



BLACKSTONE CHAMBERS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Blackstone 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 Gary Oliver, our Senior Clerk.
3. Any concerns about members of staff should be raised with Gary Oliver or Julia Hornor, our Chambers Director, as appropriate. If the complaint is about either the senior clerk or the chambers director, please discuss the matter with 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 twelve 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 twelve month time limit.

Formal complaints procedure

7. Please address your formal letter of complaint to Julia Hornor, our Chambers Director, Blackstone Chambers, Blackstone House, Temple, London EC4Y 9BW. 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 her/his/their deputy in her/his/their absence will investigate the complaint

her/himself/themselves in conjunction with the chambers director and the senior clerk. If your complaint is against the Head(s) of Chambers it will be investigated by the next most senior member of our Chambers Management Committee in conjunction with the chambers director and 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 s/he has been appointed and that s/he will reply to your complaint within 21 days. If s/he finds later that s/he is not going to be able to reply within 21 days s/he will set a new date for her/his reply and inform you. Her/his reply will set out:

The nature and scope of her/his investigation;
Her/his conclusion on each complaint and the basis for her/his conclusion; and
If s/he find that you are justified in your complaint, her/his 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 his/her 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 our chambers director 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 do have the choice of taking up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. He has 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 12 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 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB
enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

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

Website:
www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/complaintsandhearings/Informationonmakingacomplaint/

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