

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

We are committed to providing a high quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time, you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

### **1. Our complaints procedure**

If you have a complaint you may first choose to try and resolve a specific problem with the person having primary conduct of your matter or affairs. You may do so (preferably) in writing or otherwise orally, providing sufficient details.

If you feel unable or are unable to resolve your complaint or problem with that person, you may address it (again preferably in writing) to Stephen Orridge (or if the complaint is in relation to Mr Orridge, to Mr Ben Pepperell) as the designated Complaint Handler. Mr Pepperell retains overall responsibility for complaints as the Client Care Director for Pepperells Solicitors.

### **2. What will happen next?**

2.1 We will record your complaint in our central register. We will do this within three working days of receiving your complaint.

2.2 Where you address your complaint (or it is referred) to a Complaint Handler we will open a separate file for your complaint. The Complaint Handler will send you a letter acknowledging that complaint and may ask you to confirm or explain the details set out. You can expect to receive our letter within three working days of us receiving your complaint.

2.3 The Complaint Handler will then start to investigate your complaint. This will normally involve the following steps:-

- Our Complaint Handler will ask the member of staff who acted for you or against whom you complain to supply your file (if applicable) and to provide written comment upon your complaint within 5 working days.
- He will then examine their reply, check any relevant matters from your file of papers and the information in your complaint file. If necessary, he may also speak to the member of staff concerned. This may take up to three further working days from receiving their reply and the file.

2.4 The Complaint Handler will then write to you to advise you of his preliminary findings. This is usually within three working days of completing the investigatory stage at 2.3 above (i.e. within 14 working days of receipt of your complaint). The Complaint Handler will also invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint.

2.5 If you do not want a meeting you should advise the Complaint Handler who will invite you instead to comment, if you so wish, upon his preliminary findings. After that or any meeting held he will send you a detailed reply to your complaint. This will include his conclusions and any suggestions for resolving the matter. He will do this within five working days of hearing from you either in meeting or in writing.

2.6 At this stage, if you are still not satisfied you may contact us again. We will then arrange to review our decision. This can happen in one of the following ways.

- Another partner of the firm, unconnected with the matter, will review the Complaint Handler's decision within 10 working days.
- We will ask our local Law Society within five working days to nominate another local (but unconnected) solicitor to review your complaint. We will let you know how long this process will be expected to take.

2.7 We will let you know the result of the review within five working days of the end of the review. At this time we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

2.8 If you are still not satisfied, you can then contact the Legal Ombudsman at PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ about your complaint. Normally you will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman ([www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)) within twelve months of the date of our final decision on your complaint or within three years of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring (or you becoming aware of it). For further information, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman on telephone 0300 555 0333 or at [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

### **3. Please note;**

3.1 There may be reasons why we find we will be unable to meet the timescales indicated. If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

3.2 If you feel there are personal circumstances which may make it difficult for you to have your complaint dealt with effectively under the above procedure, please let us know and we will see what alternative arrangements can be made.

3.3 You are valued as a client and we look to treat your complaint seriously and fairly.