

# STAFFORDSHIRE FAMILY LAW SOLICITORS LIMITED

## COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

We pride ourselves in providing an excellent service to our clients but if at any point a client feels unhappy about any aspect of what we are doing for them, we encourage them to speak to us openly about their concerns, so that we can do our best to address and resolve them.

This procedure explains how we will investigate any complaint and try to resolve it. It is intended to ensure that we do this fairly, effectively and swiftly, and to help us continually improve our services wherever possible.

Please address your complaint to Gabi Chester, who is the Client Care Officer for the practice. Her email address is [gac@sflsolicitors.co.uk](mailto:gac@sflsolicitors.co.uk) or she can be contacted by phone on 01785 336617, or by post at 6 Marconi Gate, Staffordshire Technology Park, Stafford ST18 0FZ.

Where a complaint is regarding the Client Care Officer for the Practice then your complaint will be managed by Fay Rothery, our Managing Director, rather than the client care officer herself. The meeting referred to at point 5 below will be with Miss Rothery.

What will happen next?

1. We will record your complaint in our central register and open a file for your complaint. We will do this within one working day of receiving your complaint.
2. We will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain the details set out. You can expect to receive our letter within two working days of us receiving your complaint.
3. We will acknowledge your reply to our acknowledgement letter and confirm what will happen next. You can expect to hear from us within three working days of your reply.
4. We will then investigate your complaint. This may involve one or more of the following steps:
  - Asking the person who acted for you to respond to your complaint.
  - Examining the response and the information in your complaint file.
  - Asking the person who acted for you for more information.
  - Reviewing all the information.

This may take up to eight working days.

5. We will invite you to meet our Client Care Officer to discuss and, it is hoped, resolve your complaint. We will do this within three working days of the completion of our investigation.
6. Within two days of the meeting we will write to you to confirm what took place and any suggestions we have agreed with you.

7. If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, we will send you a detailed reply to your complaint. This will include our suggestions for resolving the matter and any appropriate redress. This will happen within five days of us completing the investigation.
8. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied you can write to us again and we will carry out a final review.
9. We will let you know the result of the review within five working days of receipt of your letter. At this time we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

We very much hope that we can resolve your complaint internally and improve our service as a result.

If we cannot resolve your complaint to your satisfaction by making use of our internal procedure then you can contact:

The Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ  
Telephone: 0300 555 0333  
Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)  
Web: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk).

Note that the Legal Ombudsman recommends that you first direct their complaint to us and allow us 8 weeks to give you our Final Response letter.

You should be aware of the time limits and abilities that the Legal Ombudsman service has.

1. The time limit for referring a complaint to the Ombudsman's office is one year from a) the date of the act or omission giving rise to the complaint or b) the date when the complainant should have realised there was a cause for complaint.
2. The Ombudsman has the discretion to consider whether it is a proportionate use of resources and time to investigate a complaint. The Ombudsman will have the ability to dismiss the complaint in cases where it may be considered the loss, detriment or impact arising out of the complaint is not significant.
3. The Ombudsman will have the ability to make a decision that a final decision is not needed on a case if not substantive issues have been raised in response to the investigators findings or remedy.