

39 Essex Chambers Complaints Procedure

1. 39 Essex Chambers prides itself on the excellence of its service. If at any time you have any concerns about the quality of the services of our barristers or members of staff you are invited to let us know as soon as possible.
2. In line with our friendly and open approach, in the first instance, we would always encourage you to discuss any day-to-day concerns about the services of our barristers directly with them. Any such concerns can also always be raised with our clerking team, and, in particular, with Alastair Davidson or Michael Kaplan our Senior Clerks.
3. Any concerns about members of staff should be raised with one of our Senior Clerks as appropriate. If the complaint is about either of the senior clerks, please discuss the matter with one of the Head(s) of Chambers.
4. We would very much hope that the matter can be resolved at this point, and that you will be satisfied with the outcome.
5. However, if you feel that the concern or matter you have raised has not been dealt with to your satisfaction, then you may wish to make a formal complaint. We set out the steps in our formal complaints procedure below.
6. You should be aware that the Legal Ombudsman, the independent complaints body for service complaints about lawyers, (see paragraph 12 below) has a six month limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to take your complaint. We will have regard to that timeframe when deciding whether we are able to investigate any complaint and we reserve the right not to deal with complaints falling outside the six month time limit.

Formal complaints procedure

7. Please address your formal letter of complaint to Alastair Davidson, Senior Clerk, 39 Essex Chambers, 81 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1DD. Please give the following details: your name and address, which member(s) of Chambers (or staff) you are complaining about; the detail of the complaint; and what you would like done about it.
8. Within 21 days of your letter being received the Head(s) of Chambers or deputy in their absence will investigate the complaint in conjunction with the senior clerk and form a complaints committee if necessary. If your complaint is against the Head(s) of Chambers it will be investigated by another senior member of Chambers appointed by

the Management Committee in conjunction with the senior clerk. In any case, the persons investigating the complaint will be someone other than the person you are complaining about.

9. The person handling the investigation will write to you as soon as possible to let you know they have been appointed and that they will reply to your complaint within 21 days. If they find later that they are not going to be able to reply within 21 days they will set a new date for their reply and inform you. Their reply will set out:

The nature and scope of the investigation;

Their conclusion on each complaint and the basis for their conclusion; and

If they find that you are justified in your complaint, their proposals for resolving the complaint.

At the conclusion of the complaints process, the person handling the investigation will forward a further copy of this complaints procedure to the complainant with their response to the complaint, drawing attention to the matters set out in paragraphs 12 – 15 below.

Confidentiality

10. 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(s) of Chambers, our senior clerk and will include anyone else we consider necessary to involve in the complaint and its investigation. Such people will include the barrister member or staff member about whom you have complained. If such a complaint is made, we will assume that you are authorising those investigating the complaint to view all the papers or other correspondence relevant to the matter.

Our policy

11. As part of our commitment to client care we will make a written record of any formal complaint.

Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman or the Bar Standards Board (professional regulatory body for barristers)

12. We hope that you will use our procedure and that this will resolve any outstanding issues. However, if you are unhappy with the outcome, you have the choice of taking up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has the responsibility for dealing with all service complaints against legal professionals and normally can only consider complaints once the Chambers' complaints procedure has been exhausted.

Please note that the Legal Ombudsman has a 6 month time limit from the date of the act of omission about which you are complaining within which to take your complaint.

13. You can write to the Legal Ombudsman at:

PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ
enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Telephone 0300 555 0333

14. The Bar Standards Board investigates complaints of professional misconduct or professional disciplinary issues.

15. You can write to the Bar Standards Board at:

Complaints Department
Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7HZ
DX: 240 LDE
Tel: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217