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Complaints Policy and Procedure

Our Complaints Policy

Our aim is to provide a first-class service to you in all respects. If however, you have any queries or concerns about our work for you please raise them with us. Tell us if you feel you are not receiving the service you hoped for. We want to know if you are dissatisfied. This will help us to improve our standards. We will try to put it right and will look into it promptly, thoroughly, fairly and free of charge.

Our Complaints Procedure

1. Please raise any queries or concerns initially with the person looking after your matter. They will try to resolve any issues. In most cases, an informal chat with the lawyer responsible for your matter will resolve your concerns.
2. If that does not satisfy your concerns then ideally you should write to us setting out details of your complaint and what you would like us to do about it. You can either write to the person handling the matter or write to the Head of the Department in which the person handling your matter works. If it is not possible to write, then it may be possible to arrange a call with the Head of Department who can record everything you are unhappy about so that your complaint can then be investigated. If your complaint concerns the Head of the Department then you should raise the matter with the Client Services Partner of the firm (Our Client Services Partner's details can be found [below](#)). Details of who you should complain to are given in the initial letter to you or the terms of business that you were sent at the outset of the matter. They will however also be given to you by the person handling your matter. If you are in doubt, address any complaint to the Client Services Partner
3. To deal with your complaint correctly, it would be helpful when contacting us if you could provide the following information:
 - Your name, contact details and preferred contact method
 - File reference number
 - Details of your concerns
 - How you would like us to put things right
4. We will send you a letter or email acknowledging your complaint and may, where appropriate, ask for further details. We will also let you know the name of the person who will be dealing with your complaint. You should expect to receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within ten working days of us receiving your letter of complaint.
5. We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve a discussion of your concerns with the person handling the matter and examining the information on the file, with input from the Client Services Partner.
6. We may also, if appropriate, invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint. You do not have to attend it you do not wish to or if you are unable to. We will be happy to discuss the matter with you by telephone or video conference.



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7. We will write to you at the end of our investigation to tell you what we have done and what we propose to do to resolve your complaint. Where possible, we will aim to do this within 28 days of the date of our letter of acknowledgement. If it is likely to take any longer then we will let you know what we will be doing and when you are likely to have a response from us.
8. If we have to change any of the above timescales, we will let you know and explain why.

What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint

9. If we have been unable to settle your complaint using our internal complaints process within eight weeks of it having been made to us, you have a right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, an independent complaints body, established under the Legal Services Act 2007, that deals with legal services complaints. The Legal Ombudsman will look at the complaint independently and any investigation by them will not affect how we handle your case.
10. Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check:
 - that you have tried to resolve the complaint with us in the first instance and
 - you have suffered significant financial loss, distress, inconvenience or detriment, which deems it proportionate for them to investigate.

We will always be happy to discuss your issues further, prior to you going down this route, if you wish to do so.

11. For complaints about our service, including billing issues, you may contact the Legal Ombudsman via one of the methods below:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough
SL1 0EH

Telephone: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

12. Any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman must be made within six months of the date of our final written response to your complaint.
13. You should also be aware that the Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to it within either of the following:
 - **one year** from the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned/ about which you are complaining, OR
 - **one year** from the date when you should reasonably have known that there was cause for concern/ complaint.



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- The Ombudsman has discretion to extend the one-year time limit for specific customers if, on the evidence, it is fair and reasonable to do so.
14. You can complain to the Legal Ombudsman if you are an individual, a personal representative or beneficiary of the estate of a person who, before they died, had not referred the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman. In addition you can complain if you are a business or micro-enterprise (broadly, an enterprise with fewer than 10 staff and a turnover or balance sheet value not exceeding €2 million) and (subject to certain limits) a charity, club, association or organisation, the affairs of which are managed by its members/ a committee/ a committee of its members, or a trustee of a trust (subject to certain limits). Other than that, the service cannot be used by businesses or most other organisations unless they are below certain size limits. Further details are available from the Legal Ombudsman's [website](#).
15. It is worth considering, whilst it is open to you to submit a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, it applies strict criteria to determine whether it will ultimately accept a complaint for a full investigation. It has the discretion to dismiss or discontinue all or part of a complaint if it believes:
- a) it does not have any reasonable prospects of success;
 - b) you have not suffered (and are unlikely to suffer) significant financial loss, distress, inconvenience or detriment;
 - c) it is frivolous, vexatious, lacks merit or where there is a compelling reason not to accept it;
 - d) the likely impact, size, complexity, scope, volume of evidence or your conduct render it disproportionate/unreasonable/impossible for the complaint to be investigated;
 - e) you have previously complained about the same issue to them, unless you provide material evidence that is likely to affect the outcome which only became available to you after you submitted the original complaint;
 - f) there has been undue delay in the complaint being raised.

Also note:

- a) if, during the course of an ongoing investigation by the Ombudsman, a revised/increased offer is made by us which is deemed to be fair and reasonable redress and you decide to reject that offer, the Ombudsman has the discretion to dismiss or discontinue all or part of your complaint;
- b) if you have already accepted an offer to settle your complaint made by us during our internal complaint handling process, which is deemed to be fair and reasonable redress, unless there has been some significant intervening act, you will not be able to have that agreement overturned in the hope of securing a preferential outcome by pursuing your complaint via the Ombudsman.

For more information on the Legal Ombudsman's rules and requirements, please see the [Scheme Rules](#) dated April 2023.



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What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour

16. The Solicitors' Regulation Authority (SRA) can help you 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. For further information, please visit the SRA's 'Reporting an individual or firm' page of their website at <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/> to see how you can raise your concerns with the SRA.

What to do if your complaint relates to an insurance policy

17. 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](#)
 - Email: complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk
 - Post: Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange, London, E14 9SR

What to do if your complaint relates to how the firm processes your personal data.

18. If you are unhappy with how we have collected, used, stored or shared your personal data, you have the right to raise a complaint with us following the firm's Data Protection Complaints Policy on our [website] or via:
- Email: ClientServices@blandy.co.uk
 - Post: FAO Client Services Partner, Blandy & Blandy LLP, 1 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1DA
 - Telephone: 0118 951 6800

What to do if your complaint remains unresolved

19. Alternative complaints bodies (such as ProMediate (www.promediate.co.uk)) also exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme. We are not required to and have chosen not to adopt an ADR process because we consider the service offered by the Legal Ombudsman to be the most appropriate means of resolving complaints about legal services.

Client Services partner's details

20. Debbie Brett
Tel: 0118 951 6826
Email: ClientServices@blandy.co.uk