Complaints Procedure

INTRODUCTION

By complying with Quality Assurance standards and maintaining our high professional standards we aim to minimise client complaints but we recognise that those which do arise must be addressed promptly and effectively. We have therefore appointed a senior member of Chambers, Patrick Gibbs KC, to act as our Complaints Officer with responsibility for ensuring that complaints are dealt with swiftly, fairly and in accordance with our procedure.

We hope that if you have a complaint you will feel able to talk about it with the Complaints Officer on the telephone, since we may be able to resolve the problem quickly, easily and to your satisfaction. If this is not appropriate we hope that we will be able to deal with your complaint through our more formal written complaints procedure.

Please note the following:

- lay clients may complain direct to Chambers without going through solicitors;
- with effect from 1 April 2023, the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has the following time limits in which a complaint must be raised with them:

  a) The complainant must refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within one year of the date of the act or omission about which the complainant is concerned or within one year of the complainant realising there was a concern.

  b) The complainant must also refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of the complaint receiving a final response from their lawyer

- We will have regard to these timeframes when deciding whether we are able to investigate your complaint. We will not deal with complaints that fall outside the limit.

Whatever the nature of your complaint, the following will apply:

- all conversations and/or documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the person to whom you direct your complaint (as indicated below), the Joint Heads of Chambers, members of our Management Committee and senior members of staff if appropriate, an investigation panel if appointed (see 2.2.2 below) and anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation, including the person about whom the complaint is made; and
- a written record will be kept of all complaints and the steps taken to resolve them.

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1 COMPLAINTS MADE BY TELEPHONE/VIDEO CALL/OTHER FORMATS

You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in Section 2 below. If you would like to make your complaint in other ways or formats, including accessible options, please do not hesitate to contact us so that we can best accommodate your needs.

1.1 Where to direct your complaint:

1.1.1 Complaints about a barrister other than the Complaints Officer should be directed to the Complaints Officer, Patrick Gibbs KC.

1.1.2 Complaints about the Complaints Officer should be directed to the Joint Heads of Chambers, James Lewis KC and Hugo Keith KC.

1.1.3 Complaints about a member of staff should be directed to the Complaints Officer, Patrick Gibbs KC.

1.2 How your complaint will be dealt with

1.2.1 The person you contact will start a written record and make a note of your details, the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. (It is recommended that you also keep a written record.)

1.2.2 They will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them.

1.2.3 If the matter is resolved they will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing. .

1.3 What happens next

1.3.1 If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone we will invite you to put it in writing within 14 days so that it can be investigated formally in accordance with the procedure shown below.

1.3.2 If your complaint is resolved the record we have made will be retained on file for a period of 6 years.

2 COMPLAINTS MADE IN WRITING AND OTHER ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

2.1 Where to address your complaint

2.1.1 All written complaints should be addressed by letter or e-mail to the Complaints Officer, Patrick Gibbs KC, marked “Private & Confidential”. (Complaints about the Complaints Officer should be addressed to the Joint Heads of Chambers, James Lewis KC and Hugo Keith KC, who will perform the duties of the Complaints Officer as outlined below.)

2.1.2 For complaints made in other accessible formats, we will discuss and advise you on the best way to set out your concerns, tailored to your needs, and how to provide the information outlined in 2.1.3 below.

2.1.3 Complaints made in writing should include the following details:

- Your name and address
- The name of the person(s) about whom the complaint is being made

- The case name if applicable
- The nature of the complaint
- What you would like done about it

2.2 **How your complaint will be dealt with**

2.2.1 Where possible, your letter or e-mail will be acknowledged within two working days and a copy of this procedure will be enclosed with our reply.

2.2.2 The Complaints Officer will appoint a panel of experienced members of chambers to consider and investigate your complaint. The panel will exclude the person about whom the complaint is being made. You will be advised that the panel has been appointed and that the Complaints Officer will correspond with you on their behalf. The Complaints Officer will endeavour to reply to your complaint within 14 days of appointing the panel, but if for any reason this is not the case you will be kept informed.

2.2.3 The reply to your complaint will set out the following:-

- The nature and scope of the panel's investigation: this will include consultation with the person about whom the complaint is being made and any other parties, both inside and outside chambers, who were involved in the matter which gave rise to the complaint, reading of case documentation and transcripts if applicable.

- The conclusion of the panel and the basis for the conclusion.

2.3 **What happens next**

2.3.1 If the conclusion is that you are justified in your complaint, the panel's proposals for resolving the complaint will also be set out in the reply.

2.3.2 If the conclusion is that you are not justified in your complaint and you accept that conclusion, the matter will be closed and the records will be placed on file.

2.3.3 If you are unhappy with the conclusion of our investigation you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman..

As indicated in our Introduction above, the Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within one year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or within one year of you realising there was a concern. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you.

The contact details are:-

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough SL1 0EH

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333
E-mail: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk
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If you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, alternative complaints bodies as approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute also exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should you and the barrister both wish to use

such a scheme.. . If mediation is used, neither you nor the barrister is required to accept the proposed resolution. If mediation does not resolve the complaint, you may still make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman (provided you fall within their jurisdiction and you do so within the time limit).

The Ombudsman will only deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from the barrister's client are within their jurisdiction. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Chambers' investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board (BSB) rather than the Legal Ombudsman. The contact details are:-

Bar Standards Board
Contact and Assessment Team
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7JZ

Telephone 020 7611 1444
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

It should be noted that it may not always be possible to investigate a complaint brought by a non-client. This is because the ability of chambers to investigate and resolve such matters satisfactorily is limited and complaints of this nature are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the BSB. Therefore, chambers will make an initial assessment of the complaint and if we feel that the issues raised cannot be resolved through the chambers complaints process we will refer you to the BSB.

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