



Michael Cook Law Firm

Complaints Handling Procedure

This Complaints Handling Procedure tells you how we will deal with your complaint and how long it is likely to take. It also provides important information about what you can do if you are not happy with the way in which we are dealing with your complaint, or about our final decision.

Designated Complaints Handler

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 to improve our standards

Whenever possible, please raise any initial client care problems with the person acting on your case to give them the opportunity of resolving matters with you. Often, matters can be quickly resolved in this way. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the service you have received, please contact us. It would assist if any complaint is submitted in writing to enable us to fully understand your concerns.

If this person cannot satisfactorily address your concerns and you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact our Designated Complaints Handler, Michael Cook in the first instance. You can write to him at Unit 4, Lambton House, Newbottle Street, Houghton-Le-Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH4 4AR or send an email to

mc@michaelcooklaw.co.uk

Step One: Acknowledging your Complaint

Within three working days we will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and setting out the name of the person responsible for handling the complaint.

Step Two: Investigating your Complaint

Within five working days of receiving your complaint, we will review your file(s) and any other relevant documentation and send you a letter telling you how we propose to deal with your complaint. Examples of what we might say in this letter are as follows:

- If your complaint is straight-forward we might make suggestions as to how we can put things right or we may offer you some form of redress;
- If your complaint is more complicated, we might ask you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues;
- We may ask to meet with you to discuss things face-to-face and we would hope to be in a position to meet with you no longer than fourteen working days after first receiving your complaint. If you would prefer not to meet, or if we cannot arrange this within an agreeable timescale, we will write to you fully setting out our views on the situation and making suggestions as to how we can put things right, or asking you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues. Within three working days of any meeting, we will write to you again to confirm what took place and to confirm any offer of redress that we have made.

Whichever form our investigation takes, we will aim to give you our final decision within eight (8) weeks of receiving your complaint (or sooner if possible).

Step Three: Appealing against our Final Decision

If you are not satisfied with the decision reached by our Designated Complaints Handler then your matter will be referred to our Practice Manager, Lorretta Coulson, who will deal directly with the matter and also with the Designated Complaints Handler to ascertain why the matter has been referred. Our Practice Manager will let you know the result of the referral within five working days of receiving your appeal. We would hope at this point that some form of satisfactory result will have been achieved.



Michael Cook Law Firm Complaints Handling Procedure

Step Four: The Legal Ombudsman

If, in the unusual event you are still not satisfied after review of the case with our Practice Manager, you are able to take the matter up with the Legal Ombudsman.

We have eight (8) weeks to consider your complaint. If, for any reason, we are unable to resolve the problem between us within that timeframe, then you may ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the complaint. The Legal Ombudsman may be contacted at PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ.

Please be aware that any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman must usually be made within six months of you having received a final written response from us about your complaint. Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman must usually be made within one year of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring; or within one year from when you should have known about or become aware that there were grounds for complaint. The requirement to refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you remains the same.

For further information, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or visit: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Ordinarily, you cannot use the Legal Ombudsman unless you have first attempted to resolve your complaint using our internal Complaints Handling procedure, but you will be able to contact the Legal Ombudsman if:

- The complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within eight (8) weeks of first making the complaint to us; or
- The Legal Ombudsman decides that there are exceptional reasons why the Legal Ombudsman should consider your complaint sooner, or without you having to use our internal Complaints Handling Procedure first; or
- The Legal Ombudsman considers that your complaint cannot be resolved using our internal Complaints Handling Procedure because the relationship between you and us has broken down irretrievably.

If you wish to make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, you must be one of the following:

- An individual;
- A micro-enterprise as defined in European Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 (broadly, an enterprise with fewer than 10 staff and a turnover or balance sheet value not exceeding €2 million);
- A charity with an annual income less than £1 million;
- A club, Association or society with an annual income less than £1 million;
- A trustee of a trust with a net asset value less than £1 million; or
- A personal representative or the residuary beneficiaries of an estate where a person with a complaint died before referring it to the Legal Ombudsman.

If you are not, you should be aware that you can only obtain redress by using our Complaints Handling Procedure or by mediation or arbitration, or by taking action through the Courts.

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



Michael Cook Law Firm Complaints Handling Procedure

Complaining to the Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

Address: Solicitors Regulation Authority, The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN

Telephone: 0370 606 2555

Email: report@sra.org.uk

Website: www.sra.org.uk

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Where we are not able to settle your complaint using our internal complaints process, there are alternative complaints bodies (such as the Ombudsman Services www.ombudsman-services.org) which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

Please let us know if you would like to consider using an alternative complaints body to resolve your complaint.

Management of your complaint case

All complaints, whether verbal or written are recorded and logged in our central Register to enable us to detect recurring problems and trends. As necessary, we will implement corrective action in response to individual complaints and improvement measures to prevent adverse trends and correct recurring problems. In this manner, we aim to constantly improve the service we provide.