

Complaints Handling Policy

Scripture teaches: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” Ephesians 4v2

1 The Company’s attitude to complaints

- 1.1 The Company holds unswervingly to its desire for excellence in its performance standard, and therefore will regard and consider seriously any complaint against it.
- 1.2 All complaints will be treated with respect, thoroughness and impartiality.
- 1.3 All complaints will be treated on their merits, and will not be viewed differently as a result of anything known by the Company to the detriment of the complainant, nor of any difficulties the Company may have experienced during previous contact with the complainant or in connection with the history or circumstances to which the complaint relates.
- 1.4 In handling the complaint, the Company will not be influenced by the potential adverse effect which a finding that the complaint is justified might have upon the Company.

2 Definition of a complaint

- 2.1 Complaints will only be considered in the following circumstances:
 - 2.1.1 If they are made in writing;
 - 2.1.2 If the name and contact details of the person submitting the complaint are indicated;
 - 2.1.3 If it is made clear whether the complainant is acting on his or her own behalf or the complaint is on behalf of a church or other individual, body or organisation;
 - 2.1.4 If the nature and details of the complaint are clearly set out.

3 Immediate response

Upon receiving a complaint which fulfils the conditions in 2.1.1 to 2.1.4, the following steps will be taken:

- 3.1 The Managing Director, or in his or her absence a suitable staff member from the Company Senior Management Team will consider the details of the complaint in order to determine that it is a complaint about a matter which is the responsibility of the Company.

- 3.2 If the complaint is about a matter which is the responsibility of another party, the complainant will be informed accordingly, so that the complainant can complain to the appropriate party.
- 3.3 If the Managing Director or the staff member acting for him or her, confirms that the complaint is about a matter which is the responsibility of the Company, he or she will then investigate it.
- 3.4 If the circumstances of 3.3 apply, the Managing Director will inform the complainant, that the matter is being investigated. A time estimate should be given. The complainant will be informed that only the matters indicated in the complainant's formal written complaint will be under consideration in the investigation process.
- 3.5 The Managing Director, will prepare and approve the arrangements for the response to the complainant and decide on any further action to be taken.
- 3.6 If the Managing Director is the subject of the complaint, or has been personally involved in the issues which are the subject matter of the complaint, then the Chairman of the Board will carry out the responsibilities set out in 3.3 to 3.5 above.
- 3.7 If the circumstances of the complaint have more urgent implications than can be accommodated by the above timetable, the Managing Director should obtain the agreement of the Chairman of the Board to a different procedure for the handling of the complaint.

4 Investigation of a Complaint

- 4.1 The Managing Director should establish the facts of the case, in order to be able to establish whether the complaint is justified.
- 4.2 In seeking to establish the facts, the Managing Director will speak to all the people who have had a relevant involvement in the matter and is free to speak to anyone else whom he or she judges may have helpful information.
- 4.3 Unless there are exceptional reasons why this should not be made known, the Managing Director should explain to all those whom he or she contacts that he or she is investigating a complaint and is seeking to establish the facts.
- 4.4 The purpose of the investigation is as follows:
 - 4.4.1 to establish whether the complaint is wholly, partly or not-at-all justified;
 - 4.4.2 to determine and to oversee the Company's response to the complainant;
- 4.5 The Managing Director should discuss the findings with the Chairman of the Board, or the Board as a whole, such discussion to include:
 - 4.5.1 If a staff member has been at fault, whether any disciplinary action is appropriate. Any action taken must be in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure;
 - 4.5.2 Whether the case has raised issues which have a wider application in respect of Company policy, staff accountability, administrative procedure, or in any other way, and need to be considered by the Managing Director with a view to "system" changes being made;
 - 4.5.3 Whether the findings indicate that a remedy should be offered to the complainant, and, if so, what that should be;
 - 4.5.4 Whether the findings are sufficiently significant to require the Board to be consulted before a response is made to the complainant. The circumstances in which the matter should be referred to the Board include those in which the remedy involves a significant financial outlay, or where the nature of a complaint found to be justified puts the welfare or reputation of the Company at risk.

- 4.5.5 Whether there is a compliance failure that needs to be reported to the SRA (see Compliance Plan)
- 4.6 Where the Managing Director is involved as a subject of the complaint, the procedure in 5.3 should be undertaken with the Chairman of the Board instead of with the Managing Director.
- 4.7 The Managing Director will produce a written report of his/her findings in the case, and this will be produced to the complainant. A copy of the report will be kept on record by the Company.

5 The Role of the Board

- 5.1 The Board should be made aware of all formal complaints made against the Company, and of the findings in respect of each complaint.
- 5.2 In any case where they think fit, the examiner and the Managing Director may consult the Board before a response is made to the complainant. The circumstances in which the matter should be referred to the Board include those in which the remedy involves a significant financial outlay, or where the nature of a complaint found to be justified puts the welfare or reputation of the Company at risk.
- 5.3 If a complainant refuses to accept the findings or the remedy following the investigation of a formal complaint, the matter will be automatically reported to the Board, who will then determine how to proceed in the matter. A complainant will always have the right to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman as indicated in the engagement letter and terms of business sent to all clients at the commencement of the matter an extract of which is shown in the Appendix to this procedure.

Appendix

Edward Connor Solicitors –Terms and Conditions Extract

- 1.1. We are committed to providing high quality legal advice and client care. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the service you receive or about the bill, please contact Gemma Adam, the Managing Director of Edward Connor Solicitors, on 01858 411568 or gemma.adam@edwardconnor.com or by post to 39 The Point, Market Harborough, LE16 7QU.
- 1.2. If Gemma Adam is the subject of the complaint, or has been personally involved in the issues which are the subject matter of the complaint, then please contact John Stevens, the Chairman of the board of directors of Edward Connor Solicitors on 01858 411568 or john.stevens@edwardconnor.com or by post to 39 The Point, Market Harborough, LE16 7QU.
- 1.3. We have a written procedure that sets out how we handle complaints. It is available from our office on request.
- 1.4. We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time, you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman. If you are not happy with our handling of your complaint you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to consider the complaint. The Legal Ombudsman's contact details are:

PO Box 6806
Wolverhampton
WV1 9WJ
Tel: +44 (0)300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk
- 1.5. Normally, you will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint or within six years of the act or omission about which you are complaining occurring (or if outside of this period, within three years of when you should reasonably have been aware of it).
- 1.6. The Legal Ombudsman deals with complaints by consumers, some charities and some small businesses. This means some clients may not have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman - e.g. charities or membership organisations with an annual income net of tax of £1million or over, and many larger-scale businesses, may be unable to use the services of the Legal Ombudsman. This does not prevent you from making a complaint directly to us about the service you have received or about the bill.