

CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

These concern rules which govern how solicitors practise and conduct themselves. Broadly speaking these rules concern the standard of behaviour of solicitors.

This includes problems such as a solicitor having:

- * Not kept your business confidential.
- * Failed to pay money over to you or not prepared accounts showing what is owed to you.
- * Acted for you and someone else on related matters.
- * Stolen your money.

SERVICE COMPLAINTS

These are typically problems such as:

- * not done what you have instructed them to.
- * failed to reply to your phone calls and letters.
- * not given you enough information about costs.

In this event you should make a complaint to your solicitor's firm asking to speak to the partner responsible for complaints. Most complaints are resolved quickly in this way and the sooner you bring the matter to the firm's attention the easier it will be to deal with.

If the firm are unable to resolve the matter with you then we may be able to help conciliate between you and your solicitor.

SOLICITOR'S BILLS

There are two ways to get your bill checked:

- * By the Legal Complaints Service
- * Assessment by the Court

The Legal Complaints Service (LCS) is an independent part of the Law Society. If you and your solicitor cannot agree on the amount of the bill, you may be able to have it checked by someone impartial. If your solicitor's bill is for work that didn't involve court proceedings you can contact the LCS by calling 0845 608 6565. If your solicitor's bill is for the work that did not include court proceedings you should apply for assessment by the court.

Assessment by the Court can be applied for by you or your solicitor. You should discuss this with your solicitor before proceeding. As with all court proceedings it is likely to involve you in costs and there are strict time limits.

NEGLIGENCE

Negligence has a special meaning in law. Basically, the law says that negligence happens where there has been a breach of a duty of care. One example of this might be where you think your solicitor has given you incorrect advice or where your complaint involves the solicitor's interpretation of the law.

If your solicitor has been negligent you may be able to sue them if that negligence has meant that you:

- * Lost money; or
- * Spent money trying to put the matter right

Negligence is dealt with by the Courts or by a solicitor's insurer. If you think your solicitor has been negligent you should get independent legal advice.

Devon & Somerset Law Society can provide names of firms who may be able to help