

Complaints Handling Procedures

In order to satisfy its regulatory requirements, every RICS regulated practice needs to have in place a Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) to deal with complaints made against the firm. Even if your firm is not RICS regulated, a formal CHP conveys the impression of a well- managed firm which helps instil client confidence.

Any client dissatisfied with the service they have received from the firm may request a copy of its CHP as a prelude to making a complaint and/or claim. Even when a client has not requested a copy of the firm's CHP but simply makes a verbal or written complaint, it can be useful when acknowledging receipt of the complaint, to send the client a copy of your CHP in order to manage their expectations as to when they can expect to receive a response.

A firm's CHP will typically have two stages:

- Complaints will be considered by a senior member of the firm or a designated complaints handler
- If the complaint cannot be resolved, it will be referred to an independent redress scheme such as an ombudsman. There are a number of redress schemes and the firm's CHP must give details of the redress scheme to which it refers complaints so that the client knows where to take their complaint.

The RICS website contains a sample complaints handling procedure that you can use (<https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/valuation/complaints-handling-1st-edition-rics.pdf>). Alternatively, you can draft your own.

You should specify in your CHP when a client can expect a formal response to their complaint. It is advisable that you seek to acknowledge any complaint within 7 days and then provide a full response within a specified number of days thereafter, for example 21 days. It is recommended that you ask that any complaint be made in writing. Your initial acknowledgement can be as straightforward as *We acknowledge receipt of yours of XX/XX/XX and confirm that we will provide you with our full response with 21 days as per this firm's Complaints Handling Procedure, copy attached.*

Larger practices may wish to incorporate into their CHP that after the complaint has initially been reviewed by one senior member that in the event that the client remains dissatisfied, that it will be further reviewed by another senior member before being referred to an ombudsman. Alternatively, some firms may specify at this stage that the complaint be referred to an independent surveyor for review. In such instances, you should specify in your CHP who this independent surveyor is. It is essential that you have in place with your nominated independent surveyor a reciprocal agreement covering such matters as to what fee, if any, will be levied for undertaking the review, what the review will consist of and response times. Any fees charged will not be recoverable under your insurance policy and as such it is preferable that the reciprocal arrangement be on a non-fee basis.

There are a number of independent redress schemes that a client can be referred under Stage 2 of your CHP. However, whichever independent redress provider you nominate, it must be one approved by RICS Regulatory Board. The RICS recently announced that they have appointed the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) as their default Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider for regulated firms in the UK*.



Their address is: The Internal Dispute Resolution Centre, 70 Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1EU
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E-mail: info@cedr.com Website: www.cedr.com.

*<https://www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/latest-news/news-opinion/update-on-new-default-adr-provider/>