



Complaints Procedure

The aim of chambers is to give clients 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 if you wish.

Please be assured that any complaints made will be taken seriously and handled with care and will not disadvantage your case or matter. We will investigate and handle complaints in a fair and consistent manner, diligently and impartially, and seek to respond and resolve your complaint promptly.

If you require a copy of this procedure in an alternative format or would like to make your complaint in other ways or formats please contact Annmarie Nightingale, Head of Practice Management by email at anightingale@gcnchambers.co.uk or by telephone on 0161 817 6377 and we will discuss how we can best accommodate your needs.

Early Resolution

You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure under the heading **Full Investigation** below. However, if you would rather speak initially on the telephone or by video call about your complaint then please contact Annmarie Nightingale, Head of Practice Management on 0161 817 6377. If your complaint is about the Head of Practice Management your complaint will be referred to the Head of Chambers, Kerry Smith or Deputy Head of Chambers, Ben McCormack.

The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint including your name and contact details; and how you would like your complaint to be resolved. They will then discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them.

If the matter is resolved they 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 discussion in writing.

If your complaint is not resolved at this stage you will be invited to write to us about it so it can be investigated under our Full Investigation procedure. At this stage we will also check if you would like to engage with us on accessible formats, to meet your specific information and communication needs. We will discuss and agree with you the best way and format for us to engage and communicate together. We will advise you on the best way to set out your concerns and complaint for the next stage, depending on your needs and preferences.

Full Investigation

For complaints made in writing, please give us the following details:

- Your name and address
- The date of the complaint

- Which barrister or staff member your complaint concerns
- The detail of your complaint; and
- How you would like your complaint to be resolved.

Please address your letter to the Head of Practice Management and send it to Chambers' postal address provided at the bottom of this page or by email to anightingale@gcnchambers.co.uk

If your complaint is about the Head of Practice Management your complaint will be referred to the Head of Chambers, Kerry Smith or Deputy Head of Chambers, Ben McCormack.

If your complaint is regarding the Head of Chambers, another senior member of Chambers will be appointed to investigate the complaint. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

We will where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two clear days and every effort will be made to provide you with a substantive response to your complaint within 14 days, but where this is not possible an interim letter will be sent, explaining what is happening and advising you when you are likely to receive a final reply.

The substantive reply will set out:

- The nature and scope of the investigation
- The conclusion on each complaint and the basis for the conclusion; and
- If found you are justified in your complaint, proposals for resolving the complaint.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation and you fall within their jurisdiction, you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, at the conclusion of our consideration of your complaint.

The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has been investigated by Chambers, or if the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within 8 weeks of you making the complaint.

Please note the Legal Ombudsman has time limits within which a complaint can be raised with them.

The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within a year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned, or within one year of you realising there was a concern.

You must refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you.

We will have regard to the timeframes of the Legal Ombudsman when deciding whether we are able to investigate your complaint and will not therefore usually deal with complaints that fall outside of the Legal Ombudsman's time limits.

The Legal Ombudsman can extend their time limits in exceptional circumstances.

The Legal Ombudsman will only deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from barrister's clients are within their jurisdiction. Those clients who are able to complain to the Legal Ombudsman are as follows:

- 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.

You can contact the Legal Ombudsman by post, telephone or email at:

[Legal Ombudsman](#)

PO Box 6167
Slough
SL1 0EH

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333

E-mail: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

More information about the Legal Ombudsman is available on their website:

<https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>

Alternative Dispute Resolution

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies as approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (tradingstandards.uk/consumer-help/adr-approved-bodies/) also exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should both parties agree to use such a scheme. Neither the barrister nor the client is required to use ADR.

If you wish to use your chosen ADR provider, please contact us to discuss this. Please note that if mediation is used, neither you nor the barrister is required to accept the proposed resolution. You should be aware that the time limits for contacting an ADR approved body will likely be different to the time limits for contacting the Legal Ombudsman.

If mediation does not resolve the complaint, you may still make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman provided you fall within their jurisdiction and you do so within the time limit.

Non-client complaints

It should be noted that it may not always be possible to investigate a complaint brought by a non-client. This is because the ability of Chambers to satisfactorily investigate and resolve such matters is

limited and complaints of this nature are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the Bar Standards Board.

Chambers will therefore make an initial assessment of the complaint and if it is thought that the issues raised can not be satisfactorily resolved through our complaints procedure, we will refer you to the Bar Standards Board.

If you are not the barrister's client and are not satisfied with the outcome of the Chambers' investigation please contact the Bar Standards Board at:

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

Telephone: 0207 611 1444

Website: [Report a Concern About a Barrister | Bar Standards Board](#)

Confidentiality

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 of Chambers, Deputy Head of Chambers, Head of Practice Management and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister or staff member who you have complained about 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

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. Chambers' Planning Committee inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

From time to time, a summary of the complaint will be provided to the Bar Standards Board, on an anonymous basis, which will only provide information about what the complaint was about, and the outcomes.