

## **DDE LAW COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

We aim to deal with any complaints promptly, fairly, openly and effectively.

Our definition of a complaint is:

“any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction referred to any person in our organisation by a client”.

A complaint can be identified through a letter, telephone call, e-mail, and fax or in the course of a face to face conversation.

A complaint may involve:

- dissatisfaction with the handling of a case
- disappointment with an alleged lack of communication
- frustration with an alleged lack of case progress
- an allegation of discrimination or
- dissatisfaction with the outcome of the case

However, issues of a very minor nature, for example, not returning a non-urgent telephone call until the following day will not be recorded as a complaint.

It is the policy of the firm that:

- every complaint made by a client is reported and recorded centrally
- every complaint received is responded to appropriately and
- the cause of the problem is identified, appropriate redress is offered, and
- unsatisfactory procedures are corrected

We inform clients in writing at the outset of their matter of their right to complain and how complaints can be made. We also advise them of their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.

When a client makes a complaint, it is handled in accordance with our complaints handling procedure. On receipt of a complaint, Eleanor Beckingham sends the client our standard letter which sets out our complaints handling procedure, outlining the relevant stages and timescales. This

letter is sent within 5 working days of the receipt of complaint. Where appropriate, we shall ensure that our procedure is tailored in response to the needs of our individual clients, especially those who are vulnerable.

We allow a maximum of eight weeks to consider the complaint. If for any reason we are unable to resolve the problem within that timeframe, where the complaint has not been settled or dealt with to a client's satisfaction, we advise the client again in writing of their right to pass the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.

We report and record every complaint made centrally. All complaints are referred to Eleanor Beckingham in the first instance, who:

- reviews the matter with any staff member involved
- identifies the cause of any problems of which the client has complained
- determines what degree of validity the complaint has and
- decides how the complaint should be resolved

Where Eleanor Beckingham identifies a potential negligence claim or where a client claims financial loss, compensation or threatens legal action, the case must be referred discussed immediately with our COLP, Andrew Egerton and a decision will be made in conjunction with our insurers, whether we should continue with this complaints procedure or adopt some other course of action.

We inform clients if we discover any act or omission which could give rise to a claim by them against us but before doing so fee earners must refer any such cases to their supervisor for advice. If the supervisor agrees that the circumstances of the case could give rise to a claim then the case must be referred immediately to Eleanor Beckingham who will decide, in conjunction with our insurers, what information should be provided to the client.

Eleanor Beckingham will offer the client appropriate redress and recommend amendments to unsatisfactory procedures to the Supervisors/ COLP where appropriate to ensure that any unsatisfactory procedures are corrected.

Any complaints made where Eleanor Beckingham had conduct of the matter are referred to Andrew Egerton.

Eleanor Beckingham keeps details of all complaints received in a central record. Copies of any documents/correspondence showing how each complaint is resolved are also retained on the central record.

Eleanor Beckingham has overall responsibility for handling complaints and carries out an analysis of the central record of complaints annually. Following this review he decides whether any action can be taken to improve our services. The results of the review (i.e. any trends identified and action proposed) are documented.

Eleanor Beckingham is responsible for the operation of this procedure. He will review it annually to verify that it is in effective operation.

**DDE LAW**