



## Service Complaints Policy

### Introduction

1. The Bar Council represents more than 17,000 practising barristers in England and Wales. Our mission as the Bar's apex representative body is to champion the rule of law and fair access to justice for all, the Bar's high-quality specialist advocacy and advisory services, the highest standards of conduct, skills, ethics, equality and diversity across the profession, and the development of business opportunities for barristers at home and abroad.
2. The staff at the Bar Council aim to establish and maintain the highest professional standards and thus hope to avoid complaints about, or dissatisfaction with, the services that we provide to our members and other people with whom we interact. We recognise, however, that as in any organisation, such complaints or dissatisfaction may from time to time arise and that it is important to ensure that they are dealt with promptly, courteously, efficiently, and sensitively. That is the purpose of this document.

### Informal complaints procedure

3. If at any time you have cause for complaint, the first step is to contact the relevant team in the Bar Council, either in writing, email, or by telephone on 020 7242 0082. A comprehensive list of our teams can be found on [our website](#) and the address for our organisation is The Bar Council, 289-293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ.

4. The recipients of your complaint will acknowledge it within three working days and provide you with a full response within 10 working days of their acknowledgement. Some complaints may take longer to process, but we will keep you informed of this, the reasons for the delay, and any revised time scales.
5. We will aim to resolve your complaint at this stage. However, if our initial response fails to deal with the issues raised to your satisfaction, you can raise a formal complaint by following the procedure set out below.

### **Formal complaints procedure**

6. Formal complaints should be made in writing within 14 days of the response that you have received under paragraph 4 above and addressed to the head or director responsible for the team (“the investigating person”) to which you have complained. If you are unsure of the investigating person to whom your complaint should be addressed, please ask the individual who dealt with your informal complaint (see paragraphs 3 to 5 above) for their name and contact details.
7. If you choose to make a complaint in writing, we ask you to include the following details, to help us investigate and resolve the complaint:
  - i. Your name and contact details.
  - ii. Which service(s) you are complaining about.
  - iii. The details of the complaint.
  - iv. The details of any informal attempt you have made to resolve your complaint.
  - v. What you would like to be done about it. Examples of the types of resolution you might seek include a formal written apology from the Bar Council, a full or partial refund of any monies spent, or written confirmation of a plan of action from the relevant department to ensure that the same issue does not arise again.

Please include any documentation or correspondence relevant to your complaint.

8. It is the responsibility of the investigating person to ensure that the procedures in this document are complied with and that your complaint is dealt with swiftly and fairly. When handling your formal complaint, they will acknowledge it within three working days and provide you with a full response within 20 working days of their acknowledgement. At all times the investigating person will be the conduit for communication with you unless otherwise agreed.
9. The person dealing with your complaint will investigate the issues raised by establishing the facts through discussion with the person(s) responsible for the delivery of the service, providing them with a copy of your letter and giving them sufficient time to respond in writing, as opposed to verbally, if they prefer. This investigation will be carried out as speedily as is consistent with fairness to all concerned. All those involved will be given a proper opportunity to state their position in relation to your complaint. At the conclusion of this process the investigating person will reply to you, setting out the nature and scope of the investigation, their conclusions and the basis for them and, where your complaint is found to be justified, their proposals for resolving it.

### **Reviewing the outcome of a formal complaint**

10. If the investigating person does not resolve your formal complaint to your satisfaction and you make them aware of this fact within five working days of receipt of their response, then the matter will be referred to the Chief Executive. At all times the Chief Executive(?) will be the conduit for communication with you at this stage, unless otherwise agreed.
11. The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt within three working days, before reviewing all communications and documents relating to your complaint to date. They either uphold the conclusions and proposals for

resolution made by the investigating person, or make changes to them, and will notify you of their decision within 10 working days.

12. This review stage is the final stage of our complaints process.

### **Anonymous complaints**

13. Generally, the Bar Council will not accept complaints made anonymously. If you do request for your complaint to be handled anonymously, then you should note that may constrain our ability to properly investigate and resolve the complaint made. To handle and investigate feedback and complaints effectively, we ask for your full cooperation, so that we can fully understand any concerns and deal with the issues you have raised.

### **Internal monitoring of complaints**

14. Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by stakeholder surveys, feedback forms, focus groups and other relevant sources, allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from complaints, each team in the Bar Council will maintain a record of the complaints received, setting out the name and contact details of the complainant, the name of the person dealing with the complaint, the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve the complaint and any relevant dates, and any steps taken to prevent a re-occurrence of the matter complained about.

### **Improving our service**

15. The Bar Council takes complaints very seriously and always seeks to improve its service. We appreciate that it is often difficult for people to complain. Once your complaint has been resolved the director responsible for the team to which you have complained will consider what steps should be implemented to reduce the likelihood of a similar complaint arising in the future.

16. As part of our commitment to improving the services we provide, the Bar Council's Senior Management Team will regularly review the complaints information and assess whether any further steps need to be put in place to avoid a similar occurrence, or whether there needs to be any alteration to this policy.

### **Protecting your data**

17. All communications and documents relating to complaints will be kept confidential and disclosed only so far as is necessary for the investigation and resolution of the complaint, and the monitoring and review of our services.

18. To process a complaint the Bar Council will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and will process it in accordance with our [Privacy Statement](#).

19. For more information on your rights and how to exercise them, and on how to complain about how we are processing your personal data, see our [Procedure on Data Subjects' Rights and Complaints](#).