

Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP: Complaints procedures

Our Client 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 and you are entitled to complain. This will enable us to address the matter and, where appropriate, to offer a remedy and it will help us to improve our standards. We take any complaints most seriously.

Complaints: Initial steps to resolve

1. If you have any concerns about the service you receive, please contact:
 - (i) the partner who has overall responsibility for your business or for the particular matter concerned; or,
 - (ii) if they cannot resolve matters to your satisfaction or the complaint concerns that partner, please contact the head of the group/department with which you are dealing or the person indicated in your client care letter. If you are in doubt, a name(s) will be supplied.
2. They will endeavour to resolve your concerns promptly and fairly.
3. If the matter cannot be resolved by them or if you would prefer, please contact the FFW Professional Standards Partner (“the PSP”), Stephen Gibbs (stephen.gibbs@ffw.com – tel +44(0)20 7861 4000). If he is away for any material time or the complaint involves him, the Managing Partner will ensure that your complaint is dealt with. If your complaint concerns the Brussels office, you may contact the Brussels Professional Standards Partner, Emmanuel Roger France, there. The complaint will be handled by him or Stephen Gibbs as appropriate in accordance with the terms of this policy. Contacting the PSP/Managing Partner will initiate our complaints procedure.

Complaints procedure

What will happen next

4. The PSP will endeavour to acknowledge your complaint within three working days. He will send you an acknowledgment and a copy of this complaints procedure which includes the contact details of the Legal Ombudsman. The acknowledgment will, as necessary, set out our understanding of your complaint.

5. We will record your complaint in a central register and open a file for your complaint.
6. The PSP will investigate your complaint. This will normally involve him in one or more of the following steps:
 - reviewing the file and any associated documents for the matter to which the complaint relates;
 - interviewing and discussing the position with those concerned within the firm;
 - seeking any further clarification which we require from you.

If it seems appropriate, we may at this stage suggest a meeting to obtain details or to discuss matters with you.

Any information that you supply will be treated in confidence unless agreed otherwise.

7. The PSP will then write to you to:
 - (i) report our findings; and,
 - (ii) make proposals for resolving your complaint.

We aim to do this within 21 days of acknowledging your complaint. If for any reason the 21 days cannot be achieved (for example, because of fee earner absences or because further information is required from third parties or yourself), we will explain why and endeavour to agree a revised date. We will update you on the progress of your complaint at no greater than 14 day intervals.

8. If you do not accept our findings or proposals for resolving the matter, you may request a review of our decision. This review will be carried out by a partner appointed by the Managing Partner who has had no prior involvement with the complaint. To start the review please write with your reasons for rejecting our findings to the PSP. In certain circumstances, we may decline the request for a further review and recommend that you contact the Legal Ombudsman.
9. Our aim will be to complete the review within 21 days of receipt of your letter but if more time is needed you will be notified. We will let you know the results of the review within five working days of its completion. At this time we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explain our reasons. If you are unhappy with the outcome you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to become involved in your complaint. We will confirm his details again at that time.

10. Please note that the time limit for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman is generally six months from the date when we give you our final written response to your complaint. The time limit can be checked by looking at the Legal Ombudsman's website or by telephoning his office on 0300 555 0333. If you miss the time limit, his office may not be able to investigate your complaint.
11. If at any stage of the complaints procedure it becomes appropriate, we will notify you of your right to see another solicitor and obtain advice as to whether we have been negligent. If a complaint may constitute a possible claim for compensation for negligence we will generally have to refer the matter to our insurers. In those circumstances this complaints procedure may not be applicable.

The Legal Ombudsman

12. The contact details of the Legal Ombudsman are as follows:

Address: The Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Phone: 0300 555 0333

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Equality and Diversity

13. Our complaints procedure will be operated in compliance with the firm's policy on equality and diversity, a copy of which is available on request.

Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP

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