

Complaints Handling Procedure

This Complaints Handling Procedure tells you how we will deal with your complaint and how long it is likely to take. It also provides important information about what you can do if you are not happy with the way in which we are dealing with your complaint, or about our final decision. Our Complaints Policy contains further information about what you can expect from us when you make a complaint.

Contacting us about your Complaint

If you have any concerns about our service, our work or our charges, please contact Susan Wright, who is our Complaints Handling Partner, with the details, either in writing to Whitaker Firth, 1 Manor Row, Bradford, BD1 4PB, by email to ssw@whitakerfirth.co.uk, or by telephone 01274 381900.

Step One – Acknowledging your Complaint

Within one working day of receiving your complaint, Mrs Wright will record it in our Central Complaints Register and open a separate file in which any correspondence and other documents relating to your complaint will be kept. Within two working days you will be sent letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint.

Step Two – Investigating your Complaint

Within ten working days of receiving your complaint Mrs Wright will speak to the member of staff who acted for you (where applicable) to gather relevant information in relation to your complaint. She will review your file(s) and any other relevant documentation. Once she has done this Mrs Wright will either speak to you, or send you a letter, telling you how she proposes to deal with your complaint.

Examples of what Mrs Wright may do are as follows:

- If your complaint is straightforward she might make suggestions as to how things can be put things right or may offer you some form of redress;
- If your complaint is more complicated she might ask you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues
- she may ask to meet with you to discuss things face to face. If she suggest this she would hope to be in a position to meet with you no longer than fourteen working days after first receiving your complaint. Within three working days of any meeting, she will write to you again to confirm what took place and to confirm any offer of redress that has been made.

If you would prefer not to meet, or if a meeting cannot be arranged within an agreeable timescale, Mrs Wright will instead write to you fully setting out her views on the situation and making suggestions as to how things can be put right, or asking you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues.

At this stage, if you are not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange to review our decision. This will happen in one of the following ways:

- Another partner in the firm will review Susan Wright's decision within ten working days; or
- Within five working days of receiving notice that you are not satisfied Mrs Wright will ask our local Law Society or another local firm of solicitors to review your complaint. Mrs Wright will let you know as soon as possible how long it will take the local Law Society or the other solicitors to review her decision; or
- Within five working days of receiving notice that you are not satisfied Mrs Wright will invite you to agree to independent mediation. Once Mrs Wright has contacted a

mediator she will ask the mediator to liaise with you to arrange a mutually convenient date for the mediation meeting to take place.

We will let you know the outcome of the review within five working days of the end of that process and at this time confirm our final decision on your complaint.

Step Three – The Legal Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with our final decision, you can then contact the Legal Ombudsman about your complaint.

Ordinarily, you cannot use the Legal Ombudsman unless you have first attempted to resolve your complaint using our internal Complaints Handling Procedure, but you will be able to contact the Legal Ombudsman if:

- The complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within eight weeks of first making the complaint to us; or
- The Legal Ombudsman decides that there are exceptional reasons why the Legal Ombudsman should consider your complaint sooner, or without you having to use our internal Complaints Handling Procedure; or
- The Legal Ombudsman considers that your complaint cannot be resolved using our internal Complaints Handling Procedure because the relationship between you and us has broken down irretrievably.

There are time limits within which complaints must be made to the Legal Ombudsman. Normally, you will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint. Other information about the Legal Ombudsman and the type of complaints that can be investigated, together with details of time limits and who can make a complaint are to be found on the Legal Ombudsman website.

If you wish to make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, further information can be found on their website or by telephoning or writing to them. Their contact details are below

Address: Legal Ombudsman
 P O Box 6808
 Wolverhampton
 WV1 9WJ

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk