Complaints Policy

Joni May Treharne is the Complaints Partner. We outline in our Office Manual how complaints are dealt with, and we have always prided ourselves on our ability to handle complaints effectively and efficiently.

We will always deal with complaints in a prompt, fair, open, co-operative and effective manner.

Initial Instructions

At the outset of the matter, all clients will be told the name of the person responsible the day-to-day work on their matter and the name of their supervisor. All clients are told at the outset of the matter who to approach in the event of any problem with the service provided. We have standard terms of business letters and standard terms in relation to Legal Aid matters and in those letters, are details of the person responsible for the matter and confirmation of how complaints will be dealt with by the firm.

The complaints procedure

1. If a client indicates in any way that he or she wishes to complain then the client should first be invited by the relevant fee earner to discuses the problem. The complaint (in the form of a wish to register an expression of dissatisfaction) can be discussed informally with the relevant fee earner in the hope it can be resolved. A client can indicate a wish to complain in a number of ways – telephone conversation, email, letter or in a face-to-face meeting.

2. If the client is not satisfied after the informal discussion, then the client is expected to ask for the matter to be referred to the complaints partner (Joni May Treharne). If the fee earner has not been able to resolve the matter informally and is aware that the matter needs to go to the next level, then the fee earner should also refer the matter to Joni May Treharne.

3. In the event the complaint is about the Complaints Partner herself then the matter will be dealt with by Tony Donnelly.

4. After the matter has been referred to Joni May Treharne, she will respond quickly and contact the client by return. Joni will deal with the complainant personally and meet, telephone or e mail the client where necessary. Joni will get to the bottom of what the clients concern is and will clarify the issues that need to be resolved and decide what the firm proposes to do.

5. The firm will resolve problems quickly and within 28 days if possible. It is intended that this procedure will resolve the matter to the client's satisfaction so that their best interests can be protected and further advanced. Joni will respond to all complaints in some way (e.g., by

agreeing action on the telephone or by email or by writing to the client), whether they are found to be justified or not.

6. The firm will respond positively to dissatisfaction and if it is considered justified an apology will be offered and an explanation given. The matter will be transferred to another fee earner if there has been a personality clash, or notification will be given to the client of their right to see another solicitor and obtain advice as to whether we have been negligent. Clients will be provided with options for redress and for correcting any underlying problem, procedure or process.

7. Joni will keep a written note of the firm's investigation and will confirm to the client in writing the firm's final response to the complaint.

8. If following the final response, the client remains dissatisfied they can contact the Legal Ombudsman and they will be provided with the Legal Ombudsman's web site address which is www.legalombudsman.org.uk, the address and contact telephone number - PO BOX 6806 Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ. Telephone 0300 555 0333.

9. A complaint should be made to the Legal Ombudsman within 6 months of the firms formal response to the complaint. From the 1st of April 2023, the time limits for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman will not be later than one year from the date of the act or omission being complained about or one year from the date when the complainant should have realised that there was cause for complaint.

9. If the identification of any problem, complained about by the client, reveals any unsatisfactory procedures in the firm then the Complaints Partner will take appropriate steps to correct those procedures within 14 days of the Firm's final response to the Complainant if possible.

10. The firm will keep a digital central record of all complaints and responses which will be held by the Complaints Partner and will be analysed and reviewed annually by Joni. The partners will also consider any complaints at the monthly meeting and Joni is the COLP and she will ensure that a separate record of any issues relating to complaints is kept in accordance with compliance requirements.

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