



# **bowcock cuerden LLP**

Commercial Lawyers and Private Client Team

## **9.1 CLIENT CARE POLICY**

### **9.1.1 Policy Statement**

As a highly respected law firm, we strive to provide outstanding legal services that are expert, accurate and appropriate, accompanied by the highest standard of professional conduct and client care. We continually monitor our performance and conduct regular reviews of our systems and procedures to refine and improve our standards of client care. We recognise that the times when clients need us are often times of difficulty and/or stress. Our Client Care Policy is designed to alleviate some of that stress and not to add to it.

### **9.1.2 Who is covered by the policy?**

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels and grades, including directors, consultants, administrative and support staff, temporary staff or any other person associated with us (collectively referred to as workers in this policy).

### **9.1.3 Our pledges**

To that end, the Firm will:

- Offer our services in a pleasant and comfortable environment.
- Offer flexible appointment times.
- Agree with clients in advance the level of service they require.
- Represent clients' interests.
- Always act professionally.
- Always act in a respectful and courteous manner.
- Always treat clients fairly.
- Be open and honest.
- Give clear legal advice that clients can understand.
- Provide letters to clients written in plain English and explain any legal terms or references.
- Ensure that clients understand what they are undertaking (including the risk of success or loss) and the likely costs involved.
- Keep clients' business confidential.
- We will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 to safeguard your data and will action any request you send concerning your data within the prescribed timescale.
- Ensure that we have the resources and expertise to deal with every matter.
- Inform clients of the progress on their matter file and important dates to remember in relation to the matter.
- Give clients the most accurate information possible about costs at

every stage.

- Provide a prompt response to all telephone calls, e-mails and correspondence.
- Deal with any questions or queries promptly.
- In the event that the solicitor acting for the client is unable to keep an appointment, advise the client as soon as possible and offer the opportunity to see someone else or to rearrange the appointment.
- Act in accordance with the Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2019 and other relevant regulatory requirements.
- Inform clients of the availability of our complaints procedure.
- Provide reasonable adjustments for disabled clients. Our premises have been specifically adapted to provide access, meeting facilities and toilet facilities for disabled clients but where there are special needs or disabilities which prevent access to our premises, we will take reasonable steps to make suitable arrangements to accommodate the needs of that individual even if it means that we have to travel to provide a home service. We can also provide our documents in large type if requested. Although interpreters have not yet been necessary (including interpreters for the deaf), a suitably qualified person will be engaged / consulted if necessary.

#### 9.1.4 Client Care Letter

Once we agree to act for a client we send them a "client care" letter, incorporating our General Terms of Business, which (among other things) explains in detail:-

- the level of service they will receive
- the name of the person responsible for their matter
- that person's position in the Firm, and their qualifications
- (where appropriate) the name of the supervisor responsible for overseeing and monitoring the matter
- details of our complaints procedure.

Annually at the October management meeting the Directors review all client care letters and General Terms of Business including to ensure that they remain in plain English,

A scam was publicised in October 2016, whereby fraudsters intercepted emails between a couple and their solicitors and subsequently managed to generate fake emails posing as both parties thus tricking the solicitors into transferring the £98,000 sale proceeds to the fraudsters' account. Consequently, the firm has adopted new safeguards for all transactional matters where the Firm will be accounting to clients electronically at the conclusion of the matter, including an additional section in the Client Care letter requesting that a password request form be completed and returned by post, or hand delivered. This password will be requested in a telephone call to the Client made prior to any electronic transfer of funds being made, to verify the destination account details. Sections 5 and section 7 of the Client Care letter have subsequently been amended to enhance and widen the scope of the password procedures for electronic transfers.

#### **9.1.5 Coronavirus pandemic**

The UK government lifted most restrictions for England on 19 July 2021; the government is no longer encouraging people to work from home and businesses no longer need to implement social distancing measures.

The office fully re-opened on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, following the easing of Government restrictions. The Solicitors are returning to the office on a phased basis and will be available for meetings by arrangement, in the usual way.

As we appreciate that we are not yet out of the pandemic though, we will continue to operate our office in a safe manner. We will therefore retain our hand-sanitising station in our reception area, as well as the protective screens in reception and two of our conference rooms. Face masks may still be worn by some of our team, although we will not be requiring this. We do not require visitors to wear facemasks, although they are of course very welcome to do so, if they would prefer.

The current coronavirus notice on our website states that no one should attend the office if they, or a member of their household, has symptoms of Covid-19, however mild. In this event, they are advised to contact us and we will make arrangements to either hold the appointment remotely, or at a later date.

We are confident that our office remains a Covid-secure environment and will continue to monitor our systems and compliance with legislation to maintain the safety of our clients and staff.

#### **9.1.6 Feedback & Testimonials**

In order that we can continually improve our service, we actively encourage and value feedback from our clients. We perform an annual client satisfaction survey to gain this feedback.

In addition, we monitor and evaluate any client complaints so as to identify and address any shortcomings and failings in order that we can strive continually to improve our standard of service.

#### **9.1.7 Monitoring and Review**

The Managing Director has overall responsibility for this policy, and the Directors will monitor and review the policy annually to monitor its appropriateness and verify its effective operation.