

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Our policy

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

Where possible, we try to resolve concerns informally. We suggest that any issues are raised with the lawyer responsible for your matter, who will do their best to put things right.

However, if you are still unhappy after speaking to the lawyer, or are uncomfortable discussing any issues with your lawyer, you may raise a formal complaint under this procedure. In order to do this, please contact our head of compliance, Simone Rudich, by writing to 383 Bury New Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 1AW.

The head of compliance has overall responsibility for complaints and will decide how your complaint should be investigated, including who should prepare the initial response.

When contacting us with any concerns, it helps if you set it out in writing, but this is not mandatory and you may prefer to discuss it over the telephone. Please note, however, that we will not deal with any complaints through social media or review sites – this is for your protection to ensure client confidentiality.

Who can make a complaint?

Other than in certain limited circumstances, our complaints handling procedure is reserved for clients of the firm. Unless MS Law has provided legal services to you as an individual, or to your business, you will not be able to complain through this procedure.

What can I complain about?

You may complain about any aspect of the service provided by MS Law, including our fees.

Please note, however, that in circumstances where you are pursuing a professional negligence claim against this firm, we will not deal with complaints arising out of the issues that form the basis of the negligence claim.

Individuals have certain rights to complain or request information under data protection law.

How does the procedure work?

- **Acknowledgement:** within three working days of receiving your complaint, the head of compliance will send you a written acknowledgment explaining the next steps.
- **Investigation:** this stage will involve reviewing your file and discussing your concerns with the lawyer who acted for you in order to find out what happened.
- **Initial response:** this will normally come from the head of the relevant department or team, but may be another partner if that is more appropriate. We aim to respond within 14 working days of receipt of your complaint. Where we need to clarify anything within your complaint, the time will run from the date we agree the list of issues.

- **Final response:** if you are not satisfied with the initial response, you may refer your complaint to our head of compliance (using the contact details above). When you do this you should explain why you are not happy with the initial response. We will then aim to provide a detailed final response within 14 working days.

Do I have a right of appeal?

We aim to resolve all complaints promptly through this procedure. But if you are not satisfied with our final response, you may be eligible to refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman provided you do so within six months of the end of our internal complaints procedure.

Only individuals and certain small companies, trusts and charities are eligible to make complaints to that office.

The Legal Ombudsman will not normally accept a complaint unless we have been given the opportunity to respond first. But you can usually escalate matters to the Legal Ombudsman if:

- The complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within 8 weeks from the date it was made; or
- The Legal Ombudsman considers that there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner, or, without it having been made to the firm first; or
- where the Legal Ombudsman considers that resolution through our internal procedure is not possible due to a breakdown in the relationship between you and the firm.

You should also be aware that, when your complaint relates to a bill, the Legal Ombudsman will not consider your complaint while your bill is being assessed by a court.

Legal Ombudsman contact details:

- Address: PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ
- Telephone: 0300 555 0333
- Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

For further information regarding timescales and eligibility, please contact the Legal Ombudsman using the details above.

The limitation period for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman is typically:

1. One year from the date of the problem (the act or omission you are complaining about),
or
2. One year from when you reasonably became aware of the problem.

However, the issue must also have occurred after October 6, 2010 for the ombudsman to investigate.

Extensions:

The Legal Ombudsman may consider complaints outside these time limits in exceptional circumstances, but this is at their discretion

For the most accurate and personalised advice, consult the Legal Ombudsman directly via the contact details provided.

Are there any alternatives to the Legal Ombudsman?

Alternative complaints bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services in circumstances where both you and MS Law agree to use such a scheme. Details of these bodies can be found at the European Commission's online dispute resolution website: <http://ec.europa.eu/odr>. However, in our experience the Legal Ombudsman's scheme is the most suitable to deal with any complaints about legal services.

Summary

We are committed to effective complaints handling and will always try our best to promptly resolve any outstanding issues and put things right. At all times we will keep you updated and if we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

Any queries or concerns regarding this procedure or complaints generally should be sent to paul.gelder@ms-law.co.uk