

Our Ref: IG/TC/293



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Ms Frances Lewis

Sent by email only:

request-669182-ffdd1aa3@whatdotheyknow.com

01 July 2020

Dear Ms Lewis

Information request – Our Ref: IG/TC/293

I am writing in response to your email of 06 June 2020.

I am handling your request for information under the SRA's Transparency Code.

You requested the following information:

"There is information on your website what to do if you want to complain about the service (which I have found to be abysmal). I have complained and the treatment of my complaint has also been abysmal. There is no information about how to challenge a decision. The investigation of my original complaint has been sub-standard and the SRA has not been transparent (as it claims to be). I wish to challenge the decision - what steps should I take and why aren't these published clearly on your website or written in your response / decision letters in line with your transparency policy?"

Our response:

The SRA has a complaints process for individuals who are dissatisfied with the service that they have received, and we clearly signpost to this in our correspondence. Our policy for handling complaints about our service is available on our website:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/complaints-policy/>

If a complainant is still dissatisfied following their complaint, they can escalate this to the Independent Reviewer. This independent organisation will carry out a review of our handling of a complaint you can read more about what they do on our website:

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

Our complaints process is not an appeals process, we are not able to overturn regulatory decisions and make new regulatory decisions through our complaints process.

If we do identify that a mistake has been when looking at a regulatory matter, (for example if we find that there is material information that has not been considered), as we look at a complaint about our service, we can arrange for consideration of internal review. We can instigate internal review when we identify material errors.

Within the SRA's processes there is no right of appeal for a complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of their report. However, complainants can challenge our decisions through, for example, the courts via a Judicial Review.

Part of our function as the regulator of solicitors is to make enquiries and obtain evidence to determine if unethical behaviour has occurred which we need to act upon to protect the wider public. The steps we take when investigating concerns are explained on our website:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/investigating-concerns/>

You can find more information about our enforcement work in our Annual Reviews and in our Upholding Professional Standards report:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports/upholding-professional-standards-2017-2018/>

More information on how we handle requests, including a link to a copy of our Transparency Code, can be found on our website:

www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/transparency.page

Please quote the reference number **IG/TC/293** if you decide to contact us further regarding this request.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Baraczewski
Information Governance Officer
Solicitors **Regulation** Authority

Internal review and complaint process

If you are not satisfied with our response to your request for information, you can request that the matter is reconsidered as an internal review. To do so please write to, or email, the Information Compliance and Governance Manager at:

SRA Information Compliance
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street,
Birmingham B1 1RN

SRAInformationCompliance@sra.org.uk

Please note that your request for an internal review must be submitted within 60 days of our decision. We aim to issue a formal response to internal reviews within 20 working days.

Internal review process

The internal review will consider any limitations applied and the information disclosed. This aspect of the review is final and there is no further avenue for appeal. It is also important for you to note that, as this is a voluntary code, the Information Commissioner is unable to consider your complaint.

Escalation to a complaint

If you are still not satisfied with the response that you have received, you can make a complaint to our Complaints Team about the way we have handled your request.

The complaints team will only be able to review the matters related to our service, for example our communication and compliance with the deadline.

If you are unhappy with the Complaint's Team decision, you can escalate the matter further and ask the Independent Reviewer (Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution) to review your complaint. The service is independent to us and they will review how we handled your complaint, not our decision.