

Solicitors regulation authority

The role of the independent reviewer

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is the independent regulatory body created by the Law Society to regulate solicitors and law firms of England and Wales. The SRA supervises firms and individuals and can take enforcement action against those caught breaching its principles.

The SRA has appointed the independent reviewer to consider complaints about the standard of service provided by the SRA. The independent reviewer accepts complaints from members of the public and from those regulated by the SRA. Allegations of unreasonable delay, unprofessional behaviour, poor communication and discrimination fall inside the independent reviewer's remit.

The independent reviewer is unable to review or overturn regulatory decisions made by the SRA. Examples of regulatory decisions the independent reviewer cannot consider include:

- Whether or not the SRA decided to investigate an allegation made about a regulated individual or firm.
- Whether or not the SRA decided to take enforcement action against a regulated individual or firm.
- Whether or not the SRA authorised a payment from its compensation scheme.

The independent reviewer does not investigate complaints about individual solicitors or legal firms. Complaints about solicitors should be made to the Legal Ombudsman. You can contact the Legal Ombudsman on 0300 555 0333 or by email at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

When can you complain to the independent reviewer?

Before the independent reviewer can investigate a complaint, the complainant must first raise their concerns with the SRA and complete its internal complaint procedure. If you have a complaint about the SRA, you can complain to the SRA by speaking to the person you have been dealing with, or their manager. Alternatively, you can complain to the SRA's central complaint team using the following contact details:

Telephone: 0370 606 2555

Email: complaintsteam@sra.org.uk

Post: SRA Complaints, The Cube, 199 Wharfedale Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN

Please visit the SRA's website for more information about the way it handles complaints:

<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service.page>

At the end of its internal complaint procedure, the SRA should inform you that if you remain dissatisfied you have the right to complain to the independent reviewer and provide our contact details.

Complainants have 15 working days from the date of the SRA's final response to ask the independent reviewer to investigate their complaint. The complainant may ask the SRA's corporate complaints team to refer the complaint to the independent reviewer. Alternatively, the complainant may contact the independent reviewer directly.

Contact us

If you have completed the SRA's internal complaint procedure and would like to ask the independent reviewer to investigate your complaint, please contact us using these contact details:

Telephone: 0330 300 1336

Email: independentreviewer@ombudsman-services.org

Post: Independent Reviewer, PO Box 1272,
Warrington, WA4 9RP

How does the independent reviewer investigate complaints?

We will start our investigation by determining the nature of the complaint and determining whether it falls within the independent reviewer's remit. We aim to do this within three weeks of receiving the complaint.

If we decide to investigate your complaint we will request both parties provide evidence to support their view of the complaint. The time it takes to complete this stage of the investigation will depend on the complexity of the complaint and the availability of the evidence.

Once we have all the required evidence, we will consider the complaint and issue a draft report to the complainant and the SRA in which we will set out our initial view of the issues raised. We aim to issue the draft report within four weeks of receiving all the required evidence. Both parties will have the opportunity to comment on our findings at this stage.

We will then issue our final decision, taking any comments made into consideration. We aim to issue the final decision within two weeks of receiving the parties' comments.

If we uphold a complaint, we may recommend that the SRA provides 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;
- an ex gratia payment made in line with the SRA's special payments guidance.

The Ombudsman Service Limited

The independent reviewer is employed by The Ombudsman Service Limited. The Ombudsman Service Limited operates alternative dispute resolution schemes across a range of sectors, including telecommunications, energy, property and parking. The Ombudsman Service Limited is entirely independent of the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Please note that The Ombudsman Service Limited does not operate the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman Service Limited and the Legal Ombudsman are entirely separate organisations.