Complaints Handling Policy

Our commitment: We aim to provide a high-quality legal service. If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, please tell us. We will listen, look into it and try to put things right as early as we can. You will not be charged for our handling of your complaint, and making a complaint will not affect the way we handle your matter.

How to tell us about a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our service, made in writing or by telephone or in person, which says or suggests that you have suffered or may suffer loss, distress, inconvenience or another disadvantage. You do not need to use the word 'complaint', and you do not need to be our client: if you have received the benefit of our service.

You may complain by email, letter, telephone or in person. Written details are helpful, but we will not insist on them. Someone else can complain on your behalf if you authorise them.

To make a complaint please contact:

Complaints Partner: Mr Richard Lewis
Email: Richard.lewis@scottrowe.co.uk
Telephone: 01297 32345
Post: Scott Rowe Solicitors, Chard Street, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5DS

If your compliant is about Richard Lewis, then please contact:

Partner: Mr Kevin Bull
Email: kevun.bull@scottrowe.co.uk
Telephone: 01297 32345
Post: Scott Rowe Solicitors, Chard Street, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5DS

You can also raise your concern with the person dealing with your matter or their supervisor. Whoever you tell, your complaint will be recorded and dealt with under this policy.

It helps if you tell us what happened, when, how it affected you and what you would like us to do. We may ask questions to make sure we have understood, but we will not delay our final response simply because information is missing.

Support and accessibility

Please tell us if there is anything we can do to make this process easier for you. For example, we can communicate by telephone rather than in writing, use large print or plain language, allow extra time, give you a single named contact, or deal with a family member, carer or other representative. We will consider each request individually, record what we agree, check that it is working, and explain if something is not workable, offering an alternative where we can.

What will happen

Our procedure is aligned with the Legal Ombudsman's Model Complaints Resolution Procedure. It has two stages, Early Resolution and Full Investigation, and every complaint ends with a written outcome.

1. Acknowledgement

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within five working days, sending you this policy, confirm our understanding of your complaint, tell you who is dealing with it, whether we propose Early Resolution and when you will next hear from us.

2. Early Resolution

We will consider whether a prompt conversation, explanation or practical step could resolve your complaint. If so, we will normally complete this stage within ten working days.

Possible outcomes include an apology, an explanation, correcting or completing work, changing how we communicate, reducing or refunding fees, or a payment assessed by reference to the Legal Ombudsman's guidance on remedies.

Early Resolution is your choice: you can ask for a Full Investigation instead at any time. If we agree a resolution, we will confirm it in writing, including anything we have agreed to do and when; that letter closes your complaint.

3. Full Investigation

If Early Resolution is unsuitable or does not resolve your complaint, we will tell you and move to a Full Investigation. A senior person not involved in your matter will agree with you a list of the points to be investigated, review the file and evidence fairly and keep you updated.

4. Written final response

We will send you a final written response as soon as we can and within eight weeks of receiving your complaint. It will address each point, explain our conclusions and the evidence behind them, say whether your complaint is upheld and set out any remedy and how long any offer remains open. If there is a delay we will explain why.

At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange for someone unconnected with the matter at the firm to review the decision.

We will write to you within 14 days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasoning.

Any extension will be agreed with you; your right to go to the Legal Ombudsman after eight weeks is unaffected. If you do not accept our final response, we will write once more to confirm that our procedure has ended.

While your complaint is being considered

- If we are still acting for you, we will start our procedure straight away. Occasionally it may suit us both to pause a complaint until a defined point in your matter.

- If you do not respond to us, we will make reasonable attempts to contact you and will still send a final response within eight weeks on the information available.

- We expect everyone involved to communicate respectfully. If behaviour becomes abusive, threatening or persistently unreasonable, we may set proportionate limits on contact. We will explain any limits and will still deal with the substance of your complaint.
- A complaint does not automatically suspend payment of a bill or affect our rights over unpaid fees or papers, but we will act reasonably, will not normally pursue a disputed amount while we are dealing with a complaint about it, and will explain the position.

- A request for your personal data, an allegation of negligence or a concern about professional conduct may also need to be handled under a separate process. We will check with you what you intend and explain; it will not stop us addressing any service complaint under this policy.

- We keep a record of every complaint and its outcome and use what we learn to improve our service. If your complaint leads to a change, we will tell you.

If we cannot resolve your complaint

If you are unhappy with our final response, or we have not sent one within eight weeks, you may ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider your complaint independently. The Legal Ombudsman is free to use and deals with complaints about service, including bills, from individuals, small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts. Before accepting a complaint, it will normally check that you have given us the opportunity to resolve it first, and it may decline a complaint that has already been resolved by agreement.

Time limits You should refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final written response, and no later than one year from the act or omission complained about or one year from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint. The Ombudsman may extend these limits where it considers that fair.

Legal Ombudsman

Address: PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH

Telephone: 0300 555 0333 | Relay UK: 18001 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

About this procedure: Our procedure is aligned with the Legal Ombudsman's Model Complaints Resolution Procedure (MCRP). You can read about the MCRP and what to expect from us under it at https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/for-legal-service-providers/learning-resources/model-complaints-resolution-procedure/. A consumer guide is at https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/for-consumers/model-complaints-resolution-procedure/.

Other dispute resolution schemes: Alternative dispute resolution bodies other than the Legal Ombudsman exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services if both you and we agree to use one. We do not agree to use such schemes and would ask you to refer any unresolved complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

Concerns about professional conduct

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) deals with concerns about professional behaviour, such as dishonesty, misuse of client money, discrimination or serious breaches of its rules. It does not usually resolve complaints about poor service or award compensation. You can find out how to raise a concern at www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor. You do not have to wait for this procedure to finish before doing so.

Details will be found at www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/principles and the SRA can be contacted at The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham B1 1RN, or by email to contactcentre@sra.org.uk.

Information about complaints is handled confidentially and in accordance with our data protection obligations, but may be shared where required by law, regulation, our insurers or the Legal Ombudsman.

What to do if your complaint relates to an insurance policy

If your unresolved complaint relates to an insurance policy covering your case, you may contact the Financial Ombudsman Service:

- Phone: 0800 023 4567
- Online complaint forms available via their website: www.financialom-budsman.org.uk
- Post: Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower. Harbour Exchange. London. E14 9SR.