



CLIENT INFORMATION - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service for all of our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it so we can take steps to assist you. This will also help us to improve our standards.

1. Responsibility for Implementation

Mr Stephen Hill, Senior Director, is the Company's Complaints Officer and is responsible for dealing with complaints at stage 4, final review stage.

Mr Hill is assisted by Marie Leary, Director, who is primarily responsible for updating this policy and dealing with client complaints at stage.

2. Aims of this Policy

The aims of this policy are to deal with any client complaint quickly, efficiently and fairly, and to clearly set out what procedure will be followed, and by whom, in the event a complaint is received by the Company.

We seek to deal with all complaints promptly, fairly, openly and effectively.

3. Definition of Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction from you about the way in which you believe we have carried out, or failed to carry out, your instructions. Complaints can be made in relation to any aspect of the service we have provided, for example:

- Mistakes
- Lack of care
- Unprofessional behaviour
- Delay
- Discrimination

4. Informal Concerns Procedure

If you have a concern with our services, please advise us immediately so we can endeavour to resolve the matter for you.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

In the first instance, please contact the person who has conduct of your case to advise them of your concerns.

Stage 2 – Informal Stage

If the matter remains unresolved, please contact Marie Leary, Director. Mrs Leary can be contacted as follows:

- Direct Line: 01754 897 190
- Email: mleary@hodgkinsons.co.uk

Mrs Leary will discuss your concerns with you, and she will then forward your concerns to the Head of Department for assessment. If the matter remains unresolved thereafter, Mrs Leary will review the matter as a formal complaint under stage 3 of this procedure.

If Mrs Leary has reviewed the matter as Head of Department under stage 2, another Director of the Company will review the complaint at stage 3.

If you want to pursue a formal complaint straight-away, please contact Mrs Leary to notify her of that, and your matter will be reviewed directly under stage 3.

We will endeavour to complete stage 2 within **21 days** of your discussing the matter with Mrs Leary. You will be notified if the matter is likely to take longer than 21-days and you will be advised of the reasons for that.

5. Formal Complaint Procedure and Time Limits

Stage 3 – Formal Complaint

Please note that you must submit your complaint within **six months** from the date of the act or omission complained of, or within **six months** of you realising there was a concern.

If you do not comply with these time limits, we may decline to review your complaint under this procedure.

1. Once a formal complaint is submitted under stage 3, we will send you a letter within **10 working days** acknowledging your complaint, specifying the length of time it will take to investigate your complaint and confirming by what date we anticipate being able to respond to your complaint in writing.
2. We will endeavour to respond fully to your complaint within **21-days** of receipt. If for any reason that is not possible, you will be notified of the reasons for that, and a revised time estimate to finalise your complaint will be given to you.
3. We will record your complaint in our Central Register and open a file for your complaint.
4. As part of the investigation into your complaint we will take the following actions:
 - 3.1. we will ask the person who acted for you to comment on your complaint within 10 working days of receipt of your complaint;
 - 3.2. We will review your file;
 - 3.3. We may need to discuss the matter with other members of the company if relevant.
5. After taking the above action, we will write to you within the time frame set out in the letter acknowledging your complaint. We will set out the conclusions of the investigation. It may be necessary to set up a meeting face to face with you to discuss the complaint and/or the conclusions reached.
6. If a meeting is required, we will endeavour to arrange that at a time to suit your convenience.
7. If a meeting takes place, we will write to you within 10 working days thereafter setting out the details of the meeting and the outcome of that.

Stage 4 – Review Final Internal Stage

8. If you are not happy with the decision reached at stage 3, you can request that a review of the decision be carried out. Your review request must be set out in writing and be forwarded to mleary@hodgkinsons.co.uk within **14 days** of receipt of the Stage 3 letter.
9. Your letter should set out the basis upon which you wish us to review the matter, citing what areas of the stage 3 decision you do not agree with and citing what you want to achieve as a result of your complaint.
10. Primarily, the review will be carried out by Mr Stephen Hill, Director, who is also the company's Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP). If Mr Hill is not available, the review will be carried out by Mr Che Shing Li, Managing Director, who is also the company's Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration (COFA).
11. We will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint within **21-days** of receiving your review notification, setting out the reasons for the decision we have reached.

6. Fees

Please note that our complaints procedure is free of charge and no fees will be raised regarding the investigation of your complaint.

7. Legal Ombudsman and Solicitors Regulatory Authority

12. If you are not satisfied with our decision, then you have the right to refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman and/or the Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA).
13. The Legal Ombudsman can review concerns relating to areas such as the work carried out on your behalf and/or in relation to charges for that work. Further details of their services are available via their website.
14. Please note that you must refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within **one year** from the date of the act or omission complained of, or within **one year** of you realising there was a concern. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within **six months** of our final response to you.

If you do not comply with these time limits, the Ombudsman has the right to decline to review your complaint unless you can satisfy the Ombudsman that it would be fair and reasonable to allow your claim to proceed outside of these time periods. If you have any concerns about the time limit, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman at the contact details specified below.

15. The complaints handling scheme operated by the Legal Ombudsman does not deal with complaints from most businesses unless you are a small enterprise. If you need guidance on this point, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman.
16. The Legal Ombudsman will not deal with complaints from trustees where the asset value of the trust is more than £1 million or from a club or association where its annual income exceeds £1 million. We will deal with any complaints made by businesses, trusts, clubs and associations falling into such categories under our complaint handling procedures set out above.
17. The SRA can review allegations relating to your legal advisor such as lying to you, stealing from you, breaking SRA rules or if the company closes down without notifying you. Further details of their complaint's procedure are available via their website. The SRA contact details are below.
18. This Company's SRA number is 558660.
19. Contact details are as follows:

The Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH Telephone: 0300 555 0333 Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Solicitor Regulatory Authority

The Cube

199 Wharfside Street

Birmingham

B1 1RN

Email: report@sra.org.uk

Website www.sra.org.uk

8. Policy Review Schedule

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if legislative changes arise or Management deem appropriate.
