

How to complaint about a Legal Service Provider

Model Complaints
Resolution Procedure



Version

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How to Complain about a Legal Service Provider

When we use the words legal service provider, we mean a solicitor, conveyancer, barrister or other lawyer or legal professional.

If you use a legal service provider, you expect a good service. It can be upsetting if this does not happen.

For example, you may be unhappy about delays, communication, a decision that's been made, or costs you weren't expecting.

This guide explains how to complain clearly so your legal provider can put things right as quickly as possible.

Where do I find out how to complain?

The rules for legal service providers say they must have a procedure for dealing with complaints.

First, find your legal provider's own procedure. It should give important information such as who to contact and what to expect.

The complaints procedure should be with the information your legal service provider gave you at the start. If you can't find it, look on their website, or ask the person you've been dealing with for a copy.

The Legal Ombudsman has a Model Complaints Resolution Procedure for legal service providers [\[link\]](#) to help them sort out complaints. Your legal provider doesn't *have* to use this. But you may find it helpful to read our guidance for consumers [\[link\]](#) to understand what we think a good procedure looks like.

How do I make my complaint?

You can complain in any way you like – it could be a letter or email, or it could be a conversation in person or on the phone. You just need to tell your legal service provider that you're unhappy and want to complain and why.

Your legal service provider's procedure may suggest you complain in writing. You don't have to do this. Writing things down can help you gather your thoughts. It also creates a record of what you said.

If you're complaining in writing, you can use our template to help you. The template can be found [here](#).

What should I say in my complaint?



A good complaint has three key parts:

1. What went wrong
2. How it affected you
3. How you want it put right

To help sort things out as quickly as possible, keep these key points in mind:

- **Say it's a complaint.** Make sure it's clear you're making a complaint. You can do this in the heading or subject line of your letter or email – for example, "Complaint – sale of 38 Woodland Road". Or if it's a conversation, say that you'd like to make a complaint.
- **Be polite and respectful, even if you are upset. This helps you work with your provider to sort things out.**
- **Explain clearly and simply.** Even though you're dealing with a legal service provider, you don't need to use legal language to complain. Use your own words, as if you were talking to a friend. AI tools can help you organise your thoughts, but do not rely on them completely. Your provider needs to hear your own words.
- **Include useful details, such as names of people you've dealt with, dates of important events, amounts of money involved and reference numbers.**
- **List what you're unhappy about.** If your complaint is about more than one thing, list them clearly. This will ensure your legal service provider understands, and responds to, the different aspects of your complaint.
- **Say what went wrong and how it affected you (the impact).** Once you've explained the problem, be clear about how this led to the impact. Try to be fair about what was within the legal service provider's control if this is something you know. For example, were they responsible for a delay – or did they communicate about it badly? Did they cause a stressful situation – or did they make it worse? If you think you've lost money, how did their actions cause this?
- **Think about realistic solutions.** For example, an apology, fixing work, or reducing fees. It's rare to get a lot of compensation for poor customer service. If you're asking for

money, say how much and why you think the amount is right. Look at our guidance here [\[link\]](#) to get an idea of what we think is fair and reasonable.

What does the legal service provider have to do?

Your legal service provider must:

- Respond to your complaint
- Give a final response within eight weeks
- Not charge you to complain
- Consider any support you need (such as using a different way of communicating).

The key things above apply whether or not they follow our Model Complaints Resolution Procedure.

How long will it take?

It may take time to look into your complaint.

Your provider may ask for more information. Try to give this if you can. If you cannot, tell them.

Simple issues may be sorted in a few days. More complex cases may take up to eight weeks.

If you cannot provide what they ask for, tell them. Also tell them if you do not understand or need help. It's really important you tell them this.

If it's clear what's happened – and how things can be put right – they may suggest a solution in a few days. We call this Early Resolution.

If your situation is more complicated, they may carry out a Full Investigation. They have up to eight weeks to give you a final written response.

After eight weeks – whether they've responded or not – you can bring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman. But if your legal 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.

See our Model Complaints Resolution Procedure guidance [here](#). This explains more about why some complaints can take longer than others to look into and sort out.

What happens when I get my legal service provider's final response?

If you accept the outcome, tell your legal service provider.

If you do not accept, or they do not respond within eight weeks, you can contact the Legal Ombudsman.

You'll need to do this within six months of the final response.

Generally, we can look into complaints about things that happened within the last year – or within a year of you realising there was a problem. When you contact us, we'll let you know about any rules or limits that affect whether we can help.

Read about how to complain to the Legal Ombudsman [here](#).