
COMPLAINTS POLICY

Our Complaints Policy

If you are at all unhappy with the way we have dealt with any aspect of your matter (such as the legal advice provided, our client service, how you have been treated) or with the bill, it is important to us that you tell us about it.

We are committed to the highest levels of client service and if something goes wrong, we would like to know about it so that we can learn from it and further improve our standards. We regard all complaints very seriously and make every effort to resolve them speedily and effectively.

If You Have a Complaint

1. Initially, we would ask you to contact the person who is handling your matter so that we can try to 'put things right' straightaway. If you prefer, as an alternative you should contact the partner with responsibility for supervision of your matter or (if different) the partner with overall responsibility for the firm's relationship with you. The contact details for these people will appear in your letter of engagement.
2. If you remain dissatisfied, please refer your complaint to the firm's Complaints Officer, Tim Culpin, who will commence a detailed investigation - please see below for contact details. Please explain what you would like us to do to resolve matters. The procedures we will then follow comprise:
 - a. Within seven working days, we will send a letter or email acknowledging receipt of your complaint.
 - b. A full review will be undertaken by the Complaints Officer with the person responsible for your matter and his/her supervising partner.
 - c. In some instances, an invitation may be sent to you to attend a meeting to discuss and, hopefully, resolve the complaint. This will be followed up with a letter within three to seven days, confirming what took place and any solutions agreed with you.
 - d. If no meeting is held, a formal written response to your complaint will be sent within eight weeks of receipt of your complaint, along with suggestions as to how we might resolve it.
 - e. Following any meeting and/or the written response to your complaint, if you remain dissatisfied about the service you have received, you should contact us again. In these circumstances, the Complaints Officer will review the matter with another of the firm's lawyers who is familiar with the work area but who is not directly involved in the matter.
3. These procedures will be followed for all complaints. Please note, though, that any dissatisfaction with the amount of the fee we have charged you must be raised with us in writing within three months of the date of the bill.
4. If we have not been able to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, then you can have the complaint independently looked at by the Legal Ombudsman or the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

5. From 1 April 2023, the time limits for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman will be no later than: one year from the date of the act or omission being complained about; or one year from the date when you should have realised that there was cause for complaint. If you wish to refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman this must be done within six months of our final response to your complaint.
6. To contact the Legal Ombudsman you can telephone on 0300 555 0333, email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk, or write to the Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH. Alternatively, you can find more information by visiting www.legalombudsman.org.uk.
7. The Solicitors Regulation Authority deal with matters where their Principles have been breached by firms that they regulate. If the matter relates to poor service provided by a solicitor this should be referred to the Legal Ombudsman. Upon receipt of your complaint, the Solicitors Regulation Authority aim to acknowledge the same within ten to fifteen working days.
8. To contact the Solicitors Regulation Authority you can telephone on 0370 606 2555, email contactcentre@sra.org.uk, or write to The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN. Alternatively, you can find more information by visiting www.sra.org.uk.
9. There may also be a right for you to object to your bill by applying to the court for an assessment under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974.
10. We would normally expect to conclude our investigations and all stages of our complaints handling procedures within eight weeks. Sometimes delays are unavoidable however (for example finding convenient dates for a meeting, if we need to discuss issues with our insurance provider, etc) and if we have to extend the above timescale above, we will let you know and explain why.

WHO TO CONTACT

Please write to Tim Culpin, Complaints Officer of Clarke Tinkler LLP trading as Smith Bowyer Clarke Road Transport Lawyers at The Mill, Lodge Lane, Derby, DE1 3HB or email tim.culpin@sbctrl.com