



Customer service standards

Most people have a good experience with their solicitor, but sometimes things do go wrong. The Consumer Complaints Service is the part of the Law Society that helps people who have a problem with their solicitor.

Our aim is to work with you to find the best solution to your complaint. In some cases, this will mean helping you to raise your problem directly with the solicitor. In others, we will work with you and the solicitor to try and sort things out.

This document sets out the service standards we aim to meet. Sometimes we may decide that there isn't enough evidence to support your complaint and we realise that this can be disappointing. We hope that whatever the outcome of your complaint, you will be satisfied with our service. However, sometimes things do go wrong and we have outlined below what steps we can take to put them right.

What you can expect from us

Special needs

We want our service to be accessible to everyone and can:

- provide all our printed materials in different formats and different languages;
- use the typetalk service and have minicom facilities; and
- talk to you on the phone in different languages (using an interpreter).

We will try to adapt to any needs you have – just let us know.

Our contact with you

Sometimes because of the number of new cases we receive, we may not always be able to pass your complaint straight to one of our complaints executives.

We will let you know how long it will be before we can start to look at your complaint.

We want you to understand, at all times, what is happening with your complaint. We will deal with you in plain English by explaining any complicated legal terms and avoiding jargon. We will give you details about the way we work and what you can expect.

We appreciate that not hearing from us can be frustrating so we aim to contact you at least once a month to update you about what is happening on your complaint.

We would like you to deal with just one person during your complaint. This is not always possible. If this happens in your case, we will tell you as quickly as possible and explain why this has happened.

Dealing with complaints as quickly as possible

We aim to sort out 75% of complaints within six months of receiving them. Sometimes complicated complaints will take longer but we aim to keep you informed throughout the process.

Confidentiality

To help us deal with your complaint effectively we will, on most occasions, tell the solicitor you are complaining about that you have made a complaint. This may include copying your letter or complaint form directly to the firm. If you do not want us to do this, please tell us.

In some cases, not allowing us to copy the letter or form may prevent us from dealing with your complaint.

Your feedback

We are keen to monitor the views of people who have used our service. When we have finished dealing with your complaint, we will send you a feedback form to fill in. We will use the information you give us to highlight where we are doing things well, but also to learn from our mistakes and improve the service we provide.



If you are not happy with our service

Complaining about our service

We are committed to dealing with all complaints about the service we provide. Please let us know if you are not happy with the service we have provided (rather than our decision or the outcome of your case).

The first stage of this process is for your complaints executive or their team manager (or both) to reply to your complaint using the timescales shown below.

If you are still not happy, you can refer your complaint to the Quality and Service Standards Team. They will answer any other concerns which you may have - again using the timescales shown below.

- We will acknowledge your concerns within five working days of receiving your complaint.
- We will send you a full response within 20 working days of the acknowledgement.

What to do if you are still not happy

If you are not happy with the service we have provided or you are not happy with the outcome of your case, you can ask the Legal Services Ombudsman (LSO) to review your file.

You need to contact the LSO within three months of us telling you that we will not be taking any further action on your complaint. You can find information about the LSO (including her contact details) at www.olso.org or we can send you a leaflet if you ask us to.

What we expect from you

We expect you to treat our staff politely. If we find that you are not treating our staff politely, we may decide to restrict how we communicate with you in the future or, in extreme circumstances, we may decide to stop dealing with the complaint.

We expect you to send us, as quickly as possible, any documents we ask for.

We expect you to raise complaints with us within six months of the end of the work which the solicitor did for you or within six months of the solicitor's final response to your complaint, whichever is later. If you are reporting a solicitor's conduct, but are not his or her client, you must contact us within six months of the event taking place. If you leave it any longer, we may decide not to investigate your complaint. We have these time limits to make sure we can carry out a fair investigation.

