



Independent Complaint Resolution Service

**How we deal with complaints
about the SRA**

Fair, impartial, effective

www.icrservice.co.uk

What is ICRS?

ICRS is an independent complaint review and settlement service. Our reviewers are highly experienced specialists in complaint handling and dispute resolution.

How to refer a complaint to ICRS

You can ask ICRS to carry out an independent review if you have made a complaint about the SRA after 1 October 2010 (the date of our appointment) and are dissatisfied with the response you have received. To refer your complaint you can either tell the SRA that you would like to refer your complaint to us or you can contact us direct.

It is important to stress that:

- We can only investigate after the SRA's internal complaints process has been concluded. The SRA should inform you when this stage is reached, and should tell you how to contact ICRS.
- We can only investigate complaints about the conduct of SRA – for example about delay, inefficiency or unfairness. We cannot review any regulatory decisions that have been made.
- We cannot investigate complaints against individual solicitors or organisations employing solicitors. Complaints about solicitors should be referred to the Legal Ombudsman. You can contact them by telephone on **0300 555 0333** or by email at **enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk**

To refer your complaint to ICRS please provide:

- Your name and contact details, preferably including a telephone number
- An outline of your complaint
- The date when you received the final response from the SRA
- A brief explanation of why you are dissatisfied with the SRA's response
- A short statement of how you would like the SRA to put things right.

It is not necessary for you to provide copies of your correspondence with the SRA, as we will request these documents from the SRA.

What will happen when we receive your complaint referral?

First steps

When we receive your referral we will contact the SRA to confirm that the internal complaints process has been completed.

If this is confirmed, we will ask the SRA to provide a copy of the complaint file.

In certain circumstances we will not carry out a full review. On referral we will consider the file together with information received from you.

We will not carry out a review if we decide that:

- The original complaint was made before the appointment of ICRS.
- The complaint is outside of the time limit for referral.
- The complaint is not within our remit. For example we cannot review a complaint about a decision, although we can review complaints about the way that decisions are reached.
- It appears that there has already been a full investigation by the SRA and appropriate redress has been offered.
- It appears, in all the circumstances, a full review would be unreasonable or disproportionate. For example, a complaint of a minor nature such as incorrect spelling may not result in investigation, although we will try to settle matters for you.
- It appears that there is an opportunity for resolution by agreement between you and the SRA. If we think that resolution is possible we will discuss this with you and the SRA to see whether the outcome you want is reasonable and can be agreed.

We will inform you and the SRA of our decision within 15 working days of the receipt of your complaint if we decide not to carry out a full review and we will explain the reasons for this.

The review process

If we decide to carry out a full review, we will contact you to check that we have understood your complaint and the outcome you are seeking. We will then prepare a written summary of the complaint issues for your agreement. This will provide the framework for our review.

Once you have agreed the summary of the complaint, we will prepare a detailed history of the complaint, based on the correspondence and any other documents we have received from you or from the SRA.

Next we will consider what additional information we need, either from you or from the SRA, in order to make a decision on the complaint. In order to ensure transparency, we will provide copies of correspondence to both parties. In some cases we will ask to meet you or SRA representatives to discuss the situation. Brief notes of any meeting will be provided to both parties.

Once we have all the information we need, we will reach a decision and produce a draft report of our findings within 20 working days.

In reaching a decision we will look closely at the events that caused the complaint, and the responses you have received from the SRA. We will take into account any relevant SRA guidance and/or service standards, as well as the Principles of Good Administration published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, together with general principles of fairness and good customer service.

The report and recommendations

Our report will include a summary of the main events related to the complaint, and an explanation of the reasons for our conclusions.

We will send a copy of the draft report to you and to the SRA to give both parties the opportunity to correct any factual mistakes. We will ask you to supply your comments within 10 working days.

Once we have received comments on the draft report we will make any necessary amendments and send you a final version within 10 working days.

Depending on our conclusions, the report may include recommendations to the SRA either for specific redress (for example an apology) or for improvements to systems and processes to reduce the risk of similar complaints arising in future.

Equality

ICRS is committed to treating everyone with respect and courtesy and ensuring equality of access to our service. Continuous monitoring of our work takes place to ensure that we treat everyone with equal fairness and that no one using our services suffers discrimination as a result of race, nationality, colour, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or age.

Please let us know if you have any special needs to be taken into account in the way that we communicate with you.

Confidentiality

We promise to treat the information we receive from you with appropriate care and sensitivity, but it is important to note the following:

- In order to deal with your complaint effectively we may need to share with the SRA the information that you provide.
- We have access to SRA information in order to help us investigate your complaint, but we do not have authority to disclose this information to you or anyone else. Any request for disclosure should be made directly to the SRA.
- Our full reports are provided only to you and to the SRA. However anonymised summaries are published in our annual reports.

Feedback on our service

We are always keen to improve our service and make it more responsive to customers' needs. So please let us have your comments, whether complimentary or critical. We shall send a feedback form at the end of the review process, and hope that you will take the time to complete it.

Complaints

If you have a specific complaint about the service you receive from ICRS, please let us know immediately and we will respond promptly.

If you would like to find out more about ICRS
and the services we provide, please contact us:

**ICRS Ground Floor Dover House
66 Whitehall London SW1A 2AU**

020 7930 0749 enquiries@icr.gsi.gov.uk