

Guildhall Chambers Complaints Procedure¹

Chair of Complaints Committee Mr Julian Allsop
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Introduction

1. All the barristers and staff at Guildhall Chambers strive to provide you with high-quality advice and standards of service at all times. We recognise, however, that there may be an occasion when you are not satisfied with the service you receive, and you wish to make a complaint. We aim constantly to improve our client service, so take such feedback very seriously and listen to it carefully. Naturally, we hope to retain a good working relationship with you, so we will do all we can to find a solution in each situation.

2. This document explains how Chambers' Complaints Procedure works, who is involved, and what you can expect at each stage. Its aim is to ensure that complaints are dealt with efficiently and fairly and resolved satisfactorily.

3. All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with Chambers' commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. If at any stage during the complaints process you require a reasonable adjustment, please raise this in writing with the Chair of the Complaints Committee (see the contact details above) who will consider what measures may reasonably be put in place to assist you in raising and determining your complaint.

4. Please note that this procedure relates to complaints about service being made by someone who is or was a client of a barrister of Guildhall Chambers. If you are not or were not a client of the barrister, we may be able to resolve your issue informally, but we cannot investigate it formally. If you wish to make such a complaint formally, you will need to contact the Bar Standards Board, the Bar's regulatory body. Please see the section below titled "Complaints to the Bar Standards board.

5. If you are making an allegation of professional negligence or professional misconduct by a barrister, we cannot investigate this, whether or not the barrister was working for you. In this instance, you will need to contact the Bar Standards Board, the Bar's regulatory body. Please see the section below titled "Complaints to the Bar Standards board.

6. The Legal Ombudsman is the independent complaints body for complaints about the services received from lawyers; it will also only deal with complaints about barristers from those for whom the barrister has worked. You may raise your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the outcome of our investigation. The Legal Ombudsman has time limits in which a complaint must be raised with it. You must refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman either:

- a. within one year of when the act or omission about which you wish to complain

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happened; or

b. within one year of when you should reasonably have known that there was cause for complaint.

c. You must also ordinarily refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving our written response to your complaint

7. We will not usually deal with complaints that fall outside the Legal Ombudsman's time limits. The Legal Ombudsman can extend its time limits in exceptional circumstances.

Informal Stage

8. We will always try to deal with complaints promptly and informally where appropriate.

9. You may wish to make a formal complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure under "Formal Stage" below. However, if you would rather contact us about your complaint to try at first to resolve it informally, then please phone 0117 930 9000 and ask to speak to one of the following, according to the type of work that was carried out for you, or email them:

- a. Lucy Northeast lucy.northeast@guildhallchambers.co.uk (Practice Director Crime & Sports) for crime, regulatory or sports matters;
- b. Stephen Arnold stephen.arnold@guildhallchambers.co.uk (Senior Practice Manager, Civil) for commercial, insolvency, or property & affairs matters; or
- c. Caroline Evans caroline.evans@guildhallchambers.co.uk (Senior Practice Manager, Civil) for personal injury, clinical negligence or employment matters.

10. If your complaint is about either Mr Arnold, Mrs Evans or Ms Northeast, please phone or email Mr Julian Allsop, the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If the complaint is about Mr Allsop, please contact the Head of Chambers, Ms Anna Vigars KC.

11. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to have done about it. They will 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 then email or write to you by post to confirm that you were satisfied with the outcome. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.

12. If your complaint is not resolved informally, you will be invited to write to us about it, so it can be investigated formally. Communication by email tends to be faster and more reliable, but we will, of course, accept letters by post.

Formal Stage

13. Please give the following details in your email or letter:

- Your name and address and, if possible, your phone number;
- Which barrister or member of staff you are complaining about;
- The detail of the complaint; and

- What you would like done about it.

14. Please email the appropriate person named at paragraph 9, above, or address your letter to that person at 23 Broad Street, Bristol BS1 2HG. Please mark the email or letter as “confidential”. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with further details of how your complaint will be dealt with. We are required to provide a written response within eight weeks of receiving a formal complaint and we will confirm this date when we acknowledge your complaint.

15. Guildhall Chambers has a Complaints Committee. It is chaired by Mr Allsop and made up of experienced Members of Chambers and a senior member of staff, which considers any written complaint.

16. Mr Allsop (or his deputy in his absence) will appoint a member of the Committee to investigate it. To ensure objectivity and fairness, this will be someone who is not connected with the complaint or with any party to it.

17. If your complaint is against Mr Allsop, the Head of Chambers will appoint a member of the panel who will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

18. The person appointed will write to you to let you know they will be investigating your complaint. The investigating barrister may also ask you some further questions if they need you to clarify anything to do with your complaint. If, for any reason, the investigating barrister finds that they will not be able to provide you with their written report by the date previously given, they will inform you as soon as possible of the reason for the delay and set a new date. The investigating barrister will send you their written report on the investigation of your complaint, setting out:

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

Confidentiality

19. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is strictly necessary to investigate your complaint fully. If the complaint is later referred to the Legal Ombudsman or the Bar Standards Board, it is likely that we will be required to pass to them information relating to our investigation.

Our policy

20. 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 Management Committee reviews annually an anonymised summary of all complaints with a view to improving Chambers’ services to our clients.

Mediation

21. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, other bodies exist which are

competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and the barrister agree to use such a scheme. One such body is [ProMediate](#). If you wish to use ProMediate, please contact us to discuss this further. Please also note that the time limit for contacting ProMediate is 28 days from the date you received Chambers' report on your complaint, and, if mediation is used, neither you nor the barrister is required to accept the proposed resolution. If mediation does not resolve the complaint, or either you or the barrister do not wish to use mediation, you may still make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

22. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, and whether or not you have attempted mediation, you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman will not consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. Please note the time limits for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, shown at paragraph 6 above.

23. The Legal Ombudsman may exercise discretion to extend these time limits if, on the evidence, it is fair and reasonable to do so, for example, if the complainant was prevented from meeting the time limit as a result of serious illness.

24. If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman, please:

- Visit www.legalombudsman.org.uk
- Call 0300 555 0333 between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday
- Email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Write to The Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

Complaints to the Bar Standards Board

25. If you are not or were not the client of a barrister at Guildhall Chambers or if you are alleging professional negligence or other professional misconduct by a barrister who worked for you, we are unable to investigate your complaint formally. If you wish to raise a formal complaint in these circumstances, please visit the Bar Standards Board's [webpage on reporting concerns about a barrister](#) for further information and an online reporting form, or write to the Bar Standards Board, 289-293 High Holborn, London WC1V 7JZ.