

Raising concerns and making complaints – procedure for clients

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mills & Reeve LLP (“firm”) is committed to providing outstanding client service to all its clients and we do our utmost to treat all our clients fairly. When a problem arises or something goes wrong, we need you to let us know as soon as possible. This gives us the opportunity to investigate your concerns objectively, address the issues you have raised and to try to satisfy your concerns. It also helps us to improve our standards.

2 What to do if you have concerns about the service we have provided

- 2.1 In the first instance, we would like you to seek to resolve any concerns you have regarding your matter with the individual dealing with the work (or their supervisor) or the person responsible for managing the firm’s relationship with you. You should contact the lawyer dealing with the matter (or their supervisor) or the partner managing our relationship with you without delay and they will attempt to deal with your concerns informally. You can refer to the initial letter we sent to you at the start of your matter for their details and contact them either by telephone, in writing or by email.
- 2.2 The lawyer dealing with the matter (or their supervisor) or the partner managing our relationship with you will acknowledge your concerns within 3 working days and provide you with a copy of this procedure. They may also need to ask you for further clarification about your concerns.
- 2.3 It may be possible to offer a solution to promptly resolve your concerns and if so, the lawyer handling your matter (or their supervisor) or the partner managing your relationship with the firm will write to you to ask whether the proposed solution is acceptable. However, if this is not possible, your concerns will be investigated by the supervising partner or the partner managing your relationship with the firm (or by someone on their behalf and at their direction), who will either:
- 2.3.1 send you a detailed written reply to your concerns within 28 days of acknowledging receipt of your concerns and include our suggestions for resolving the matter; or
- 2.3.2 if they believe it would be helpful, contact you to try to arrange a meeting with you to discuss your concerns and put forward a solution, and will write to you as soon as possible (and in any event within 7 working days of the meeting) to confirm the outcome of that meeting and, if applicable, the solution agreed.
- 2.4 If you inform us that the solution proposed (either in writing or at a meeting) is not acceptable you may ask for the matter to be passed to the firm’s Complaints Partner, Guy Hinchley, and be dealt with as a formal complaint, in accordance with paragraph 3 below.

- 2.5 You can, of course, make a complaint (as defined in paragraph 3.1) to the Complaints Partner at any time.

3 Making a complaint to the Complaints Partner

- 3.1 If you are unable to resolve your concerns with the individual dealing with the work, the matter partner or the person responsible for managing the firm's relationship with you (or you do not wish to), you should make a complaint to the Complaints Partner, Guy Hinchley, either orally or in writing, by setting out your expression(s) of dissatisfaction and the financial loss, distress, inconvenience or other detriment you have suffered (or may suffer).
- 3.2 The Complaints Partner will follow the following timetable:
- 3.2.1 acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days;
 - 3.2.2 ask you for further clarification about your complaint(s) if necessary, as soon as reasonably practicable;
 - 3.2.3 conduct an investigation of your complaint either personally or by referring the matter to another partner or member of the management team as soon as reasonably practicable; and
 - 3.2.4 endeavour to write to you (or someone on his behalf and at his direction shall do so) to confirm the firm's full and final position on your complaint and set out our reasons within 28 days of acknowledging receipt of your complaint. If this is not possible we will update you within this time frame.
- 3.3 If we have not received an acknowledgement from you within 4 weeks of the date of our full and final response, we shall assume that you are satisfied with our response and that the complaint has been settled.

4 Complaints about bills

- 4.1 Please also use this procedure if you have a concern or complaint about a bill. In addition, you have the right to object to a bill by applying to the court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. If you apply to the court, the Legal Ombudsman (see below for details) may decide not to deal with a complaint about the bill.

5 Referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman

- 5.1 If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction within eight weeks of receiving full details of your complaint (in accordance with paragraph 3.1), you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider your complaint. The Legal Ombudsman is an independent complaints body which was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 and deals with legal services complaints. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted at PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ or by email to enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk. Normally, you will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint or within six years of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring (or if outside of this period, within three years of when you should reasonably have been aware of it). The act or omission, or when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint must have been after 5 October 2010. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman may consider complaints from prospective clients in

certain circumstances, but may decline to deal with complaints from certain types of clients. For further information you should contact the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or go to www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

- 5.2 We are obliged to point out to you that there are alternative complaints bodies, such as ProMediate, (whose website address is www.ProMediate.co.uk), exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should all parties agree to use such a scheme.
- 5.3 This firm submits to the jurisdiction of the Legal Ombudsman but does not agree to using ProMediate. If you wish to discuss the matter of mediation further please contact Guy Hinchley.
- 5.4 As a result of European regulations on alternative dispute resolution “ADR”, we are obliged to provide a link on the Mills & Reeve website to the European online dispute resolution “ODR” platform. Please note, however, that the ODR platform only transmits disputes to ADR bodies which are approved under European law and these do not currently include the Legal Ombudsman scheme.

6 Referring a complaint to the Solicitors Regulation Authority (“SRA”)

- 6.1 Subject to paragraph 5.1 above, complaints about poor service should be directed to the Legal Ombudsman. You should report a matter direct to the SRA if you think a firm or anyone regulated by the SRA has breached an SRA Principle. Details of the SRA Principles can be found at <http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/>.
- 6.2 The SRA can be contacted via their website: <http://www.sra.org.uk/contactus/> or by the following means:
 - 6.2.1 Phone: 0370 606 2555 (or +44(0)121 329 6800 for international callers)
 - 6.2.2 Fax: +44 (0)121 616 1999
 - 6.2.3 Post: Solicitors Regulation Authority, The Cube, 199 Wharf Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN

7 General points

- 7.1 If we have to change any of the timescales set out in this procedure, we will let you know and explain the reasons for the change.
- 7.2 The firm is bound by the rules of the SRA and is not entitled to charge for handling a complaint.

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