

Written Complaints Procedure

At Blake Lapthorn we are dedicated to the continual improvement of our services. However just occasionally things do not run as smoothly as we would wish and, in such an event, we would want to know about it. If you have any concerns regarding our service, or a bill that you have received, and wish to raise it with us as a formal complaint, then you must do so within 6 months of becoming aware of the problem in accordance with the procedure set out below. In the event that you do complain, we aim to resolve it promptly, fairly and effectively and in any event within eight weeks of it first being referred to us.

1. Initially, you should raise your concerns, either by telephone or in writing, with the person with whom you have been dealing. Where you do so and it is not possible to rectify the situation immediately, he/she will acknowledge written receipt of your complaint within 3 working days. Where appropriate we may ask you to put your complaint into writing. We aim to provide a substantive written response to your complaint within 14 days of our acknowledgement or your written complaint (where we have asked for your complaint to be put in writing). A complaint requiring acknowledgement will be reported to the head of the department in which your matter is being handled.
2. If after the consideration by the person with whom you have been dealing, you are still unhappy, you should ask for your complaint to be referred to the head of the relevant department, who (either personally or by the relevant team leader) will review the complaint and, within 14 days of the reference, will respond to you with his/her conclusions..
3. If you remain unhappy, please ask for your complaint to be referred to our Complaints Handling Partner, Niall Brook at our Oxford office, who will review the complaint and respond to you, within 14 days with his conclusions. In the absence of the Complaints Handling Partner, your matter will be passed to his assistant, Matthew Sturgeon a Senior Solicitor.
4. In certain instances, we may require further time to consider and respond to the issues raised but we shall alert you to any extension of time proposed subject always to the overall 8 week time limit.
5. If having exhausted our Complaints Procedure you still do not feel that your complaint has been satisfactorily addressed then within 12 months of you first becoming aware of the problem you may be entitled to direct your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman for consideration. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted at PO Box 15870, Birmingham, B30 9EB; Tel. 0300 555 0333; email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk and the website is <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>.
6. If your complaint is about a bill you have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman and/or apply to the Court for the assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. You should know that if you have already applied to the Court for an assessment of your bill, the Legal Ombudsman may not deal with your complaint

Niall Brook

Risk and Compliance Partner
October 2010