

Chambers Complaints Procedure

1. Our aim is to provide good service at all times. However if you have a complaint please let us know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. Please note that Chambers will normally only consider complaints that are made within six months of the act or omission complained of.

Complaints Made by Telephone

3. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 4 and 5 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone Stephen Smith. If the complaint is about Stephen Smith, telephone the Head of Chambers - presently Michael Pooles QC. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and attempt to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.
4. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it within the next 14 days so it can be investigated formally.

Complaints made in Writing

5. Please give the following details:
 - Your name and address;
 - Which member(s) of Chambers or member of staff you are complaining about;
 - The detail of the complaint; and
 - What you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to [Stephen Smith at Hailsham Chambers, 4 paper Buildings Temple EC4Y 7EX]. We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

6. Our Chambers has a panel headed by Michael Pooles QC and made up of experienced members of Chambers and a senior member of staff, which considers any written complaint. Within 14 days of your letter being received the

head of the panel or his deputy in his absence will appoint a member of the panel to investigate it. If your complaint is against the head of the panel, the next most senior member of the panel will investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

7. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know he has been appointed and that he will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If he finds later that he is not going to be able to reply within 14 days he will set a new date for his reply and inform you. His reply will set out:
 - The nature and scope of his investigation;
 - His conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
 - If he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

8. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the head of chambers, members of our management committee and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the panel and the person who investigates the complaint. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

Our Policy

9. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years. Our management committee inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Bar Standards Board (the regulatory arm of the Bar Council, the professional body for barristers)

We hope that you will use our procedure. However, if you would rather not do so or are unhappy with the outcome you may take up your complaint with the Bar Standards Board at any time. Please note that the Bar Standards Board has a six-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. However, should you raise your complaint with Chambers first, there is a three month time limit from the conclusion of the investigation by Chambers in which to raise your complaint with the Board. You can write to them at: Complaints Team; Bar Standards Board; 289-293 High Holborn; London WC1V 7HZ; Tel: 020 7611 1444; Fax: 020 7831 9217. See also www.barstandardsboard.org.uk