

MERRITTS SOLICITORS LLP

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our complaints policy

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us improve our standards. Making a complaint will not affect how we handle your matter.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a complaint, please contact Mrs Helen Baxter, our client care partner. You can contact her at hb@merritts-solicitors.co.uk or at The Manor House, 83 High Street, Yarm, TS15 9BG.

If we have to change any of the timescales set out below we will let you know and explain why.

What will happen next?

1. We will send you a letter or email acknowledging your complaint and asking you to confirm or explain any details. If it seems appropriate, we will suggest a meeting at this stage. We will also let you know the name of the person who will be dealing with your complaint.
2. We will then record your complaint on our central register and open a file for your complaint. We will also investigate your complaint by examining the relevant file.
3. Within 10 working days of our letter or email acknowledging your complaint we will investigate your complaint and provide you with a substantive response. If this is not possible within this timescale then we will provide you with a date by when you will receive the substantive response setting out the investigator's views on the situation and any redress that is felt to be appropriate.
4. If you do not accept the response, then we will then invite you to meet Helen Baxter to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. We would hope to be in a position to meet with you in this way in no longer than 14 days after your request for a meeting.
5. Within 2 days of any meeting, we will write to you to confirm what took place and any suggestions that we have agreed with you. In appropriate cases we could offer an apology, a reduction of any bill or a repayment in respect of any payment received.
6. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied or do not want to have a meeting, please let us know. We will then arrange to review our decision. We will generally aim to do this within 10 days. This will happen in one of the following ways.
 - Helen Baxter will review her decision

- We will arrange for someone in the firm who has not been involved in your complaint to review it
 - Another Partner, will review your complaint
 - We will invite you to agree to independent mediation. We will let you know how long this process will take.
7. We will let you know the result of the review within 5 days of the end of the review. At this time, we will write to you confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help you 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.

You can raise your concerns with the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint

The Legal Ombudsman can help you if we are unable to resolve your complaint ourselves. They will look at your complaint independently and it will not affect how we handle your case.

Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first and we have a period of 8 weeks within which to resolve your complaint. If you have raised your complaint with us and it has not been resolved then you can take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman:

- Within six months of receiving a final response to your complaint

and

- No more than one year from the date of the act/omission; or
- No more than one year from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.
- In the case of a complaint by a personal representative of beneficiary of the estate of a person who, before they died, had not referred the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, the period runs from when the deceased should reasonable have known there was cause for complaint; and
- When the complainant (or the deceased) should reasonably have known there was a cause for complaint will be assessed on the basis of the complainant's (or the deceased's) own knowledge, disregarding what the complainant (or the deceased) might have been told if they had sought advice.

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 10am to 4pm.

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Legal Ombudsman PO BOX 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

ADR

There are a number of external providers who are authorised to deal with a complaint by Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and these include the following:

The Law Society

CILEx Regulation

Council for Licensed Conveyancers

These organisations will provide details of the ADR services that they offer and further details can be provided to you by Merritts, if required.