

## **COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY**

### **Our Complaints Policy**

We are committed to providing a high quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us improve our standards.

If you have a complaint, please contact us with the details.

### **What will happen next?**

1. We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within three working days of receiving it enclosing a copy of this procedure.
2. We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to our Complaints Handling Partner, Julian Jefferson, who will review your matter and speak to the member of staff/fee earner, who acted for you. If your complaint is against Julian Jefferson, another criminal defence solicitor will conduct the process.
3. Depending on the nature of the complaint, Julian Jefferson may invite you to a meeting to discuss, and hopefully resolve, your complaint if it is considered that such a meeting is in the best interests of both parties and will facilitate a resolution. If appropriate, he will invite you to attend a meeting within 14 working days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
4. Should a meeting take place then, within 3 working days of the meeting, Julian Jefferson will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions he has agreed with you.
5. If a meeting is not considered appropriate, then we will explain why we do not believe a meeting is necessary. In these circumstances, we will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including suggestions for resolving the matter, within 21 working days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
6. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange to review the decision. Someone unconnected with the matter at this firm will review the decision.
7. We will write to you within 14 working days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

8. If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why. You will not incur any fees for any time spent in dealing with your complaint.
9. If you are still not satisfied, you can then contact the Legal Ombudsman at P.O. Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ about your complaint. Any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman must be made within six months of you receiving a final response from us. From 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013, the time limits for the Legal Ombudsman accepting a complaint have increased to six years from the date of act/omission and three years from the date the complainant should reasonably have known that there were grounds for complaint. If you do not follow these time frames, the Legal Ombudsman may not be able to review your complaint. For further information, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman on telephone number 0300 555 0333 or at [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)
10. Where any complaint relates to our bill, then you may also have the right to object to the bill by making a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman or by applying to the Court for an assessment of the bill under the Solicitors Act 1974. However, the Legal Ombudsman may not consider a complaint about our bill if you have applied to the Court for an assessment.
11. The firm will not charge for handling the complaint. The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge to the complainant.