



PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE

Complaints Procedure

The Public Defender Service is committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. However, from time to time we may fall short of our own expected standards. On these rare occasions, it is important for you to have the opportunity to voice any dissatisfaction so that we can address the issues and improve our standards.

If you have any reason to be unhappy with the service provided by us, the following procedure is in place to assist you.

1. The first step is that you should always speak to or write to the person handling your matter and explain the cause of your dissatisfaction. The vast majority of problems can usually be resolved informally at this stage on an amicable basis.
2. However, if the situation has not been resolved to your satisfaction and you would like to make a formal complaint you should contact the Head of Office where the person handling your matter is based or the Head of Solicitors, Helen Smith, if your complaint is about the Head of Office. If your complaint relates to a member of the Advocacy Unit then you should contact the Head of Advocacy David Aubrey KC. The overall person responsible for reviewing complaints is the Head of Service, Malcolm Bryant.
3. If you wish you can contact us by phone but it is helpful if you can put your complaint in writing and provide us with as much information as possible about why you are unhappy with the service we have provided to you. This does not have to be a formal document and we are happy to accept complaints by email.
4. Once your complaint is received we will write to you acknowledging receipt within three working days enclosing a copy of this procedure. If necessary at that stage we will also ask you for any further information we may need to help us review your complaint.
5. We will then investigate your complaint. This investigation will include studying the relevant file, speaking to the person handling your matter and asking for any other relevant details from you. Following this investigation we will aim to provide you with a written response within 10 working days of your complaint being acknowledged by

us but will inform you if our investigation will take longer to conclude. On the conclusion of our investigation we will explain our findings and our response to your complaint.

6. If after a full investigation we are unable to resolve your complaint and you are still unhappy, or if we have failed to provide a response within 8 weeks of your complaint, you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the complaint. The Legal Ombudsman investigates complaints about service issues with lawyers. The Legal Ombudsman will normally only consider a complaint from you if we have failed to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. It is therefore important that our complaints handling procedure is carried out in full before you use that avenue to attempt to resolve the matter. The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge.

The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within one year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned 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.

The Legal Ombudsman's contact details are: -

Telephone: 0300 555 0333 Minicom: 0300 555 1777

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Post: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ

If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman's service, including these time limits, please contact the Legal Ombudsman directly.