

Tanfield Chambers Complaints Procedure

1. Our aim is to give professional and lay clients an excellent service at all times. However, if you have a complaint or suggestion you are encouraged to let us know as soon as possible.
2. This document describes Chambers' policy and procedures in relation to the handling of complaints from the professional or lay client, in accordance with the Bar Council Practice Management Guidelines and the Code of Conduct of the Bar.
3. Chambers recognises that a complaint may be made against [1] an individual barrister; [2] Chambers as a whole; and [3] against the staff. Chambers recognises that in each case it is the duty of Chambers to ensure that the interests of the lay client are protected. A fair, positive and constructive attitude will be adopted in the handling of complaints. It is understood that a complaint does not necessarily mean that any individual is at fault and a complaint may be unfounded.

Complaints made by Telephone

4. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 7 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone the Senior Clerk (Kevin Moore). If the complaint concerns the Senior Clerk, then the matter should be addressed to the Head of Chambers (Geraint Jones QC).
5. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like done about it. S/he will discuss your concerns with you and endeavor to resolve the matter on an informal basis. If the matter is resolved s/he will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. If the complaint cannot be resolved, or you do not feel that the concern or matter you have raised has been dealt with to your satisfaction, then you may wish to make a formal complaint and you will be invited to put your complaint in writing within 14 days.
6. If you tell us that you will not use a particular barrister again, this will be recorded to assist in the future allocation of work from you.

Complaints made in Writing

7. Please address your formal letter of complaint to **The Senior Clerk, Tanfield Chambers, 2-5 Warwick Court, London, WC1R 5DJ**. Please give the following details: your name and address; which member(s) of Chambers or staff you are complaining about; the detail of the complaint; and what you would like done about it.
8. The written complaint will be recorded and you will be sent an acknowledgment of receipt following which an internal investigation will be carried out and giving a date for a formal response following that investigation. The date for a formal response should be no more than **28 days** after the receipt of the initial complaint, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This response will be in writing.
9. In relation to complaints against barristers, the complaint may relate to (a) the service provided; and/or (b) the legal competence of counsel; and/or (c) professional misconduct.
 - (a) where the complaint relates to the legal service provided, the Senior Clerk may investigate the complaint himself unless, in his discretion, he considers it appropriate to ask the Head of Chambers or a designated member of the Management Committee to assist him in the investigation (the person presently designated is the Chambers Barmark Officer, Adrian Carr).
 - (b) where the complaint relates to the legal competence of a barrister, the Senior Clerk will refer the complaint to the Head of Chambers so that he may investigate the complaint.
 - (c) where the complaint alleges a breach of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales the complainant may make a complaint to the Bar Council (please follow the procedure under Paragraph 13 below). The complainant will be informed of this right in the initial letter confirming that the complaint is being investigated. If a complaint is made to the Bar Council the Chambers complaints procedure will usually be suspended until the conclusion of the Bar Council's procedure. The Senior Clerk will refer such a complaint to the Head of Chambers for investigation.

If your complaint is against the Senior Clerk or Head of Chambers, it will be investigated by the Deputy Head of Chambers.

10. The person appointed to investigate your complaint will give you a formal written response on or before the date specified in the letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint. Her/his formal written response will set out:
 - The nature and scope of her/his investigation
 - Her/his conclusion on each complaint and the basis for her/his conclusion; and
 - If s/he finds that you are justified in your complaint, her/his proposals for resolving the complaint.

Confidentiality

11. All conversations and documents relating to the complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will be to the Head of Chambers, Senior Clerk, members of Chambers' Management Committee and to anyone else we consider necessary to involve in the complaint and its investigation. This will include the barrister or staff member who you have complained about. To enable chambers to advance its commitment to equality of opportunity, in cases of complaints involving allegations of discrimination, the Chambers Equal Opportunities Officer will also be notified of the complaint.

Our Policy

12. As part of our commitment to client care we make a written record of any complaint. Regular reports are made to the Management Committee with a view to improving services.

Complaints to the Bar Standards Board (professional body for Barristers)

13. We hope that you use our procedure. However, if you would rather not do so or are unhappy with the outcome you do have the choice of taking up your complaint with the Bar Standards Board. All complaints must be made on their standard complaint form, which can be downloaded from their website. Their contact details are:

Complaints and Hearings Team
Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7HZ
Complaints Information Line: 020 7611 1445
Switchboard: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217

Website: www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

14. Please note that complaints made more than six months after the act or omission complained of will be dismissed by the Complaints Commissioner unless the complaint is sufficiently serious to justify further consideration, or there are exceptional circumstances which would justify further consideration of the complaint despite the lapse of time since the matters complained of. If you have already contacted us and are not happy with the results of the investigation, you must send your complaint to the Bar Standards Board within 3 months of the date that our decision is sent to you.

Last Updated: 31 July 2009