

Thompson Smith and Puxon Complaints Handling Procedure

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. We acknowledge that we may not always get it right, so, if something has gone wrong, and you have a complaint about our service or a bill that we have rendered, or both, we need you to tell us. This will help us to improve our standards of service.

1 How do I make a complaint?

- 1.1 You can contact us in writing (by letter or email) or by telephone.
- 1.2 In the first instance, it may be helpful to contact the person who is working on your case to discuss your concerns and we will do our best to resolve any issues. If you do not feel able to discuss your concerns with them, please contact the person responsible for the overall supervision of your matter, who will be named in the engagement letter we sent you at the beginning of your matter.
- 1.3 If you do not feel able to raise your concerns with either of these people, or you are unsatisfied with their response, please contact our Head of Professional Standards, Nicola Crisell. Nicola's contact details are

nicola.crisell@tsplegal.com 01206 217 012 (Direct line) 07808 781 077 (Mobile)

- 1.4 To help us to understand your complaint, and in order that we do not miss anything, please tell us:
 - 1.4.1 your full name and contact details
 - 1.4.2 what you think we have got wrong
 - 1.4.3 how you would like your complaint to be resolved

2 How will you deal with my complaint?

- 2.1 We will write to you within five working days acknowledging your complaint, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
- 2.2 We will then investigate your complaint. This will usually involve:
 - 2.2.1 reviewing your complaint
 - 2.2.2 reviewing your file(s) and other relevant documents; and
 - 2.2.3 liaising with the person who dealt with your matter.
- 2.3 We may also need to ask you for further information or documents. If so, we will ask you to provide the information within a specific period of time.
- 2.4 We will update you on the progress of your complaint at appropriate times.

- 2.5 We may also, if appropriate, invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint. You do not have to attend if you do not wish to or if you are unable to. We will be happy to discuss the matter with you by telephone.
- 2.6 We will write to you at the end of our investigation to tell you what we have done and what we propose to do to resolve your complaint. Where possible, we will aim to do this within 20 working days of the date of our letter of acknowledgement.
- 2.7 At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again, no later than five working days following receipt of our initial response, and we will review our decision. We will then write to you within 5 working days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.
- 2.8 If we have to change any of the timescales detailed above we will let you know.

3 What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint

- 3.1 We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time you may be able to complain to the Legal Ombudsman. This applies if you are an individual, a business with fewer than 10 employees and turnover or assets not exceeding a certain threshold, a charity or trust with a net income of less than £1m, or if you fall within certain other categories (you can find out more from the Legal Ombudsman—www.legalombudsman.org.uk). The Legal Ombudsman will look at your complaint independently and it will not affect how we handle your matter.
- 3.2 Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. If you have, then you must take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman:
- 3.2.1 within six months of receiving a final response to your complaint; **and**
 - 3.2.2 no more than one year from the date of the act/omission you are concerned about;
or
 - 3.2.3 no more than one year from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.
- 3.3 If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman, please contact them.

Contact details

Visit: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Call: 0300 555 0333 between 9.00 to 17.00

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

3.4 Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm wish to use such a scheme. We have, however, chosen not to adopt an ADR process. If, therefore, you wish to complain further, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman.

4 What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour

4.1 The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

4.2 Visit its website to see how you can raise your concerns with the [Solicitors Regulation Authority](#).

4.3 What to do if you are unhappy with our handling of your data

4.4 If you are not satisfied with our processing of your data, or you have a complaint relating to our handling of your data, you have the right to make a complaint, at any time, to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues. However, the ICO have said that they prefer that initially any complaint is made to the relevant organisation under their own complaints handling procedure. Complaints may, after that, be referred to the ICO if a resolution cannot be agreed, or at any time prior to that if you are not satisfied with our complaint handling. The ICO have said they will prioritise the investigation of cases where an organisation has already followed their own complaints handling procedure.

5 What will it cost?

5.1 We will not charge you for handling your complaint.

5.2 Please note that if we have issued a bill for work done on the matter, and all or some of the bill is not paid, we may be entitled to charge interest on the amount outstanding. This is explained in our Terms of Business.

5.3 The Legal Ombudsman service is free of charge.