Complaints Procedure

One of our key values is to deliver excellent client experience.

We do, however, accept that there may be times when things do not go as planned and you feel dissatisfied with the service we have provided. When this happens, we want to hear about it so we can explain things and hopefully put them right.

As part of this commitment, we take every individual complaint seriously and endeavour to handle them in a timely, fair and consistent manner.

How to make a complaint?

- To make a complaint, please initially discuss the issue with the lawyer dealing with your matter. Most minor issues can be resolved quickly and to everyone's satisfaction in this way.

- Should this not resolve the problem please contact the Client Care Partner, Simon Fisher, who will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within five working days of receiving it.

  - So, we can deal with your complaint correctly please ensure you provide the following information:

    - Your name, contact details and preferred contact method

    - Matter reference number

    - Details of your complaint

    - An outline of how you would like us to resolve the issue

  - Once the detailed information has been received, we will commence the investigation into your complaint. This will include a comprehensive review of your file, a discussion with the relevant member of staff and their Team Leader.
  - If your complaint cannot be resolved by correspondence, you may be invited to a meeting or video call with the Client Care Partner.
  - Within twenty-one working days of the acknowledgment of your complaint, the Client Care Partner will either write to you with a decision or a proposal for the resolution of your complaint or to request further information to enable the investigation to be completed.
  - If it has not been possible to complete the investigation within the twenty-one working day period, we will contact you to give a revised date with an explanation as to why the response will take longer than usual.
  - If you are not satisfied with our decision/resolution proposal, you may request a review of the decision.

- The review will be carried out either by the Client Care Partner or, if appropriate, by another partner nominated by the Client Care Partner. The position will be reviewed in light of your comments, and we will notify you of our final decision within 10 working days of the date on which you send us your letter requesting the review.

- If we do not hear from you within 21 days of our letter setting out our views or of any letter sent after a review or a meeting, we will assume the complaint is resolved.

- If your complaint is about the Client Care Partner, it will be referred to the Managing Partner for resolution.

- We will communicate with you in the most convenient way for you.

- We will not make any charge for handling your complaint.

If you are not satisfied with our final response, you may have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman. Ordinarily you are unable to use the Legal Ombudsman unless you have first used our internal complaints process.

You can use the Legal Ombudsman if:

- The complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction having followed our complaint procedure or a period of eight weeks has expired since we acknowledged your complaint without our final response being received.

- The Ombudsman considers there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner or without it being made to Gardner Leader.

- Where an Ombudsman considers that in-house resolution is not possible due to an irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between us.

The time limits for a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman are:

- One year from the date of the event/omission being complained about, or
- One year from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.

Any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman should be made within six months of our final written response to the complaint.

How to make a complaint about a barrister?

If we have instructed a barrister on your behalf, you may have a right to complain about the service provided by that barrister. If you wish to make such a complaint, please inform the lawyer advising you and we will provide you with the necessary complaint process information. You may also be entitled to make a complaint about a barrister directly to the Legal Ombudsman.

Client Care Partner:

Simon Fisher
s.fisher@gardner-leader.co.uk
Fifth Floor, The Pearce Building, West Street,
Maidenhead, SL6 1RL 01628 671636

Managing Partner:

Derek Rodgers
d.rodgers@gardner-leader.co.uk
20-24, Market Place, Newbury, RG14 5BA
01635 508080

Legal Ombudsman:

PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH
www.legalombudsman.org.uk
enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
0300 555 0333

What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour?

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

Visit their website to see how you can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority. www.sra.org.uk