



## **Complaints Procedure**

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## Complaints Procedure

1. 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. It is not necessary to involve solicitors in order to make your complaint, but you are free to do so should you wish.
2. Doughty Street Chambers (DSC) asks you to raise any complaint as soon as practicable. DSC takes the same approach to time-limits for complaints as the Legal Ombudsman: As such, you should make any complaint to DSC within one year, counted from the date of the act (or the omission) about which you wish to complain or (if later) from the date on which you should have realised that there was cause for you to make a complaint.
3. The Legal Ombudsman, an independent complaints body, can investigate complaints from consumers about the service they received from a DSC barrister. Helpful information about the Legal Ombudsman complaints process is available on its website: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk/how-we-work/consumer-journey/](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/how-we-work/consumer-journey/). You should raise your complaint with DSC, before going to the Legal Ombudsman. Non-clients who are not satisfied with the outcome of the DSC investigation should contact the Bar Standards Board, rather than the Legal Ombudsman.
4. Please note that it may not be possible for DSC to investigate a complaint made by a non-client. This is because the ability of DSC satisfactorily to investigate and resolve such matters is limited and such complaints are often better suited to the disciplinary processes maintained by the Bar Standards Board. DSC will make an initial assessment of the complaint and, if it appears to DSC that the issues raised cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the DSC complaints process, DSC will refer the complainant to the Bar Standards Board.
5. Please note also that you may wish to consider alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Neither the complainant nor the barrister complained about is required to use ADR. A list of ADR bodies is available here: [www.tradingstandards.uk/consumer-help/adr-approved-bodies/](http://www.tradingstandards.uk/consumer-help/adr-approved-bodies/). We would be happy to discuss this option further with you, should you wish to consider it. Going to ADR would not affect your right to raise a complaint with the Legal Ombudsman.
6. We would encourage you to speak initially on the telephone about your complaint. We would like to see if we can resolve your complaint with you (at an early and informal stage). Also, we are able to assist you if you feel you need help in formulating your complaint. Please telephone the relevant Senior Practice Manager, Sian Wilkins (Civil) or Matthew Butchard (Crime). If your complaint is about either of them, then you can telephone James Whiting, Chief Executive Officer.
7. You are welcome to put your complaint in writing, before speaking to someone from DSC about it. If you prefer to speak to someone first, then the person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to have done about it. The next step will be for your concerns to be discussed informally then or on a subsequent call (or calls), with an aim to resolve them satisfactorily. If the matter is resolved, the outcome will be recorded. We will check that you are satisfied with the

outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.

8. If we have not been able to reach an informal resolution with you through speaking on the telephone, or if you prefer to proceed with your complaint without having such informal telephone discussions, then you will need to put your complaint in writing, DSC would prefer that you make your complaint by email to [enquiries@doughtystreet.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@doughtystreet.co.uk). This will be directed to the appropriate staff member.

### **Complaints – investigation by DSC**

9. When making your complaint in writing, please give the following information:

- Your name and address, together with a contact email (if available);
- Which member(s)/entity of DSC you are complaining about;
- The details of the complaint (including what the person did, or did not do); and
- What you would like done about it.

Please provide all information (including copy documents or other material) that is relevant to your complaint with your written complaint.

10. Please address your complaint to the relevant person, as advised in paragraph 6. DSC will, where possible, acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days and provide you with details of how your complaint will be dealt with.
11. DSC has a Complaints Panel made up of senior members of DSC and a senior member of staff. Each written complaint is referred to, and will be investigated by, a person from that Complaints Panel. DSC will notify you who will investigate your complaint, as soon as practicable after that person has been appointed (we aim to make sure that this is within 10 working days of the letter of acknowledgement, referred to above). You will receive a letter from DSC confirming the name of the person who will investigate your complaint and provide a written report of their investigation. The investigation must be completed, and the report sent to the complainant, within eight weeks of receipt of the written complaint. If there are exceptional circumstances which mean that the investigation cannot be concluded within that time, the complainant will be informed accordingly. DSC seeks to ensure that a realistic time frame is set.
12. The person investigating (the investigator) the complaint may want you to provide further information (including supporting material) about your complaint. DSC will inform you of any such request (please let us know if the request is unclear to you in any way). You are asked to reply, with the information and supporting material requested, as soon as practicable (ideally, within 7 days). It is important that you provide all information you consider relevant to your complaint, so that it can be considered during the investigation. Once the complainant has replied to the investigator's request, no further material will be accepted (unless, for exceptional reasons or in exceptional circumstances, the investigator considers it appropriate to take it into account).

13. When they have completed their investigation of your complaint, the investigator will prepare a report to the complainant which will set out:
  - a. the nature and scope of the investigations carried out in respect of each complaint; and
  - b. the conclusions reached and the reasons for those conclusions.
14. The report will, so far as possible, be drafted using clear and concise language.
15. Where a complaint is found to be justified (in whole or in part), the report will provide proposals for resolution. The investigator will include the recommendations they consider appropriate in the circumstances.
16. The report will be sent to the complainant, and to the person against whom the complaint was made, within the period set under paragraph 11.

### **Confidentiality**

17. All conversations and documents relating to complaints considered under the Complaints Procedure shall be confidential and disclosed only to the extent necessary. They may be disclosed to the complainant, the person complained about, the Chief Executive/equivalent, the Chair of the DSC Management Board, the investigator, and any other individual with whom enquiries need to be made for the purpose of the investigation including a relevant regulatory body from which assistance is sought (in which event, the name of the complainant and person about whom the complaint is made should not be disclosed, unless necessary). The details of complaint investigations and their outcome may be disclosed to the Management Board, staff and individual members (including practice team leaders), only in so far as is necessary to secure resolution of the complaint, and/or the ongoing and continued good management of DSC and its practitioners.

### **Our Policy**

18. As part of our commitment to client care we keep a record of any complaint received and retain all documents and correspondence generated by the complaint for a period of six years.

### **Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman**

19. As we mention above, the Legal Ombudsman is an independent complaints body for complaints about lawyers. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation and you fall within their jurisdiction you may take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Legal Ombudsman is generally not able to consider your complaint until it has first been investigated by DSC. Please note the timeframe for referral of complaints to the Legal Ombudsman as referred to in paragraph 2 above and as set out on the Legal Ombudsman's website.

You can write to them at:

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Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6806  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 9WJ

Or telephone on:  
0300 555 0333

Or Email on: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

See: [www.legalombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/)

### **Complaints to the Bar Standards Board**

20. If you are not the barrister's client and are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation then please contact the Bar Standards Board.

You can write to them at:  
Bar Standards Board  
Professional Conduct Department 289-293 High Holborn  
London WC1V 7JZ

Or telephone on:  
0207 6111 444

Or visit their website on:  
[www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)