

# Complaints about our service - our policy

Updated 1 April 2025

## About this page

1. We are committed to providing a high standard of service to our customers. We welcome the opportunity to consider and respond to concerns about our service so we can help resolve issues and improve our service.
2. This page sets out our Complaints Policy and the processes for making and responding to complaints about our service. It is useful reading for those who want to make a complaint about our service to understand what complaints we can consider and how we will handle them.

## How to make a complaint

### Resolving complaints informally

3. We will always try to resolve complaints informally where we can. We encourage you to first tell the person who has been dealing with your issue what your complaint is. They will often be able to sort things out for you. But, if we cannot resolve things informally, you can raise a formal customer service complaint.

### How do I make a formal complaint about the SRA's service?

4. [You can fill in our complaints form.](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/make-a-complaint/)  
[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/make-a-complaint/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/make-a-complaint/) We also accept complaints in writing, by email, or by speaking to the person you have been dealing with or their manager.
5. The information we need from you is:
  - your full name, contact details and any reference number you may have for your case
  - what you think we have done wrong
  - what you think we should do to put things right.

## Types of complaints

### What type of complaint can I make?

6. **Complaints may be made about any aspect of the service we have provided, or something we have failed to do. Examples include:**



- mistakes or lack of care
- unreasonable delay
- unprofessional behaviour
- discrimination
- bias.

## **Can I complain about a regulatory decision you have made?**

7. What you can ask us to do will depend on whether we regulate you or not and what the decision is about. Look below to see which option applies to you. Reviews and appeals of regulatory decisions sit outside this Complaints Policy and are subject to strict time limits, so please make any request or application promptly.

**a. If we regulate you/your firm and we have made a formal regulatory decision against you/your firm**

If we regulate you/your firm, and you are unhappy with a formal regulatory decision we have made against you or your firm (for example, a disciplinary or authorisation decision), we advise you to use any available appeal process. This will generally include a review of our decision or an appeal to an external body. These processes sit outside the Complaints Policy. Please contact the team you have been dealing with and ask for details.

**b. You have made a claim on the SRA Compensation Fund and you are unhappy with the outcome**

If you have made an unsuccessful claim to the SRA Compensation Fund and you wish to challenge it, then we advise you to use the review process. This sits outside the Complaints Policy. Please contact the compensation fund member of staff you have been dealing with and ask for a review of the decision.

**c. If you have reported a firm or solicitor to us and you are unhappy with the outcome**

If you have reported a firm or solicitor to us and you are unhappy with the outcome (for example, we make a regulatory decision not to investigate), you should let us know if you believe the decision is materially flawed and the reasons why or if you have new information that you believe will affect the outcome. If we agree this is the case, then we can review the decision. Reviews, however, sit outside the Complaints Policy, so please contact the team you have been dealing with.

8. If, when dealing with a service complaint, we consider there may have been a material flaw in our decision-making or we think there



is new information which may affect the decision, we will refer the matter back to the relevant team. It will then consider whether the decision should be reviewed. In deciding whether a review is appropriate, the team can consider whether:

- the correct procedure has been followed
- all relevant information has been considered and no irrelevant information has been considered
- the Standards and Regulations or other guidance or legislation have been correctly applied
- the decision is reasonable.

An operational team will not review a decision a year or more after it is made unless there are exceptional circumstances.

## **Data Protection and Transparency Code responses**

9. If you are unhappy with a decision or the service provided relating to a request made under Data Protection legislation (for example, a subject access request), or a Transparency Code request, you can ask for a review of the decision or complain. This request must be made to the Information Governance and Compliance Team (the Compliance Team). See [our privacy notice](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/privacy-data-information/privacy-notice/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/privacy-data-information/privacy-notice/>] and 'Review process' section of the [SRA Transparency Code](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/privacy-data-information/disclosure-policy/transparency/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/privacy-data-information/disclosure-policy/transparency/>].
10. Our Corporate Complaints Team will only respond to these [type of stage 2 complaints](#) [[#stage-2](#)] if the Compliance Team has already carried out its own review and responded.
11. We will not review, comment on or change any decision to release information or comply with Data Protection legislation obligations under the Complaints Policy. We will only consider the service provided.

