

## **Complaints Handling Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This document describes the Complaint Handling Policy of the Procurement Lawyers' Association ("the PLA").
- 1.2 This Policy aims to:
  - 1.2.1 Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
  - 1.2.2 Ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
  - 1.2.3 Ensure that complaints are resolved wherever possible.

### **2. Definition of a Complaint**

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the PLA.
- 2.2 Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has been directly affected by the action or inaction complained of.
- 2.3 A complaint can be received by email or in writing.

### **3. Confidentiality**

- 3.1 All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### **4. Responsibility**

- 4.1 Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Executive Committee of the PLA.

### **5. Complaints Procedure**

- 5.1 Written complaints may be sent to the PLA at the following address:

Peter Ware  
Partner  
Browne Jacobson LLP  
Mowbray House  
Castle Meadow Road  
Nottingham  
NG2 1BJ "the PLA's Complaints Manager"

- 5.2 Alternatively, written complaints may be sent electronically to the PLA at peter.ware@brownejacobson.com.

### **6. Receiving Complaints**

- 6.1 Where a complaint is received by phone or in person the recipient should ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email to the addresses provided at Clause 5 so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- 6.2 Written complaints will be managed in accordance with the process set out at Clause 7 below.

### **7. Resolving Complaints**

#### **Stage One**

- 7.1 The person receiving the complaint must forward the complaint to the PLA's Complaints Manager, who has responsibility for ensuring that the following steps are taken.

- 7.2 The PLA's Complaints Manager must formally acknowledge the complaint within one week. The acknowledgement should state who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- 7.3 If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- 7.4 Complainants should ideally receive a definitive reply within 28 days of the initial complaint. If this is not possible, because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- 7.5 Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

### **Stage Two**

- 7.6 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by the Chair of the Executive Committee. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair of the Executive Committee.
- 7.7 The request for the Chair to review should be acknowledged within two weeks of receiving it. The acknowledgement should state who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The Chair may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
- 7.8 If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
- 7.9 The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.
- 7.10 Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- 7.11 Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
- 7.12 The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Chair decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

### **8. Variation**

- 8.1 The Executive Committee may vary the procedure for managing complaints for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair of the Executive Committee should not also have the Chairperson as the person leading a Stage Two review.
- 8.2 Where any amendments are made to the PLA's Complaints Handling Policy, the PLA will notify the Bar Standards Board within 14 Business Days of the change being made.

**Policy date: March 2016**