

## **Walker & Co. – Our Complaints Handling Procedure**

Our Complaints Handling Procedure tells you how we will deal with your complaint and how long it is likely to take. It also provides you with important information about what you can do if you are not happy with the way in which we are dealing with your complaint, or about our final decision.

### **Designated Complaints Handler**

If you have any concerns about our service, our work, or our charges, you should discuss these first with the individual who has day-to-day control of your matter.

If this person cannot satisfactorily address your concerns and you wish to make a complaint, please contact our Designated Complaints Handler, **Catherine Burns**, who is a Director of the firm.

You can write with your complaint to **Walker & Co., 82 High Street, Maltby, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S66 7BN** or telephone on **01709 817 112**.

### **Step One: Acknowledging your Complaint**

Within two working days of receiving your complaint, it will be recorded in our Complaints Register and a separate file will be opened in which we will store any correspondence and other documents relating to your complaint. Within two working days, we will also send you a letter acknowledging your complaint.

If your complaint relates to our refusing to act for you, we may at our discretion decide to follow this complaints procedure, even though we may not be required to do so. However, if we do follow this complaints procedure, it is on the basis that it is not intended to negate, or cast any doubt, on any evidence or other legitimate reasons or arguments we may rely on for having refused to act and is 'without prejudice' to them.

### **Step Two: Investigating your Complaint**

Within five working days of receiving your complaint, we will review your file(s) and any other relevant documentation and send you a letter telling you how we propose to deal with your complaint. Examples of what we might say in this letter are as follows:

- If your complaint is straightforward we might make suggestions as to how we can put things right or we may offer you some form of redress;
- If your complaint is more complicated we might ask you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues;
- We may ask to meet with you to discuss things face-to-face and we would hope to be in a position to meet with you no longer than fourteen working days after first receiving your complaint. If you would prefer not to meet, or if we cannot arrange this within an agreeable timescale, we will write to you fully setting out our views on the situation and making suggestions as to how we can put things right, or asking you to confirm, explain or clarify any issues. Within three working days of any meeting, we will write to you again to confirm what took place and to confirm any offer of redress that we have made.

Whichever form our investigation takes, we will aim to give you our final decision within six weeks of receiving your complaint (or sooner if possible).

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### **Step Three: Appealing against our Final Decision**

If you are not satisfied with our final decision, please let us know and we will review our decision again. We will let you know the result of any review within five working days of receiving your appeal and will then confirm your options in writing. If you remain dissatisfied, you can then contact the Legal Ombudsman about your complaint. We will also advise you whether we are prepared to engage in alternative methods of mediation.

### **Step Four: The Legal Ombudsman**

You may refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them no more than one year of the date of the act or omission being complained about or no more than one year from the date you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final decision to your complaint. The relevant time limits are set out in the version of the Legal Ombudsman's Scheme Rules in force from time to time (which can be accessed at: <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/information-centre/corporate-publications/scheme-rules/>) or by contacting the Legal Ombudsman using the contact details provided below) and may only be extended by the Legal Ombudsman in exceptional circumstances.

Ordinarily, you cannot use the Legal Ombudsman unless you have first attempted to resolve your complaint using our Complaints Handling Procedure, but you will be able to contact the Legal Ombudsman if:

- The complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within eight weeks of first making the complaint to us; or
- The Legal Ombudsman decides that there are exceptional reasons why the Legal Ombudsman should consider your complaint sooner, or without you having to use our internal Complaints Handling Procedure first; or
- The Legal Ombudsman considers that your complaint cannot be resolved using our internal Complaints Handling Procedure because the relationship between you and us has broken down irretrievably.

If you wish to make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman you must be one of the following:

- An individual;
- A micro-enterprise as defined in European Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 (broadly, an enterprise with fewer than 10 staff and a turnover or balance sheet value not exceeding €2 million);
- A charity with an annual income less than £1 million;
- A club, association or society with an annual income less than £1 million;
- A trustee of a trust with a net asset value less than £1 million; or
- A personal representative or the residuary beneficiaries of an estate where a person with a complaint died before referring it to the Legal Ombudsman.

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If you are not, you should be aware that you can only obtain redress by using our Complaints Handling Procedure or by mediation or arbitration, or by taking action through the Courts.

#### **Legal Ombudsman Contact Details**

Address: PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

Website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)

#### **Complaints about our professional conduct or behaviour**

Our regulatory body, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) 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.

We are bound by various professional rules of conduct (contained within the SRA Handbook) which can be viewed at [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk). You can also see more information about the help the SRA can give to you here: <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor.page>

#### **Solicitors Regulation Authority Contact Details:**

Address: The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN

Telephone: The Solicitors Regulation Authority's contact centre's number is 0370 606 2555

Email: [report@sra.org.uk](mailto:report@sra.org.uk)

Website: [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk)