

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A report by a client that their expectations of what they consider to be a good service have not been met.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

You can register the complaint with the person dealing with your matter or our Client Care & Practice Manager directly – Linda Baughan.

In the first instance, we'd prefer if you write to us with full details of your complaint so that we have a good understanding of the issues being highlighted.

You can write to Linda at:

28 South Parade,

Doncaster

South Yorkshire

DN1 2DJ

And by Email to: lgb@dickinsonwood.co.uk

Linda Baughan is responsible for ensuring that complaints are handled effectively and in accordance with this procedure. This procedure will also apply to prospective clients who we have refused to provide a service to or persistently or unreasonably offered an unwanted service to but only if the claimant has evidence to show that we did not have reasonable grounds to do so.

Linda keeps a register of all complaints. The register includes all the required details and the register is signed off when the complaint has been finalised. Linda and the

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management team reviews the complaints data and it also forms part of our Annual Risk Review. Any complaints are reviewed to determine if there are any training requirements, changes in systems and processes which are required.

INVESTIGATING THE COMPLAINT

1. We will acknowledge the complaint within seven days which allows for any postal delays and notify you who will be handling your complaint.
2. We will record your complaint in our central register and open a file for your complaint. We will conduct a full investigation and an independent review of the matter.
3. We aim to respond in full within 28 days. However, if the complaint is of a more complex nature we will require more time but we will let you know when you will receive a full response. We may also invite you to meet with our Client Care & Practice Manager to gather more information and resolve the matter.
4. We will reply to you, usually in writing to tell you of our views on the complaint and how we propose to resolve it, hopefully to your satisfaction – including appropriate redress – this could include a reduction in fees if appropriate, compensation or a gesture of goodwill.
5. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, or the way the complaint has been handled, you may write to the Senior Partner – Mrs Kay Wood – also at the address above, who will make such further investigations as are necessary.
6. We would generally aim to do this within 10 days. This will happen in one of the following ways –
 - Client Care & Practice Manager will review her own decision.
 - We will arrange for someone in the firm who has not been involved in your complaint to review it.
 - Senior Partner will review your complaint within 10 days.
 - We will ask another local firm of solicitors to review your complaint.

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The Senior Partner will inform you of the conclusions and any alternative proposals to resolve the complaint.

7. If still unresolved at this stage, you may take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman or, in accordance with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Regulations to an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Scheme Provider. We will issue a final letter advising you of this.

LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

The Legal Ombudsman is the independent body established by the Office for Legal Complaints under the Legal Services Act 2007 to deal with complaints against Solicitors.

The Legal Ombudsman may:

- Investigate the quality of professional service supplied by a solicitor to a client.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has breached rules of professional conduct.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has unreasonably refused to supply a professional service to a prospective client
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has persistently or unreasonably offered a professional service that the client does not want

Before it will consider a complaint the Legal Ombudsman generally requires that the firm's internal Complaints Procedure (outlined above) has been exhausted. If the Legal Ombudsman is satisfied that the firm's proposals for resolving a complaint are reasonable, it may decline to investigate further. You will have to bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within 6 months of receiving a final response from us about your complaint and 6 years from the date of the act or omission, giving rise to the complaint. Alternatively, 3 years from the date you should reasonably have known there are grounds for complaint (if the act/omission took place before 6 October 2010 or was more than 6 years ago).

The Legal Ombudsman's address and contact details are:

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PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH; telephone, 0300 555 0333; website, www.legalombudsman.org.uk; or email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

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.

You can raise your concerns with the [Solicitors Regulation Authority](#).

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SCHEMES

Alternative complaints bodies (such as Ombudsman Services www.ombudsman-services.org/) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

However, we don't currently agree to use this Alternative Dispute Resolution service in view of the availability of the independent Legal Ombudsman Service established under the Legal Services Act 2007. We are bound by our Regulatory Code to comply with the Legal Ombudsman.

CONTRACTS ENTERED INTO ONLINE

If we are unable to resolve your complaint which relates to a contract entered into online, you may contact the Online Dispute Resolution providers by accessing the following link <http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/odr>