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COMPLAINTS – POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy

We take very seriously all expressions of dissatisfaction from our clients. If you have received this leaflet, it is likely that you have already expressed your concerns verbally or in writing to your lawyer, their Supervisor, or the Director/ Principal responsible for dealing with complaints. This leaflet explains our procedures for handling complaints to ensure that each complaint is dealt with swiftly in an attempt to reach an amicable and satisfactory solution.

Reporting & Investigation Responsibilities

Informal verbal complaints should be addressed to your lawyer in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with their proposals, then the matter should be taken up with the Director/Principal responsible for their work / or direct to the Complaints Director. The name of that Director will have been given in your initial client care letter, but if you are unable to locate this, you can ask your lawyer or a member of our support staff. If the matter cannot be resolved informally with your lawyer, it would assist investigations if you were to fully detail your concerns in writing so there is less room for misunderstanding your concerns and requirements.

Response Times

Written complaints will be acknowledged within 7 days of receipt whereby the name of the person responsible for handling the complaint will be confirmed. A full reply will be sent as soon as the matter has been investigated and any proposals for dealing with your concerns have been agreed upon. In any case, we will always endeavour to provide a full response within 4 weeks of receipt of the complaint. If that is not possible, an interim response will be given explaining why it is not possible to meet this deadline, when we expect our investigations to be completed and a response finalised.

Unresolved Issues

If, in the unusual event that we are unable to resolve the matter to your satisfaction, you may refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, whose contact details are as follows:

Address: PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB.

Telephone 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Ordinarily, a complainant cannot use the Legal Ombudsman unless the complainant has first used the firm's complaints procedure. However, a complainant can use the Legal Ombudsman if:

- a) the complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction within eight weeks of being made to the authorised person; or
- b) an ombudsman considers that there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner, or without it having been made first to the authorised person; or
- c) where an ombudsman considers that in-house resolution is not possible due to irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between an authorised person and the person making the complaint.

Ordinarily, a complainant must refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of the date of the firm's written response, if that written response prominently included:

- a) an explanation that the Legal Ombudsman was available if the complainant remained dissatisfied; and
- b) full contact details for the Legal Ombudsman and a warning that the complaint must be referred to the Legal Ombudsman within six months.

However, you should also appreciate that ordinarily, a complainant must also refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within:

- a) one year from the act/omission; or
- b) one year from when the complainant should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint without taking advice from a third party;

whichever is later.

You may also have a right to object to our fees by making a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman and/or by applying to the court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. However, you should note that if all or part of a bill remains unpaid the firm may be entitled to charge interest.

Management

All complaints (written or verbal) are recorded and logged centrally to enable us to detect recurring problems and trends. As necessary, we will implement corrective action in response to individual complaints and improvement measures to prevent adverse trends and correct recurring problems. In this manner, we aim to constantly improve the service we provide.