

STEWARTS

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 to improve our standards. If you have any problem with our service, the level of our fees, or with the way in which we have dealt with any matter, please in the first instance contact the lawyer dealing with the matter by telephone, e-mail or by post.

Timescales

All references to “days” in this policy mean working days, which are Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays and notified days of office closure.

What is the procedure?

- 1 We will send you a letter/email acknowledgement receipt of your complaint within 5 days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
- 2 We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve a review of your file by the supervising partner (identified in our engagement letter that will have been sent to you at the outset of this matter) in conjunction with the lawyer who acted for you. The head of the department will oversee this review and any proposed resolution.
- 3 If your complaint is about the supervising partner on your matter, the head of department or [Julian Chamberlayne](#), Partner, Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and Head of Knowledge Management & Compliance, will normally conduct the review.
- 4 The supervising partner or head of department will then invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. Wherever possible that meeting will take place within 15 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- 5 Within 5 days of the meeting, the supervising partner or head of department will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions agreed with you.
- 6 If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, the supervising partner or head of department will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including his/her suggestions for resolving the matter, within 15 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- 7 At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact [Julian Chamberlayne](#) or [Funmilayo Kolaru](#), Compliance Manager and they will independently investigate the complaint and our response. They will revert to you in writing, reporting their findings within 15 days of receiving your notification that you are not satisfied with the initial response.
- 8 If we have not responded to your complaint within the timescales stated, without explanation or you are not satisfied with the response, you can contact

an alternative complaints body such as ProMediate – www.promediate.co.uk who are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

- 9 We agree to use ProMediate or another suitable Alternative Dispute Resolution provider.
- 10 If we are not able to resolve your complaint through our complaints process or through mediation you can contact the Legal Ombudsman. The helpline number is 0300 555 0333 and the address is PO Box 6806 Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ.
- 11 A six month time limit, from the date of our final response, normally applies to complaints to the Legal Ombudsman. Further information can be found on its website at <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/>.
- 12 The service provided by the Legal Ombudsman is only available to certain types of clients/organisations. Further details of those eligible for the service can be found on the Legal Ombudsman's website. Alternatively, you can contact the Ombudsman on the helpline number given above.
- 13 Also, if your complaint relates to our charges and/or any of our bills you may also have a right to object to the relevant bill by applying to the court for an Assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974.
- 14 Please note that if all or part of a bill remains unpaid, the firm may be entitled to charge interest and may exercise a lien over your papers, as explained in our Terms of Business.
- 15 If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.