

Chambers Complaints Procedure

1. Our aim is to give you a good service at all times. However if you have a complaint you are invited to let us know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish. It is Chambers' policy to deal with problems and complaints in a responsive way.
2. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has a twelve-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. Chambers must therefore have regard to that timeframe when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. Chambers will not deal with complaints that fall outside the twelve month time limit.

Initial Complaint

3. You may make a complaint by telephone or in writing. This should initially be to the Senior Clerk, Alan Austin, unless you wish to make your complaint immediately to the Head of Chambers.
4. If made to the Senior Clerk he will initially discuss the issue with you by telephone and try to resolve the problem informally. If the matter is resolved he 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.
5. If your complaint can not be resolved on by a telephone discussion or if the Senior Clerk consider that it is best dealt with by a written complaint then he will request you to make it in writing within a week and it will be acknowledged in writing within 7 days with advice that the complaint is being investigated.
6. The Senior Clerk will investigate and consider all aspects of the complaint, obtaining further details from you and the barrister or administrative/clerking staff as necessary. All relevant people should be given the opportunity to state their opinions on the circumstances of the complaint. Records are taken of discussions, investigations, and documents relevant to the complaint. All investigations should aim to understand the root causes leading to the complaint. Brief results of the investigation are recorded. The Senior Clerk agrees with the barrister the action necessary to resolve the complaint and provides a substantive response in writing to the client of the results of the investigation or the circumstances leading to the complaint within 21 further days of acknowledgment of the complaint.

Referral to Head of Chambers

7. If this does not provide a resolution to the dispute, then the complaint is referred to the Head of Chambers.
8. The Head of Chambers' approach will be objective and detached from the day-to-day business of running Chambers. He will pursue his own enquiries with the purpose of ensuring that the complaint is dealt with fairly and firmly provided that it is possible to do so. This procedure is not suitable for resolving factual disputes. The Head of Chambers will normally acknowledge the complaint within 7 days of his notification of the complaint, arrange to meet with you if appropriate, and provide a substantive

response to you within a further 21 days. If he finds later that he is not going to be able to provide a response within that further 21 days he will set a new date for his response and inform you. :

Written complaint to Head of Chambers

9. In the alternative a complaint may be made direct to the Head of Chambers and paragraph 8 will apply to such a complaint. If this course of action is adopted by you please give the following details:
 - Your name and address;
 - Which member(s) of Chambers or member of staff you are complaining about;
 - the date when the subject matter of the complaint occurred
 - The detail of the complaint; and
 - What you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to the Head of Chambers at 9, Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3NN. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 7 days.

10. If your complaint is against the Head of Chambers, or for another reasons it is inappropriate for him to investigate the complaint, the immediate former Head of Chambers, Vivian Chapman, will investigate the complaint.
11. The response from the Head of Chambers or (if appropriate) Vivian Chapman will set out:
 - The nature and scope of his investigation;
 - His conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
 - If he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

12. All conversations and 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 Head of Chambers or Vivian Chapman, the person investigating the complaint if not the Head of Chambers and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation including the member of chambers or staff member about whom you have complained. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.
13. Any duty of confidentiality owed to any other person in relation to the matter shall be respected.

Our Policy

14. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Any review within Chamber of complaints shall be conducted using anonymised records.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

15. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers, at the conclusion of our consideration of your complaint. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman has a twelve-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. You can write to them at:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 15870,
Birmingham
B30 9EB

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Notification of insurers

- 16 Any complaint that involves negligence or a potential claim against professional indemnity insurance is brought to the attention of the insurers as soon as possible by the barrister.