



Complaints Code

This Code must be read with the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct is the parent document of the CLC Handbook and Frameworks; it sits above all other Codes in our regulatory arrangements. The Code of Conduct prescribes six Ethical Principles of behaviour which are essential to delivering the specific Outcomes which sit beneath each of the Ethical Principles. All CLC regulated individuals and bodies are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct in the delivery of authorised reserved legal activities and permitted non-reserved legal activities.

The CLC also publishes several other topic specific Codes addressing important areas of practice, such as this Complaints Code. Topic specific Codes underpin the Code of Conduct and support regulated individuals and bodies in delivering the Ethical Principles and Outcomes of behaviour defined in the Code of Conduct. Topic specific Codes apply to all regulated activities carried out by the individuals or bodies specified in that Code.

In this Code ‘you’ refers to individuals and bodies regulated by the CLC. You must ensure that you always comply with the Code of Conduct and topic specific Codes and must not permit anyone else to act or fail to act in such a way as to amount to a breach of this Code, the Code of Conduct, or the Ethical Principles.

Should circumstances arise in which there is an apparent conflict between a topic specific Code, the Code of Conduct, or any other regulatory requirement, you must ensure that you comply with the Code of Conduct. If in doubt, contact the CLC for advice.

You must ensure that:

1. You make all reasonable efforts to ensure your service is accessible and responsive to ***Clients***, including those with vulnerabilities.
2. The ***complaints*** procedure is clear, well-publicised and free.
3. You treat ***complaints*** seriously and provide appropriate redress options.
4. You deal with ***complaints*** fairly and within 28 days.
5. You identify and address systemic ***Client complaints*** issues.
6. You operate a procedure which is appropriate to the needs of ***clients*** and which allows

complaints to be made by any reasonable means.

7. You deal with **complaints** constructively and impartially, basing decisions upon a sufficient investigation of the circumstances.
8. Where redress offers are accepted, these are actioned within 28 days.
9. You treat fairly members of staff who are the subject of a **complaint**.
10. From the outset you advise **Clients** in a prominent place on your website and in writing of their right to make a **complaint**, how to make it, to whom, and the timeframes involved.
11. You advise **Clients** in a prominent place on your website and in writing of their right to have their **complaint** escalated to the **Legal Ombudsman**, and provide them with contact details and timeframes of that body.
12. You keep a record of **complaints** received and any action taken as a result.
13. **Complaints** are investigated under the supervision of one of your senior **managers**/members.
14. You respond in writing to **complaints** within 7 days. Where a full response cannot be given in this timeframe, you acknowledge receipt of the **complaint**, give the reason for the delay and commit to responding fully within 28 days of receipt of their initial **complaint**.
15. The response includes:
 - a clear explanation of your assessment of the **complaint**;
 - your decision on it,
 - offer of remedial action and/or redress where a **complaint** is upheld;
 - information on your **complaint**-handling review procedure (if applicable), its timeframes and how it can be accessed;
 - information on the complainant's right to refer the **complaint** to the **Legal Ombudsman**, its timeframes and contact details¹;
 - information about a named complaint body approved by The Chartered Trading Standards Institute² which is competent to deal with complaints about legal services, if both you and Clients wish to use such a scheme;
 - a statement whether you agree to use such a scheme³.
16. Should your procedure make provision for review of how a **complaint** was handled, the review must be carried out in a timely manner and not inconvenience the complainant.

Should you require guidance on how to meet your responsibilities under this Code, please see the CLC's [Complaints Guidance](#).

¹ These requirements are unaffected by the [EU Directive on consumer alternative dispute resolution](#)

² See the Trading Standards website. Complaints bodies which are currently approved for this purpose are Ombudsman Services, ProMediate and Small Claims Mediation.

³ Although you must provide information about a complaints body, there is no requirement for you to use that complaints body's complaints scheme