

How to make a complaint about a solicitor or barrister



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísi Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

LSRA Guide for Consumers

1

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority investigates complaints about solicitors and barristers (legal practitioners). We deal with complaints independently and our service is free. This leaflet tells you the types of complaints that we deal with, what you need to know before you make a complaint, and how to make a complaint.

Our commitment to you

We will:

- deal with your complaint in an impartial way (we do not take sides);
- explain our processes to you;
- treat you with respect and courtesy;
- help you to resolve your complaint in an informal way where we can;
- contact you if we need additional information from you or when we have an update on your complaint.

Things we cannot do

We cannot:

- provide legal advice or represent you;
- advocate for you (argue on your behalf) – we also do not advocate for the solicitor or barrister you are complaining about;
- look into matters that are currently before a court or tribunal;
- consider complaints about a solicitor or barrister that were previously dealt with by us or by any other organisation;
- deal with complaints about staff working for the Courts Service, or judges.

There may be other limits not listed above that affect whether or not we can accept your complaint.



It can take between six to 18 months for us to deal with complaints. Some complaints require a lot of investigation and can take longer.

Types of complaints that we deal with

The Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 sets out the types of complaints we can and cannot investigate and what we can and cannot do about them. We can investigate complaints about:

- the quality of the legal services you received (inadequate services),
- the legal costs you were charged (excessive costs), and
- conduct or behaviour (misconduct).

Who can make a complaint

Only a client of a solicitor or barrister can make a complaint about legal services or costs.

Anyone can make a complaint about the conduct or behaviour of a solicitor or barrister – you do not need to have been their client.

Time limits for complaints

If you have a complaint about the legal services you received or the costs you were charged, you must send your complaint to us within three years of the time you:

- first became aware of the issue, *or*
- should reasonably have become aware of it.

There is no time limit for complaints about conduct or behaviour (misconduct).



Before you contact us, please try to speak with your solicitor or barrister about your problem or concern, as they may fix the problem once they know about it.

How to make a complaint – a three step guide

1. Fill in our complaint form

We can process your complaint faster if you use our complaint form. You can download the form from our website or contact our office and we can post a form to you.

We want to have the clearest possible account of what happened (the events) that led to your complaint. Please provide all the facts that you think are relevant to your complaint and do your best to explain your concerns. For example, if you believe you were overcharged for legal services, we ask you to identify what element of the bill you think is too much.

2. Include supporting documents

If you have documents to support your complaint, please send a copy of these to us along with the complaint form. This will help us process your complaint faster. We also ask you to help us by co-operating with any requests we may make for further information or documents.



It helps us to know how you would like the issue to be resolved so we can tell your solicitor or barrister what they could do to help fix the problem.

3. Send the form and other documents (if any) to us

Please send your complaint form and any relevant supporting documentation to us by post or by email. Our contact details are on the last page of this leaflet. We will review your complaint and contact you. During busy periods, this may take a few weeks.

Support for making a complaint

Need support?

If you need support in making your written complaint to us, you can ask someone you know and trust to complete the form for you. You will need to sign a statement on the complaint form to give your consent for someone to act on your behalf.

If you have a disability, our access officer is here to help. You can find their contact details on our website or ask any of our staff to connect you with them.

Giving support?

If you are helping someone to make a complaint, they will need to give their consent. They do this by signing a statement on the complaint form, unless there is a reason they are not able (for example due to age or a medical condition).

What to expect after we receive your complaint

When we receive your written complaint, we will send you a file reference number. While we are processing your complaint, we will generally communicate with you in writing by email or letter. We may also occasionally contact you by phone.

We designed our complaints process so that you do not need to hire a solicitor to handle your complaint with us. You can choose to do this at your own cost if you wish.

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We use information you give us about you and your complaint for its intended purpose only and in line with our data protection obligations.

For further information please read our leaflet 'What to expect when you make a complaint.'

If we cannot help

Citizens Information provides information on public services and entitlements. See www.citizensinformation.ie

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) provides basic legal information and advice. See www.flac.ie

The Law Society of Ireland has a list of solicitors on its website. See www.lawsociety.ie

The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities provides a free advocacy service. See www.advocacy.ie

How to contact the LSRA

Post: Complaints & Resolutions Unit,
Legal Services Regulatory Authority,
PO Box 12906, Dublin 7

Phone: 01 859 2911 (see website for opening hours)

Email: complaints@lsra.ie

Website: www.lsra.ie

Accessible Services: If you have a disability and need help to use our services, contact us to arrange to speak to our access officer.

