Liverpool Law Clinic – Complaints Procedure

Liverpool Law Clinic is committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. If something goes wrong or if you are unhappy in anyway about the service you receive, we would like you to tell us. This will help us to improve. We aim to deal with any complaints promptly, fairly, openly and effectively. We will not charge you for investigating or resolving your complaint.

A link to this policy, together with details of your right to complain to us, to the Legal Ombudsman and, where relevant, to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, is provided to you in writing in your Client Care Letter at the start of your matter.

If you need this policy, or any of our correspondence with you about your complaint, in a different format (for example large print or audio) or in a different language, please let us know and we will do what we can to help.

How do I complain?

Please tell the staff member dealing with your case why you are not happy. They may be able to sort out your problem immediately. You can do this by speaking to them, writing an email to them, or telephoning them on the office number on your Client Care Letter.

What will happen next?

1. The staff member must tell the Complaints Officer ("the Officer") that you have raised a complaint. This allows us to have an overview of any problems which keep coming up. This does not stop the staff member from helping to sort out your problem immediately. The Officer maintains a written record of all complaints received. This record is reviewed periodically by the Officer to identify any recurring issues and to help us improve our service.
2. The Officer will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within one week of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
3. If your complaint is about the staff member who is also the Complaints Officer, the Director of the Clinic will deal with your complaint. In that case, below, read 'Director' instead of 'the Officer'.
4. The Officer may ask you to provide further information or details about your complaint if it has not already been resolved. The Officer will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve reviewing your file and asking the person who was responsible for the issue to comment on your complaint.
5. Within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter the Officer will contact you to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. If it is possible and helpful, you can come to an in-person meeting with the Officer.
6. Within three days of the discussion or meeting, the Officer will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions they have agreed with you.
7. If you do not want to discuss the matter, or it is not possible, the Officer will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including any suggestions for resolving the matter, within 21 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.

What happens if the Law Clinic does not resolve my problem?

The Legal Ombudsman is an independent service which can investigate complaints about legal services. You can complain to the Legal Ombudsman if:

a) you are not satisfied with the Officer's suggestions to resolve the problem; or
b) we have not considered and resolved your complaint within 8 weeks of your raising it; or
c) the ombudsman considers that there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner or that an inhouse resolution to your complaint is not possible due to irretrievable breakdown in the relationship

If you are unhappy with our response, you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to review your complaint. You must do this within six months of the date of our final response to your complaint. You can contact them on 0300 555 0333, at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk, or at PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ.

From the 1 April 2023 the Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within a year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or within a year of you realising there was a concern. The requirement to refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you remains the same. (Until 1st April 2023 the time limit is six years).

For further information, you can visit the Legal Ombudsman's website here https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/how-to-complain/?source=817075da-41b2-4f10-a1ac-44ef39407720 and contact the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk or write to them at PO Box 6806 Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ

In addition to directing a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman you will be able to refer your dispute for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). There are three Institutions available to deal with disputes in the legal services sector: Ombudsman Services, ProMediate and Small Claims Mediation. If you ask us we will provide you with contact details for those mediation service

If we have not resolved your complaint within 8 weeks of you raising it, we will write to you confirming this and explaining your right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, contact details for approved ADR providers and whether we agree to use the scheme operated by the provider.

You also have the right to make a report to the Solicitors Regulation Authority or the Bar Standards Board if your complaint relates to allegations of dishonesty or discrimination or a breach of professional rules.