

## **Essex Court Chambers Chambers Complaints Procedure**

1. Chambers' aim is to give you the best possible service at all times. However if you have a complaint you are invited to let Chambers know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. You should be aware that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers (see paragraph 12 below) will only consider complaints received within the following time limits:
  - six years from the date of the act or omission complained of;
  - three years from the date on which the complainant should reasonably have known that there were grounds for complaint (if the act or omission took place before 6 October 2010 or was more than six years ago);
  - within six months of the complainant receiving a final response from his or her lawyer, if that response complies with the requirements of rule 4.4 of the Legal Ombudsman Scheme Rules (which requires the response to include prominently an explanation that the Legal Ombudsman was available if the complainant remained dissatisfied, the provision of full contact details for the Ombudsman and a warning that the complaint must be referred to the Ombudsman within six months).
3. The Legal Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances. We will have regard to the applicable time limit in deciding whether we are able to investigate any complaint. We will not normally deal with a complaint that falls outside the time limit applicable to a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.
4. The Legal Ombudsman can only deal with complaints from consumers. (The Legal Ombudsman can also deal only with complaints from individuals and certain other entities). This means that only complaints from a client of a member of Chambers are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. Non-clients should contact the Bar Standards Board (the body that regulates the

professional conduct of barristers) rather than the Legal Ombudsman. Chambers is not always able to investigate satisfactorily complaints made by non-clients, and may refer such complainants to the Bar Standards Board.

### **Informal Complaints made by Telephone**

5. If you wish to make a formal complaint about a member of Chambers or staff, you should follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 below. However, we would encourage you, in the first instance, to raise any concern that you may have by telephone, with Mr Joe Ferrigno, Senior Clerk, on 020 7813 8000. If the complaint is about the Senior Clerk please telephone the Head of the Complaints Panel, Mr Mark Templeman KC on 020 7813 8000. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he will record the outcome, check that 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.
6. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to Chambers about it within the next 14 days so that it can be investigated formally.

### **Complaints made in Writing**

7. Please give the following details:
  - your name and address;
  - which member(s) of Chambers or staff you are complaining about;
  - the detail of the complaint; and
  - what you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to Mr Joe Ferrigno or Mr Mark Templeman KC at Essex Court Chambers, 24 Lincolns Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3EG. Where possible, receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged within two days and details provided of how your complaint will be dealt with.

8. Chambers has a panel headed by Mr Mark Templeman KC and made up of experienced members of Chambers and two senior members of staff, which considers any written complaint. Within 14 days of your letter being received the head of the panel or his deputy in his absence will either appoint a member of the panel to investigate it, or notify you that your complaint, or certain aspects of it, fall outside Chamber's complaints handling procedure. In the latter event, you will be provided with information on how to complain to the Legal Ombudsman and/or the Bar Standards Board. If your complaint is against the head of the panel, the next most senior member of the panel will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
  
9. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know that he or she has been appointed and that he or she will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If he or she finds later that they are not going to be able to reply within 14 days he or she will set a new date for his or her reply and inform you. The reply will set out:
  - the nature and scope of the investigation;
  - the conclusion on each complaint and the basis for each conclusion; and
  - if he or she finds that you are justified in your complaint, proposals for resolving the complaint;
  - how you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

### **Confidentiality**

10. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Head(s) of Chambers, members of the complaints panel and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the member of Chambers or staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the 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.

## **Our Policy**

11. As part of our commitment to client care Chambers makes a written record of any complaint and retains all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. The Complaints Panel inspects and reports to the Head(s) of Chambers on an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

## **Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman or the Bar Standards Board**

12. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our procedure, you have the choice of taking up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. Generally, the Legal Ombudsman will only consider your complaint if you have first used Chambers complaints procedure, but the Ombudsman will consider a complaint where there has been no resolution under our complaints procedure within 8 weeks of your complaint. If you are not eligible to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, you may contact the Bar Standards Board.
13. You can write to them at:

Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 6167  
Slough  
SL1 0EH  
Tel: 0300 555 0333  
Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)

Bar Standards Board  
Professional Conduct Department  
289–293 High Holborn  
London WC1V 7HZ

Tel: 0207 6111 444  
Website: [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)

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