

# **Affinity Legal Group**

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

The primary objective of these procedures is to enable Affinity to deal effectively; quickly and consistently with any complaints from existing or prospective clients.

Affinity is a member of the Society of Will Writers and subscribe fully to their Code of Practice. Our complaints handling procedure therefore reflects the applicable provisions relating to complaints within the code and is framed to implement the spirit of 'treating customers fairly' both in principle and practice.

All Affinity employees are provided with a copy of the company's complaints procedure at induction and are expected to comply with and manage complaints in accordance with the company's procedure.

### **What is a complaint?**

Affinity defines a complaint as: 'any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from or on behalf of an existing or prospective client, about our provision of, or failure to provide, any aspect of the Legal services we provide'.

### **Receiving; recording and monitoring the complaint**

In principle any client who has a complaint should be advised that we have a defined complaint procedure and where practical should be asked to write to us (letter or e-mail) providing as much information as possible to enable us to investigate and respond to the problem and resolve the complaint. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing (or by e-mail) using the template in the letter library (within 24hrs of receipt) and passed for immediate investigation.

**Verbal complaints:** As above, unless good judgement indicates that the complaint can be dealt with immediately and relatively informally or that asking for a complaint to be made in writing will exacerbate the problem.

Additionally all complaints must be recorded on the centrally held complaints log with all relevant detail. Where more than one employee is involved in responding to or resolving the complaint it is the responsibility of the senior employee to record the outcome.

**Written complaints:** Any written complaint (letter or e-mail) should be date stamped, scanned and or linked to the client record. Referral for action should be made by setting a pending activity for the relevant employee.

All written complaints must be recorded on the client record (with adequate supporting notes – including the nature of the complaint – if referred; to whom and the outcome).

Additionally all written complaints must be recorded on the centrally held complaints log with all relevant detail. Where more than one employee is involved in responding to or resolving the complaint it is the responsibility of the senior employee to record the outcome.

### **The handling of the complaint**

Unless the nature of a complaint makes it completely evident to whom it should be referred, all complaints should initially be referred to the Departmental Manager and or for clearly contentious complaints the General Manager or the Director of Estate Planning (in the absence of the General Manager).

The Departmental Manager or General Manager will then investigate the complaint thoroughly and fairly and or direct remedial activity to resolve where possible. The Departmental Manager must ensure any contentious complaint is brought to the attention of a Senior Manager and is responsible for both updates and escalation where necessary.

All complaints will be dealt with on a timeous basis, the service standards for resolving complaints will in part be determined by both complexity and or any constraints in terms of investigation. The accepted principle in all cases is to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible, but at minimum the client will receive a written (or e-mail) response/proposed resolution within 14 days or a report on progress with a clear indication of future action to be taken and the timeline involved.

All clients will be advised in writing of the Society of Will Writers arbitration service in the event the complaint cannot be resolved to the client's satisfaction (Affinity is bound by and will abide with any decision in respect of a complaint made under the Society of Will Writers arbitration service.