

## CLIENT GUIDE TO OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### January 2024

#### **1 Our complaints policy**

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

#### **2 What is a complaint?**

- 2.2 A report by a client that their expectations of what they consider to be a good service have not been met. Service relates to things like returning telephone calls promptly, delay in dealing with your matter, failure to keep you informed and that type of thing.

#### **3 Our complaints procedure**

- 3.1 If you have a complaint about our service or any invoice, please contact us with the details by writing to or phoning our client care partner, Mr Justin Emerson, at our office at 5 Springfield Lyons Approach, Chelmsford CM2 5LB. (E: [complaints@gepp.co.uk](mailto:complaints@gepp.co.uk) or T: 01245 493939).

- 3.2 To help us understand your complaint, and in order that we do not miss anything, please tell us:

- 3.2.1 your full name and contact details;
- 3.2.2 what you think we have got wrong;
- 3.2.3 how you would like your complaint to be resolved; and
- 3.2.4 your file reference number (if you have it).

- 3.3 What will happen next?

- 3.3.1 We will write to you acknowledging receipt within seven days of receiving your complaint, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
- 3.3.2 We will record your complaint in our central register and open a file for your complaint. We will then review your complaint and write to you again to let you know how long it will take us to fully investigate the matter and provide you with a full response from us.
- 3.3.3 We will then investigate your complaint. We use an independent company to assist us with this process. The investigation process will normally involve an experienced complaints investigator reviewing your matter file and obtaining the comments of the member of staff who acted for you and the Head of his or her department if appropriate. The person carrying out the investigation will consider whether they agree with your comments.



- 3.3.4 If the person carrying out the investigation does agree with your comments, we will write to you to let you know. We will explain why the investigator does agree with your comments and tell you what we are able to do to put matters right for you. This could be an apology to you, a reduction in our bill or us taking some action. You will be able to consider if you want to accept our offer to put things right. If you do want to accept our offer, this will usually be done in full settlement of the issue and you will not normally be able to then ask the Legal Ombudsman to investigate the matter further. If you do not want to accept our offer, you can tell us the reasons why and ask us for something else. We will consider your request and will write to you again to let you know if we agree and what the next steps are.
- 3.3.5 If the investigator does not agree with your complaint, we will write to you to explain the reasons why. We will tell you what you can do next if you do not accept what we say in our letter. This will usually be an explanation of how to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman for a full review of the complaint and how we have handled it for you.
- 3.3.6 We will provide you with a full reply to your complaint within 8 weeks of receiving your first letter of complaint. We will send you a letter confirming that we have finished the complaints process at this point.
- 3.3.7 This will normally involve reviewing your matter file and obtaining the comments of the member of staff who acted for you and the head of his or her department.

#### **4. What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint**

- 4.1 If you are not satisfied with our handling of your complaint, you can contact the Legal Ombudsman whose details are as follows:

Telephone: 0300 555 0333  
Minicom: 0300 555 1777  
E-mail: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)  
Website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)  
Address: Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH

- 4.2 You should address any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of the expiry of our complaints procedure as above. The services of the Legal Ombudsman are not available to certain commercial clients and organisations: if this might be relevant to you, you may wish to check your eligibility by consulting their website.
- 4.3 Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) bodies exist which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our Firm wish to use such a scheme, eg such as ProMediate ([www.promediate.co.uk](http://www.promediate.co.uk)). We have, however, chosen not to adopt an ADR process. If, therefore, you wish to complain further, you should contact the Legal Ombudsman



4.4 If your complaint relates to the amount of any bill you may also be entitled to apply to court for an assessment of the charges under part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. There are strict time limits for this procedure and you may wish to seek independent legal advice. We may be entitled to charge interest on any outstanding sums from any invoices that are unpaid in full or part.

**5. What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour**

5.1 The Solicitors Regulation Authority ('SRA') can help if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

5.2 Visit the [SRA](#) website to see how you can raise your concerns.