LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

# MCRP: A Guide for Consumers

## Model Complaints Resolution Procedure



## Version

| Version | Description | Date |
|---|---|---|
| **1.0** | First release of guidance | 29 July 2026 |

# About the Model Complaints Resolution Procedure (MCRP)

### What is the MCRP?

The Legal Ombudsman's role is to resolve complaints.  This also includes trying to stop problems happening in the first place. This includes helping legal service providers to resolve complaints themselves so the Legal Ombudsman doesn't need to step in unless it's really needed. When we use the words legal service provider we mean a solicitor, conveyancer, barrister or other lawyer or legal professional.

As part of this, the Legal Ombudsman has developed the MCRP.  This sets out how legal service providers can resolve complaints fairly and as quickly as possible.

Legal service providers do not have to use the MCRP, so this guide sets out what you might see and what to expect.

# What is this guide about and how will it help me?

### If your legal service provider uses the MCRP

If your legal service provider uses the MCRP, this guide will help you understand what to expect. In particular, it explains what happens if:

- Your complaint is suitable for Early Resolution (fixing your problem)
- Your complaint needs a Full Investigation to be resolved. (Looking into what happened in more detail)

### If your legal service provider doesn't use the MCRP

Legal service providers don't have to use the MCRP. Their choice isn't something you can complain about to them or to the Legal Ombudsman.

But you may find it useful to see what we think good complaints handling looks like. If you think anything we say in this guide could help to resolve your complaint, you can highlight this to your legal service provider.

If you're reading this guide, it's likely you will have already made a complaint. If you haven't yet complained to your legal service provider, please **read our guide** about how to do this.

### What happens when I complain, if my legal service provider uses the MCRP, and how long will it take?

Your legal service provider should:

- Let you know they got your complaint within five working days
- Suggest a solution in around 10 days if they think your complaint can be resolved quickly (Early Resolution)
- Give you their final response to your complaint within eight weeks if they need more time (Full Investigation).

They will decide which option is right for your situation. Whichever they choose, they should let you know – and keep you updated throughout the process.

The process should take no longer than eight weeks. After that, you can bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman – whether or not you have your legal service provider's final response.

## Early Resolution

### Why might my legal service provider suggest Early Resolution?

(Early resolution means fixing the problem quickly without a longer investigation)

If your complaint can be resolved fairly at an early stage, it's better for everyone involved. Your legal service provider will carefully consider whether your complaint is right for Early Resolution.

It doesn't mean your complaint isn't as serious or important as those that don't go down this route. It just means there's more possibility of reaching a fair outcome without a longer process and investigation.

Your complaint may be more likely to be resolved if:

- The legal service provider can clearly see their service hasn't been good enough.
- What happened is straightforward and clear from the start, so no extra information is needed from you.
- You've complained about something that's easy to put right – for example, poor communication, a short delay, or a minor issue about costs.
- There's just been a misunderstanding that can be solved with a reason.
- The way you want things resolved is clear and reasonable.

### What will happen when my legal service provider uses Early Resolution?

After letting you know they have got your complaint, your legal service provider will contact you within about 10 days. They will explain how they think your complaint can be resolved.

To put things right, they might:

### Make a reasonable offer (compensation)

Your legal provider could make you an offer to resolve your complaint.

They should have looked at our guidance to help make sure what they're offering is reasonable – that is, it's an appropriate way to put things right. If you end up complaining to us, we'll check whether we agree.

You may find it helpful to look at our **guidance** and **case studies** to get an idea of the type of thing we think is reasonable.

### Offer to do some work

Sometimes action is a better answer than money. For example, your legal service provider may offer to progress things more quickly, update you more regularly, or do something specific that helps give you a better service from now on.

They should tell you clearly what they're going to do and make sure they do it.

### Talk to you

Your legal service provider might want to put things right – but has something different in mind to what you've asked for. In this situation, they may ask to discuss a different solution with you, so you can find something else that you're both happy with.

### Clarify a misunderstanding or explain something

If your complaint was caused by a misunderstanding, your legal service provider might be able to put your mind at rest by explaining things clearly. In some cases, an explanation might help reassure you that their service didn't actually fall short.

### What happens once I have their response?

If you accept what your legal service provider has suggested, let them know as soon as possible – so they can take any action they need to. The complaint then won't need to go any further.

If you don't agree, they will give you a final response to your complaint within what's left of the eight-week period.

# Full Investigation

## Why might my complaint need a full Investigation?

If your legal service provider says that your complaint needs a full Investigation, it doesn't mean they're less willing – or less able – to sort things out for you. It just means they need more time – and sometimes information – to look into what's happened and decide how to address your concerns.

This may happen if:

- Your complaint involves events that happened a long time ago.
- Your complaint is complex, with a lot of detail to review.
- It's clear that your views on what's happened, or about how to put things right are significantly different to the legal service provider's.

## What will happen if my complaint needs a Full Investigation?

If your complaint needs a Full Investigation, your legal service provider has up to what's left of the eight-week timeframe to give a final response to your complaint. It won't necessarily take this long – they should let you know when you can expect to hear from them.

Before then, they may ask you to clarify what you're complaining about. They may also ask for more information to help them investigate what's happened, and decide how things can be put right. It's important to respond as soon as you can, so they can consider this information when responding to your complaint.

Within eight weeks, you should receive the legal provider's final response to your complaint. If you don't have a response by then, you can contact the Legal Ombudsman. But if your legal service provider asks for a short extension, be open to this. It could mean things are sorted out more quickly than going through the Legal Ombudsman.

## What will the final response say?

In a final response, we encourage legal service providers to:

- Address all of the issues you've complained about.
- Reach a clear decision for each issue.
- Explain the evidence they've used reach their decisions.
- Give an overall decision about whether they think their service were not as good as they should have been.
- If they agree with any parts of your complaint, consider the impact on you, and how they think things can be put right fairly.
- Clearly set out how and when you can bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

## The legal service provider has made an offer – how do I know if it's fair?

If the legal service provider agrees they didn’t do a good enough job, they should explain how they will fix it. Usually, this means trying to put you back in the position you would have been in if they had done their job properly in the first place.

We encourage legal service providers to apply our **guidance** on what we think is fair and reasonable. They may refer to this in their final response. If you have any questions or concerns, ask them to clarify how they’ve made their decision.

### What are my options once I’ve had the final response?

If you accept what your legal service provider has suggested, let them know as soon as possible – so they can take any action they need to. The complaint won’t then go any further.

If you don’t, you can ask the Legal Ombudsman to look into your complaint, and give an independent view about what’s happened. You can read our guidance about how to do this.

We will use the same guidance about putting things right as we ask legal service providers to apply. So if it’s clear to you that their offer is in line with what we’d expect, it’s very unlikely you’ll get a different outcome if you take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.