

FIVE STONE BUILDINGS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Five Stone Buildings (“Chambers”) aims to give you a good service at all times. However, if you have a complaint you are invited to let us 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. If you do make a complaint about the service provided by Chambers, Chambers will investigate that complaint and will advise you of the outcome of such investigation in accordance with the procedure set out below.
3. If at the conclusion of our complaints procedure you remain unhappy:
 - (1) Alternative dispute resolution (“ADR”) may be an option and, when advising you of the outcome of our investigation, we will provide you with the name and contact details of an approved organisation providing ADR services.
 - (2) You may be able to take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman (“the LO”), the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers. The contact details for the LO are set out in paragraph 18 below. In order to be able to refer your complaint to the LO you must do so within **six months** of receiving our final response to your complaint under the procedure set out below. Please note that there are other time limits that limit the complaints which can be referred to the LO which are set out in paragraph 16 below. More information about the LO can be found on the LO’s website <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/>
4. Please note that it may not be possible for Chambers to investigate every complaint or every element of a complaint. Chambers may not be best placed to deal with complaints by non-clients and these often more suited for consideration by the Bar Standard Boards (“the BSB”), the body that regulates barristers in England and Wales. Chambers will make an initial assessment of the complaint and if we feel that the issues raised cannot be satisfactorily resolved through our complaints process we will refer you to the BSB.

The contact details for the BSB are set out in paragraph 19 below. More information about the BSB can be found on their website www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

5. Chambers will always investigate a complaint or an element of a complaint that relates to the service that has been provided by Chambers. Chambers will not investigate allegations of professional misconduct or professional negligence save insofar as they involve an allegation of poor service.

Complaints made by telephone

6. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 8 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint, then please telephone the Senior Clerk or, if the complaint is about the Senior Clerk, then please telephone Miss Penelope Reed QC. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to have done about it. He or she will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he or she 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.
7. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it within the next 14 days, so it can be investigated formally.

Complaints Made in Writing

8. If you make a complaint in writing please give the following details: (1) your name and address; (2) which member(s) of Chambers you are complaining about; (3) details of the complaint and (4) what you would like done about it.
9. Please address your letter to Penelope Reed QC or, if the complaint is about Miss Reed QC or a member of staff, to the Senior Clerk at 5 Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3XT. If the complaint is about the Senior Clerk then please write to Miss Reed QC at that address. We will acknowledge your complaint promptly and, wherever possible, within two days or receipt of your letter. In our acknowledgment we will explain how your complaint will be dealt with.

10. Chambers has a panel which will consider any written complaint. The panel is headed by Penelope Reed QC and includes another experienced member of Chambers and the Senior Clerk. Within 14 days of your letter being received Penelope Reed QC (or, in her absence, the Senior Clerk) will appoint a member of the panel to investigate your complaint. If your complaint is against Miss Reed QC, the other senior member of the panel will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed to investigate your complaint will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
11. 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 he or she will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If that person later finds that he/she is not going to be able to reply to your complaint within 14 days, he or she will set a new date for their reply and inform you. His or her reply will set out: (1) the nature and scope of the investigation; (2) the conclusion he or she has reached on each complaint and the basis for that conclusion; and (3) if he or she finds that you are justified in your complaint, his or her proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

12. 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 Miss Reed QC, the Senior Clerk and anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about and the member of the panel who investigates the complaint. The BSB is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its monitoring functions.

Our policy

13. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Our Senior Clerk reviews this record regularly with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman/alternative dispute resolution

14. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation and you fall within the LO's jurisdiction you may take up your complaint with the LO once our consideration of your complaint has concluded. .
15. The LO can only investigate your complaints made by clients of Chambers. Not all of Chambers' clients can complain to the LO. At present the LO can consider complaints made by:
 - a) Individuals;
 - b) Businesses or enterprises that are micro-enterprises within the meaning of Article 1 and Article 2(1) and (3) of the Annex to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC (broadly businesses or enterprises with fewer than 10 employees and turnover or assets not exceeding €2 million);
 - c) Charities with an annual income net of tax of less than £1 million;
 - d) Clubs, associations or organisations, the affairs of which are managed by its members or a committee of its members, with an annual income net of tax of less than £1 million;
 - e) Trustees of trusts with an asset value of less than £1 million; and
 - f) Personal representatives or beneficiaries of the estates of persons who, before *they died, had not referred the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.*
16. The LO is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. Please note the timeframe for referral of complaints to the LO set out at paragraph 3(2) above. In addition, ordinarily the LO will only investigate your complaint if it relates to acts or omissions which occurred after 5 October 2010 and if your complaint to the LO is made within six years of the act or omission you are complaining about or within three years of the date on which you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.
17. Chambers will have regard to the timeframe for making complaints to the LO when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. Chambers will not usually deal with complaints which fall outside of the LO's time limits.
18. Contact details for the LO are as follows:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6806,
Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ
Telephone number: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

19. If you are not a client of Chambers and are unhappy with the outcome of Chambers' investigation of your complaint under this procedure, then please contact the BSB at:

Bar Standards Board
Contact and Assessment Team 289-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7JZ

Telephone number: 0207 6111 444
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

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