

Guildhall Chambers Complaints Procedure

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Introduction

All Members and employees of Chambers strive to provide you with high quality advice and standards of service. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when you are dissatisfied with the service you receive and which you feel merit 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.

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.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with Chambers' Equality & Diversity policy, a copy of which is available on request.

Informal stage

We will always try to deal with complaints promptly and informally where appropriate. You are encouraged to contact the Barrister, clerk or employee involved direct and discuss your complaint with them in the first instance. That person will take details of your complaint and what you would like done about it, and will aim to resolve your concerns.

If the person you wish to speak to is not immediately available, a message will be taken and that person asked to call you as soon as is reasonably practicable.

If your complaint is received by email or in writing, we will ask the relevant person to contact you by telephone to discuss the issue with you in the first instance. That person will endeavour to address your concerns to your satisfaction.

Escalation

If the matter remains unresolved after this telephone conversation, and you wish to pursue it further, you will be invited to put your complaint in writing to Ewan Paton, the Chair of Chambers' Complaints Committee, whose contact details are at the top of this document.

On receipt of a written complaint that has been escalated this way, Ewan Paton may, if appropriate, telephone you to discuss the matter. If it remains unresolved, he will write to you explaining the next steps in the process and their timing.

Ewan Paton will instruct a member of Chambers' complaints panel to investigate your matter. To ensure objectivity and fairness, this will be someone who is not connected with the complaint or with any party to it, and is likely to be one of: Richard Smith QC, Adam Chippindall, William Batstone, Anna Vigars QC, Richard Ascroft, Julian Allsop and Ewan Paton.

He will write to you to let you know the timescale for the investigation (usually 14 days), and when you can expect to receive the response/proposals for resolution of the matter. If it transpires that investigation of the matter requires longer than the time estimated, he will keep you informed of progress and give a revised time estimate.

When the investigation is complete, the panel member will write to you with details of:

- The nature of his investigation;
- The conclusions reached;
- His proposals for resolution; and

- How to take the issue forward with the Legal Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

Involvement of the Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund (BMIF)

In the event that professional negligence is alleged at any point against a Barrister, s/he is obliged to inform the BMIF immediately and follow their instructions. If the BMIF wishes to take over conduct of the matter, Chambers must comply with that request and ensure that all correspondence and other documentation is sent to it. The panel member will inform you immediately of the action taken and your complaint will be handled by the BMIF from that point.

Confidentiality

All conversations and documents shall remain confidential and shall be disclosed only as necessary for the purposes of investigating and reviewing the complaint.

Using complaints to shape practice

As part of our commitment to Quality Assurance and client care, we retain a written record of all complaints received by the Complaints sub-committee. Chambers' Chief Executive reviews these regularly, and recommendations for change are implemented.

Legal Ombudsman involvement

We hope that we can work together to resolve your complaint. However, if you are not happy with the outcome, you may wish to take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, whose website is at <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/> or the postal address at PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB or telephone 0300 555 0333.