Service Complaints Policy

Introduction

We recognise that concerns may arise from time to time about the standard of service provided or the way in which a matter has been handled.

We are committed to providing a high-quality service and to dealing with complaints fairly, consistently, transparently and promptly. We recognise that complaints provide valuable feedback and an opportunity to improve our services, processes and ways of working.

This policy sets out our process for handling complaints about the services provided by CILEx Regulation. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the services we provide or the way in which those services have been delivered. This policy applies only to complaints about CILEx Regulation.

Examples of service complaints about CILEx Regulation include:

- Unreasonable delay;
- Failure to communicate appropriately;
- Administrative errors;
- Unprofessional behaviour;
- Failure to follow published procedures; and
- Discrimination or unfair treatment.

This complaints process is not an appeal mechanism and cannot be used to challenge, overturn or circumvent the outcome of a regulatory, authorisation, enforcement or other decision that has already been determined. Complaints about our service will be considered separately from the merits of any decision made.

If you wish to raise concerns about the conduct, competence or behaviour of a legal services provider or firm that we regulate, you should use the Misconduct Information Form available on our website.

Where a complaint contains matters that are both within and outside the scope of this policy, we will consider the elements that fall within scope and explain how any remaining issues should be raised.

We are committed to ensuring that our complaints process is accessible to everyone. If you require reasonable adjustments or support to make a complaint, please let us know and we will work with you to meet your needs wherever reasonably practicable. Requests for reasonable adjustments can be made when submitting a complaint or at any stage during the complaints process by emailing us.

We ask complainants to treat our staff with courtesy and respect and to provide information that is relevant to the complaint at the outset.

CILEx Regulation

CILEx Regulation is the independent regulator of members of CILEX and other individuals who are not members of CILEX, but who have Practice Rights in the legal sector.

Complaints about CILEx Regulation are dealt with under this policy. CILEx Regulation does not deal with complaints about other CILEX companies.

Who can complain

Any person who has used, been affected by, or had dealings with our services may submit a complaint.

Complaints should normally be made within 12 months of the event giving rise to the complaint, or within 12 months of you becoming aware of the matter.

We may exercise discretion to consider complaints made outside this period where there are good reasons for the delay.

We will also consider anonymous complaints where sufficient information is provided to enable an assessment of the issues raised. Our ability to investigate and respond may be limited where we are unable to contact the complainant for further information or clarification.

Our approach

When a complaint is made in accordance with this policy, we will:

- Treat all complainants with courtesy and respect;
- Investigate complaints fairly, objectively; impartially and transparently;
- Investigate concerns thoroughly;
- Consider all relevant information available;
- Act proportionately and consistently;
- Keep complainants informed of progress;
- Respond in clear and accessible language; and
- Use feedback to improve our services.

Wherever possible, a complaint will be investigated by an individual who has had no direct involvement in the matters being complained about.

Any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be considered and managed appropriately to ensure the integrity of the complaints process.

Information provided as part of a complaint will be handled in accordance with our Privacy Statement and applicable data protection legislation.

Our complaints process

We have a two-stage complaints process:

Stage 1

Where appropriate, we encourage you to try and resolve your concerns informally by raising them directly with the relevant person, team, or department. Informal resolution may include providing an explanation, clarification, apology or other appropriate action.

If your concern cannot be resolved informally, or if a formal complaint is appropriate in the circumstances, please complete this form to make a complaint. Using this form will ensure that your complaint is registered, acknowledged, and directed to the correct department for consideration.

To help us deal with your complaint as efficiently as possible, please provide all relevant information when you submit your complaint. If significant additional information or evidence

is provided later on in the process, we may need to carry out further enquiries, which could affect our ability to respond within the stated timescales. Where this occurs, we will keep you informed of any revised timeframe.

We will acknowledge the complaint as soon as the form is completed and confirm who is responsible for handling it. Your complaint will be dealt with by a relevant senior manager. Wherever possible, we will respond to you within 15 working days but if we are unable to do so, we will explain why and tell you when a full response will be sent. When sending our full response, we will tell you whether we find your complaint justified, partly justified or not justified.

Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint, or how your complaint has been handled, you may request a Stage 2 review. Your request should set out the reasons why you are dissatisfied and what aspects you would like to be reconsidered.

Requests for a Stage 2 review should normally be made within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response, although we may exercise discretion to accept requests outside this period where appropriate.

Once we receive your request, the complaint will be logged and progressed under Stage 2 of this policy. An acknowledgement will be sent to you within three working days. Your complaint will be reviewed by a Director of Service who had no operational involvement with your matter, or if they dealt with the complaint at Stage 1, it will be reviewed by our Chief Executive. The Stage 2 review will consider whether the complaint was handled appropriately at Stage 1, whether relevant information was considered, and whether the outcome reached was reasonable in the circumstances.

A full response will be sent to you within 20 working days. If we cannot respond fully within that time, we will explain why and tell you when a full response will be sent.

Note: A complaint cannot be escalated to Stage 2 without first completing Stage 1.

Outcomes of complaints

Where a complaint is found to be justified, or partly justified, we will consider what action is appropriate to put matters right and improve our service. Actions may include:

- Providing an explanation of what happened;
- Offering an apology;
- Correcting inaccurate records or information;
- Taking steps to address service failures;
- Reviewing or improving procedures and processes;
- Providing additional training or guidance to staff; and
- Taking any other appropriate action to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

These actions are applicable at both stages of our complaints process.

The action taken will depend on the circumstances of the complaint and the nature of the service failure identified.

Note: The complaints process is not intended to provide financial redress and we are unable to award compensation as part of our complaints procedure.

After completion of the complaints process

Once Stage 2 has been completed, our complaints process will be exhausted. Nothing in this Policy affects any legal rights you may have.

Learning from complaints

We record and monitor complaints, comments and compliments to identify trends and opportunities for improvement.

We will periodically review complaint data to identify recurring issues, underlying causes and areas for service improvement.

Where appropriate, action plans will be implemented and monitored to ensure lessons learned are embedded within our processes and procedures.

Matters outside the scope of this policy

- The following matters are outside the scope of this policy:
- Appeals against regulatory decisions where an appeal or a review process exists;
- Challenges to decisions of Committees, Panels or Tribunals and Investigating Officers;
- Employment-related matters;
- Requests for legal advice;
- Complaints about regulated individuals or firms.

If you wish to challenge a regulatory decision, including the decision of a committee, panel, or tribunal you must use the relevant appeal or review process. You will be notified about the relevant appeal or review process at the conclusion of the matter. You can also request relevant details from the person or team dealing with the matter until that point.

Note: We may, at our discretion, decide to defer the consideration of a complaint relating to the handling of an application for authorisation or an enforcement case while that matter remains ongoing.

This may happen if responding to the complaint before the conclusion of the matter could affect the fair and orderly progression of the application, investigation, or any related proceedings, or where the issues complained of are already being considered as part of the ongoing process. If we decide to defer your complaint, we will explain our reasons for doing so. We will also review the decision to defer periodically and keep you informed of the outcome of our review and the reasons for the decision.

Once the application, investigation, and any related proceedings have concluded, we will contact you within 10 working days to confirm whether you still wish to pursue your complaint and, if so, which parts of it you would like us to consider.

Managing unreasonable behaviour

We recognise that people who are dissatisfied with our services may express strong views or pursue matters persistently.

We will not restrict access to our complaints process solely because a complainant is persistent or critical of our services.

However, where behaviour becomes unreasonable, abusive, threatening or places a disproportionate burden on our resources, we may take appropriate action in accordance with our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

Review

Information relating to complaints, complaint trends, service improvements and any significant service failures will be reported periodically to the CILEx Regulation Board. The Board will use this information to monitor organisational performance, identify risks and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to improve services and maintain public confidence in the organisation.

Policy Governance

This policy is owned by CILEx Regulation and is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective, legally compliant and aligned with regulatory best practice. The Policy Owner is responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy and proposing amendments where required.

Document Owner	Jonathan Levack, Director of Policy and Governance
Responsible Department	Regulatory Affairs & Governance
Effective From	08/10/26
Next Review Due	08/10/28
Version Number	2