



QUEEN SQUARE
CHAMBERS

Complaints Policy / Protocol

QUEEN SQUARE CHAMBERS
56 QUEEN SQUARE
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Queen Square Chambers Complaints Procedure

Introduction

1. Members of *Queen Square Chambers* pride themselves on the quality of the advice, advocacy and other legal services that they provide, and the staff at *Queen Square Chambers* pride themselves on the quality of service that they provide.
2. *Queen Square Chambers* is committed to ensuring that the standards of its service are maintained and accordingly welcomes feedback, both negative and positive.
3. *Queen Square Chambers* encourages its members' lay and professional clients to raise concerns over quality of work as soon as they arise so that they may be dealt with quickly.
4. It is possible that some concerns or complaints may be able to be dealt with informally in the first instance, either by raising it with the barrister involved or, if preferred, with the Senior Complaints Manager.
5. This may not, however, always be sufficient to adequately address the concern or complaint and to accommodate that scenario *Queen Square Chambers* also operates a formal complaints procedure which is always available to a client if they remain dissatisfied with the response they receive from the barrister or the Senior Complaints Manager. That procedure is set out below.
6. Lay clients (that is, those who have instructed the solicitors who instruct the barrister) may complain about a barrister through the solicitors, but they do not have to. They are welcome to complain directly to *Queen Square Chambers*.
7. Alternatively, complaints relating to misconduct may be made to the Bar Standards Board who can be found at this address:-

Complaints Team
Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7HZ
Tel: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217

8. On the 6th October 2010 the Legal Ombudsman Scheme came into effect. Under this Scheme complaints as to levels of service provided by barristers (as opposed to issues of misconduct) should be made to the Legal Ombudsman and not the Bar Standards Board Complaints Committee. For clarification, misconduct involves any breach of the Bar's Code of Conduct and any complaints falling within that category will not be entertained by the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's remit covers complaints pertaining to service levels. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ
Tel: 0300 555 0333 (calls may be recorded)
www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Formal complaints procedure

Manner of making of complaints

9. An initial complaint or cause for concern may be raised with the relevant barrister directly or with chambers' Senior Complaints Manager who will undertake a review of the details giving rise to the expression of dissatisfaction and provide a prompt response. Contact details are:

Queen Square Chambers, 56 Queen Square, Bristol BS1 4PR

Complaints@qs-c.co.uk

10. In the event that this response does not adequately explain or ameliorate the client's concerns then it is open to them to invoke the formal complaints procedure. Any such request should be made in writing and addressed to: -

The Head of Chambers, Queen Square Chambers, 56 Queen Square, Bristol BS1 4PR

save when they relate to the Head of Chambers him/herself in which case they should be addressed to the Senior Complaints Manager at the same address.

11. In either case the complainant should mark the envelope clearly 'CCP' in the top left hand corner.

12. Written complaints should set out the following information:-

(1) the name and address and, where possible, the telephone number and e-mail address of the person making the complaint,

(2) the member(s) of Chambers or member(s) of Chambers' staff about whom the complaint is being made and

(3) details of the complaint.

13. Where by reason of disability the complainant is unable to make a complaint in writing they may make a complaint by telephone to the Head of Chambers or, where the complaint concerns the Head of Chambers, to the Senior Complaints Manager. The names of the present Head of Chambers and Senior Complaints Manager will be given to anyone telephoning Chambers and asking for them.

14. During any period when the Head of Chambers or Senior Complaints Manager is not regularly available they shall appoint a deputy to deal with complaints in their absence. All mail marked 'CCP' shall be passed to them during that period.

Response to complaint

15. Within two working days of receiving the complaint the person receiving the complaint shall identify a suitable member of Chambers, who shall be someone other than the person about whom the complaint is made, to deal with the complaint and, unless not reasonably practicable, inform the Complaints Manager of the complaint.

16. Within five working days of receiving the complaint the person receiving the complaint shall write to the complainant providing the following information:-

(1) the name of the person who will deal with the complaint together with a description of that person's role in Chambers,

(2) a copy of this document,

(3) the date by which the complainant will next hear from chambers and

(4) information: that the complainant may alternatively complain to the **Legal Ombudsman** and as to the relevant time limits that apply to such a complaint.

Resolution of complaint

17. Within twenty-one days of receiving the complaint the person dealing with the complaint shall seek to write to the complainant setting out this information:-

(1) the nature and scope of their investigation,

(2) the conclusion in relation to each element of complaint and the reasons for coming to that conclusion and

(3) if the complaint is well founded, proposals for resolving the complaint.

18. Where, within twenty-one days of receiving the complaint the person dealing with the complaint is unable to write a letter as just set out, they shall write explaining, where possible, what the delay has been and setting a new date on which such a letter will be sent to the complainant.

19. The person dealing with the complaint shall regularly update the Head of Chambers, or, where the complaint relates to the Head of Chambers, the Complaints Manager, on the progress of their investigation and copy them all correspondence to the complainant in relation to the complaint.

General

20. *Queen Square Chambers* shall attempt to resolve all complaints within three months of their having been made.

Reference of complaints to Chambers pursuant to Annexe J of the Bar Code of Conduct ('The Complaints Rules')

21. Where the commissioner refers a complaint to Chambers for investigation and resolution, the matter shall be dealt with as though the complainant had complained directly to Chambers and the following further requirements shall also be met.

22. Within six weeks of the date of the referral of the complaint to Chambers the Head of Chambers shall inform the Commissioner of the progress which has been made in considering the complaint, or of the outcome of the complaint.

23. Where the investigation is not completed within six weeks of the referral the Head of Chambers shall provide updates on progress to the Commissioner every six weeks until the investigation is concluded and shall then inform the Commissioner of the outcome of the complaint.

Documents and Record Keeping:

24. All communications and documents relating to complaints shall be kept confidential and disclosed only so far as is necessary for:-

(1) the investigation and resolution of the complaint,

(2) internal Chambers review for the purposes of improving practice and

(3) complying with requests from the Bar Standards Board in the exercise of its monitoring and or auditing functions.

25. A record shall be kept of each complaint, all steps taken in response to it and the outcome of the complaint, together with a copy of all correspondence, including electronic mail, and all other documents generated in response to the complaint. The records and copies should be kept for six years.

Review of complaints received:

26. The Head of Chambers shall report annually to a meeting of the Management Committee on the number of complaints received, the subject areas of the complaints and the outcomes. The complaints shall be reviewed at this meeting in an effort to discern any trends and possible training issues.

Letting clients know about the complaints policy:

27. There is no purpose in having a complaints policy about which no one knows. In this section of the policy the ways in which the policy is to be publicised and clients made aware of it is set out.

Notification of clients of procedure

28. Where any barrister at *Queen Square Chambers* receives instructions from a new professional or a new lay client they shall be informed in writing:-

(1) that there is available upon request a Chambers Complaints Procedure and

(2) that the lay client may complain directly to Chambers without going through solicitors.

Professional clients shall be informed of these matters in the letter acknowledging receipt of the instructions. Lay clients shall be informed of the information in this way: in the letter to the professional clients acknowledging receipt of the instructions, the professional clients will be requested to pass the information about the Chambers Complaints Procedure on to the lay client.

29. Where a barrister receives public or licensed access instructions via an intermediary, the intermediary shall also be informed of these matters.

Availability of Chambers Complaints Policy

30. The Chambers' Complaints Procedure shall appear on the Chambers' website.

31. On request *Queen Square Chambers* shall supply to anyone who requests it a copy of its complaints policy.