



Complaints Policy and Procedure

The Inn is committed to working in a way that is inclusive, collaborative, professional, positive, and with a high level of integrity. The Inn aims to achieve the highest standards in its service delivery and operations.

We welcome feedback about things which have gone well and about problems which may have arisen. We take any complaints seriously and seek to resolve them in a timely way.

It is often helpful to discuss a concern before making a formal complaint. Some matters can be resolved quickly and informally.

Initial contact for this purpose can be made with the Under Treasurer or a designated manager appointed by her. They will listen to your concerns and discuss with you the best way forward. This may include attempting to resolve your concerns informally. They will not discourage you from making a formal complaint.

The designated Inn managers are:

Amanda Jeffery, Director of Operations
Faye Appleton, Director of Membership & Education
Nathalie Brule, HR Director
Dunstan Speight, Librarian
Henry Skinner, Director of Estates
Charlie Taylor, Head of Education and Scholarships
Claire Coveney, Head of Membership

If you feel that you have been subject to harassment in connection with the activities of the Inns (or witnessed the harassment of others) please refer to our [Anti-Harassment Policy](#) first.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

What you can complain about:

- The quality and standard of any service we provide
- Our failure to provide a service
- The quality of our facilities
- The behaviour of our staff
- The behaviour of our members at the Inn or when engaged on Inn business
- Any action, or lack of action, by our staff or members engaged on Inn business

What you cannot complain about:

- Matters that have already been fully dealt with through this complaints policy and procedure
- The behaviour of barrister or judicial members in their professional capacity
- Student disciplinary cases dealt with or being dealt with by the Inns' Conduct Committee (ICC)
- Barrister disciplinary cases dealt with or being dealt with by the Bar Tribunal Service.

We cannot ordinarily investigate anonymous complaints. We will discuss any concerns and maintain the confidentiality of complainants as far as is possible and appropriate.

We will not normally treat information received through routine feedback mechanisms – such as responses to questionnaires or surveys – as formal complaints.

What complaints do these procedures cover?

The Inn: Complaints about our services and facilities will be addressed through this policy and procedure.

The Inn's employees: Complaints about individual employees will normally be dealt with under our employment, discipline and grievance policies and procedures.

The Inn's members: These procedures only cover complaints about Called Inn members in relation to their behaviour while at the Inn or engaged on Inn business. Complaints about their conduct as a barrister must be referred to their chambers and / or the Bar Standards Board (BSB). Complaints about their conduct as a judge must be referred to the Judicial Office.

The Inn is responsible for overseeing student conduct before Call to the Bar so will investigate any allegations of student misconduct, at the Inn or elsewhere. Issues of student misconduct may be referred to the Inns' Conduct Committee for determination of whether they are fit and proper to practise as a barrister.

How to make a complaint

Formal complaints must be made in writing by email or letter to HR@lincolnsinn.org.uk or HR Department, The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2A 3TL.

Complaints about the Under Treasurer should be sent to the HR Director who will then bring them to the attention of the Treasurer.

If you have a disability and need a reasonable adjustment to ensure you can register your complaint, you can contact us by telephone (one of our designated employees can assist you by writing out your complaint, if necessary). If you require different adjustments, let us know and we will try and put those arrangements in place where we can.

It is normally better to raise a concern as soon as possible while memories are still fresh and issues can be addressed promptly. As such we will not normally consider complaints which relate to matters dating back further than 3 months. If you wish to raise an issue that took place longer than 3 months ago please contact the Under Treasurer or another designated Inn employee to discuss.

When submitting a complaint please provide as much information as you can about the matter and circumstances, how you would like us to resolve the matter, and any evidence relevant to your complaint.

How complaints are handled

These procedures apply to a broad range of complaints. Some complaints relate to straightforward matters and can be easily resolved: others may be more complex. In all cases the Inn will treat those involved with courtesy, respect and fairness. We will listen to the perspective of those involved, examine the facts and seek an objective and proportionate outcome.

Those involved in considering complaints will not have been directly involved in the matters giving rise to the complaint.

Stage 1 – Initial Stage

Complaints will be acknowledged on receipt. An initial assessment as to whether the matter falls within the scope of these procedures will be carried out by the HR Department, with assistance from the Under Treasurer or relevant head of department.

