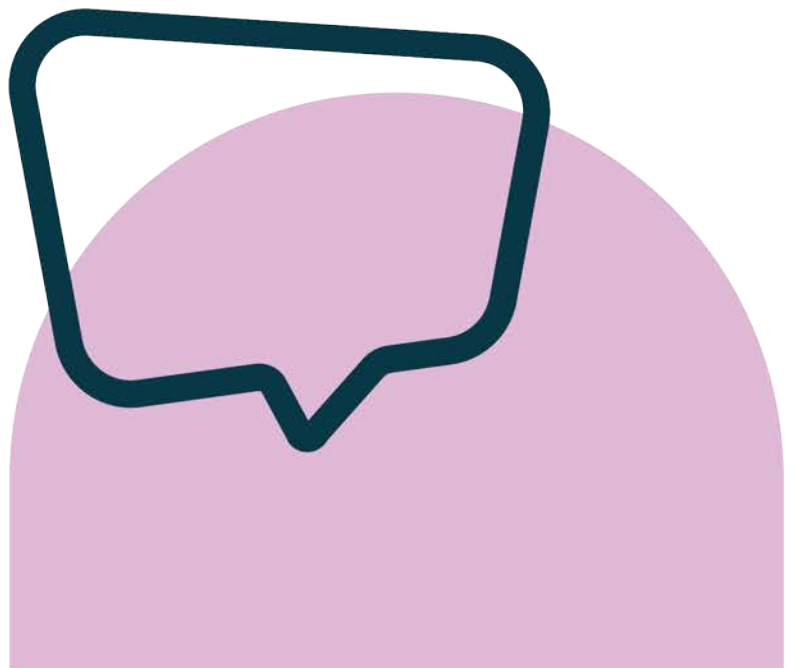


How to handle complaints as a small service provider

Model Complaints Resolution
Procedure



Version

Version	Description	Date
1.0	First release of guidance	29 July 2026

Introduction

Whilst LeO receives complaints across the entire spectrum of legal services in England and Wales, we know that the vast majority of service providers are small and don't receive many complaints.

When they do arrive, the process of dealing with them in a way that is up to date, compliant with regulatory requirements, conducive to resolution with the consumer and consistent with organisational philosophy offers a considerable challenge, not least when the exercise means time away from chargeable work.

The MCRP has been developed from LeO's experience of a large volume of escalated complaints and our exposure to the same number of first tier complaints.

What's clear is that some small firms and individuals really get the value of feedback from those using the service and have huge personal pride in the interactions that help find an amicable resolution. This guide is designed to encourage that and share how the MCRP can be applied to best effect.

The central message is the opportunity complaints bring

Complaints are a form of feedback. Consumers don't have to tell their lawyer that they aren't happy. They could tell their friends, their family, their social media followers, a review website or indeed they could tell no one. That they have chosen to tell you is an indication that there remains a belief that you can put right what they consider has gone wrong. It is a reflection – not a shattering – of their trust.

Those service providers who encourage dialogue with consumers will cultivate an ecosystem where consumers feel not just comfortable but responsible for sharing their views on anything they like or don't like.

The absence of a complaint doesn't mean the consumer was totally happy with all aspects of the service they received and no improvement was possible. Why miss out on the chance to make a small improvement for the next person through the door?

Why is LeO talking about this?

Simply, at a time where LeO is facing unprecedented demand, we receive too many complaints that needn't have come to us. There are complaints which should have been resolved by better engagement with consumers and a better application of the complaints procedure.

We see the same mistakes being made by firms not spotting the patterns and themes their consumers are telling them about. The service providers that actively seek these patterns and themes and that are keen to learn from the data they're given will make changes to the service that prevent complaints from being made in the future.

For small service providers, we often see complaints procedures that are out of date, inefficient and difficult to navigate. Some reflect a different time in customer service, where consumers felt less confident about expressing their views.

Applying the MCRP

The Model Complaints Resolution Procedure has two stages. It's for you to decide how those are divided.

- Who will carry out the Early Resolution process?
 - If you're a sole practitioner, this is probably an easy question to answer.
 - For those with staff, it's important to know that we don't believe that first stage must be carried out by a partner/member or even by someone senior at the firm.
 - What matters is that whoever carries out the Early Resolution process:
 - Has the skills and knowledge to do so;
 - Has the authority to make decisions that will resolve the complaint (there might be a limit above which approval is required);
 - Can get to grips with the background and reason for the consumer's dissatisfaction;
 - Knows what to do, if the Early Resolution process isn't successful; and
 - Keeps good records of what happened during the process.
- However, you apply MCRP, make it work for your business, your staff and your consumers
 - Small adaptations to the MCRP to personalise the experience can be helpful. Only make changes you believe to be beneficial and keep them under close review.
- Ensure there is the facility for the information gathered in complaints to be fed into service improvement
 - The best way to reduce complaints is to improve service, and the best way to do that is to use the data from direct contact with consumers.
- Keep good records of the complaints and the outcomes
 - If the complaint is escalated to LeO, we will be asking for copies of documents, including the final response. If there has been an agreement reached to resolve the complaint, we'll want to see what was agreed