Complaint Handling Procedure

For Gard & Co
Last Updated: 7 August 2025

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1. Introduction

We are committed to providing high-quality legal services to all our clients. If something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

This document sets out our complaints procedure in accordance with the **Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Code of Conduct** and the expectations of the **Legal Ombudsman** and **Law Society of England and Wales**.

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2. What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction (oral or written) about our service, our fees, our professional conduct, or how we have handled your matter.

You do not need to use the word "complaint" for it to be treated as one — if you are unhappy with our service, we want to know about it.

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3. How to make a complaint

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, please contact the person who handled your case in the first instance but if they cannot resolve your complaint informally the matter will be escalated to the Complaints Handler:

Complaints Handler: Steven Hudson
Position: Managing Partner & Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP)
Email: sjh@gardandco.com
Telephone: 01752 668246
Address: 4 Bretonside, Plymouth PL4 0BY

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4. What will happen next?

We follow this procedure upon receiving a complaint:

Step 1: Acknowledgement

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within **7 working days**, confirming who is handling your complaint and when you can expect a substantive response.

Step 2: Investigation

Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and impartially by the Complaints Handler or another senior member of staff. This may involve reviewing your file and speaking to the person who acted for you.

Step 3: Response

We aim to provide a full written response within **28 calendar days** of acknowledging your complaint. If more time is needed, we will inform you and explain the reason for the delay.

Step 4: Outcome and Further Action

Our response will set out:

- Our findings and any actions to resolve the complaint
- Whether your complaint has been upheld (in whole or in part)
- Any offer of redress (if appropriate)
- Your right to escalate the complaint further if you remain dissatisfied

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5. What if you are still not satisfied?

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction within **8 weeks**, or you are not happy with the outcome, you may refer your complaint to the:

Legal Ombudsman

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 555 0333
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
Address: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH

Time Limits:

You must contact the Legal Ombudsman:

- Within **6 months** of receiving our final response to your complaint
- No more than **1 year from the date of the act or omission** being complained about, or
- No more than **1 year from when you should have known** about the issue

These time limits may be extended in certain circumstances by the Legal Ombudsman.

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6. Complaints about professional misconduct

If your complaint involves concerns about a solicitor's professional behaviour (e.g., dishonesty, discrimination, or breach of SRA principles), you may contact the:

Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)

Website: www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor.page

The SRA does not deal with complaints about poor service — these should go to the Legal Ombudsman.

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7. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled confidentially and in accordance with data protection law. Your complaint will not affect how we handle your matter.

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8. Record Keeping and Learning

We keep a central record of all complaints and review them regularly to identify trends and areas for improvement in our service.

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9. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

We are not required to agree to ADR after the internal procedure is exhausted. However, you are entitled to seek external ADR where available. The Legal Ombudsman is the primary ADR body for legal services.
