

9 PARK PLACE

Chambers' Complaints Procedure (Public Document)

1. General

- 1.1 For the purpose of Chambers' Complaints Procedure (hereafter called the "Procedure") a complaint means "any expression of dissatisfaction". It does not, however, include negative feedback contained in a Chambers' evaluation form submitted by a professional/lay client unless that person specifically requests that the matter be dealt with as a complaint.
- 1.2 Professional clients or a lay client using the public or licensed access procedure to instruct a member of Chambers will be informed in the Chambers' client-care letter:
 - who has overall responsibility for this Procedure
 - to whom complaints should be addressed.
- 1.3 A copy of this Procedure will be provided to professional clients, lay clients and intermediaries upon request.

2. Control and Responsibility

Overall responsibility for the Procedure will be exercised by the Head of Chambers. He will be assisted in processing and determining complaints by the Senior Clerk.

3. In General

- 3.1 For all complaints other than those arising in work for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) this Procedure will apply. The aim of the Procedure is to provide a system for dealing with complaints that is:
 - clear and simple
 - transparent
 - fair to all concerned, and
 - ensures that all complaints are acted upon.
- 3.2 Complaints are divided into 2 categories: formal and informal. All will be investigated and corrective action taken where appropriate.
- 3.3 When the complainant intends that his complaint be formally considered and determined it will be treated as formal.
- 3.4 An informal complaint occurs when a client expresses irritation or concern but does not seek formal consideration of his complaint.

4. Handling Procedure – Formal Complaints

- 4.1 Any formal complaint must be forwarded on the day of receipt to the Head of Chambers or the Senior Clerk. If neither is available, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the most senior member of Chambers present.
- 4.2 If the complaint is in writing the relevant document must be forwarded. If it is oral a written note thereof should be made and that note passed on.
- 4.3 Before the end of the following working day the Senior Clerk or, if he is not available, the Head of Chambers, will notify the complainant:
 - that his complaint has been received
 - of the name of the person is dealing with it and the role of that person in Chambers
 - of the date by which the complainant will next hear from Chambers
 - of the option of making a complaint to the Bar Standards Board and the time limits which apply.He will also send the complainant a copy of this Procedure.
- 4.4 If so requested by a professional client the Senior Clerk will furnish details of the complaints procedure of the Legal Service Commission (LSC). This may be done by referring the client to the LSC website.
- 4.5 The Head of Chambers, or the Senior Clerk at his behest, will carry out all necessary investigations into the circumstances of the complaint and give all interested persons the opportunity to state their opinions thereon. If he/she considers the complaint to be justified he/she will discuss with the barrister concerned the action to be taken and then make a decision thereon.
- 4.6 The Head of Chambers, or the Senior Clerk as the case may be, will next take one or more of the following steps as appropriate:
 - (a) Inform the complainant that the complaint has been investigated and found not to be justified, explaining why.
 - (b) Inform the complainant that the complaint has been investigated and found to be justified and
 - explain the action proposed
 - provide the complainant with any Bar Standards Board Guidance on how to complain to them about the barrister in question.
- 4.7 In the case of a complainant who continues to use the services of members of these Chambers the Head of Chambers, or Senior Clerk, will contact the complainant again at a later date to find out if there has been any improvement in the services.

5. Handling Procedure – Informal Complaints

- 5.1 Informal complaints should be reported quickly to the Senior Clerk. If the recipient has already resolved the complaint he should provide the Senior Clerk with details and the Senior Clerk will keep a record thereof.
- 5.2 In the case of an unresolved complaint the Senior Clerk will endeavour to resolve the matter as speedily as possible in an informal manner, paying due regard to the interests of the complainant and those of Chambers.

6. Confidentially and Records

- 6.1 All communications and documents relating to complaints will be kept confidential and disclosed only so far as is necessary for:
 - (a) the investigation and resolution of the complaint,
 - (b) internal Chambers' review for the purposes of improving practice, and
 - (c) complying with requests from the Bar Standards Board in the exercise of its monitoring and/or auditing functions.
- 6.2 The Senior Clerk will maintain a record of each complaint containing all relevant correspondence (including electronic mail) and all other documentation generated in response to the complaint. The record will include details of :
 - the name and address of the complainant firm or individual
 - the nature of the complaint
 - the barrister or member of staff concerned
 - the steps taken to resolve the complaint
 - the outcome of the complaint
 - details of any changes in procedures made or other appropriate steps taken to reduce the possibility of a similar complaint occurring again.
- 6.3 The record will be kept for a period of 6 years.