

Cornerstone Barristers

Complaints Policy

1. Cornerstone Barristers aim to always provide our clients with the best possible service. If you have not received the standard of service you would expect, you are invited to let us know as soon as possible so that we have the opportunity to resolve the issue.
2. Cornerstone Barristers is committed to ensuring that its complaints process is accessible to all clients. Complaints may be made by email, letter, telephone or by any other reasonable method. Information about this procedure can be provided in alternative formats, including large print and other accessible formats where required. Chambers will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disability, vulnerability, language needs, neurodiversity or other communication requirements.
3. For the purposes of this policy, lay clients may complain directly to chambers without going through their solicitor.
4. Chambers will normally only consider complaints regarding an issue that has occurred within the last 12 months or within 12 months from the date when you could reasonably have known about the issue(s).
5. Where your complaint includes a concern about the service you have received, we will investigate it under this policy. If your complaint does not concern client service, it is likely to be more suitable for the disciplinary process of the Bar Standards Board. This would include complaints relating to professional conduct. We will assess every complaint and if we consider that your complaint is outside of the scope of this policy, we will set out our reasons for this conclusion.
6. Chambers' Chief Executive Officer, Nadia Biles Davies is the individual designated under this Complaints Policy to deal with complaints. If you have a complaint about Nadia Biles Davies, you may contact our Heads of Chambers, James Findlay KC or Robin Green KC.
7. Often complaints can be resolved informally and you may wish to discuss your complaint with Nadia Biles Davies over the telephone in which case you should telephone 0207 24204986. In the event, she is out of the office or otherwise unavailable, your concern may be dealt with by our Senior Clerk, Andy Bisbey.
8. They will take a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to have done about it. They will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved, the outcome will be recorded. We will check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone, you will be invited to write to us about it within 14 days so it can be investigated formally. Where you have been invited to put your complaint in writing, the process below will be followed.

Formal Written Complaints

9. You may prefer to raise your complaint in writing by letter or email. When writing, please ensure you provide the following details:

- a. Your name and address;
- b. Which member(s) of Chambers or our staff that you are complaining about;
- c. The detail of the complaint; and
- d. How you would like your complaint to be resolved

Please address your letter to Nadia Biles Davies, CEO, Cornerstone Barristers, 2-3 Gray's Inn Square, London, WC1R 5JH. Please send any email to ndavies@cornerstonebarristers.com. If your complaint is about Nadia Biles Davies, please address your letter to James Findlay KC or Robin Green KC at the same address or email them at jfindlay@cornerstonebarristers.com or rgreen@cornerstonebarristers.com.

10. Where possible, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with. This will include the name and contact details of the individual dealing with your complaint, their role, a copy of the complaints policy, and the anticipated timeline for investigation including when you might next receive an update.

11. Our Chambers has a complaints panel made up of experienced members of Chambers and senior members of staff. Within 14 days of your complaint being received, the CEO will appoint a member of the panel to investigate it. If your complaint is against the CEO, an alternative member of the panel will appoint a member of the panel to investigate it. In any case, the person appointed will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

12. The person appointed to investigate will write to you as soon as possible to let you know they have been appointed and that they will aim to reply to your complaint within 14 days. Where an investigation cannot be completed within the anticipated timescale, we will provide you with regular progress updates and a revised timetable.

13. Following investigation, you will receive a written response which will confirm:

- a. The nature and scope of their investigation;
- b. The investigators conclusion on each complaint and the basis for their conclusion; and
- c. If they find that you are justified in your complaint, their proposals for resolving the complaint.

14. This written response will constitute our final response.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

15. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation you may have a right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers. The Legal Ombudsman will only deal with complaints from consumers and therefore complaints from a barristers' client. You have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman eight weeks after the making of your complaint under this policy if the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

16. The Legal Ombudsman has time limits in which a complaint must be raised with them. Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. You must usually bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within one year of the act or omission complained about, or one year from when you should reasonable have known there was cause for complaint, and within six months of our final response. The Legal Ombudsman can extend the time limit in exceptional circumstances.

17. If you would like more information about the Legal Ombudsman please contact them:

Complaints
Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough
SL1 0EH

Telephone number: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Complaints to the Bar Standards Board

18. The Legal Ombudsman will also only deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from the barrister's client are within their jurisdiction. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Chambers' investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board rather than the Legal Ombudsman.

If you are not the barrister's client and are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, then please contact the Bar Standards Board at:

Bar Standards Board
Professional Conduct Department
289-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7JZ

Telephone number: 0207 611 1444
Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

Alternative Dispute Resolution

19. If you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, alternative complaints bodies, such as ProMediate (<https://www.promediate.co.uk/>) exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services, should you and the barrister both wish to use such a scheme. If you wish to use ProMediate, please contact us to discuss this. Please also note that: (1) the time limit for contacting ProMediate is one year, and (2) if mediation is used, neither you nor the barrister is required to accept the proposed resolution. If mediation does not resolve the complaint, you may still make a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman provided you fall within their jurisdiction and you do so within the time limit.

Confidentiality and Data Retention

20. 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. This will include the barrister or member of staff whom 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 monitoring functions.

21. 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.

22. Chambers will also collect and retain complaints data and submit summary information to the Bar Standards Board in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.