

ATLANTIC CHAMBERS COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Our Policy

Our aim is to give all our clients the best possible service; however we recognise that there may be occasions when, for whatever reason, we do not always meet expectations and that complaints may arise as a consequence. When this occurs, we have a procedure in place for investigating complaints and, so far as possible, resolving them to our clients' satisfaction. We review our procedure periodically, to ensure that it meets the requirements of changing circumstances, and we rely on the results of our investigations to show us how we can improve our services and reduce the risk of future complaints.

2. Who can complain

We accept complaints from anyone who is a client of Chambers, or has an issue relating to the conduct of any of our barristers. Clients include (but are not limited to):-

- (a) solicitors who have instructed a barrister in these Chambers;
- (b) intermediaries who have instructed a barrister under the Licensed Access Rules;
- (c) members of the public for whom a barrister in these Chambers has acted. If you are a member of the public who is unhappy with the services provided for you by a barrister in these Chambers, you can complain directly to us. There is no need for you to go through a solicitor.

3. When to complain

All complaints must be received within 12 months of the act or conduct complained of. However, if you have ample evidence and it is a serious issue we can look at complaints made outside of this time limit.

4. How to make a complaint

We will accept a complaint in whatever form is most convenient for you. You can complain by:-

- (a) letter, addressed to the Complaints Officer at the Chambers' address;
- (b) telephone to 0151-236 4421;
- (c) fax addressed to the Complaints Officer on 0151-236 1559;
- (d) email to clerks@atlanticchambers.co.uk.

Whichever way you contact us, if you explain that you want to make a complaint, our staff will ensure that the Complaints Procedure is operated.

5. How the Procedure works

We have a Complaints Officer who is a barrister in these Chambers with responsibility for ensuring that the Complaints Procedure operates satisfactorily. Most complaints are investigated by the Complaints Officer, although in exceptional circumstances the Chambers Management Committee may appoint some other barrister to carry out the investigation. When you tell Chambers that you wish to make a complaint the Complaints Officer will be told about it and given any details of our complaint which you have supplied. The Complaints Officer will write to you within 7 days acknowledging receipt of your complaint, asking for further information needed to process it and explaining the steps that will be taken to investigate it.

The Complaints Officer will carry out a full investigation into your complaint, getting any necessary information from you, from the person complained about and from any other person involved. All aspects of the complaint will be considered to ensure it is dealt with to your satisfaction and the root cause of the complaint is properly identified. If the investigation is lengthy, the Complaints Officer will keep you informed as to its progress. Once the investigation has been completed, the Complaints Officer will write to tell you whether your complaint has been found to be justified. If it has been found to be justified, you will be told what action will be taken to put matters right. If it has been found not to be justified, you will be told the reason for this.

6. Record of complaints

Written records are kept of all complaints, including all communications and documents produced during the course of the investigation.

These records are confidential and will only be disclosed (with adequate safeguards to preserve confidentiality so far as possible) for the purpose of (i) investigation of the complaint; (ii) internal Chambers' review to assist in improving standards; and (iii) to comply with any requirement of the Bar Standards Board.

7. Complaining to the Bar Standards Board or Legal Ombudsman

There are 2 regulatory bodies that deal with complaints against barristers: **the Bar Standards Board ("BSB")** will deal with complaints relating to the conduct of a barrister, they will investigate complaints where your barrister may have broken the rules or acted in a way that might damage the public's ability to trust barristers. This would include things like acting dishonestly; taking on work they are not qualified for, bullying, being racist or being homophobic. You have the right to complain directly to the BSB; however they encourage use of Chambers' Complaints Procedure first. You will not suffer any disadvantage from using our Complaints Procedure first. If you are not happy with the way we deal with your complaint, you can refer the matter to the BSB at that stage. Please note the time limit for informing the BSB of

any complaint is 12 months from the event complaint of, or 3 months after you have been told of the result of your complaint to Chambers.

Complaints Department, Bar Standards Board

289-293 High Holborn

London

WC1V 7HZ

Tel: 0207 611 1444

Fax: 0207 831 9217

Email: assessmentcomplaints@barstandardsboard.org.uk

Website : www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

The Legal Ombudsman will deal with the complaints relating to the service provided by a barrister. Once you have made a complaint to us, we have eight weeks to respond, if you aren't happy with our response or we don't respond within the eight weeks then you may direct your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman. Please note that usually the Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers. The Ombudsman will accept complaints within 6 years from the date of the complained of act or omission or 3 years from when the complainant should have known about the complaint.

Legal Ombudsman

PO Box 6806

Wolverhampton

WV1 9WJ

Tel: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

8. Further Information

If you would like any further information, please contact us as suggested in paragraph 4 above.