



Complaints about the CLC

Policy Statement

The purpose of the CLC is to set entry standards and regulate the profession of Licensed Conveyancers effectively in order to:

- secure adequate consumer protection;
- promote effective competition in the legal services market; and
- provide choice for consumers.

We aim to get things right the first time and to provide all our customers with a good service. However, we accept that there may be times when our standard of service may fall below the reasonable expectations of our customers.

We define a complaint as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered (or may suffer) financial loss, distress, inconvenience or detriment due to the way the CLC has carried out, or failed to carry out, its activities. Where the service received from the CLC is below your expectations you can make a formal complaint to us, in writing, by letter, email, fax, or by telephone, outlining your complaint; we aim to handle your complaint courteously, objectively, sensitively and in a timely manner. Where genuine grievances have arisen we will seek to rectify the situation to the satisfaction of the complainant. Your complaint gives us the opportunity to learn from our errors and to improve the quality of our services so the opportunities for a reoccurrence of the grievance are minimised.

We deal with any complaints from anyone directly affected by the CLC's actions or inactions with regard to the services provided by the CLC. Although the CLC receives and acts upon complaints regarding the quality of service and conduct of licensed conveyancers, this policy refers only to complaints about the service and conduct of the CLC itself and not third parties; please see the CLC website for how to make a complaint regarding a CLC-regulated individual or entity.

1 Policy Aims

It is intended that this policy generates the following outcomes for users of CLC services:

- Consumers are aware of how they can make a complaint from the outset and are confident that should things go wrong we will be responsive to their concerns and are able and willing to act swiftly and informally where possible to sort matters out;
- Consumers are confident that they will be treated fairly and in accordance with our complaints policy;
- The consumer is properly informed of the progress being made on their complaint and is aware that they can make an appeal if they are not ultimately satisfied with the handling of the complaint or its outcome;
- Awareness that we will take action when the level of their service provision is inadequate or inappropriate;
- Our minimum standards of consumer care are regularly reviewed.

It is intended that this policy generates the following outcomes for CLC:

- We have in place an appropriate written complaints policy which is adhered to;
- Staff are aware of what constitutes a complaint and at what stage correspondence with a customer needs to be referred to the complaints policy and logged on the Central Complaints Record;
- We are able to learn from the complaint information captured and of its impact upon the consumer, identifying complaints trends to help prevent the cause of the complaint from recurring, reducing the number of complaints received and increasing customer satisfaction;
- We secure the confidence of customers who have complained and who have been dealt with fairly and promptly; and
- Our processes are transparent, efficient, timely and fair.

2 Statutory, Regulatory & Corporate Responsibilities

The CLC has a number of regulatory objectives, several of which are central to the purpose of this policy and its accompanying procedure:

- Protecting and promoting the public interest;
- Protecting and promoting the interests of consumers;
- Increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties;
- Promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles.

The Legal Services Act 2007 requires us to ensure that the legal service providers we regulate have in place an effective complaints policy. It is only fitting that we should lead by example.

3 Policy Details

3.1 How / when can I make a complaint about the CLC?

You should make your complaint to us by email, fax or letter:

Email: clc@clc-uk.org

Fax: 01245 341300

Letter: Director of Corporate Services
CLC, 16 Glebe Road Chelmsford Essex CM1 1QG

Telephone: 01245 349599. Complaints made over the telephone and which are resolved informally by the end of the next business day will not enter the formal complaints procedure.

It would assist the investigation of your complaint, if you clearly indicate the specific complaint(s) that you wish to raise, what action you are seeking and provide us with any supporting papers or information relevant to your complaint.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CLC

The Director of Corporate Services will register your complaint and pass it on to the appropriate person in the CLC for investigation.

We will not usually accept complaints that are lodged more than six months after the event being complained about unless the complainant can show reasonable grounds for the delay.

3.2 How will we deal with your complaint?

The line manager of the department that is relevant to your grievance will generally investigate your complaint. If he or she was directly involved in the matter, a member of the senior management team who has not had direct involvement with the matter, which gave rise to the complaint will investigate it.

We will write to you within three working days of receiving your complaint to acknowledge receipt.

The CLC normally carries out its investigations based on the documentary evidence available and it is not normally necessary to invite the complainant to attend a formal interview as part of the investigation process.

In order to investigate fully your complaint, we may ask for further information and/or clarification in writing. We may not be able to progress our investigation of the complaint until we receive this information.

We aim to resolve all complaints within 20 working days of receipt. We will write to you to advise you of the outcome of our investigation and clearly explain the reasons for the outcome. In addition, we will provide details of any other steps we will take to meet your concerns. If we are unable to resolve your complaint within this period, we will also write to you, explaining why, and when you are likely to receive a full response.

