



Dere Street Barristers

Chambers Complaints Procedure

Dere Street Barristers is proud to maintain the highest standards of professionalism. As part of this our complaints policy is designed to be transparent and easy for clients to use should they feel it necessary. We promise that all complaints will be dealt with in the same manner as we deal with all other issues: quickly, politely, efficiently and with sensitivity.

How can I complain and about what?

1. A complaint may be made in writing, about any aspect of the service provided by the members of Chambers or the staff of Dere Street Barristers.
2. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, has a twelve-month time limit in which a complaint must be raised from the date of the act or omission complained of from when the complainant should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint without taking advice from a third party. The Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances. Chambers must therefore have regard to that time frame when deciding whether they are able to investigate your complaint. Chambers will not therefore usually deal with complaints that fall outside of the twelve month time limit.

To whom may a complaint be made?

3. In the first instance it should be made to the Head Clerk, Phil Paxton or in his absence to the Head of Chambers, John Elvidge KC.

What is the procedure for complaints made in writing?

4. All written complaints regarding a member of Chambers or a member of staff will be passed immediately to the Head Clerk regardless of to whom it refers unless it refers to the Head Clerk when it will be passed to the Head of Chambers. It is the Head Clerk's responsibility to ensure that the procedures in this document are complied with and that your complaint is dealt with swiftly and fairly.
5. When making a written complaint please provide the following details:

- your name and address;
 - which member of Chambers, or staff member, you are complaining about;
 - the detail of the complaint; and
 - what you would like done about it.
6. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 7 days by the Head Clerk. Within 21 days of your letter being received the Head of Chambers or his deputy will investigate. If he finds later that he is not going to reply within this timescale he will set a new date for his reply and inform you of that date. The reply will set out:
- the nature and scope of the investigation;
 - the conclusion on each complaint and the basis for that conclusion; and
 - if it is found that you are justified in your complaint, the proposals for resolving the complaint.

Will my complaint be kept confidential?

7. All communications and documents relating to complaints will be kept confidential and disclosed only so far as is necessary for:
- the investigation and resolution of the complaint;
 - internal Chambers' review for the purposes of improving practice/procedures;
 - complying with requests from the Bar Standards Board in the exercise of its monitoring and or auditing functions.
8. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. The Head Clerk will report to the executive board annually, considering the number of complaints received, the subject areas of the complaint and the outcomes, with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

9. If you are unhappy with:
- the outcome, **or**
 - your complaint has not been dealt within eight weeks, **or**
 - the way in which we have handled your complaint,

you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers.

You must complain to the Legal Ombudsman:

- within six years of your barrister's actions/failure to act, **or** no later than three years after you should reasonably have known there were grounds to complain.
- You must also complain to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving your barrister's final response to your complaint.

You can write to them at:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167,
Slough, SL1 0EH.
Telephone Number: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

10. As an alternative you may contact the Bar Standards Board at:
Bar Standards Board
Professional Conduct Department
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7JZ

Improving our service

11. Chambers take complaints very seriously and always seeks to improve its service. We appreciate that it is often difficult for people to complain. Once your complaint has been resolved the Head Clerk will consider what steps should be implemented to reduce the likelihood of a similar complaint arising in the future.

Professional Duty to Notify

12. Any complaint which involves an allegation of negligence or any other possible claim on the Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund Ltd (BMIF) will be reported immediately by the member of chambers to whom the complaint refers to the BMIF even though the complaint is being investigated internally under this procedure.