If either:

- the Inn advises that a complaint should more appropriately be made to another body; or
- a complainant notifies the Inn that they are also making a complaint to another body (e.g. the BSB),

the Inn may choose to suspend examination of the complaint until the other body has concluded its considerations. In such circumstances, the Inn may consider the case for interim action, such as requesting members to stop participating in specified Inn activities.

Stage 2 – examination of the complaint

If a complaint falls within the scope of these procedures and is not subject to investigation by another body, the relevant manager or the Under Treasurer will carry out an examination of the circumstances. If the complaint involves the behaviour of a Called Inn member, the Under Treasurer will inform the Treasurer, who will appoint a panel consisting of two members and the Under Treasurer to examine the complaint. If the complaint involves a student member, the Registrar and Director of Membership & Education will examine the complaint.

Complaints will be examined in line with our [general principles for complaints handling](#).

Unless there are good reasons for delay, consideration of complaints will be completed as soon as is reasonably practicable, with the aim of achieving completion in most cases within 30 working days of the formal complaint being received.

Determination of complaints

We aim, where possible, to resolve complaints proportionately and in a way that addresses the concerns of all those involved, including measures to remedy matters, to avoid recurrence and to address any related issues.

We will inform all those involved:

- what we concluded about the justification for the complaint;
- why we reached those conclusions;
- our recommendations about steps needed to remedy matters or avoid recurrence.

The Under Treasurer will ensure that any recommendations are taken forward as soon as practically possible, unless there is request for a review of the findings.

Review

The complainant, or the subject of the complaint where this is a member of the Inn, may ask for the outcome of the complaint to be reviewed. The request must be made in writing to the HR Department within 20 working days of the date of notification of the decision. The request must make clear which aspect/s of the original decision the individual disagrees with and why. All those involved must be informed of this process when they are notified of the outcome of the complaint.

For complaints about services, facilities, or employees, the Under Treasurer will be notified and will conduct the review or appoint another Executive Team member to do so.

For complaints about Called members, the Treasurer will be notified and will appoint a panel to conduct the review.

Unless there are good reasons for delay, the review will be carried out within 30 working days of a review request being received. It will involve a review of the request for the review and the original materials and decision. It may involve meetings with the complainant, subject, others involved, and the original examiner/s.

Student members may appeal decisions of the Inn relating to their fitness to practise to the ICC, following the conclusion of our internal process. Student members may appeal decisions of the ICC to the BSB.

Records

We will keep records of all formal complaints received for a period of six years from the date of the final response from the Inn, except in cases where the subject of the complaint is a member of the Inn and the matter complained of results in disbarment or actions that have a defined period longer than six years.

In cases where the matter complained of results in disbarment, the record of the complaint will be kept until the subject is 75 years of age as individuals may usually seek reinstatement of their Call to the Bar after a defined period has elapsed and the information on the complaint will be material to their application for reinstatement.

In the case of an action being imposed as part of the decision on the complaint, it may have a defined period and so the record of the complaint will be kept for the length of the action or six years, whichever is longer.

The record of complaints will comprise:

- The date the complaint was received
- The complainant's name
- The complainant's contact and other personal details
- The service, facilities, employee, or member complained about
- The nature of the complaint
- Material provided by the complainant
- Material provided by the relevant department or the subject of the complaint
- Notes from meetings held as part of the examination of the complaint
- Any electronic material gathered as part of the examination of the complaint, such as copies of the Inn's CCTV, audio recordings, or photographs
- The decision and date
- The reasons for decision
- Any actions, including timeframe for actions

After the relevant period has elapsed the personal data on complaints will be destroyed and the Inn will retain the anonymised data for statistical purposes, such as the analysis of trends and improvements.

All records will be kept centrally by the HR Department and will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law or for disciplinary or other remedial processes. All records will be stored and managed in accordance with our [Data Protection Policy](#).

Anonymised reports may be used to assist the Inn in highlighting common issues and improving policies, processes, or training for employees or members. Anonymised reports on complaints related to our regulated activities for students may also be provided to the BSB for quality assurance purposes, in line with our Memorandum of Understanding with the BSB.

Comments

The quality of our service to our members, tenants, residents and other customers is important. Learning from complaints is a way of helping us to improve our services.

We would also appreciate your comments on when we do things well and if you have ideas on how we can do things better. Your comments will be passed on to the relevant team and we will use them to help improve. You can make comments by contacting any members of our staff, or, if you're not sure who to contact, by emailing mail@lincolnsinn.org.uk.