



Complaints Code

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In this Code 'you' refers to individuals and bodies regulated by the **CLC**; all individuals and bodies regulated by the **CLC** must comply with this Code. You must not permit anyone else to act or fail to act in such a way as to amount to a breach of this Code.

Outcomes-Focused

The **Code of Conduct** requires you to deliver the follow **Outcomes**:

- **You accept responsibility where the service you provide is not of the expected standard and provide appropriate redress for the *Client* where necessary (*Outcome 6.3*);**
- **Handling of *complaints* takes proper account of *Clients'* individual needs, including those who are vulnerable (*Outcome 6.4*);**
- ***Complaints* are dealt with impartially and comprehensively (*Outcome 6.5*).**

Effective handling of **complaints** helps you deliver these **Outcomes** and requires you to act in a principled way:

1. **Maintain high standards of work. (*Overriding Principle 2*)**
2. **Promote equality of access and service. (*Overriding Principle 6*)**
3. You make all reasonable efforts to ensure your service is accessible and responsive to **Clients**, including those with vulnerabilities. (**CoC P6d**)
4. The **complaints** procedure is clear, well-publicised and free. (**CoC P6e**)
5. You treat **complaints** seriously and provide appropriate redress options. (**CoC P6f**)
6. You deal with **complaints** fairly and within 28 days. (**CoC P6g**)
7. You identify and address systemic **Client complaints** issues. (**CoC P6h**)

8. You operate a procedure which is appropriate to the needs of **clients** and which allows **complaints** to be made by any reasonable means.
9. You deal with **complaints** constructively and impartially, basing decisions upon a sufficient investigation of the circumstances.
10. Where redress offers are accepted, these are actioned within 28 days.
11. You treat fairly members of staff who are the subject of a **complaint**.

You must also comply with the following **specific requirements**:

12. 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. (CoC P6j)
13. 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. (CoC P6k)
14. You keep a record of **complaints** received and any action taken as a result. (CoC P6k)
15. **Complaints** are investigated under the supervision of one of your senior **managers**/members.
16. 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**.
17. 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.

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

18. 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.