

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 take all feedback and any complaints very seriously and please be assured that we will make every effort to resolve any concerns promptly and effectively.

1. Our complaints procedure

- 1.1. 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/via email providing sufficient details to allow your concerns to be reviewed.
- 1.2. If you feel unable, or are unable to resolve your complaint or problem with that person, you may address it (again preferably in writing/email) to Mr. Stephen Orridge – Stephen.orridge@pepperells.com (or if the complaint is in relation to Mr Orridge, to Mr Ben Pepperell – ben@pepperells.com) as the designated Complaint Handler. Mr Pepperell retains overall responsibility for complaints as the Client Care Director for Pepperells Solicitors.
- 1.3. To help us to understand your complaint, and in order that we do not miss anything, please tell us:
 - 1.3.1. your full name and contact details;
 - 1.3.2. what you think we have got wrong;
 - 1.3.3. how you would like your complaint to be resolved; and
 - 1.3.4. your file reference number (if you have it).
 - 1.3.5. If you require any help in making your complaint we will try to help you.

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.

- 2.3. You can expect to receive our letter within three working days of us receiving your complaint.
- 2.4. The Complaint Handler will then start to investigate your complaint. This will normally involve the following steps:-
 - 2.4.1. 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 10 working days.
 - 2.4.2. 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.
 - 2.4.3. 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 above. The Complaint Handler may also invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint.
 - 2.4.4. 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.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. Another partner of the firm, unconnected with the matter, will review the Complaint Handler's decision within 10 working days.
- 2.7. 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.

2.8. 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.

3. What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint

3.1. We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time you may be able to complain to the Legal Ombudsman. This applies if you are an individual, a business with fewer than 10 employees and turnover or assets not exceeding a certain threshold, a charity or trust with a net income of less than £1m, or if you fall within certain other categories (you can find out more from the Legal Ombudsman—www.legalombudsman.org.uk). The Legal Ombudsman will look at your complaint independently and it will not affect how we handle your matter.

3.2. Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. If you have, then you must take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman:

3.2.1. within six months of receiving a final response to your complaint;

and

3.2.2. no more than one year from the date of the act or omission being complained about; or

3.2.3. no more than one year from the date when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.

3.3. If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman, please contact them.

Contact details

Visit: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Call: 0300 555 0333 between 10.00 to 16.00

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme,

4. What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour

- 4.1. The Solicitors Regulation Authority does not deal with client service complaints, but may review with matters where their Principles, Standards or Regulations have been breached by firms that they regulate (whilst this is highly unlikely to apply to your matter, we are professionally obliged to inform you of their role).
- 4.2. To contact the Solicitors Regulation Authority you can telephone on 0370 606 2555, email contactcentre@sra.org.uk, or write to The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN. Alternatively, you can find more information by visiting <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/>
- 4.3. Upon receipt of your complaint the Solicitors Regulation Authority aims to acknowledge it within ten to fifteen working days.

5. What will it cost?

We will not charge you for handling your complaint.

6. Please note;

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. You are valued as a client and we look to treat your complaint seriously and fairly.
- 6.4. These procedures will be followed for all complaints. Please note, however, that any dissatisfaction with the amount of the fee we have charged you must be raised with us in writing within three months of the date of the bill.

7. Who to contact

Please contact Stephen Orridge, Complaints Officer of Pepperells Solicitors, by email Stephen.orridge@pepperells.com