



10 Park Square ~ Leeds ~ LS1 2LH
DX 26412 Leeds Park Square

Complaints Procedure

Our aim is to give you a good service at all times. However if you have a complaint you are invited to let us know as soon as possible.

We welcome feedback from all clients, both positive as well as negative. If you do not wish to make a formal complaint, but would like to provide feedback on the service you have received, please feel free to ask Andrew Argyle the CEO or a Senior Clerk to contact you as soon as possible.

Zenith Chambers (ZC) adopts a positive and constructive approach to the investigation and resolution of all complaints by lay or professional clients. Our intention is to take all complaints seriously and to resolve them, as far as is reasonably possible, to the satisfaction of the parties involved.

Complaints may concern Chambers as a whole, individual Members, a group of Members or a member of staff. A complaint is defined as "any expression of dissatisfaction".

Please note: it is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint, but you are free to do so should you wish.

Our procedures:

1. A complaint must be made **within 6 months** of the relevant date: i.e. the date on which an issue arose, about which the complaint is being made. If you wish to lodge a complaint outside that time period, we ask that you provide a reason for such a delay, and consideration will be given as to whether the complaint should still be investigated, although it has been received 'out of time'.
2. You may make an informal or formal complaint.
 - i) An informal complaint is one that can be discussed and resolved satisfactorily over the telephone. It is therefore typically dealt with and resolved very swiftly. A short record is kept on file, and the Complaints Panel Chairman is notified. You may also wish to keep your own note of the conversation(s) that take place.
 - ii) A formal complaint is one which is required to be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Complaints' Panel (or Head of Chambers if the complaint is about the Practice Director).

Informal Complaints

3. To make an informal complaint, contact a Senior Clerk or the Practice Director on 0113 245 5438 as follows:
 - i) Helen Dring : Senior Clerk for Criminal Cases – where the complaint relates to the barrister on your case or one of the clerks
 - ii) Clive Taylor : Senior Clerk for other cases – where the complaint relates to the barrister on your case or one of the clerks

iii) Andrew Argyle : CEO : for any type of complaint whether formal or informal, whether relating to a case or not, and whether or not relating to an individual member of staff or barrister.

iv) Julian Goose QC, Head of Chambers, where the complaint is against the Practice Director.

4. Instructing Solicitors may optionally contact the barrister direct when making an informal complaint.
5. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.
6. Where you are dissatisfied with the way your informal complaint has been dealt with in anyway, you may wish to lodge a formal complaint **within 14 days** instead.

Formal Complaints

7. To make a formal complaint, please provide details of the complaint in writing to Andrew Argyle (or Head of Chambers if the complaint is about Andrew Argyle). Ideally, and to be sure that you provide all relevant information, we would encourage you to use our Complaints Form. This is available on request, and will be available from our new web site during summer 2008.
8. Please address your complaint to Andrew Argyle the CEO, and ensure you provide the following details:
 - i) Your name and address
 - ii) Which member(s) of chambers or staff you are complaining about
 - iii) The details of the complaint
 - iv) What you would like done about it
9. Zenith Chambers has a Complaints Panel, and Andrew Argyle is its chair. On receipt of your complaint, he will either elect to investigate the complaint himself, or appoint a senior barrister from the Panel of investigators to look into the complaint. (Note, where a complaint is against him, the Head of Chambers will investigate the complaint or delegate the task to a senior member of chambers).
10. A formal complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt, confirming the name of the person who will be investigating the complaint.
11. Where the complaint may involve an allegation of professional misconduct, and/or any complaint which may involve an allegation of negligence and hence a potential claim against Chambers, the Barrister or their insurers, the Practice Director will notify the Head of Chambers.
12. Where a complaint raises an allegation of negligence the Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund will be informed, and will be consulted before proposals for resolution are made to the client.

13. If the complaint involves the Head of Chambers personally, the Management Committee shall nominate a senior Member of Chambers to conduct the functions of the Head of Chambers.
14. It shall be open to the Head of Chambers, within his or her discretion, to inform the Bar Standards Board of the complaint if, following the investigation and, having discussed the issue with the Member concerned, he considers the complaint to be justified and a referral to be desirable in the interests of Chambers and in order to comply with the Code of Conduct.
15. The person about whom the complaint has been made is informed at the latest within three days of receipt of the complaint (where such complaint was initially received by the Practice Director or the Head of Chambers).
16. A record is kept of all complaints received, with a note of the steps taken to resolve the matter.
17. As part of the investigation, the barrister or member of staff will be asked to make a written record of their version of events relating to the complaint.
18. The Investigator will report back as soon as possible, and in any event within 28 days with an up to date position regarding the investigation. Please note, leave of absence may result in this time limit being extended for a reasonable period.
19. The Report made to you on conclusion of the investigation will set out:
 - i) The nature and scope of the investigation
 - ii) His conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion; and
 - iii) Where he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint
20. Complaints will be referred to the Head of Chambers, or an appointed substitute, for resolution where:
 - a response to the complainant cannot be agreed by those concerned; or
 - the client wishes to take the matter further; or
 - those concerned cannot agree upon a suitable response for the clientOr where any other difficulty has arisen.

The decision of the Head of Chambers or his substitute shall be final and binding upon any Member of Chambers.
21. We hope that you will use our Complaints Procedure. However, if you would rather not do so, or if you remain dissatisfied with our handling of your complaint, or of the content of our Report, you may wish to contact the Complaints Department at the Bar Standards Board at 289-293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ; Telephone: 020 7611 1444; Fax: 020 7831 9217; www.barstandardsboard.org.uk. Please note: the Bar Standards Board has a six-month time limit from the date of the act or omission about which you are complaining within which to make your complaint. However, should you raise your complaint with Chambers first, there is a three month time limit from the conclusion of our investigation in which to raise your complaint.

Confidentiality

22. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential, and will only be disclosed to the extent that it is deemed necessary as part of the investigation.
23. Disclosure will be to the Head of Chambers, the Practice Director Management Committee, and anyone else involved in the complaint and its investigations. Such people will also include the barristers or staff members about whom you have complained. Additionally, the Bar Standards Board is entitled to inspect the documents and seek information about the complaint when discharging its auditing and monitoring functions.

Complaints Records & Reviews

24. Complaint records will be retained for six years.
25. At each Management Committee meeting, the Practice Director shall report on any new formal complaints received since the last meeting, and on the status of any unresolved complaints.
26. Every May and October (or thereabouts), the Practice Director will review all formal complaints received during the period since the last review, and prepare a report to the Management Committee highlighting any trends found.
27. Consideration will then be given to any training needs that may be identified and to whether any procedures within ZC require amendment to avoid any potential complaints of a similar nature in the future.
28. For the avoidance of doubt, the obligations of Members in relation to complaints are as follows:
 - To make a full record of any complaint received by them personally.
 - To promptly notify the Practice Director or Head of Chambers of any complaint received.
 - In any event, to notify the Head of Chambers in respect of any complaint which may involve an allegation of professional misconduct and/or any complaint which may involve an allegation of negligence and hence a potential claim against them or their insurers
 - To co-operate with any investigation conducted by the Practice Director/Head of Chambers.
 - To abide by any decision of the Head of Chambers and Complaints Panel in relation to any complaint.

The Bar Code of Conduct can be read on line at:
<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/standardsandguidance/codeofconduct/>

For further information about lodging a complaint about a Barrister to the Bar Standards Board, refer to:
<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/complaintsanddiscipline/>