

DS Legal Complaints Policy & Procedure

DS Legal is committed to providing a high- quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

If you have a concern or a complaint, please contact us as soon as you are aware of the problem so this can be addressed. Please address your concerns to Colleen Saunders, DS Legal, Cheltenham Office, Eagle Tower, Montpellier Drive, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 1TA or by email to colleen@ds-legal.co.uk

What will happen next?

1. Within five days we will send you a letter acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain the details. We may suggest that we meet to clarify any details.
2. We will then record your complaint in our central register and open a file for your complaint and investigate your complaint. This may involve one or more of the following steps.
 - Colleen Saunders who is a Barrister consultant will consider your complaint in detail; or
 - Mark Saunders will investigate your complaint.
3. At this stage, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you within 14 days of first receiving your complaint. If you would prefer not to meet, or if we cannot arrange this within an agreed timescale, we will write to you setting out our views of the situation and any redress.
4. Within three days of the meeting we will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions that we have agreed with you. In appropriate cases we would offer an apology, a reduction of any bill or repayment in relation to any payment in relation to any payment received.

5. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again to explain why you remain unhappy with our response and we will review your comments. Depending on the matter we may at this stage arrange for another partner to review the decision.
6. If appropriate we will invite you to agree to an independent mediation. This again may take longer than 10 days and we will do our best to let you know how long this will take.
7. We will let you know the result of the review within 5 days of the end of the review. At this stage, we will write to you confirm our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

Legal Ombudsman

8. If you are still not satisfied, you can then contact the Legal Ombudsman. (www.legalombudsman.org.uk) PO Box 6167, slough, SL1 0EH. Telephone number 0300 555 0330 about your complaint.
9. The legal ombudsman expects complaints to be made to it **within one year** of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or **within one year** of you realising there was a concern. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman **within six months** of our final response to you.

Complaints about costs.

10. If your complaint is specifically about our bill, you have the right to object, and apply to the court for what is called a **“detailed assessment.”** The procedure is set out in sections 70, 71 and 72 of the Solicitors Act 1974. You should be aware that there are strict time limits applicable to this procedure. In particular, Section 70 requires an application to the court for assessment of costs to be made **within one month of the date of the solicitors bill.** You may wish therefore to seek independent legal advice. We may also be entitled to charge interest on any outstanding sums from any invoices that are unpaid in full or part.

We are required to inform you that alternative complaints handling bodies (such as Pro Mediate, Brow Farm, Top Road, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SP, 01928 732455,

www.promediate.co.uk) exist which are able to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and we wish to use such a scheme. Whilst it is free to use the Legal Ombudsman service, there is a fee for using an alternative complaints handling body. Given the cost and the fact that mediation is not binding on you or us we see no benefit in this, and it will be unusual for us to agree to a reference to such a body.

If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.