

## Walnut House - Complaints Procedure

1. Our aim is to give you a good and efficient 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.
2. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers has a twelve-month time limit in which a complaint must be raised from the date of act or omission complained of from when the complainant should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint without taking advice from a third party. The Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances. Chambers must therefore have regard to the timeframe when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. Chambers will not therefore usually deal with complaints that fall outside of the twelve month time limit.
3. The Ombudsman will also 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 rather than the legal Ombudsman.
4. 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 satisfactorily investigate and resolve such matters is limited and complaints of this nature are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the Bar Standards Board. Therefore, Chambers will make an initial assessment of the complaint and if they feel that the issues raised cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the Chambers complaints process they will refer you to the Bar Standards Board.

### Complaints made by telephone

5. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 7 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone the individual nominated under the Chambers Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints, Mr. Bernard Hayward (Senior Clerk) or, if the complaint

is about the Senior Clerk, the Head of Chambers Mr. Adrian Chaplin. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. They will then discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. 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.

6. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it so it can be investigated formally.

### **Complaint made in writing**

7. Please give the following details:

- Your name and address;
- Which member(s) of Chambers you are complaining about;
- The detail of the complaint; and
- What you would like done about it

Please address your letter to Mr Bernard Hayward (Senior Clerk), Walnut House, 63 St David's Hill, Exeter, EX4 4DW or to Mr Adrian Chaplin. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

8. Our Chambers has a panel headed by Mr. Adrian Chaplin and made up of experienced members of Chambers and a senior member of staff, which consider any written complaint. Within 14 days of your letter being received the head of panel or his deputy in his absence will appoint a member of the panel to investigate it. If your complaint is against the head of the panel, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
9. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know they have been appointed and they will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If they find later that they are not going to be able to reply within 14 days they will set a new date for their reply and inform you. Their reply will be set out;
  - The nature and scope of their investigation;
  - Their conclusion on each complaint and the basis for their conclusion; and
  - If they find that you are justified in your complaint, their proposals for resolving the complaint.

### **Confidentiality**

10. All conversation 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, members of our management committee and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the panel and the person who investigates the complaint. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

### **Our Policy**

11. 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. Our management committee inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

### **Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman**

12. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your investigation and you fall within their jurisdiction 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 six month time limit from the date Chambers concluded its investigations and provided you with a final response.

You can write to them at:

Legal Ombudsman, Po Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ.

Telephone Number; 0300 555 0333 Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

13. If you are not the barrister's client and are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation then please contact the Bar Standards Board at:

Bar Standards Board, Professional Conduct Department, 289-293 High Holborn, London WC1V 7JZ.

Telephone number: 020 76111 444 Website: [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)