



cornerstone barristers

# COMPLAINTS

Revised May 2019



## Complaints

### Complaints Procedure

1. Our aim is to provide our clients with the best possible service at all times. However we recognise that on occasions you may find it necessary to raise a complaint about service. If you do, you are invited to let us know as soon as possible. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. The complaints procedure applies to both clients and, in alleged instances of professional misconduct, to those for whom the barrister did not act.

### Complaints Made by Telephone

3. You may wish to make a complaint in writing, by letter or by e-mail. If you do, please follow the procedure in paragraph 4 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone our CEO, Clare Bello, on 020 7421 1819. This is the person designated under this Complaints Procedure to deal with telephone complaints. If the complaint is about Ms Bello, please contact our Head of Chambers, Philip Kolvin QC on 0207 242 4986. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He or she will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he or she will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.
4. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone you will be invited to write to us about it within the following 14 days so it can be investigated formally. We would normally assume such complaints involved an allegation about serious poor service and/or professional misconduct.



## Complaints Made in Writing

5. As indicated above, you may prefer to raise your complaint in writing either by letter or email. When writing, please ensure you give the following details:
  - a. your name and address;
  - b. which member(s) of Chambers or our staff you are complaining about;
  - c. the detail of the complaint; and
  - d. what you would like done about it.

Please address your letter to Clare Bello, CEO, Cornerstone Barristers, 2-3 Gray's Inn Square, London, WC1R 5JH. Please send any email to [cbello@cornerstonebarristers.com](mailto:cbello@cornerstonebarristers.com). If your complaint is about Ms Bello, please address your letter to our Head of Chambers, Philip Kolvin QC at the same address or email him at [philipk@cornerstonebarristers.com](mailto:philipk@cornerstonebarristers.com). We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

6. The person dealing with your complaint will investigate it and will communicate with you about it either in writing or by telephone as might be appropriate. You will receive a letter or email recording the outcome of the investigation and how it is proposed to resolve the matter. Wherever possible, this investigation will be concluded within 14 days of our acknowledgement of your complaint.
7. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the preliminary investigation, please notify us within 14 days by writing to Clare Bello or Philip Kolvin QC at the addresses stated above. We will then convene a panel headed by the Head of Chambers and made up of two other experienced members of Chambers and a senior member of staff, to consider the complaint. Within 14 days of receipt of your notification that you wish to pursue the complaint, the head of the panel or his/her deputy in his/her absence will appoint a member of the panel to investigate



it. We will always ensure that the panel does not include the person you are complaining about.

8. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know he/she has been appointed and that he/she will reply to your complaint within 14 days. If he/she finds later that he/she is not going to be able to reply within 14 days he/she will set a new date for his/her reply and inform you. This date will be no longer than eight weeks from the date you raised your complaint. His/her reply will set out:
  - e. the nature and scope of the investigation;
  - f. his/her conclusion on each complaint and the basis for that conclusion; and
  - g. if he/she finds that you are justified in your complaint, his/her proposals for resolving the complaint which will have been approved by the panel.

### **Confidentiality**

9. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Head of Chambers, members of our Management Board and to anyone involved in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff who you have complained about, the head or relevant senior member of the panel and the person who investigates the complaint. The Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

### **Our Policy**

10. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the



complaint for a period of six years. Our Management Board inspects an anonymised record regularly with a view to improving services.

### **Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman**

11. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, where it is a complaint relating to service levels where a barrister acted for you, you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers, at the conclusion of our consideration of your complaint. The Ombudsman is not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by Chambers.
12. Ordinarily, you can ask the Ombudsman to look at your complaint if it meets all three of the criteria below:
  - h. the problem, or when you found out about it, happened after 5 October 2010;
  - i. you refer the issue to the Ombudsman either within six years of the problem happening or within three years from when you found out about it; and
  - j. you refer the issue to the Ombudsman with six months of our final written response to you.
13. The Legal Ombudsman's service is free to consumers.
14. You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 6806,  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 9WJ

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333



Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/>

**Complaints to the Bar Standards Board (the regulatory arm of the Bar Council, the professional body for barristers)**

15. Should your complaint relate to professional misconduct where the barrister did not act for you, and you are dissatisfied with the outcome of our investigation, you can refer it to the Bar Standards Board. Please note that the Bar Standards Board normally has a 12 month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. However, you should raise your complaint with Chambers first. You can write to the Bar Standards Board at:

Assessment Team  
Professional Conduct Department  
Bar Standards Board  
289-293 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 7HZ

Telephone number: 020 7611 1444

Fax: 020 7831 9217

E-mail: [assessmentcomplaints@barstandardsboard.org.uk](mailto:assessmentcomplaints@barstandardsboard.org.uk)

Web: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/complaints-and-professional-conduct/>

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