

# Here to help

What to do if you have a  
complaint about your lawyer

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## **We are here to help with legal complaints**

### **What do we do?**

We help sort out complaints you have about lawyers who have worked for you but we can only do this after you have made a complaint to them.

### **Our service is free.**

We are independent and we don't take sides. We're not part of the courts and we don't work for lawyers. We will look at the facts of your complaint to reach a fair outcome.

We have powers to make things better if we think lawyers have done something wrong. But you must complain to your lawyer first.

## **What can we help with?**

There are lots of different complaints we can look at.

For instance if you are unhappy with how your lawyer has:

- Dealt with parole matters for you
- Worked on a personal injury claim or clinical negligence matter
- Sorted out a Proceeds of Crime hearing

- Represented you in court
- Dealt with an appeal against sentence or conviction
- Helped you with a transfer or re-categorisation matter
- Dealt with matters such as a will, or family or children issues

We can't look at the things that a court has decided, just the things your lawyer has done. If we can't help you we might be able to tell you who can.

**We can't get you out of prison or get your sentence overturned or reduced.**

## **Who can use the Legal Ombudsman?**

Our service is open to nearly everyone. As a prisoner (convicted, on remand, civil prisoners, young offenders, and people held in immigration detention) you are entitled to use our service.

## **Who should get in touch with us?**

It's best if you can get in touch with us yourself. But we realise that sometimes this isn't easy. Someone else can ring for you, such as a family member or friend, but we will need to check that you have agreed that they can speak for you.

If you pay someone else to speak for you, you will have to pay them yourself.

# How to make a complaint

## Step 1. Tell your lawyer

If there is a problem or you are unhappy with anything, you need to tell your lawyer first so they have a chance to sort it out.

Tell them that you want to make a complaint as soon as possible. Don't leave it too long.

If you have any problems getting in touch with your lawyer and don't know what to do next please contact us.

## Step 2. Give your lawyer enough time to sort things out.

Give your lawyer eight weeks to sort things out.

If you're still unhappy after eight weeks let us know as soon as possible. This is because there are time limits for making a complaint.

## Step 3. Complain to us

Come to us as soon as you can after trying to sort things out with your lawyer.

If you aren't happy with their final response, you only have six months to complain to us.

It will help if you can tell us:

- The name and address of your lawyer
- The date you first told them you had a complaint
- The date when you first noticed the problem you are complaining about
- What they have said to you about it

**Do not send us any original paperwork because all documents are destroyed once we have received them.**

## **What happens next?**

We sort out most of the complaints we see quickly by getting everyone to agree what's fair. We can look into a problem in more detail if it needs it but this takes more time.

If we think your lawyers have not been good enough we can ask them to:

- Say sorry to you
- Give you information you need or documents that belong to you
- Do more work for you
- Give you some or all of your money back, if you paid them yourself
- Give you some money if you have lost out or been badly treated. This could be up to £50,000 but usually it's £250 or less.

## **How to get in touch with us**

### **Write to us at:**

Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 6167  
Slough  
SL1 0EH

**Please note Rule 39 does not cover us so mark your correspondence Confidential Access.**

### **Phone us on:**

0300 555 0333  
8.30am – 5.30pm

**Calls are not free – you will have to pay for them. You can ask for this number to be put on your PIN.**

### **Our Minicom number is:**

0300 555 1777  
8.30am – 5.30pm

**If your prison uses the email a prisoner service we may choose to contact you by this method.**

**If you need this information in another language, in large print, Braille or on audio CD, please get in touch.**