

## **Complaints Handling Procedure Mills & Co Solicitors Limited**

We are authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). We are committed to high quality legal advice and client care and aim to offer all our clients an efficient and effective service. However, if our clients would like to discuss how the service to them could be improved, or the level of their bill, or should there be any aspect of our service with which they are not satisfied, we ask them to please contact the person in our company responsible for Complaints Handling: Guy Mills, Director on 0191 233 2222, by email to [guy.mills@mills-co.com](mailto:guy.mills@mills-co.com) or by post to Portland House, 54 New Bridge Street West, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8AP.

We are committed to high quality legal advice and client care and are keen to resolve any concerns as soon as possible. In order to do this, we will follow our complaints handling procedure.

We will endeavour to handle your complaint promptly, fairly and free of charge.

Our complaints procedure is as follows:

### Step One:

If you have not already done so, we ask you to let us know the full nature of the problem.

### Step Two:

Our Complaints Handling Director will write to you acknowledging your complaint within five working days. In this letter, we will set out what happens next.

### Step Three:

Our Complaints Handling Director will then investigate the matter by reviewing the matter file and speaking to the member of staff concerned within ten (10) working days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint. If for some reason the matter cannot be investigated in this timeframe, then we will write to you notifying you of this together with the reason why and giving a revised timescale for our further response.

Once the investigation has been completed, our Complaints Handling Director will invite you to a meeting to discuss the issue(s) which you have raised and hopefully to resolve the complaint. This could be a meeting, video conference call or telephone call and your preference will be taken into account along with your views on how best the matter may be dealt with. This process of engagement will take place within ten (10) working days of our concluding the investigation of the matter. Following the meeting or call, our Complaints Handling Director will write to you within five (5) working days of the meeting or shall call you to confirm the discussion and the solution agreed upon.

If you do not wish to or are unable to attend such a meeting or engage in a discussion (or the meeting or call is not necessary), we will be happy to send you a detailed, written response, including the proposed solution, within fifteen (15) working days of our concluding the investigation of the matter.

### Step Four:

If you are satisfied with our response following the above steps, that will be the end of the matter. However, if not then you will be invited to contact our Complaints Handling Director again and they will arrange for another Director who is unconnected with the matter to review the decision. That other Director will write to the client within ten (10) working days of receiving the request with confirmation of the company's final position in relation to the complaint, outlining the reasons and any final redress that is offered.

#### Step Five: Other avenues

Clients should always refer a complaint to us first. In most cases they will not be able to take their complaint further without allowing us the opportunity to put things right.

#### *Legal Ombudsman*

We are permitted a period of eight (8) weeks to consider the complaint. If for any reason we are unable to resolve the problem between us within that timeframe, then our clients are advised that they may ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the complaint.

Clients are free to refer any complaint about our work, fees or level of service but there are some conditions and time limits. Please be aware that any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman must usually be made within six (6) months of the client having received a final written response from us about their complaint.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman must usually be made within one (1) year of the act or omission about which the client is complaining occurring; or within one (1) year from when the client should have known about or become aware that there were grounds for complaint.

For further information, please contact the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or visit [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk). The Legal Ombudsman may also be contacted by post at Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH

#### *Solicitors Regulation Authority*

If you think that a solicitor might be dishonest or if you have concerns about a solicitor's ethics or integrity, you have the right to notify our regulator, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). There are no time limits for making a report but there are limits on what the SRA will consider. Please note that the SRA is not able to deal with issues of poor service (complaints of this nature should instead be referred to the Legal Ombudsman). For further information about the SRA's role, please contact the SRA or visit:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor.page#report>.

#### *Information Commissioners' Office*

To the extent that you have a complaint which relates to a breach of personal data, we may have to deal with and/or respond to your complaint differently, owing to our obligations as a data controller.

For your guidance, our privacy notices are all published on our website, and pdf or printed copies are available on request.

Aspects of your complaint which concern our control and processing of personal data will need to be passed to the director responsible for data protection (Jonathan Cooke). She will respond to you in accordance with our data protection notices, policies and procedures, and our regulatory obligations.

Our standard complaint handling timescales noted above may not be appropriate for a complaint concerning our control and processing of personal data. If that is the case, we will let you know if we need longer to respond to your complaint.

If you have alleged a personal data breach, or expressed a concern that our company has not handled your personal data properly, we will consider whether a report needs to be made to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Not all breaches are reportable. We will advise you whether we have decided to report to the ICO or not.

You can find guidance about our obligations pursuant to data and information rights legislation on the ICO's website ([www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)) as well as information about its regulatory powers and the action it can take.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the ICO provided that you have first allowed us the opportunity to attempt to resolve it ourselves. For further information or to contact the ICO please visit [www.ico.org.uk/concerns](http://www.ico.org.uk/concerns) or call 0303 123 1113.

Your rights to refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman and SRA (as set out above) may still be available to you in addition to your personal data rights.

#### Further Information

For further information about our complaints handling procedures, please do not hesitate to contact Guy Mills, Director, on 0191 233 2222, or by email to [guy.mills@mills-co.com](mailto:guy.mills@mills-co.com) or by post to Portland House, 54 New Bridge Street West, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8AP.