

XXIV OLD BUILDINGS

CLIENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

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. You may make a complaint directly to Chambers or, if you prefer, make a complaint through your solicitors.
2. Please note that Chambers will only consider complaints that are raised within six months of the act or omission complained of (other than in exceptional circumstances).
3. Chambers has a panel headed by Elizabeth Weaver and made up of experienced Barristers at XXIV Old Buildings (“Barristers”) and a senior member of staff (the “Complaints Panel”). The Complaints Panel considers any complaint made against Barristers or staff.
4. Complaints may be made informally by telephone using the procedure set out in paragraphs 7 to 9 below, or formally in writing using the procedure set out in paragraphs 11 to 14 below.
5. For the purposes of this Procedure we do not regard normal negotiations between a member of staff and those instructing a Barristers relating to the fee charged or to be charged by that Barrister as constituting a ‘complaint’.
6. Please note that it may not always be possible or appropriate for us to investigate a complaint by someone who is or was not a client of a Barrister. That is because the ability of Chambers to investigate and resolve such complaints is limited and because complaints by non-clients are better suited to the disciplinary procedures of the Bar Standards Board. Therefore, we will make an initial assessment of the complaint by a non-client and if we feel that the issues raised cannot be dealt with satisfactorily through our own complaints procedure, we will inform you and refer you to the Bar Standards Board.

Complaints by telephone

7. If you would prefer to speak to us initially on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone, Sue Medder (Chambers Director) or Elizabeth Weaver. If your complaint is about a member of staff rather than a barrister, please contact Sue Medder. If your complaint is about any of the above-named individuals or they are unavailable then please contact Alan Steinfeld QC, our Head of Chambers.
8. The person you speak to will:
 - (a) Make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it
 - (b) Make every effort to address all queries and questions you may have
9. If the matter is resolved, the person you spoke to will record the outcome, check 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.

10. 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 that it can be investigated formally in accordance with paragraphs 11 to 14 below.

Complaints in writing

11. If making a complaint in writing, please give the following details:

- (a) your name and address;
- (b) which member(s) of Chambers or staff you are complaining about;
- (c) the detail of the complaint; and
- (d) what you would like done about it.

12. Please address your letter to Sue Medder or Elizabeth Weaver, at XXIV Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2A 3UP. 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.

13. Within 14 days of your letter being received, Elizabeth Weaver or her deputy in her absence, will appoint a member or members of the Complaints Panel to investigate your complaint. If your complaint is against the head of the Complaints Panel, the next most senior member of the Complaints Panel will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

14. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know he or she has been appointed and that he (we use "he" for convenience) will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If it is apparent, or he finds later, that he is not going to be able to reply within 14 days he will set a new date for his reply and inform you. His reply will set out:

- (a) the nature and scope of his investigation;
- (b) his conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
- (c) if he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

15. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that it is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Heads of Chambers, members of our management committee and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister or member of staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the Complaints 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.

16. We make a record of any written complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Our Chambers management committee regularly inspects these records, anonymised where necessary, with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Bar Standards Board or the Legal Ombudsman

17. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation into your complaint you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman if you fall within his remit. The Legal Ombudsman will only deal with complaints from consumers i.e. the barrister's client. Also the Legal Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. Please note that there is generally a period of 12 months from becoming aware of the relevant act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

You can write to the Legal Ombudsman at:

PO Box 15870,
Birmingham B30 9EB
Tel: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

If you are not the barrister's client and are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation into your complaint you may take up your complaint with the Bar Standards Board by writing to:

Bar Standards Board
Professional Conduct Department
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7HZ
Tel: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217
contactus@barstandardsboard.org.uk
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk