

# DRYSTONE

## CHAMBERS

### COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

#### STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. Drystone Chambers is committed to providing a high-quality service at all times. We recognise however that concerns or complaints may arise, and we aim to address these promptly, fairly, and transparently.
2. This policy outlines the way in which Chambers will investigate and deal with any complaints about the service provided by barristers, pupils or members of staff.
3. Our policy aims to ensure that:
  - a. Those who wish to raise a complaint are provided with a clear and fair procedure to raise concerns or complaints;
  - b. Complaints are identified, acknowledged, and addressed promptly at the earliest possible stage;
  - c. Complaints are handled in a consistent and transparent manner;
  - d. Outcomes are fair, proportionate, and clearly explained; and
  - e. Where appropriate, lessons are identified to improve services and prevent recurrence.

#### SCOPE

4. If you were represented by both a solicitor and barrister and wish to complain about the conduct of the barrister, you do not need to do this via the solicitor. You may complain to us directly.
5. Where a complaint relates to the conduct of a barrister (whether you were the client or someone else) we will consider the nature of the complaint carefully and investigate the complaint where it is appropriate to do so.
6. There may be some complaints relating to barristers which we cannot investigate or where it may be inappropriate to do so. An assessment will therefore always be made of the complaint, and should we conclude that we cannot investigate the complaint or cannot investigate all of the complaint or where it may be inappropriate to do so, we will:
  - a. Inform you clearly;
  - b. Explain what we can and cannot investigate; and
  - c. Direct you to the appropriate body (e.g. the Bar Standards Board).

## **TIME LIMITS**

7. If you wish to make a complaint this should be done as soon as possible. Significant delay in bringing a complaint may impact on our ability to investigate.
8. We will generally only consider your complaint if:
  - a. it relates to an issue that took place within the last 12 months, or
  - b. the issue took place more than 12 months ago but is within 12 months from the date you could reasonably have known about the issue.
9. Whilst we may consider complaints made outside these time frames, this will depend on the specific circumstances including any reason for the delay in bringing the issue to our attention.

## **COMPLAINTS MADE BY TELEPHONE OR OTHER FORMATS**

10. You may wish to make a complaint in writing. If so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 15 below. If you would like to make your complaint in other ways or formats or take advantage of accessible options, please do not hesitate to contact us so that we can best accommodate your needs.
11. If you would rather speak about your complaint, initially on the telephone, or other format that best suits you and your information needs, then please contact Chambers on 020 7404 1881 and ask to speak to Russell Burton-Lawrence, Head of Operations, who is the nominated person to deal with complaints. If the complaint is about the Head of Operations, then please ask to speak to the Head of Chambers, Allison Summers KC.
12. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. They will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved, they will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome, and record that you are satisfied.
13. If your complaint has not been resolved on the telephone, you will be invited to write to us about it, so that it can be investigated formally. At this stage, we will also check if you would like to engage with us on accessible formats, to meet your specific information and communication needs. We will discuss and agree with you the best way and format for us to engage and communicate together. We will advise you on the best way to set out your concerns and/or complaint for the next formal investigation stage, depending on your needs and preferences.

## **COMPLAINTS MADE IN WRITING AND IN OTHER ACCESSIBLE FORMATS**

14. If you would prefer to make a complaint in writing, please give us the following details:
  - a. Your name, contact details and preferred contact method;

- b. Which barrister, pupil or member of staff are you complaining about;
- c. The detail of the complaint; and
- d. What you would like done about it.

15. Your complaint can be sent by email to the Head of Operations at [russell.burton-lawrence@drystone.com](mailto:russell.burton-lawrence@drystone.com) or in writing addressed to:

Head of Operations  
(Complaint)  
1 Bedford Row  
London  
WC1R 4BU

16. If your complaint is about the Head of Operations, you can send your complaint by email to the Head of Chambers at [allison.summers@drystone.com](mailto:allison.summers@drystone.com) or in writing addressed to:

Head of Chambers  
(Complaint)  
1 Bedford Row  
London  
WC1R 4BU

We will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.

17. For complaints made in other accessible formats, we will discuss and advise you on the best way to set out your concerns, tailored to your needs, and how to provide the information set out in paragraph 14 above.

## **COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

18. On receipt of a complaint, we will:

- a. Write to you formally to acknowledge your complaint;
- b. Provide you with the name of the person who will review and where different, investigate your complaint;
- c. Provide you with a copy of Chambers Complaints Policy and Procedure; and
- d. Advise you of the date by which you will next hear from us.

## **FORMAL INVESTIGATION**

19. Our Complaints Panel is made up of senior members of Chambers and headed by the Head of Chambers. Unless the complaint relates to the Head of Chambers, all complaints are referred to her for an initial review. If your complaint is against the

Head of Chambers, the complaint will be referred to the Deputy Head of Chambers or to the next most senior member of the panel for review.

20. In all cases, the person appointed to investigate the complaint will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.
21. Within 14 days of receipt of your complaint, we will notify you of who will be investigating your complaint.
22. The person who has been appointed to investigate your complaint will write to you as soon as possible to let you know of their appointment and let you know when they expect to respond to you.
23. We usually try to report within 14 days of the appointment of a person to investigate your complaint being notified to you, but this may vary depending on the nature of the complaint and the enquiries to be made.
24. We will ensure that you are kept updated throughout the process and that communications are clear and tailored to your needs.
25. We must deal with your complaint within 8 weeks.
26. The response to your complaint will set out:
  - a. the scope and limitations of the investigation undertaken;
  - b. the conclusion on each complaint and the basis for such conclusion; and
  - c. if they find that you are justified in your complaint, they will set out proposals for resolving your complaint.
27. At the conclusion of the complaints process, if appropriate, you will be told that you can complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the timeframe for doing so and details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman will be provided.

## **COMPLAINTS TO THE LEGAL OMBUDSMAN and BAR STANDARDS BOARD**

28. The Legal Ombudsman is the independent complaints body for complaints about the service provided by lawyers to their clients.
29. The Ombudsman will only deal with complaints from consumers. This means that only complaints from a barrister's client are within its jurisdiction. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of our complaints procedure should contact the Bar Standards Board (BSB) instead.
30. Please be aware that the Legal Ombudsman has time limits in which a complaint must be raised with them. In particular, there is a 6-month time limit from when we provide our final response to the complaint in which to raise your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman.

31. The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within:
- One year of the date of the act or omission you are complaining about, or:
  - One year from when you should reasonably have known there was cause for complaint.
  - 6 months of the complainant receiving a final response from us, if that response complies with the requirements in rule 4.4 of the Scheme Rules (which requires the response to include prominently an explanation that the Legal Ombudsman was available if you remained dissatisfied and the provision of full contact details for the Ombudsman and a warning that the complaint must be referred to them within 6 months).
32. The Legal Ombudsman may extend these time limits in certain circumstances.
33. The Legal Ombudsman's Scheme Rules are available at  
<https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/media/oughytel/scheme-rules-april-23-final.pdf>
34. Ordinarily, you cannot refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman without first having gone through Chambers complaints procedure although there may be occasions when the Ombudsman is willing to become involved without this requirement, namely if:
- a. the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction within 8 weeks of the complaint being made to Chambers; or
  - b. where an ombudsman considers that there are exceptional reasons to consider the complaint sooner or without it having been made to Chambers; or
  - c. where an ombudsman considers that resolution by Chambers is not possible due to irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between Chambers and the person making the complaint.
35. More information about the Legal Ombudsman is available on its website:  
<https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>
36. You can write to the Legal Ombudsman at:
- Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 6167  
Slough SL1 0EH
- Telephone: 0300 555 0333  
Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)
37. If you are not the barrister's client and having received our response to your complaint still wish to pursue your complaint, you may refer this to the Bar Standards Board at:

Bar Standards Board  
Contact and Assessment Team  
289-293 High Holborn  
London WC1V 7HZ  
Telephone: 020 7611 1444  
Email: [contactus@barstandardsboard.org.uk](mailto:contactus@barstandardsboard.org.uk)  
Website: [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)

## **RECORD KEEPING, MONITORING AND REPORTING**

38. In line with the Bar Standards Board's rules:

- a. We maintain records of all complaints, including informal complaints;
- b. Complaints are reviewed to identify trends, risks, and learning opportunities;
- c. We ensure appropriate oversight at Chambers level; and
- d. We comply with obligations to collect and report complaints data to the BSB as required.

39. These requirements aim to improve transparency, consistency, and service quality across the profession.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

40. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that it is necessary. Disclosure will be limited to the Head of Chambers, the Head of Operations, and to those who are the subject of the complaint and those involved in the investigation of any such complaint.

The BSB is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its monitoring functions.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

41. The Legal Ombudsman publishes data on all complaints that have been resolved by an Ombudsman's final decision in the previous 12 months. In each case the data shows whether the Legal Ombudsman required the provider to give the consumer a remedy.

42. Decision data can be found at: <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/information-centre/data-centre/ombudsman-decision-data/>

43. In addition, the Bar Standards Board Barristers' Register shows who has a current practising certificate and whether a barrister has been the subject of any disciplinary findings, in accordance with the Bar Standards Board policy. The link to the Barristers' Register is <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/for-the-public/search-a-barristers-record/the-barristers-register.html?q=>

Dated June 2026