

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. What does the Field Court Chambers Complaints Procedure do?

Taking legal advice or becoming a party to litigation almost always involves uncertainty, stress and difficulty. We understand this and naturally hope that you or your client will be completely satisfied with the professional services received from the barristers and staff at Field Court Chambers (“FCC”). There may however be occasions when this is not so, and therefore in accordance with the Barristers Code of Conduct FCC operates a Chambers complaints procedure which we hope will lead to an agreed resolution of any outstanding issues to everyone’s satisfaction.

2. Does it affect my right to complain direct to the Bar Standards Board?

No. The FCC procedure operates completely separately from the Bar Standards Board (“BSB”) complaints procedure and making a complaint under the FCC procedure does not in any way restrict your right to use the BSB procedure as long as you make your BSB complaint within 6 months of the problem complained of, or, if later, within 3 months of the end of the FCC procedure.

3. What triggers the FCC Complaints Procedure?

Broadly, the FCC Complaints Procedure deals with complaints about serious poor service or incompetence by your barrister or by a member of the Chambers staff.

4. How do I start a complaint?

A complaint can be made informally and doesn’t have to be begun in writing – although it certainly can be [see below]. If you wish to, you can make a complaint by phoning the FCC clerks on 020-7405-6114 and telling them what your grievance is. It may be that your complaint is resolved over the phone straightaway or after a short interval (of up to 5 days) after it has been communicated to the barrister or member of staff involved. We will need your contact details to get back to you.

If your complaint can’t be sorted out in that way, we may ask you to complete a written complaint form (“Form B”) and set out your complaint in writing.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to make your complaint in writing and to skip the informal approach, you can write to us at:

Field Court Chambers
5 Field Court
Gray’s Inn
London
WC1R 5EF

marking your letter “FCC Complaints Procedure”.

Or if you prefer, you can e-mail your complaint to complaints@fieldcourt.co.uk. We may then send you a Form B and ask you to complete it.

5. Who can make a complaint?

Any client making use of the professional services of barristers provided by FCC can make a complaint; if you are a friend or family member of a client you can make a complaint on their behalf if you are authorised by them to do so. Barristers serve both lay clients and professional clients (usually solicitors) and both types of client can use the FCC complaints procedure. If you are a lay client, you don't need to make your complaint to FCC through a solicitor.

6. What will happen to my complaint?

If we haven't been able to resolve it informally within 5 days, we shall treat your complaint under the more formal procedure.

The formal procedure begins when we send you the Complaints Pack which includes a Form B for you to fill in. Form B is designed to help you set out the nature of your grievance as concisely and succinctly as possible. You must complete the Form B and send it back to us within 10 working days (starting the day after the day you received it).

Once we've received it by letter, e-mail or in Form B, we will assign your complaint to a senior member of Chambers for investigation. We'll send you an acknowledgement that we've received your complaint, and telling you who is investigating it and the date when you can expect to hear from him or her. The Investigator has the authority of Chambers under the FCC Complaints Procedure to enquire into and try to resolve your complaint with the person concerned. To do this fairly and within a reasonable time, the Investigator may require you to provide such further information or evidence as (s)he thinks fit. You must co-operate fully with the Investigator and if you fail to do so, it may lead to your complaint being dismissed.

When the Investigator has concluded the investigation of your complaint (s)he will send you a Report. This will describe to you the steps that the Investigator has taken, the evidence and documents reviewed, the Investigator's conclusions and the reasons for them, together with (if appropriate) a proposal for resolution.

7. What happens then?

The Investigator may dismiss or uphold your complaint in whole or in part. A dismissal brings the procedure to an end. If the Investigator upholds your complaint (or part of it) (s)he will propose terms for resolution.

If you and the barrister or other person you are complaining about accept the proposed resolution, then the complaint can be resolved in that way.

If either you or the person about whom you are complaining do not accept the proposed terms of resolution, then the procedure will have failed, and the FCC complaints procedure comes to an end.

In relation to its processing of complaints against barristers or staff members, Field Court Chambers is committed to ensuring all users of the complaints procedure are treated fairly, impartially and without discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or political persuasion.

Field Court Chambers will look into assisting disabled people to use the complaints procedure and will, where necessary, make 'reasonable adjustments' to its operating procedures and practices. If you are disabled and require assistance, please contact The Complaints Manager who will be able to advise you.

Field Court Chambers will monitor regularly the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy.