GARTH COATES SOLICITORS
COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Complaints policy

We value your business and do not wish you to have any reason to be unhappy with us. We are confident of providing a high-quality service. It is therefore important that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately, so that we may address them. This will help us to improve our standards.

Our complaints procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the service received or if you are dissatisfied with regard to a charge on a bill received, please first contact the member of staff who is dealing with your matter and they will try to resolve your concerns informally. Our aim will always be to deal with your concerns as quickly as possible and without recourse to any formal complaints procedure, if that is possible.

If it is clear that you remain dissatisfied, the member of staff will inform you of the existence of our formal complaints procedure by sending you a copy of this procedure.

Stage 1
You should contact Mr. Garth Coates, our Principal Partner, in writing by email at garth@garthcoates.com or by post to Garth Coates Solicitors, Bloomsbury House, 29B Montague St, London WC1B 5BW. Please outline the cause of your dissatisfaction and if possible, the action you would like us to take in order to remedy that dissatisfaction.

Stage 2
We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days and inform you of the name of the person who is dealing with your complaint. In order to obtain an independent and objective view, we may outsource stage 2 to an independent complaints handler. Your complaint will be acknowledged by them within 5 working days and a thorough investigation undertaken. We will record your complaint in our central register which is reviewed regularly by the firm.

Stage 3
The person investigating the complaint will have full access to all the information and personnel that they require to investigate your complaint properly. They may contact you directly to discuss and confirm your heads of complaints and request any further information from you to assist the investigation.

We will ask the person investigating the complaint to recommend the action which they believe would be recommended by the Legal Ombudsman if the complaint was referred to their office.

Stage 4
The person investigating your complaint will provide you with a detailed assessment report together with their recommendations to resolve the complaint, if any, and a copy of this will first be forwarded to our Partners for review. If the complaint is outsourced, we will generally follow their recommendations made, but if we think they are not appropriate we will explain our reasons to you.

We have 8 weeks from the date we receive your complaint to fully investigate and provide our final response to you.

If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will contact you to explain why.

You will not be charged for our time spent on dealing with a complaint internally.

Stage 5
If you are still not satisfied, the next step is for you to contact the Legal Ombudsman by one of the following methods:

Telephone : 0300 555 0333
Overseas: +44 12 245 3050
Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
In writing : PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ
www.legalombudsman.org.uk

The Ombudsman service is only available to members of the public, very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts. If you are unclear about your position, then you should contact the Legal Ombudsman direct to clarify whether or not they can deal with your complaint. Alternatively, please refer to the Legal Ombudsman's scheme rules which are available by clicking on the following link:

https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/information-centre/corporate-publications/scheme-rules/

You have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman at the conclusion of our complaints process. The Legal Ombudsman expects complaints to be made to them within one year of the date of the act or omission about which you are concerned or within one year of you realising there was a concern. You must also refer your concerns to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of our final response to you.

Alternative complaints bodies such as ProMediate (http://www.promediate.co.uk/) exist, which are competent to deal with complaints about legal services should both you and our firm agree to use such a scheme. Garth Coates Solicitors does not usually agree to use ProMediate as we prefer the Legal Ombudsman's clear adjudication process.

Complaints About Fees

If you are dissatisfied with our bill, you have the right to apply to the High Court for an assessment of our charges by an Officer of the Court under ss. 70, 71 and 72 of the Solicitors Act 1974. We hope that before making such an application you would first use our complaints procedure explained above.

Complaints About Misconduct

If you have any concerns about any misconduct or breach of the SRA Code of Conduct by our firm, such as taking or losing your money, dishonesty or discrimination, you can also report the matter to our regulatory body, the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Their details are:
The Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube
Wharfside Street
Birmingham

B1 1RN
0370 606 2555
http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor.page