



HARDWICK LEGAL  
SOLICITORS

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

We hope that you will never have reason to complain about our service or a bill of costs that we send to you. However, if any problems arise or we do not provide the service you expect or the bill appears to be incorrect, please let us know as soon as possible. We will then try to resolve any issue fairly, openly and as quickly as possible.

### Complaints Generally

The person who is responsible for dealing with any complaints is the Firm's Principal, Geoff Gilbert.

We have a complaints procedure which we hope will address any problems that may arise. In this policy we will explain what you need to do if you have a complaint and the procedure for dealing with any complaint that may arise.

Please note the following.

- The first step in pursuing a complaint is to raise the issue with us and to go through the Firm's complaints procedure.
- We do not charge for investigating a complaint.
- If we are not able to resolve your complaint or if you are not happy with the outcome of the complaints procedure you have the right to apply to the Legal Ombudsman which is an independent body that handles complaints about legal services. We will explain the procedure below.
- The Legal Ombudsman has published three helpful booklets to guide you if you have a complaint, Here to Help, Making a Complaint and Guide to good complaints handling. We can let you have copies or they can be obtained from the Legal Ombudsman.
- You can have our invoice checked by the Court regardless of whether you have instigated the Firm's complaints procedure. This is called applying for an assessment or detailed assessment. The Court can examine the whole bill and either approve it or reduce it. You should submit the application to Court within one calendar month from the date you received the bill. You will have to pay further costs to use this procedure but if the Court decides to reduce our bill by more than one-fifth, you will not pay the costs of the assessment.

### Who do I complain to?

Geoff Gilbert, the Firm's Principal.

### How do I complain?

We are prepared to discuss any complaints by telephone, by email, by letter or at a meeting. However, in the case of a substantial or complicated complaint we may request you to put this in writing.

We appreciate that the Firm's Principal, Geoff Gilbert, is the only lawyer in the practice and in some cases you may feel uncomfortable or nervous about raising issues with him. We appreciate that in some instances you might prefer to ask a third party to raise any complaint you may have. We are happy to discuss the matter with a third party provided you authorise to do so.

### What happens next?

1. We will write to you acknowledging receipt of your complaint within two (2) working days of becoming aware of your complaint.
2. We will consider your complaint thoroughly and offer a map of options.
3. When we investigate your complaint we may arrange to meet you to discuss your complaint. You are not under any obligation to attend a meeting.
4. When we have considered your complaint we will share our findings with you. We will share our findings with you within twenty one (21) days of sending you the written acknowledgment of your complaint. If the complaint is complicated we may need longer to consider your complaint and we will notify you of this at the earliest opportunity. In any event we will share our findings with you within eight (8) weeks of your making the complaint.
5. Our findings may include the following.
  - 5.1 If we find that we provided poor service we will acknowledge what went wrong and offer a suitable remedy proportionate to the level of poor service along with a full explanation of what happened.
  - 5.2 If we decide that we have not provided a poor service we will provide a full and clear explanation of why we have reached that decision.
  - 5.3 If we find that our bill is incorrect we will make the appropriate adjustment.
  - 5.4 If we find that our bill is correct we will provide a full and clear explanation of why we have reached that decision.
6. We have an arrangement with another Firm of Solicitors whereby we will each consider any complaints made against the other's Firm. We are happy to refer the matter to that Firm if you are happy to do so.
7. If we cannot agree on a resolution to your complaint you have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman within the time limits set put below.

### Legal Ombudsman

8. Please note that if you want to refer your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman following our complaints procedure you must do so within six (6) months of the date of our written response to your complaint.
9. Complaints should be made to the Legal Ombudsman as follows.

Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton WV1 9WJ;  
telephone: 0300 555 0333;  
website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk).

10. Ordinarily you cannot use the Legal Ombudsman unless you have first used our complaints procedure. However, you can use the Legal Ombudsman if:
  - 10.1 the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within eight weeks of your raising the complaint ; or
  - 10.2 the Legal Ombudsman considers that there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner, or without it having been made to us; or
  - 10.3 where the Legal Ombudsman considers that in-house resolution is not possible due to an irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between you and our Mr Gilbert.
11. The Legal Ombudsman publishes a useful guide which can be obtained from the website or we will be pleased to send one to you if requested to do so.

**HARDWICK LEGAL**