# COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

LLOYD EVANS & HUGHES

CYFREITHWYR | SOLICITORS

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## 1. Our commitment

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service. If you are unhappy or concerned about any aspect of our service, including our work, communications, conduct or a bill, please tell us as soon as possible so that we can try to resolve the matter. We will deal with complaints promptly, fairly, consistently and free of charge. Making a complaint will not affect how we handle your matter, and you will not be treated less favourably because you have complained.

## 2. Who can complain

This procedure applies to complaints from clients, former clients and other persons who are entitled to complain about our legal services. A complaint is any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered, or may suffer, financial loss, distress, inconvenience or other detriment. You do not need to use the word “complaint” for us to treat your concerns as a complaint.

## 3. How to make a complaint

In the first instance, you may wish to raise your concern with the person dealing with your matter, who will try to resolve it. If you wish to make a formal complaint, or the concern has not been resolved, please contact either, Sara Lloyd Evans or Shaun Hughes, by post at Lloyd Evans & Hughes Cyf, 10 Heol y Dŵr, Penygroes, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6LR, or by email using the contact details given in your client care letter. Please provide your name and contact details, our file reference if known, what you believe has gone wrong, how this has affected you and what you would like us to do to put matters right. We will assist you if you need help to set out your complaint.

## 4. Who will deal with your complaint

The Complaints Partner has overall responsibility for complaints. Wherever practicable, the complaint will be investigated by someone who has not been directly involved in the matter complained about and who has sufficient authority to investigate and resolve it. If the complaint concerns the Complaints Partner, it will be referred to another director, ordinarily Shaun Hughes, who was not directly involved in the subject matter. If neither director can investigate independently, we will appoint another suitably experienced person and tell you who will deal with the complaint.

## 5. What will happen

**5.1 Acknowledgement:** We will acknowledge your complaint promptly, normally within three working days of receipt. We will confirm who is dealing with it, our understanding of the issues, the next steps and the anticipated timetable. We may ask you for further information.

**5.2 Investigation:** The investigator will review the relevant file and records, speak to the people involved where appropriate, and consider the complaint impartially. We may invite you to a meeting or telephone discussion if that may help to clarify or resolve the issues. We will keep you informed of material progress and any reason for delay.

**5.3 Outcome:** We aim to provide a written outcome within 28 days of acknowledging the complaint. If that is not reasonably possible, we will explain why and provide a revised date. In all cases, we will issue our final response as soon as possible and within eight weeks of receiving the complaint, unless you agree to an extension.

**5.4 Final response:** Our final response will address the issues raised, explain our conclusions and any proposed remedy, and confirm that our internal procedure is complete. It will also explain your right to refer the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, including the applicable time limits.

## 6. Possible remedies

Where we uphold all or part of a complaint, we will consider an appropriate and proportionate remedy. Depending on the circumstances, this may include an explanation or apology, correcting an error, carrying out further work, returning documents, improving our procedures, reducing or refunding fees, or paying compensation. We will implement promptly any remedy that you accept.

## 7. The Legal Ombudsman

If we have not resolved your complaint to your satisfaction within eight weeks, or you are unhappy with our final response, you may be able to ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider it independently. The Legal Ombudsman's service is free. Contact details are: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH; telephone 0300 555 0333; email enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk; website www.legalombudsman.org.uk.
Ordinarily, the Legal Ombudsman expects a complaint to be referred within one year of the act or omission complained about, or within one year of when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint. You must also refer the complaint within six months of our final response. The Legal Ombudsman may apply exceptions in limited circumstances. Further information about eligibility and time limits is available from the Legal Ombudsman.

## 8. Complaints about a bill

You may complain to us about a bill under this procedure and may also have a right to apply to the court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. The Legal Ombudsman may not consider a complaint about a bill if you have already applied to the court for assessment. We may charge interest on an unpaid bill in accordance with our terms of business, but we will consider whether it is appropriate to suspend recovery action or interest on the amount genuinely in dispute while the complaint is investigated.

## 9. Reporting concerns to the Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority ("SRA") does not usually deal with complaints about poor service or fees, which are generally matters for the Legal Ombudsman. The SRA may, however, investigate concerns about professional conduct or possible breaches of its rules, such as dishonesty, misuse of client money, discrimination or serious failure to meet professional standards. Information about reporting a concern is available at www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor. Raising a concern with the SRA does not replace our complaints procedure or the Legal Ombudsman process.

## 10. Accessibility, confidentiality and support

We will make reasonable adjustments to enable you to use this procedure. Please tell us if you would like information in Welsh, large print or another accessible format, or if you need a different method of communication. You may ask another person to assist or represent you, although we may require your written authority before sharing confidential information. We will handle complaint information sensitively and share it only so far as reasonably necessary to investigate, respond, comply with our legal or regulatory duties, notify our insurers where appropriate, or cooperate with the Legal Ombudsman or the SRA.

## 11. Records, learning and review

We will keep an appropriate record of each complaint, the investigation, the outcome and any remedy. We will monitor complaints for themes, root causes and lessons, and will take proportionate action to improve our service and reduce the risk of recurrence. The directors will review this procedure regularly and whenever relevant regulatory requirements or Legal Ombudsman rules change.