

Cathedral Chambers - Complaints Procedure

1. Aim

1.1 Our aim is to give you a good service at all times. If, however, you have a complaint you are invited to let us know as soon as possible.

1.2 It is not necessary to involve solicitors, even if you are instructing one, in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.

2. The Legal Ombudsman

2.1 Please note that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has time limits in which a complaint must be raised with them. The time limits are:

a) 6 years from the date of the act/omission;

b) 3 years from the date that the complainant should reasonably have known there were grounds for complaint (if the act/omission took place before the 6 October 2010 or was more than 6 years ago);

c) within 6 months of the complainant receiving a final response from his/her lawyer, if that response complies with the requirements in rule 4.4 of the Scheme Rules.

2.2 The Legal Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 Chambers must have regard to that timeframe when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. Chambers will not therefore usually deal with complaints that fall outside the Legal Ombudsman's time limits.

2.4 The Legal Ombudsman will deal only with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from the barrister's client are within their jurisdiction. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Chambers' investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board rather than the Legal Ombudsman.

2.5 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 investigate such matters satisfactorily and to resolve them is limited and complaints of this nature are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the Bar Standards Board. Therefore, Chambers will make an initial assessment of the complaint and, if they feel that the issues cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the Chambers' complaints process they will refer you to the Bar Standards Board.

3. Complaints made by telephone

3.1 You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in below. However, if you would prefer to speak on the telephone about

your complaint, then please telephone the individual nominated under the Chambers' Complaints Procedure, Nicola Morgan, the Senior Clerk.

3.2 If the complaint is about the Senior Clerk you should telephone the Head of Chambers, Sheila Radcliffe

3.3 The person you contact will make a note 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. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.

3.4 If your complaint is not resolved over the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it so that it can be investigated formally.

4. Complaints made in writing

4.1 Please give the following details:

- your name and address;
- which member of Chambers you are complaining about;
- details of the complaint; and
- what you would like done about it.

4.2 You should address your letter to Nicola Morgan , Senior Clerk to Chambers at the address above, or by email to her at nmorgan@cathedralchambers.co.uk. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and the following procedure will start

4.3 The management committee (excluding the subject of the complaint if they are a member) shall meet within 7 working days, of the complaint being received in Chambers, to consider the complaint and invoke the division of responsibilities.

4.4 You will be advised of the timescales in which the complaint will be considered by template letter and outline the areas of complaint to be investigated and explain any reasons why some aspects are not part of the complaints procedure **within 14 days** of the complaint being received.

4.5 The division of responsibilities will require a decision-making panel (DMP) and an appeal panel (AP). Both panels should consist of an uneven number of members to permit majority decisions. Unless they are the subject of the complaint, the Head of Chambers shall sit on the AP.

4.6 The DMP shall collate all evidence in respect of the complaint and convene to consider whether it is necessary to continue with the procedure **within 14 days of receipt of the complaint and secure any documentation in respect of the same.**

4.7 The DMP will notify the relevant member (RM) of their decision and, if appropriate, provide the evidence relied upon in their decision **making within 28 working days of the complaint being received within chambers.**

4.8 If the DMP have concluded that an interview of the RM is appropriate, that shall take place **within 21 working days of the complaint being received within chambers.**

4.9 You will be advised of the outcome of the complaint in writing **within 40 working days including whether the RM is seeking to appeal that decision.**

4.10 The RM may appeal the conclusion and/or recommendation **within 35 working days of the complaint being received within Chambers.**

11. The appeal panel will sit **within 5 days of receipt of the appeal.**

12. The decision of the appeal panel will be notified in writing to you and the person complained about **45 working days after the receipt** of the complaint in Chambers. The letter will advise you of any alternative avenues of complaint and relevant contact details.

13. The decision of the appeal panel is final within the context of Chambers own complaints procedures.

Approved at the chambers general meeting on 6th Feb 2021 and amended on the 4th September 2023