

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Our complaints handling policy

We want you to be completely satisfied with the work we do for you and the service we provide. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it so that we can put matters right. This will also help us to improve our standards. We conduct an annual review of complaints.

Your complaint will be dealt with promptly (within 8 weeks), fairly, openly, free of charge, effectively, and based on a sufficient investigation of the circumstances.

How do I make a complaint?

You can make your complaint or expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our service, including data protection, in writing, by email, over the telephone or in person to our Client Care Partner at Porter Dodson, The Quad, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, TA1 2PX (tel. 01823 625800), or clientcare@porterodson.co.uk.

We may need to request proof of identity before we are able to respond to your complaint and, where you are raising a complaint on behalf of someone else, we will need to check that you are authorised to act on behalf of that person.

Our procedure for handling complaints

1. Our complaints procedure is flexible to suit you and the circumstances and nature of your complaint. Normally however we:
 - read the file and speak with the advisor concerned about the complaint;
 - give a preliminary decision;
 - invite you to reply to the preliminary decision (which can either be a meeting or a written reply).
2. At the end of the complaints procedure, we will make a decision on your complaint and provide you with what we consider is the appropriate remedy.

What if I am dissatisfied with the outcome?

You have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, an independent complaints body, established under the Legal Services Act 2007, that deals with legal services complaints.

You will have six months from the date of our final letter in which to complain to the Legal Ombudsman. It must also be no more than 1 year since the reason for your complaint, and no more than 1 year since you became aware of that reason to complain.

Please note that this service is only available to consumers and very small businesses, charities and clubs. The Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH.

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

Email address: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Alternative complaints bodies (such as ProMediate, www.promediate.co.uk) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme.

We do not usually agree to use such a scheme because the Legal Ombudsman was established specifically to deal with legal services complaints and in any event, we will seek in the first instance to facilitate an informal resolution between the parties.

Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO')

If your complaint relates to a data protection issue, you have a right to complain to the ICO. The ICO recommends that any complaint is raised within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Email address: icocasework@ico.org.uk

Solicitors Regulation Authority ('SRA')

The SRA can help you if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

Solicitors Regulation Authority, The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN.

Telephone: 0370 606 2555

Email address: report@sra.org.uk