



GUILDFORD 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.
2. Please note that Chambers will only consider complaints that are raised within 6 years of the act or omission complained of.

First Stage

3. Where a client is dissatisfied with some aspect of the service provided by a Barrister or by Chambers, they will be invited to telephone the Senior Clerk. If the complaint is about the Senior Clerk, the client should telephone the Head of Chambers (currently George Coates) or the Deputy Head of Chambers (currently Dominique Gillan). The client should also be told that if they prefer, they may make the complaint in writing and the Chambers Complaint leaflet should be sent to them unless it has already been provided.
4. Where a complaint is made by telephone, a note of the complaint should be made. It should record:

The name and address of the complainant

Against whom the complaint is made

The detail of the complaint

What the complainant believes should be done about her/his complaint.

5. In many cases, the complaint will be resolved over the telephone during the first call. When that occurs, the Barrister/Senior Clerk/Head of Chambers/Head of Chambers' appointee should record the outcome on the note of complaint. The client should be asked whether s/he is content with the outcome. If s/he is, that fact will be recorded. The complaints leaflet suggests the client may wish to make his own note. If the client is not content, they should be invited to put the complaint in writing within 14 days so that it may be investigated formally. At that stage, they should be sent a copy of the chambers complaints leaflet, unless it has already been provide. The client should also be informed of the Bar Council's complaints procedure.

Second Stage

6. During the 2nd stage Chambers will convene its complaints panel which is made up of experienced practitioners from different practice areas (George Coates, Michael Jones, Matthew Pascall & Rowan Morton) and the Senior Clerk, A head of panel will be appointed. There will also be a



nominated deputy. All complaints (other than those resolved at stage one) should be put before the head of the panel or, in his/her absence, the deputy.

7. Within 14 days of the receipt of a letter of complaint, the head of panel (or their deputy) should appoint a member of the panel to investigate the complaint. Where the complaint is against a member of staff, the person appointed will normally be the Senior Clerk. Where the complaint is against the Senior Clerk, the head of the panel should appoint another member of the panel to investigate. Where the complaint is against the head of the panel, the Head of Chambers should investigate or, in their discretion, appoint a member of the panel to investigate. Where the Head of Chambers is the head of the panel, the deputy head of the panel should be the appointed person. No Barrister should investigate a complaint of which they are the subject.
8. The appointed person should write to the client as soon as they are appointed. They should inform them that they are to investigate the complaint and that they will report back to the client within 14 days. If it becomes plain that a response cannot be sent within 14 days, a realistic time frame should be set and the client informed accordingly.
9. The appointed person should investigate the complaint. They should speak to the Barrister/Member of Staff complained against and any other person they identify as having something to contribute. They should review all relevant documents, if necessary, they should revert to the client for further information and clarification.
10. The appointed person will prepare a report to the client (with a copy to the Barrister/Member of Staff complained against). The report will set out all the matters referred to at paragraph 4 above, the nature and scope of the investigations carried out in respect of each complaint, their conclusions and the basis for their conclusions. Where a complaint is found to be justified, proposals for resolution should be made (e.g. reduction in fees, apology, compensation).
11. The report will be sent to the client within 14 days of the appointed person's appointment (or such longer period as has been communicated to the client in advance — see paragraph 8). A copy of the report will be provided to the Barrister/Member of Staff complained against.

BMIF

12. Where a complaint raises an allegation of negligence, the BMIF will be informed immediately. Further, the BMIF will be consulted before proposals for resolution are made to the client.

Confidentiality

13. All conversations and documents shall be confidential and disclosed only to the extent necessary. They may be disclosed only to the client, the person complained about, the Head of Chambers, the head of the complaints panel or relevant senior member of the panel, the management committee (for carrying out the task at paragraph 16) and any other individual with whom enquiries need to be made for the purpose of the investigation.



Record Keeping

14. Where the procedure ends after the first stage, the person responsible for recording the outcome on the note of complaint should ensure that the note of complaint is placed on the chambers complaints file.
15. Where the procedure ends after the second stage the head of the panel should ensure that the following documents are placed on the Chambers complaints file:
Note/letter of complaint (see paragraphs 3 and 4)

Appointed person's report (see paragraph 9)

All letters to client

All letters from client

Review Of Records

16. The Chambers complaints file should be inspected regularly by the management committee. The management committee should consider matters raised with a view to improving services generally.

Further Information

17. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of our handling of your complaint you may pursue your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has firstly been made to Chambers under the above procedure. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman has a six year time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted on 0300 555 0333 or if calling from overseas +44 121 245 3050. Alternatively you can write to: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 15870, Birmingham, B30 9EB Or email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk. Please see www.legalombudsman.org.uk for further information.