

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Background

We are committed to providing high quality legal services to all of our clients. When something goes wrong we need our clients to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

This document sets out the procedure to be followed in circumstances where a client makes a complaint about the services that they have received from Renaissance Legal ("the Policy").

Fee-earners and staff should have due regard to this Policy in connection with any complaint which is made or intimated against the firm.

2. Our approach to complaints

The Terms of Business of Renaissance Legal contains the following paragraphs:

2.19 Complaints

We aim to provide all of our clients an efficient and effective service. However, if you are unhappy with any aspect of our service (which could include an issue in relation to our charges), you are entitled to complain to us. Please discuss this initially with the person handling the matter for you.

We have a complaints policy which applies to both verbal and written complaints. Please let us know at any time if you would like to see this.

Our Director in charge of handling complaints is Philip Warford.

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received from us you have further recourse. If your complaint relates to the service provided, then you may refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/>. If your complaint relates to conduct of a Legal Executive handling the matter for you, then you may refer the matter to Ilex Professional Standards on 01234 845770 or info@ilexstandards.org.uk.

Whilst Renaissance Legal is committed to client excellence, it is important to recognise that there may well be circumstances where the level of our service falls below the reasonable expectations of our clients. We should also appreciate that on occasions, our service may fall below the standard that we may expect.

Where a complaint is determined to be well founded, it is important not only that the complaint is resolved satisfactorily but also that the grievance is dealt with efficiently and sympathetically. As a firm, we will deal with any complaints in a manner that is fair to our clients. Naturally, we have an interest in ensuring that we retain the goodwill of any particular client, even where things do go wrong. We are also keen to resolve complaints before a reference to the Legal Ombudsman or Ilex Professional Standards occurs.

We expect our staff, whether a fee-earner or otherwise, to deal with a complaint in an open and co-operative manner. We all make mistakes; what is important is that the consequences of a mistake are properly resolved and where necessary, any detriment to a client is rectified.

It is also important that sufficient analysis is given to identify and prevent any further occurrence of the underlying cause of the complaint. In other words, lessons should be properly learnt from any mistakes that we make.

3. Complaint handling process

If a complaint is made to a fee-earner or other member of staff, it should be reported to Philip Warford within one day of receiving the complaint.

For the purposes of the Policy, a "complaint" includes any expression of dissatisfaction with the firm or a member of staff made by or on behalf of a client, whether expressed verbally or in writing, and whether described formally as a complaint or otherwise.

The process relating to any particular complaint will be owned by the fee-earner responsible for the client in question. In respect of complaints made against other members of staff (i.e. non fee-earners), Philip Warford will own the process. All complaints will be addressed and ultimately resolved with the participation and prior approval of Philip Warford.

Details of a complaint will be logged by Philip Warford in the firm's Complaints Register. A file for the particular complaint will then be opened (the "Complaint File"). The Complaint File will be maintained separately by Philip Warford.

A copy of the firm's Complaints Policy should be promptly forwarded under cover of a letter of acknowledgment by the relevant fee-earner in order that a client may understand how we will seek to resolve the complaint. This should be done no later than 3 working days after receipt of the complaint.

Philip Warford and the relevant member of staff shall then carry out an assessment of the complaint, no matter how trivial it may appear. If a frivolous or unjustifiable complaint is made then this should still be addressed in a letter or communication from the member of staff or alternatively from Philip Warford in order to explain why the complaint is frivolous or unjustified.

The process for dealing with a complaint is as follows:

- 3.1 We will send the complainant a letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint within 3 working days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of our Complaints Policy.
- 3.2 We will then investigate the complaint. Philip Warford will review the matter file and speak to relevant members of staff in order to ascertain the background and (if applicable) the substance of the complaint.
- 3.3 We will either write to the complainant in response or invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve the complaint. This will be done within 10 working days of sending out the acknowledgement letter.
- 3.4 If a meeting is held, within 3 working days of the meeting, Philip Warford will write to the complainant confirming what took place and any solutions that have been agreed.
- 3.5 If the complainant is offered but does not want a meeting or it is not possible for them to attend a meeting, Philip Warford will send a detailed written reply to the complaint, including suggestions for resolving the matter, within 15 working days of sending the acknowledgement letter.

- 3.6 Complainants will be told that if they are still not satisfied, they should contact us again and Philip Warford will review the decision.
- 3.7 If such a review is requested, we will write again to the complainant within 15 working days of receiving the request for a review, confirming our final position on the complaint and explaining our reasons.
- 3.8 Complainants will be told that they may then contact the Legal Ombudsman or Ilex Professional Standards (as appropriate) if they remain dissatisfied.
- 3.9 If for any reason the timescales above need to be altered, for example, if we require additional evidence to be sought or if a relevant member of staff is away from the office, we should let the complainant know and explain the reasons why.

Copies of all correspondence, file notes etc. relating to a complaint should be forwarded to Philip Warford for filing on the appropriate Complaint File.

4. Aims and objectives

The principal objects of the complaints process are to:

- 4.1 ensure that complaints are properly recorded and reported to Philip Warford;
- 4.2 resolve complaints in a timely, transparent and manifestly fair manner;
- 4.3 satisfy the complainant that the complaint has been dealt with seriously and has been resolved in a timely, transparent and fair manner; and
- 4.4 retain clients as far as it is possible (and desirable) to do so. A complaining client may not be lost to the firm. Even though a member of staff may not agree that the complaint has any validity, the response from the firm may be to agree with some elements of the complaint and to assure the client that some effort will be made to remedy the problem. In such instances, staff must understand that this is not intended to undermine their position; we all have to accept a certain amount of criticism, in return, we hope, for a more satisfied client.

5. Upheld complaints – making good

- 5.1 Where a complaint is upheld, it is important that sufficient steps are taken to remedy the detriment occasioned by the complaint to the satisfaction of the client.
- 5.2 What is reasonable and fair will depend on the particular circumstances of any given complaint. Due consideration will be given to the following remedies:
- 5.2.1 An apology from the firm and an assurance that the complained-of behaviour will not happen again, and that we will try to do better;
- 5.2.2 a reduction in the bill;
- 5.2.3 abatement of the bill in total;

- 5.2.4 Notification to the client of their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman or Ilex Professional Standards (as appropriate), either as a matter of professional conduct, or the firm's inadequate professional services;
- 5.2.5 Notification to the Client of their right to see another legal advisor and obtain advice as to whether we have been negligent.

6. Action after a complaint – improvement loop

- 6.1 A key objective of the Complaints Policy is to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the client, such that the relevant member of staff may continue with the file. In some circumstances, if the relationship has broken down completely, it may be more appropriate for another member of staff to take the file over.
- 6.2 Following closure of the complaint, howsoever resolved, Philip Warford and the members of staff involved will hold a debrief meeting. The debrief meeting is in order to draw out any trends or lessons to be learnt from the circumstances surrounding the complaint and the way in which the process was applied in order to improve the firm's responses and procedures.

Renaissance Legal v.1 August 2010