

SLATER HEELIS CLIENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Please let us know if you require a copy of this procedure in a larger font.

Slater Heelis 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. We will deal with any such complaints fairly, sympathetically and quickly.

If you have any reason to be unhappy with the service provided by our firm or about our bill, 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 at this stage on an amicable basis.

2) If the situation has not been resolved to your satisfaction the next more formal approach is to raise the issue with our Client Care Manager who is Jill Entwistle. She can be contacted on 0161 672 1331, by e-mail jill.entwistle@slaterheelis.co.uk or by writing to her at Lloyds Bank Building, 16 School Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 7XP. If at all possible please put your complaint in writing, explaining the circumstances and the reasons for your dissatisfaction. We will acknowledge it within 2 working days.

We have eight weeks in which to consider your complaint and if we have not resolved it within this time you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

3) Mrs Entwistle will then ensure the issue is investigated. The investigation will include studying the relevant file, speaking to the person handling your matter and asking for any other relevant details from you. It may also include a personal meeting with you. We aim to complete the investigation of your complaint within 14 days of sending the acknowledgement letter.

4) At the conclusion of the investigation, (including a possible meeting with you if you wanted one or if it was possible to arrange one), our findings will be communicated to you in writing and it is hoped that a resolution will be possible which will both deal with the issues raised by you while at the same time preserving the goodwill between yourself and the firm. We would aim to do this within 21 days of the initial acknowledgement letter.

5) If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, you should contact us again explaining why you are not happy with our findings. You may request a review of our decision. In these circumstances it might be appropriate for a Partner, unconnected to either your matter or the first investigation to carry out the review. If this is the case you will receive a further report within 14 days of your appeal. This report will confirm our final position on your complaint and explain the reasons.

6) If, after such a full investigation by the firm, you are still unhappy you may ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the complaint. The Legal Ombudsman accepts complaints from individuals and small businesses, charities or associations. Even if you cannot complain to the Legal Ombudsman this does not prevent you from raising any concerns with us.

Alternative complaints bodies such as Small Claims Mediation exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme. We have, however, chosen not to adopt an ADR process. If you wish to complain further, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman.

You would need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint. The time limits for the Legal Ombudsman accepting a complaint is six years from the date of act or omission, or three years from when you should have reasonably known about the complaint. However, the Legal Ombudsman will not accept complaints where the act or date of awareness was before 6 October 2010.

The contact details for the Legal Ombudsman are, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ, telephone 0300 555 0333 or visit www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

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 resolve the matter.

Please note that if your complaint relates to our fees, you may also apply to the Court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974 although the Legal Ombudsman may not deal with your complaint if you have already applied for an assessment.

We will always endeavour to deal with your complaint within the timescales outlined but if it is not possible to do so, we will let you know and explain the reasons.

If you have any questions about this procedure and your rights under it, please do not hesitate to contact the Client Care Manager. We hope that the need to use this procedure will not arise but if it does, please be assured that your matter will be dealt with objectively, quickly and with the utmost courtesy. There is no cost to you for us to deal with a complaint under this procedure.

What will it cost?

We will not charge you for handling your complaint.

Please note that if we have issued a bill for work done on the matter, and all or some of the bill is not paid, we may be entitled to charge interest on the amount outstanding.

The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge.