

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Shearman Bowen hope clients have no reason to complain but, on occasion, things can go wrong or appear to go wrong. We continually improve our service through client feedback and engagement and ensure the highest standards when dealing with a matter on behalf of clients. However, if a client believes they have reason to complain or are dissatisfied with the service they receive, we welcome the opportunity to address their concerns. We aim to deal with complaints promptly, fairly, openly, and effectively.

Definition

Our definition of a complaint is: *'any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction referred to any person in our organisation by a client.'*

A complaint can be identified through a letter, telephone call, e-mail, or in the course of a face to face conversation.

A complaint may involve:

- Dissatisfaction with the handling of a case;
- Disappointment with an alleged lack of communication;
- Frustration with an alleged lack of case progress;
- An allegation of discrimination; or
- Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the case.

However, issues of a very minor nature, for example, not returning a non-urgent telephone call until the following day will not be recorded as a complaint.

Procedure for Raising a Complaint

Step 1: Contact the Fee Earner with Conduct

We ask that our clients, in the first instance, raise their concerns with the Solicitor or Fee Earner who has day-to-day conduct of their case. The identity of their Fee Earner is within their client care letter, which details who has conduct of their case, and the standards they should expect. At this stage Fee Earners will process, assess, and respond to such complaints in accordance with this procedure. Our clients can expect a response to their complaint in writing, and we hope any concerns can be addressed at this early stage. The Fee Earner, as part of processing this complaint, may review the relevant client file(s) and/or invite the client to attend a meeting where their concerns can be discussed further.

We would expect that most complaints can be resolved quickly at this stage. However, if the complaint is not resolved to the client's satisfaction, then the client can then pursue the complaint further as set out below.

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"Shearman Bowen" is the trading name of Shearman Bowen Ltd, a limited company no.7276201.

Registered Office: 6-9 Snow Hill, City of London, EC1A 2AY

Director: Mark Bowen

Regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority of England and Wales // Registration no.547069.

Step 2: Contact our Complaints Manager

The identity of our Complaints Manager will be set out in our client care letter that is sent to each client when he/she first instructs the firm on a matter.

The Complaints Manager will investigate the complaint in whatever manner they consider is necessary and with regard to the issues raised. This investigation will typically include the Complaints Manager discussing the issues with the Fee Earner and examining the relevant client file(s). It may also include arranging further meetings where our client may be present. We will ensure that this process is tailored in response to any particular vulnerabilities, disabilities, or special circumstances presented by our clients.

Once the investigation is complete, the Complaints Manager will write to our client within 8 weeks of their complaint having been raised. Correspondence will set out their findings and offer any appropriate redress. If, for any reason, we are unable to resolve our client's concern within this timeframe, or if, after our client has been offered redress, they believe it is still unsatisfactory our client can expect further advice in writing which will detail how to refer their complaint to the Legal Ombudsman or Solicitors Regulation Authority.

There is no internal right of appeal in respect of complaints, but we invite our clients to provide the Complaints Manager with any new information which may be pertinent to their complaint, such that the Complaints Manager may revisit their determination.

Step 3: External Complaints

At the conclusion of our internal process, if the complaint has not been resolved to our client's satisfaction then our client will be referred to external bodies who may offer them redress or otherwise intervene.

Legal Ombudsman

As Shearman Bowen is a legal services provider, our clients may also ask the Legal Ombudsman to review their complaint. However, our clients must have exhausted our internal complaints procedure before asking the Legal Ombudsman to review the complaint. If our clients are not satisfied with our handling of their complaint, they may ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the issue. Normally, our clients will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us at the exhaustion of Step 2 above, or within 6 years of the date of the act complained of. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted via www.legalombudsman.org.uk, Telephone: 0300 555 0333, or at PO Box 6806 Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ.

The Legal Ombudsman has significant discretion as to whether they accept complaints, and how they must be communicated. Our clients should act promptly at the end of our internal procedure, should they wish to take their complaint further. We ensure our clients are advised, at the end of our internal process, how they made escalate their concerns. The Legal Ombudsman may consider complaints about poor service and fees.

Solicitors Regulation Authority

Shearman Bowen is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (www.sra.org.uk) which is part of the Law Society of England and Wales. Our registration number is 547069. You may also ask the Solicitors Regulation Authority to review your complaint.

We pride ourselves on our quality of service, our transparency when dealing with clients' cases, and our integrity when conducting work on our clients' behalf. Should our clients feel we have acted in contravention of the Solicitors' Code of Conduct, acted dishonestly, mishandled client funds, or acted otherwise than in accordance with their best interests, our client may escalate their complaint to the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Our clients may raise their complaint with the Solicitors Regulation Authority directly, without exhausting our internal procedure, if our client believes we have acted against the Solicitors Regulation Authority principles, or in breach of the Code of Conduct. Allegations of dishonesty, discrimination, or not acting independently are reviewed by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Complaints about fees or poor service must be referred to the Legal Ombudsman, after our internal procedure has concluded.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority accept complaints via their report form. Our clients may also contact their contact centre by email (contactcentre@sra.org.uk), telephone: 0370 606 2555, or at The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN.

Review

Our procedure is reviewed annually by our Senior Partner. This includes an analysis of trends identified, to see how we can improve our services in future.