

Quadrant 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 for you to involve a solicitor in order to make a complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. On receipt of instructions from a new professional or lay client, as soon as possible we will inform in writing;
 - (a) That Chambers' Complaints Procedure can be found on our website and that hard copies will be provided on request. We will also attach a hard copy of our complaints process to that letter.
 - (b) That a lay client may complain directly to Chambers without going through solicitors.

Where a lay client is new to Chambers we will ask the lay client's solicitor in writing to pass the information about Chambers' Complaints Procedure to the lay client, we will ask for positive confirmation that has been done.

3. It may not always be possible to investigate a complaint brought by non-client. This is because the ability of Chambers satisfactorily to 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 the complainant to the Bar Standards Board.
4. All complaints will be handled and acknowledged promptly. With the acknowledgement we will provide;
 - (a) The name of the person who will deal with the complaint and details of their role in Chambers.
 - (b) A copy of our Complaints Procedure
 - (c) The date by which to complainant will next hear from Chambers.

We will also advise the Complainant that they may, at the end of Chambers complaints process, take their complaint to the Legal Ombudsman (see paragraph 13 below)

5. Where a complaint is passed to Chambers by the Commissioner (i.a.w Annex J to the Bar Code of Conduct):
 - (a) The Head of Chambers will inform the Commissioner, within 6 weeks of the date of the referral, of the progress that has been made in considering the complaint, or of the outcome.
 - (b) Where the investigation is incomplete within 6 weeks of the date of referral, the Head of Chambers will update the Commissioner every 6 weeks until the investigation is complete. The Head of Chambers will then inform the Commissioner of the outcome of the complaint.

Complaints Made by Telephone

6. You may make a complaint in writing and, if you wish to do so, please follow the procedure set out below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone us on 020 7583 4444 and ask to speak to the Chief Operating Officer (Peter Blair), who will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. 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.
7. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it within the next 14 days so it can be investigated formally.

Complaints made in writing

8. When making a complaint in writing, please give the following details:
 - Your name and address;
 - Which member(s) of Chambers or staff you are complaining about;
 - The detail of the complaint;
 - What you would like done about it; and
 - How you would like us to communicate with you (i.e. whether by e-mail, fax or letter).

Please address your letter to The Chief Operating Officer, Quadrant Chambers, Quadrant House, 10 Fleet St, London EC4Y 1AU. If your complaint is about the Chief Operating Officer, please address your letter to Simon Croall QC. 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.

9. Our Chambers complaints procedures are currently overseen by Simon Croall QC. Within 14 days of your letter being received the he, or a senior member of chambers in his absence, will appoint a senior and experienced member of chambers or staff to a panel comprising two or more members of chambers or staff to investigate it. If your complaint is against or involves Mr. Simon Croall (or anyone supervising the procedure), a suitable alternative senior member or members will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
10. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know of the appointment and the date by which a reply to your complaint will be available. If it is found later that this date is not going to be met a new date for reply will be set and you will be informed. The reply will set out:
 - The nature and scope of the investigation;
 - The conclusion on each complaint and the basis for the conclusion; and
 - If the investigation finds that you are justified in your complaint, the proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

11. 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 limited to the head of chambers (plus, insofar as it may be necessary, 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

12. 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

13. If you are unhappy with the outcome of chambers' 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 chambers' consideration of your complaint. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by chambers. Please note the timeframe for referral of complaints to the Ombudsman as set out below.

14. The Ombudsman will deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from the barrister's client are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. Non-clients who are dissatisfied with the outcomes of a chambers' investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board rather than the Legal Ombudsman.

15. The Legal Ombudsman has time limits within which a complaint must be raised with them. The time limits are:
 - a. Six years from the date of the act/omission
 - b. Three years from the date that the complainant should reasonably have known that there were ground for complaint (if the act/omission took place before 6 October 2010 or was more than 6 years ago)
 - c. Within six months of the complainant receiving a final response from their lawyer, if that response complies with the requirements in rule 4.4 of the Scheme Rules (which requires a response to include prominently an explanation that the Legal Ombudsman was available if the complainant remained dissatisfied and that the provision of full contact details for the Ombudsman and a warning that the complaint must be referred to them within six months).
 - d. The Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances. Chambers will therefore have regard to that timeframe when deciding whether to investigate your complaint.

16. Chambers will not usually deal with complaints that fall outside the Legal Ombudsman's time limits.

17. You can write to the Legal Ombudsman at:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 15870
Birmingham
B30 9EB

Alternatively you may call or email them at:

Tel: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

18. If you are not the barrister's client but are unhappy with the outcome of Chambers' investigation, then please contact the Bar Standards Board at;

Bar Standards Board
Professional Conduct Department
189-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7JZ

Tel: 020 7611 1441

Web: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk