

Legal Ombudsman

Here to help

What to do if you have a complaint

The Legal Ombudsman can help you resolve your complaint about legal services

- Are you unhappy with the service your lawyer or law firm has provided?
- Do you think your lawyer has failed to do what they agreed to do, been slow in responding to your calls, or increased their charges without properly explaining this to you?
- Have you told them about this and still not received a satisfactory response?

This leaflet gives you information about the Legal Ombudsman and the services we provide. It covers the type of complaints we can deal with and the people and organisations we can help. There is also a step-by-step guide inside to help you understand how the service works.

We are an independent organisation with official powers to resolve complaints about legal services. We are completely impartial and don't take sides. When we receive a complaint, we look at all the facts so we can reach an outcome that is fair for everyone involved. If we decide the service you received was unsatisfactory, we can make sure your lawyer or law firm puts it right.

Our service is free to consumers.

What issues can we help resolve?

We can get involved in lots of different types of legal service complaints, such as the way a lawyer has dealt with a will or a family issue. We can also help if you have had poor service when you bought or sold a house or made a personal injury claim.

We can look into complaints about all sorts of lawyers: solicitors, barristers, licensed conveyancers, cost lawyers, legal executives, notaries, patent attorneys, trade mark attorneys, law firms and companies providing legal services.

To find out if we can help, please get in touch. You'll find our contact details on the back of this leaflet.

Who can use our service?

Our service is open to all members of the public and to very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts.

We prefer you to come to us directly, but you can ask a friend, family member or anyone else to get in touch on your behalf. If you decide to pay someone to act as your representative, such as a claims management company, you will have to pay their costs.

To check if we can help you, please call us.

What if we can't help?

If we can't help, we can put you in touch with other organisations that can investigate things like professional misconduct. The Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board, for example, can deal with issues that are beyond our powers.

Here are the steps you need to take

Step 1: Tell your lawyer

You have the right to expect the highest standard of service and fairness from your lawyer. But sometimes things do go wrong.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received, tell your lawyer so they have a chance to put things right. Every lawyer should explain how their own complaints handling procedure works. So ask them about this first.

You must give your lawyer a chance to resolve your complaint before the Legal Ombudsman can get involved. Make your complaint to them as soon as you are aware there's a problem – don't leave it too long.

If you are having difficulties contacting your lawyer and are not sure what to do next, please get in touch with us.

Step 2: Give your lawyer time to resolve things

You should allow your lawyer up to eight weeks to resolve your complaint. If they have failed to deal with the complaint to your satisfaction in that time, you can involve the Legal Ombudsman.

Step 3: Bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman

Come to us as soon as you can after trying to sort things out with your lawyer yourself. If you are not happy with their final response, you have up to 6 months to bring your complaint to us. Your complaint should also be brought to us no later than 12 months from when the problem first happened, or from when you should reasonably have become aware of the problem.

When you contact us we will need you and your lawyer to provide information about the steps that have been taken to resolve the complaint before it reached us. Keep copies of any written correspondence as well as any notes you might have made on what happened and when.

When you contact us, it will help if you have:

- the name and address of the lawyer or law firm involved
- the date you first told them about your complaint
- the date you first became aware of the problem you are complaining to them about
- details of the response you received from them.

Action we can take

If we agree that your lawyer's service has been unsatisfactory, we can ask them to:

- apologise to you
- give back any documents you might need
- do more work for you if this can put right what went wrong
- refund or reduce your legal fees, or
- pay compensation if you have lost out or been badly treated (this can be anything up to £30,000).

Most complaints brought to us can be resolved informally by getting everyone to agree what's fair. We can also carry out formal investigations if necessary. But these can take longer to complete.

Once accepted, an Ombudsman's decision is final.

How to contact us

Call

You can call us on **0300 555 0333**

(Calls to the Legal Ombudsman cost the same as a normal 01 or 02 landline number, even from a mobile phone, and are recorded for training and monitoring purposes).

We are open Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5.30pm.

If you are calling from overseas, please call +44 121 245 3050.

For our minicom call 0300 555 1777.

Email

You can also email us at **enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk**

If you want to find out more about us and what we do, please visit **www.legalombudsman.org.uk**

Write

If you prefer, you can write to us at

Legal Ombudsman

PO Box 6806

Wolverhampton

WV1 9WJ

If you need information in another language or in large print, Braille or on audio CD, please get in touch.