

Complaints policy

This firm is committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to put matters right with yourself and to improve the situation for the future. There is no charge for us to consider and deal with your complaint. If you are unhappy with any part of our service to you, we would ask you initially to make your unhappiness known to the person dealing with your transaction and give them the chance to remedy your concern. If you are still unhappy with the service and feel that the person dealing with your transaction has not resolved things to your satisfaction, you should either tell that person that you wish to activate our formal complaints procedure or contact a Partner of the firm and tell them that you wish to make a formal complaint.

What will happen next?

1 Making initial contact with you.

If we have your telephone number, we will contact you immediately acknowledging your complaint and, where appropriate, seek further details. We will also send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain the details of it. At the same time we will confirm the name and contact details of the person who will be dealing with your complaint. You can expect to receive our letter within two working days of us receiving your complaint.

2 Records and action

We will record your complaint in our central register and open a separate file for it. We will do this within a day of receiving the complaint from you.

Within three days of receiving your complaint we will pass it to Pete Evans, who is our client care partner. He can be contacted at our Ferryhill office at 3 Durham Road Ferryhill DL17 8LD, telephone 01740 657 444, fax 01740 655 533 email: ferryhill@evansco.co.uk

If your complaint involves Mr Evans we will pass it to another partner who will act as Client Care partner in your case. If this is the situation our initial letter will tell you the name and contact details of that person.

3 Investigation of your complaint

The Client Care partner will start to investigate your complaint as soon as they receive it. This process should normally take no more than five days.

Investigation will normally involve the following steps.

- a) If verbal contact has not already been made with you the Client Care partner may contact you for further details of your complaint. He/she will be looking for information on what you think has gone wrong together with the effect that this may have had on you and your family.
- b) The member of staff who acted for you (the fee earner) will be contacted by the client care partner. That fee earner will be asked for a response to your complaint.

- c) The client care partner will examine the fee earner's reply together with the information in your transaction and complaint files. He/she will seek to obtain any other relevant information from other people or documents which may throw light on what has happened.

4 Matters or people outside our control

In some situations, it may be necessary for the client care partner to talk to people outside of this firm, or to review documents other than those in our possession. If these people or documents are not within the firm's control and it is likely to take longer than the five days to investigate properly and we will contact you to tell you what further information we are seeking and how long we think it will take to obtain.

5 Resolution

This process should take no longer than three further days and the following:

- a) The client care partner will invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint. Any proposals that the firm has for rectification of the situation will be put forward at this meeting and discussed with you. It is hoped that this will arrive at a resolution of the problem
- b) Within two days of the meeting the client care partner will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions they have agreed with you.

If a meeting is not suitable

- a) If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible for one to take place, the client care partner will send you a detailed reply to your complaint. This will include his (or her) suggestions for resolving the matter. If appropriate they may telephone you to discuss those proposals with a view to resolving the problems.

This will be done within five days of completing the investigation. Nothing further will then happen until you let us have your views on these proposals.

6 Review of decision

If you are still not satisfied you should contact us again. We will then arrange to review our decision. This will happen in the most appropriate of the following ways. We will let you know within five days of your latest contact to us which method is to be used and details of when and where it will happen

- a) We may ask another partner of the firm to review the client care partner's decision.
OR
- b) We may ask our local Law Society or another local firm of solicitors to review your complaint. OR
- c) We may invite you to agree to independent mediation.

7 Results of review and next steps

We will let you know the result of the review within five days of the end of the review. At this time we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

Legal Ombudsman

If we are unable to resolve your complaint under our Complaints Procedure, you may be entitled to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ. There are time limits for making complaints to the Legal Ombudsman.

Normally you will need to refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within:

- **one year** from the date of the act or omission being complained about; or
- **one year** from the date when the complainant should have realised that there was cause for complaint.

The Legal Ombudsman may exercise discretion to extend the 1 year time limit for specific cases if, on the evidence, it was fair and reasonable to do so.

For further information you should contact the legal ombudsman by telephone on 0300 555 0333 or enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

SRA

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic. You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority. We hope that our procedure will lead to a speedy resolution which is satisfactory to everybody involved. If, for any reason we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.