## **How we handle complaints - who will respond and when**

### **Stage 1: The team you have been dealing with will respond to your complaint**

12. In most cases, someone from the team you have been dealing with will initially respond to your complaint. This person may have been the one dealing with your matter/issue, or they may be a senior customer services adviser, a manager or a complaints officer.
13. Your complaint will be acknowledged as soon as possible within five working days and we will reply to it within 20 working days (four weeks) of receiving your complaint. We may be able to deal with your matter quickly in a phone call or we may need to carry out a



detailed review of your concerns. If we need more time, we will let you know and explain why.

14. We will write to you to tell you the outcome of your complaint. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you will have the opportunity to escalate it.

## **Stage 2: If you are not satisfied, you can escalate your complaint**

15. Our Corporate Complaints Team manages stage 2 complaints. If you raise new complaints at this stage, we may ask the team you were dealing with to respond to the new set of complaints first to see if they can resolve them.
16. If your concerns have already been responded to at stage 1, we will acknowledge your request to escalate your concerns within five working days and we will reply to you within 25 working days (five weeks) of receiving your complaint. If we need more time, we will let you know and explain why.
17. We will write to you to tell you the outcome of your complaint. If you are still unhappy with our response, you can ask the Independent Reviewer of Complaints to review your service complaint.

## **Stage 3: If you remain dissatisfied, the Independent Reviewer of Complaints can review how we handled the complaint. More detail about this process is at paragraphs [36] to [43].**

### **Moving straight to stage 2 in the complaints process**

18. When we receive a complaint, we decide whether to refer it to the team where the complaint arose (stage 1) or whether it should be handled by our Corporate Complaints Team (stage 2). We handle the majority of our complaints at stage 1 first.
19. Some complaints may be more appropriate for referral straight to our Corporate Complaints Team at stage 2. This will be decided by the Corporate Complaints Team. These include:
  - Complaints which are about the work of more than one of our teams. In these instances, the Corporate Complaints Team prepares a single response.
  - Complaints where we decide the case is sensitive or high profile.
  - Complaints where there is likely to be a significant impact on us and/or you. For example, cases where the outcome could affect our work more widely than within the team where the complaint arose or where we are involved in related legal proceedings.
  - Complaints where a stage 1 response from the team you have been dealing with would be inappropriate because there has



been a serious breakdown of trust and confidence between you and the team.

- Any complaints purely about the service provided by the Compliance Team where an internal review has already taken place.
20. If, at any time, our Corporate Complaints Team decides that a complaint referred for a stage 1 response becomes more suitable for a stage 2 response (or vice versa), the complaint will be transferred accordingly. We will explain our decision to you and the reasons for it.

### **What to expect from us when we respond to your complaint**

21. If you complain about the service we provide, [our Complaints Charter](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/complaints-charter/) (<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/complaints-charter/>) explains what you can expect from us and how we will deal with your complaint.

### **What outcomes can we provide?**

22. If your complaint or part of it is upheld, we can offer some of or all the following remedies:
- a full acknowledgement and explanation of any poor service
  - an apology
  - appropriate action to rectify the situation, such as an extension of time to respond to a deadline
  - we can pass on information to an operational team and ask it to consider it
  - appropriate recommendations for action to improve our service to customers in the future.

### **Do you offer compensation payments or refunds?**

23. No, as a regulator, rather than a commercial business, we do not offer compensation payments for poor service.
24. However, if you have paid a fee, we will consider a refund in the following limited circumstances:
- you have overpaid us or duplicate payments have been made in error
  - an application has been made in error, or an incomplete application has been submitted, and you have withdrawn your application before any casework has been started.

### **What can I do if I am unhappy with the complaint handling at stage 1 or stage 2?**

25. We encourage you to discuss your concerns with the person handling your complaint to see if we can resolve them. But we will



not be able to transfer the matter to a new person to manage or escalate your concerns through the management line. If you still have concerns when the person handling your complaint has provided their final response, your issues can be considered at the next stage of the complaints process. For example, concerns about complaint handling at stage 1 can be considered at stage 2. Concerns about complaint handling at stage 2 can be considered by the Independent Reviewer of Complaints.

