

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE- FOR CLIENTS AND POTENTIAL CLIENTS

At the start of your case

At the outset of the case you will be given the name and contact details of the person dealing with your case, along with the details of their supervisor.

In the first instance you should raise any dissatisfaction with the person dealing with your matter.

If they are unable to resolve the issue for you or you are uncomfortable raising it with them you can make a formal complaint in writing, this must be addressed to the firms Client Care Partner, Andrew Wheldon, who is a senior partner at the firm, his email address is aw@blackgraf.com

What will happen next?

1. We will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain the details set out. You can expect to receive our letter within 5 working days of our receiving your complaint.
2. We will record your complaint in our central register and open a separate file for your complaint. We will do this within a working day of receiving your complaint.
3. The Client Care Partner will conduct a full investigation and an independent review of the matter within 28 days of acknowledging the complaint.
4. You may be invited to come to our offices to discuss your complaint in an attempt to resolve same to your satisfaction. Following the meeting we will write to you to

confirm the outcome of the meeting, we will arrange to do this within 2 working days of the meeting taking place.

5. If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, the Client Care Partner will send you a detailed reply to your complaint. This will include his suggestions for resolving the matter. He will do this within 5 working days of completing his investigation.
6. At this stage, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, or the way the complaint has been handled you can write to us again. We will then arrange to review our decision. This will entail another partner of the firm reviewing the decision within 10 working days.
7. We will let you know the result of the review within 5 working days of the end of the review.
8. If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

Referral to the Legal Ombudsman ("LeO")

If we are unable to resolve the complaint with you then you can have the complaint independently looked at by the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman investigates problems about poor service from lawyers.

The Legal Ombudsman may:

- Investigate the quality of professional service supplied by a solicitor to a client.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has breached rules of professional conduct.
- Investigate allegations that a solicitor has unreasonably refused to supply a professional service to a prospective client.

Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. If you have, then you must take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman:

- Within six months of receiving a final response to your complaint and
- No more than six years from the date of act/omission; or
- No more than three years from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.

If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman, please contact them.

Contact details:

Visit www.legalombudsman.org .uk

Call 0300 555 0333 between 9am to 5pm.

Email enquiries@legalombudsman.org .uk

Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ

Who can Complain

A **complainant** to the Legal Ombudsman must be one of the following:

- (a) An individual;
- (b) A micro-enterprise as defined in European Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 (broadly, an enterprise with fewer than 10 staff and a turnover or balance sheet value not exceeding €2 million);
- (c) A charity with an annual income less than £1 million;
- (d) A club, association or society with an annual income less than £1 million;
- (e) A trustee of a trust with a net asset value less than £1 million; or a personal representative or the residuary beneficiaries of an estate where a person with a complaint died before referring it to the Legal Ombudsman.

If you do not fall into any of these categories, you should be aware that you can only obtain redress by using our Complaints Handling Procedure or by mediation or arbitration, or by taking action through the Courts.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority 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.

You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative complaints bodies (such as Ombudsman Services - www.ombudsman-services.org) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

However, we don't currently agree to use this Alternative Dispute Resolution service in view of the availability of the independent Legal Ombudsman Service established under the Legal Services Act 2007. We are bound by our Regulatory Code to comply with the Legal Ombudsman.

Contracts Entered Into Online

If we are unable to resolve your complaint which relates to a contract entered into online, you may contact the Online Dispute Resolution providers by accessing the following link <http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/odr>

Continual improvement

We seek at all times to give our clients the best possible service. Your complaint will be recorded on our central register and will be used to improve our services to our clients by identifying the cause of any problems and correcting unsatisfactory procedures.

The procedure will also apply to prospective clients who we have refused to provide a service to or persistently or unreasonably offered an unwanted service to, but only if the complainant has evidence to show that we did not have reasonable grounds to do so.