

# Legal Ombudsman

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## Here to help

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### **The Legal Ombudsman can help you resolve your complaint about legal services**

#### **What we do**

The Legal Ombudsman resolves complaints about legal services. It may be that your lawyer has failed to do what they agreed, has been slow in responding, or increased their charges without explaining why. Perhaps you think you've been unreasonably refused a legal service or have been pressured to accept a service you didn't want.

We will investigate your complaint and look at all the facts to reach a fair outcome. We are independent, impartial and we don't take sides. If we decide the service you received was unreasonable, we can make sure your lawyer or law firm puts it right.

Our service is free to consumers.

#### **What issues can we help resolve?**

We can investigate lots of different types of legal service complaints, such as the way a lawyer has dealt with a will or family issue, if you've had poor service when you bought or sold a house or made a personal injury claim.

We can look into complaints about all sorts of lawyers: solicitors, barristers, licensed conveyancers, cost lawyers, legal executives, notaries, patent attorneys, trade mark attorneys, law firms and companies providing legal services.

To find out if we can help, please get in touch using the contact details on the back of this leaflet.

## **Who can use our service?**

All members of the public and very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts.

We prefer you to come to us directly, but you can ask a friend, relative or anyone else to get in touch for you.

## **What if we can't help?**

If we can't help, we can put you in touch with other organisations that might be able to. The Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board, for example, can deal with issues that are beyond our powers.

## **Here are the steps you need to take**

### **Step 1: Tell your lawyer**

Your lawyer should provide you with a reasonable service and treat you fairly. But sometimes things do go wrong.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received, tell your lawyer so they have a chance to put things right. Every lawyer should explain how their own complaints handling procedure works.

You must give your lawyer a chance to resolve your complaint before we can get involved. Make your complaint to the lawyer as soon as you are aware there's a problem – don't leave it too long.

If you are having difficulty contacting your lawyer and aren't sure what to do next, please get in touch with us.

## **Step 2: Give your lawyer time to resolve things**

You should allow your lawyer up to eight weeks to resolve your complaint. If they don't deal with the complaint to your satisfaction in that time, you can involve us.

## **Step 3: Bring your complaint to us**

Come to us as soon as you can after trying to sort things out with your lawyer. If you aren't happy with their final response, you have up to six months to bring your complaint to us.

Also, the problem must have happened on or after 6 October 2010 or, if the problem happened earlier than that, you must not have been aware of it before 6 October 2010.

When you contact us, we will ask for information from you and your lawyer. Keep copies of any letters and emails as well as any notes you might have made about what happened and when. When you contact us, it will help if you have:

- the name and address of the lawyer or law firm involved;
- the date you first told them about your complaint;
- the date you first became aware of the problem you are complaining about;
- details of their response.

## **Sending us documents**

We can't accept documents from online stores such as Microsoft SkyDrive, Xdrive and Livedrive. Attach documents to an email instead.

Alternatively, you can post your documents. Please only send copies, because we scan our post and destroy the originals. Make copies of any important papers relating to your complaint (letters, statements, official documents or certificates).

## Action we can take

Most complaints are resolved quickly and informally by getting everyone to agree what's fair. We can carry out more formal investigations, if they're necessary, but these can take longer.

If we agree that your lawyer's service has been unsatisfactory, we can ask them to:

- apologise to you;
- give you back any documents you're entitled to;
- do more work for you, if this can put right what went wrong;
- refund or reduce your legal fees; or
- pay compensation if you have lost out or been badly treated (this can be anything up to £50,000 but we generally award less than £1,000).

## How to contact us

### Call

You can call us on **0300 555 0333**

(Calls to the Legal Ombudsman cost the same as a normal 01 or 02 landline number, even from a mobile phone, and are recorded for training and monitoring purposes).

We are open Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5.30pm.

If you are calling from overseas, please call +44 121 245 3050.

For our minicom call 0300 555 1777.

### Email

You can also email us at **[enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)**

If you want to find out more about us and what we do, please visit [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)

### Write

If you prefer, you can write to us at

**Legal Ombudsman**

PO Box 6806

Wolverhampton

WV1 9WJ

If you need information in another language or in large print, Braille or on audio CD, please get in touch.