### **Can you look at my complaint about a third party or firm acting for the SRA?**

26. You can make a complaint about our staff or anyone we have authorised to act on our behalf. For example, panel solicitors or firms we have outsourced our work to.
27. However, we cannot consider complaints about the Independent Reviewer of Complaints or Kaplan SQE Limited under the Complaints Policy as these companies have their own complaints processes. Please make your complaint directly to them.

### **How long do I have to make my complaint?**

28. Please make your complaint as soon as you can so we can look into it and hopefully resolve it. We accept complaints about our service within six months of the concern/event. We can make exceptions if there are reasons you are delayed in making your complaint. For example, if you only become aware of an issue after the six-month period.

### **Complaints we will not consider under this policy**

29. Some complaints are better handled outside this policy. For example, general concerns about something we have said in the press or a criticism of one of our policies.
30. We will not consider complaints about matters you are not personally involved in. The only exception to this is if you are acting on behalf of another person involved in the case and we have their consent to share information with you.
31. We will not respond to service complaints under this policy if you issue a legal claim against us or send us pre-action correspondence about the same or related issues. Our legal team will instead respond outside this policy.
32. We will acknowledge complaints which fall outside this policy and explain why they fall outside this policy. If we can provide a response outside this policy, we will explain who will respond and when.



## **Reasons we defer looking at a complaint**

33. In exceptional cases, we may decide to defer considering a complaint. For example, where internal disciplinary procedures against our staff member(s) need to conclude. In such cases, we will put the complaint on hold until we conclude the other matters. You will be advised of the reasons we have deferred the complaint response and you will be able to ask the Independent Reviewer of Complaints for a review of our decision to defer.

## **Handling complaints where there is an ongoing regulatory case**

### **Will you put the regulatory case on hold while you consider my complaint?**

34. In most cases, we will not suspend our regulatory work while we consider a complaint. However, if you make a request for the regulatory case to be suspended while we respond to the complaint, we will consider it and explain our decision in writing to you. In making our decision, we will take into account:
- the public interest and our responsibility to protect clients and the public
  - the nature of the complaint made, in particular, whether if upheld it could have a significant impact on the outcome of the regulatory case
  - the reasons given for the request, and whether there will be any significant disadvantage to you if the case continues while the complaint is considered
  - whether there will be any significant impact on any third party.

### **I am unhappy with a member of staff dealing with my regulatory issue. Will you transfer my matter to another staff member?**

35. We will not usually consider that transferring a matter to another staff member is necessary to maintain the integrity of our regulatory work, or that it is appropriate to do so on request.

## **Independent review of complaints**

36. The Independent Reviewer of Complaints is not an employee of the SRA and makes its decisions completely independently. You can either tell us that you would like us to refer your complaint or you can do it yourself. You must do this within 20 working days (four weeks) of the date of our stage 2 response.





37. The Independent Reviewer of Complaints cannot review or overturn any regulatory decisions we have made. Its role is to consider how we have handled your service complaint at stage 1 and stage 2.
38. If you ask the Independent Reviewer of Complaints to review your complaint, it will consider:
- whether our handling of a complaint has been thorough and fair
  - whether all relevant facts were taken into account
  - whether the complaint conclusions reached were reasonable and properly explained
  - whether the complaint was handled efficiently and without unnecessary delay.
39. The Independent Reviewer of Complaints will confirm the outcome of their review in writing to you. It can recommend any of the following:
- no further action
  - that we provide an apology to you
  - we take appropriate action to rectify the service provided
  - we take appropriate action to improve our service to customers in the future.

## **How to contact the Independent Reviewer of Complaints**

40. You can contact the Independent Reviewer of Complaints:

**By email:** [complaintsreview@cedr.com](mailto:complaintsreview@cedr.com)  
[\[mailto:complaintsreview@cedr.com\]](mailto:complaintsreview@cedr.com)

**By post:**

Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR)  
100 St. Paul's Churchyard  
London  
EC4M 8BU  
United Kingdom

**By phone:** 020 7536 6000

## **Can the Independent Reviewer of Complaints decline to look at my complaint?**

41. Yes, the Independent Reviewer of Complaints may decide not to review a complaint in the following circumstances:
- The complaint is outside the Independent Reviewer of Complaints' time limit for referral.
  - The complaint is not within the Independent Reviewer of Complaints' remit. For example, it cannot review a complaint





about a regulatory decision, although it can review complaints about the way in which decisions are reached.

