

Independent Review of Complaints Service for the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)

Guidance Note for Consumers

The Independent Review of Complaints Service, operated by CEDR Services, forms part of the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA's) approach to handling complaints about the SRA's work. We also provide independent oversight of the way that the SRA carries out its complaints handling functions – we do this by conducting an independent audit of SRA's complaints handling.

The service is solely for complaints against the SRA's complaint handling. If you are looking to further a complaint about a particular Solicitor / Firm, the service would not be suitable and we will not be able to assess your complaint.

To use the service, you must first exhaust the SRA's internal two stage complaints procedure. Should you remain unhappy after the second stage, and would like to complain about the SRA's complaint handling, you will need to come to CEDR within 20 working days of the date of their response letter.

For those cases that the Independent Reviewer of Complaints decides are appropriate for review, they will conduct a review of the papers to consider whether:

- The investigation was thorough and fair
- All the relevant facts were taken into account
- The conclusions reached (in respect of complaints about the service provided by the SRA) were reasonable and properly explained; and
- The investigation was handled efficiently, without unnecessary delay.

Process

To use the service, you must first exhaust the SRA's internal two stage complaints procedure. Should you remain unhappy after the second stage, and would like to complain about the SRA, you need to come to CEDR within 20 working days of the date of their response letter. You will need to complete our Application Form within 10 working days. Once we receive all the information from yourself, it is sent to the SRA. All responses are then sent to the Reviewer, who will issue a final written response within a further 30 working days. Please note, that in some instances, the response may not be available until after 30 working days.

Once a final written response is published, the matter is closed with no appeals or reviews under any circumstances. The Reviewer does not speak to either party and their response is provided in writing only. Complaints are able to continue their complaint in another forum.

Recommendations

Where a complaint has been upheld or partially upheld by the Reviewer, they will provide an explanation for any poor service and may require the SRA to provide one or more of the following remedies:

- An apology
- Appropriate action to rectify the situation for the complainant, such as an extension of time to respond to a deadline
- Appropriate action to improve the SRA's practices or procedures

** Please note that the SRA are able to accept or reject any and all recommendations made by the Reviewer and we will not be able to intervene.*

Complaints we cannot deal with

This service is not suitable for the following:

- Complaints that have not completed the SRA's two stage complaints procedure
- Complaints against anyone other than the SRA
- Complaints deemed to be out of scope by the Reviewer
- Please note, that CEDR will remain impartial throughout and can only give advice on the application process.

Should you require Reasonable Adjustments to be made, please advise the team when you first make contact. This includes if you need more than 10 working days to return the completed Application Form. Please contact the team via email at complaintsreview@cedr.com if you require further assistance with the application form or process.