3.3 What are the possible outcomes I can expect?

Our response will set out the findings of our investigation and how we came to the response considered appropriate. We hope that you will be satisfied with the outcome of our investigation, which may be one or more of the following steps:

- Make an apology on behalf of the CLC;
- Provide a full explanation of what happened and why;
- Rectify any error;
- Reject your complaint.

3.4 Appeals - what if I am unhappy with the outcome?

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, then you can refer your complaint to the Chief Executive of the CLC. Further details about this will be included in the formal reply to your complaint.

3.5 Complaints Procedure

The process we follow on receipt of a complaint is provided in full in the CLC Internal Complaints Procedure (Annex A).

3.6 What does this Policy not cover?

If you have a complaint about a conveyancer or conveyancing transaction, please look at our website for further details of who you should contact with your complaint.

If, as a licensed conveyancer, you are dissatisfied with a decision made by the CLC or one of its Committees you have the right to request a review of, or to appeal, the decision. Please see the CLC Enforcement and Regulatory Policies for details.

If you are dissatisfied with a decision about grants out of the Compensation Fund, you should obtain independent legal advice as to your entitlement to challenge the decision.

4 Equalities Considerations

In our regulatory work and in processing complaints about the service we provide we are committed to ensuring that all users of the complaints service are treated fairly, impartially and without discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity or race religion or belief, sex (including gender reassignment), or sexual orientation.. On receipt of your complaint we will ask you complete a Diversity Form so we can analyse complaints to ensure we are not inadvertently disadvantaging a particular equalities group in the provision of our services.

Should you be unable to complete the form/set out your grievance in writing due to literacy issues or other disability we will provide you with support to complete the form or accept your complaint orally.

5 Policy Promotion, Evaluation & Review

A copy of this policy and its accompanying procedure are available on the CLC website. A leaflet summarising the Complaints Policy is also available on the website; hard copies are available in Reception at the CLC offices and provided on request.

All staff will be provided with a copy of this policy and its accompanying procedure and will be trained in its consistent application. Complaints will be recorded in the Central Complaints Register.

Complaints informally resolved – without the need for written communication from us - by the end of the next business day will not be considered formal complaints and will not be recorded in the complaints log.

The complaints log will be reviewed quarterly by the Senior Management Team and a report regularly made to the Council.

This policy and procedure will be reviewed after 12 months of operation and revised as necessary.

Annex A

We define a complaint as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered (or may suffer) financial loss, distress, inconvenience or detriment due to the way the CLC has carried out, or failed to carry out, its activities. Where the service received from the CLC is below your expectations you can make a complaint to us, on the CLC Complaints Form, or in a letter or telephone call outlining your complaint. For obvious reasons there will be no response to complaints made anonymously.

Below are the procedures we follow on receipt of your complaint:

Procedures		Timescale for response
1	The complaint is logged on the Central Complaints Record.	Within 1 working day of receipt.
2	The complaint will be sent to the relevant line manager to investigate.	Within 1 working day of receipt.
3	We acknowledge to you that we have received the complaint. This acknowledgement will be accompanied by a Diversity Form which we ask you to complete so we can determine whether our services are inadvertently disadvantaging any equalities group.	Within 3 working days of receipt.
Investigation of Complaint		
Stage 1 – Investigation		
4	In order to investigate fully your complaint, we may ask for further information and/or clarification in writing. We may not be able to progress our investigation of the complaint until we receive this information.	
5	The member of staff investigating the complaint will write to you to advise you of the outcome of our investigation and clearly explain the reasons for the outcome. In addition, we will provide details of any other steps we will take to meet your concerns. If we are unable to resolve your complaint within this period, we will also write to you, explaining why, and when you are likely to receive a full response.	Within 20 working days of receipt of initial complaint.
Decision		
6	The line manager of the department that is relevant to your complaint will generally investigate your complaint. If he or she was directly involved in the matter, a member of the senior management team who has not had direct involvement with that matter, which gave rise to the complaint would investigate it.	
Stage 2 – Appeals		
7	If you are not satisfied with the handling of your complaint, its findings or outcome, you can refer it to the Chief Executive of the CLC for a further review. Details about this will be included in the formal reply to your complaint. If we do not hear from you we will treat the complaint as resolved.	Within 20 working days of receipt of the full response.
8	If there is an apparent impropriety or control failure we will ask the Internal Auditor to carry out an independent review.	

Recording and Monitoring		
9	The decision made and actions taken in response will be recorded on the Central Complaints Record.	Within 5 working days
10	The Senior Management Team will be provided with a Complaints Analysis report.	Quarterly