- It appears there has already been a full consideration of the complaint by us.
- It appears there is an opportunity for resolution between you and us. If the Independent Reviewer of Complaints thinks resolution is possible, it will discuss this with you and us to see whether a resolution can be agreed.
- It appears, in all the circumstances, a review would be unreasonable or disproportionate.

### **Is the Independent Reviewer of Complaints' decision final?**

- 42. Yes, if the Independent Reviewer of Complaints makes no recommendation, it is the end of the complaints process. Its decision is final and the complaint is closed.
- 43. If the Independent Reviewer of Complaints makes a recommendation to us, we will consider it and respond to it and you, if appropriate. We will do this within 20 working days of us receiving the recommendation explaining whether we accept it or not. If we decline to accept the recommendation, we will explain why.

## **Complaints to MPs, MSs, our CEO, General Counsel, Executive Team, and Board**

### **My MP/MS has written to you about my issue. Will you consider this as a complaint?**

- 44. We respond to MP/MS correspondence outside the Complaints Policy. However, if you ask us to, we will consider your concerns under our Complaints Policy as well.

### **I have written to the CEO/Deputy CEO/General Counsel/Executive Team or other senior leader in the organisation. Will they consider my complaint?**

- 45. We deal with complaints in accordance with our Complaints Policy. Any complaints sent to the CEO/Deputy CEO/General Counsel/Executive Team or other senior leader will be re-directed to our Corporate Complaints Team. The team will decide whether a response is necessary under the Complaints Policy or outside it (if, for example, the matter is out of time). If a response is needed, the complaint will be sent to the relevant team within the organisation and it will respond, or the Corporate Complaints Team will respond.
- 46. A response will not be provided if we have managed contact with you under our [Managing unreasonable behaviour towards SRA staff](#)



[policy\\_ \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/unreasonable-behaviour-policy/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/unreasonable-behaviour-policy/) and/or we have previously explained our position and already let you know we are unable to respond to you on the same issues.

## **I have written to the Board. Will it consider my complaint?**

47. No, the Board does not have a role in handling individual casework matters or complaints. Rather, its role is to set our strategy and policy direction and oversee our operational performance as a whole.
48. Any complaints sent to the Board will be re-directed to our Corporate Complaints Team. The team will decide whether a response is necessary under the Complaints Policy or outside the Complaints Policy (if, for example, the matter is out of time). If a response is needed, the complaint will be sent to the relevant team within the organisation and it will respond.
49. A response will not be provided if we have managed contact with you under our [Managing unreasonable behaviour towards SRA staff policy\\_ \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/unreasonable-behaviour-policy/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/unreasonable-behaviour-policy/) and/or we have previously explained our position and already let you know we are unable to respond to you on the same issues.

## **Learning from complaints about us**

### **How we record, monitor and learn from complaints**

50. We expect all colleagues to identify what learning can be taken from complaints, regardless of whether mistakes are found or not. Our senior leaders take an active interest and involvement in all sources of feedback as part of continuous improvement. Identifying what insight and learning we can take from complaints will help improve our service for other users. We maintain a record of:
  - each formal complaint we receive
  - the subject matter of the complaint
  - the outcome (including any learning we have identified).

We monitor complaints over time, looking for trends and risks that may need to be addressed.

### **Do you publish any reports about service complaints?**

51. [Yes, we produce and publish an annual report on our complaint handling. \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/board-meetings/2024/july/sra-board-item-corporate-complaints.pdf\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/board-meetings/2024/july/sra-board-item-corporate-complaints.pdf) This report includes details on the number and main types of complaints we have received and what actions we have identified to improve our service.

52. [The Independent Reviewer of Complaints also produces an annual report \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/independent-reviewers-report/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints-service/independent-reviewers-report/) regarding the complaints it reviews under this policy at stage 3 and its audits of our complaint handling.

This policy applies to all service complaints from 1 April 2025.