

Client Complaints Policy and Procedure for Outer Temple Chambers

Policy

1. Barristers and staff at Outer Temple Chambers aim to provide a quality service at all times. We recognise however that occasionally mistakes will happen and that these can cause inconvenience and upset. Our policy aims to ensure that:
 - a. Our solicitors and clients are provided with a procedure that enables them to make a complaint or raise a concern;
 - b. All complaints are handled quickly and efficiently;
 - c. Our solicitors and clients feel that the complaint has been handled properly;
 - d. The outcome of the complaint satisfies the complainant;
 - e. Where concerns and complaints highlight problems with our service, these are properly addressed;
 - f. Complaints are monitored so that we can ensure that the same concerns do not reoccur;

Informal complaints

2. We are aware that our solicitors and clients will not always want to raise a concern with us. It is easier to take your business elsewhere than to go through the hassle of raising a concern or complaint. However, we would like the opportunity to try and improve the service you receive and any concerns raised with us will be investigated.
3. You can raise an informal complaint with anyone in Chambers. Let the person know that you have a concern and provide them with details. S/he will report it to the Commercial Director and the Commercial Director or the Business Development Director will look into the matter and take steps to try and resolve it and/or make an appropriate adjustment to our service.

Formal complaints

4. If you have a formal complaint about a barrister, a member of staff or any aspect of our service please raise it directly with the Commercial Director by telephone (extension 4887), in writing to Outer Temple Chambers, The Outer Temple, 222 Strand, London WC2R 1BA or by email: christine.kings@outertemple.com. If the Commercial Director is not available please refer your complaint to the Business Development Director, or to one of the Senior Team Leaders.
5. Complaints that are received by a barrister or a member of staff will be referred to the Commercial Director.
6. If your complaint is about the Commercial Director please contact the Head of Chambers, Philip Mott QC.

Our procedure

7. Once the Commercial Director has received your complaint she will aim to contact you within 24 hours to acknowledge your complaint, to find out what you would like done about it and to get any further details.

8. The Commercial Director will also inform you as to what the next steps will be. This will include informing anyone who is the subject of the complaint, alerting the Head of Chambers to the complaint and undertaking an investigation.
9. If we can resolve your complaint following an initial investigation, the Commercial Director will contact you to let you know what has happened and what we are proposing to do.
10. If your complaint is serious and/or the matter has not been resolved, the complaint will be referred to our complaints panel which is headed by Philip Mott QC, Head of Chambers. The panel is made up of experienced practitioners and the Commercial Director.
11. The Head of Chambers may conduct the investigation into your complaint or he may delegate the responsibility to another member of the panel. If the Head of Chambers is the subject of the complaint, then the Deputy Head or a nominated QC will take over this responsibility.
12. Within 14 days of receiving your complaint a member of the panel will be appointed to investigate it and will contact you. This person will let you know:
 - a. that s/he has been appointed
 - b. that s/he will reply to your complaint within 14 days or s/he will arrange an alternative date for getting back to you
 - c. the nature and scope of her/his investigation
13. You will have the opportunity to provide further information in writing if you wish and the person against whom the complaint is made will have the opportunity to respond in accordance with our internal complaints and disciplinary procedures.
14. If there is the possibility that the complaint may result in a claim against a barrister, then the insurers (Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund Limited) will be informed as soon as possible.
15. The appointed panel member will contact you to let you know the outcome of the investigation.
16. If your complaint is found to be unjustified the panel member will explain why s/he reached this decision. If you are not satisfied with this decision then you are entitled to take your complaint to the Bar Standards Board which oversees complaints and standards at the Bar (see below).
17. If your complaint is justified, action will be taken in line with our internal disciplinary procedures. The panel member will contact you to apologise and to explain what remedial action, including compensatory measures where appropriate, is proposed.

Confidentiality

18. All conversations and documents relating to your complaint will be treated as confidential and will be relayed only to those who need to know. This could include the Head of Chambers, members of our management committee, the person(s) you have complained about, relevant members of the complaints panel and anyone called as a witness to the investigation.

Monitoring and reporting

19. Details of your concern or complaint will be recorded by the Commercial Director. Each year statistics on formal and informal complaints and the nature of the complaints are collated together on an anonymous basis. This information is reported to the Chambers Management Committee and circulated to all staff and barristers with a view to improving our services.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint

20. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of your complaint but if we have been unable to resolve it to your satisfaction then you may wish to pursue this further.
21. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of our investigation, you have the right to make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints against lawyers. Please note that you must make your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within twelve months of the complaint arising. You can contact them at: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB, email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk or telephone 0300 555 0333. If the content of your complaint may constitute a breach of the Professional Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales the Legal Ombudsman will refer those complaints directly to the Bar Standards Board which is responsible for regulating barristers'. For further details see: www.legalombudsman.org.uk