

LEAFLET No. 10 - CUSTOMER CARE AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Board is committed to providing a professional, efficient, cost effective, and accessible legal aid and advice service and mediation service.

Customer Service

What quality of customer service can I expect from the Board?

The Board is committed to the provision of a quality service in line with its Customer Charter. You can get a copy of the Charter from any law centre on request and/or from the Board's Head Office and/ or website -

www.legalaidboard.ie

Selection of Solicitor / Barrister - Civil Legal Aid

What is the procedure for selecting a solicitor / barrister?

If you are granted legal advice and/or aid the Board will:

- nominate a solicitor/barrister for the purpose of providing such legal advice or aid; or
- refer you to the private practitioner panel to select a solicitor from that panel.

What can I do if I want a change of solicitor / barrister?

If you wish to change your solicitor/barrister you should first notify the Managing Solicitor of the law centre (or if the solicitor is a private practitioner, Legal Services Section, Cahirciveen).

If the matter is not resolved, you should **write** to the Managing Solicitor of the law centre outlining the **reasons** for requesting the change.

If the matter is still not resolved or if the solicitor that you have and whom you wish to change is the managing solicitor, you should **write** to the Board's Head Office at the address shown at the end of this leaflet, again outlining the reasons for requesting the change.

If the Board considers your request to be reasonable in all the circumstances of the case it may consent to the change.

If the change of solicitor/barrister results in the Board incurring any increased costs, you will be considered liable for these costs.

A decision in relation to costs will be taken at the same time as a decision in relation to a change of solicitor/barrister and you will be notified accordingly.

Complaints procedure

How can I go about making a complaint about the service I am getting?

If you wish to make a complaint about the service from a law centre you should carry out the following steps:

1. First make the complaint to the Managing Solicitor of the law centre. He/she will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible and, if necessary, meet with you to discuss your concerns.
2. If you are still dissatisfied, you should put the complaint in **writing** to the Managing Solicitor. A copy of this letter will be given to the person about whom the complaint is being made.
3. If the problem remains unresolved, you may request that the letter of complaint be forwarded to the Board's Head Office (Legal Services, Section, Cahirciveen).

If you have a complaint regarding a private practitioner you should make the complaint directly to Legal Services Section, Cahirciveen.

What can I do if I have a complaint about a Managing Solicitor?

If you wish to make a complaint about a Managing Solicitor of a law centre you should put the complaint in writing, and send it to Legal Services Section, Cahirciveen.

What can I do if I am not satisfied with the decision on my application for legal services?

It is possible that you will not be granted a service on the basis that the issue does not come within the terms of the Civil Legal Aid legislation. If you are dissatisfied with decisions on your application for legal aid/advice you may within one month:-

- apply to have the decision reviewed; and/or
- appeal the decision to an appeal committee of the Board.

Family Mediation Service

What can I do if I wish to make a complaint about my Mediator or the service provided by the Family Mediation Service:

If you wish to make a complaint about the service provided by your Mediator or the Family Mediation Service you should carry out the following steps:

1. First make the complaint to the Mediator. He/she will aim to resolve the matter as quickly as possible and, if necessary, meet with you to discuss your concerns.

2. If you are still dissatisfied, you should put the complaint in **writing** to the Service Manager, Family Mediation Service, 9 Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin 1. A copy of this letter will be given to the person about whom the complaint is being made.

If the problem remains unresolved, you may request that the letter of complaint be forwarded to the Board's Head of Private Practitioner and Specialist Legal Services, 47 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2.

If your complaint is about the Services Manager in the Family Mediation Service, you should send your complaint to the Board's Head of Private Practitioner and Specialist Legal Services, 47 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2.

Criminal Legal Aid

What if I have a complaint about the service provided to me by a solicitor or barrister under either the Garda Station Legal Aid Scheme or the Legal Aid – Custody Issues Scheme?:

The Legal Aid Board has administrative responsibility for both the **Garda Station Legal Advice Scheme** (since 1 October, 2011) and the **Legal Aid – Custody issues Scheme** (since 1st June 2012). If you wish to make a complaint in relation to the service provided by the Solicitor or Barrister under these Schemes, you should write to the Assistant Director, Criminal Legal Aid Section, 47 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2 (E-mail: gardascheme@legalaidboard.ie).

What can I do if I have a complaint about the broader service?

You should send your complaint to the Customer Liaison Officer in the Board's Office at 47 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2 (customerliaisonofficer@legalaidboard.ie).

Are there any other remedies available to me?

The Office of the Ombudsman is entitled in certain circumstances to investigate any action taken by the Board in the performance of its administrative functions. The Office of the Ombudsman is not however entitled to investigate the provision of legal services by solicitors of the Board or by private solicitors who are providing services on behalf of the Board. Thus if you have a complaint about the legal service you are receiving from your solicitor, the Office of the Ombudsman has no role.

Contact Details for the Office of the Ombudsman are as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman,

18 Lower Leeson Street,
Dublin 2.

Lo-call: 1890 223030

E-mail: Ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

If you are a child or young person under 18 or an adult who knows a child who you feel has been unfairly treated, or you are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, it is open to you to contact **the Ombudsman for Children's Office**. By law the Ombudsman for Children's Office can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in dealings with us. The Ombudsman for Children provides an impartial, independent and free complaints handling service.

Contact details for the Ombudsman for Children's Office are as follows:

Ombudsman for Children's Office
52-56 Great Strand St
Dublin 1

Free Phone: **1800 20 20 40**

E-mail: ococomplaint@oco.ie
www.oco.ie

It is important to note that the remit of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children only relates to a complaint relating to an action of the Board taken after **1 May, 2013**. They have no remit in relation to any action or decision of the Board taken prior to that date. Neither the Ombudsman nor the Ombudsman for Children will investigate any complaints made to their office unless the complainant has fully utilised the Board's internal complaints process and/or avenues of appeal prior to complaining to their offices.

Contact Details for the Board's Head Office.

Head Office : Legal Aid Board, Quay Street, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry.

Tel: (066) 947 1000

Fax: (066) 947 1035

Locall No. 1890 615 2000

Website: www.legalaidboard.ie