

# **Wilberforce Chambers Complaints Procedure**

1. Our aim is to give you a good service at all times. However, if you have a complaint you are invited to let us know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint, but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. Please note that Chambers will only consider complaints that are raised within 12 months of the act or omission complained of.
3. There may be occasions when the nature or circumstances of a complaint make it more appropriate (e.g. because the complaint might raise an allegation of professional misconduct) to be dealt with by the Bar Standards Board or the Legal Ombudsman rather than through this complaints procedure. If we reach this conclusion in relation to any complaint we will tell you promptly. It will then be a matter for you to decide whether you wish to raise the complaint with the Bar Standards Board or the Legal Ombudsman. The contact details of those bodies are given in paragraph 13 below.

## **Complaints Made by Telephone**

4. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 6 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone the individual nominated under the Chambers Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints, Declan Redmond (Chambers' Senior Clerk/Chief Executive) or (if the complaint is about Declan Redmond) the Head of Chambers (John Martin QC). The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing. Matters resolved in fee negotiations will not usually be recorded as a formal complaint unless the complainant has requested it to be recorded as such. Many complaints may be resolved on the spot. Speed, sympathy and a willingness to listen are all that may be necessary to resolve a complaint. It may be possible to resolve the matter at an early stage by an appropriate explanation or apology.
5. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it within the next 14 days so it can be investigated formally.

## **Complaints made in Writing**

6. Please give the following details:

Your name and address;  
Which member(s) of Chambers or staff you are complaining about;  
The detail of the complaint; and  
What you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to Declan Redmond, Senior Clerk/Chief Executive, Wilberforce Chambers, 8 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2A 3QP (or, if the complaint is about Declan Redmond, to the Head of Chambers, John Martin QC, at the same address). We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

7. The complaint will be investigated by Declan Redmond and John Martin QC or another Queen's Counsel nominated by John Martin QC, (If the complaint is about John Martin QC, it will be investigated by the next most senior QC in Chambers). In any case, the person appointed to investigate the complaint will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

8. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know he has been appointed and that he will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If he finds later that he is not going to be able to reply within 14 days he will set a new date for his reply and inform you. His reply will set out:

- The nature and scope of his investigation;
- His conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
- If he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.

### **Confidentiality**

9. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Senior Clerk/Chief Executive and Head of Chambers and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister or staff member who you have complained about, Declan Redmond, John Martin QC and the person who has been appointed to investigate the complaint. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

### **Our Policy**

10. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Our Senior Clerk/Chief Executive inspects a record of complaints regularly with a view to improving services.

## **Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman or the Bar Standards Board**

11. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman or the Bar Standards Board. The Legal Ombudsman will deal with complaints from clients of barristers about the services provided by barristers and the Bar Standards Board will deal with complaints about professional misconduct and disciplinary matters. The Legal Ombudsman acts as a single point of contact for all such complaints, and will ensure that any complaints that relate to professional misconduct are referred to the Bar Standards Board to deal with.

12. The Legal Ombudsman is not able to consider a complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers.

13. The Legal Ombudsman has a time limit of 12 months from the date of the event giving rise to the complaint or 12 months from the date on which a complainant should reasonably have known, without taking advice, that there was a reason for making a complaint.

14. The contact details for the Legal Ombudsman and the Bar Standards Board are as follows:

Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 15870  
Birmingham  
B30 9EB  
Tel: 0300 555 0333  
E-mail: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

Complaints Team  
Bar Standards Board  
289-293 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 7HZ  
Tel: 020 7611 1444  
Fax: 020 7831 9217  
See also [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)