



The Costs Lawyer Standards Board, setting and maintaining standards in the profession

Newsletter 9: 5 March 2018

2018 CPD record forms

Please note that a blank 2018 CPD record form can be downloaded from the CLSB website under “Costs Lawyer Handbook” then “Forms.”

Change of personal circumstances

Just a reminder that if you change your employer or residential address during 2018, do notify the CLSB at enquiries@clsb.info so we can ensure our database is current, and the public domain register accurately reflects where a potential client can contact you.

2018 employer support

We are delighted that the following employers continue to support the profession by employing high numbers of CLSB authorised and regulated Costs Lawyers.

Irwin Mitchell:	33
Kain Knight:	25
Masters:	18
Compass Costs Solutions:	16
North West Law Services:	14
PIC:	11
Civil & Commercial:	10

Revised guidance note: Client care letters

Following recommendations by the CMA, and discussions with The Access to Justice Foundation on pro-bono work, the CLSB guidance note on client care letters was revised in January 2018. The new guidance note can be located on the CLSB website www.clsb.info under “Costs Lawyer Handbook” then “Guidance Notes.”

Good practice on complaint handling

The Legal Ombudsman commissioned research to examine the extent to which the use of language and communication influenced people’s ability to engage in complaints. As a result of this research, in January 2018 the CLSB revised its guidance note on complaints handling. The new guidance can be located on the CLSB website www.clsb.info under “Costs Lawyer Handbook” then “Guidance Notes.” Here are some key points from that research:

Keep it simple: Particularly with a lay client. Avoid using jargon, acronyms, pretentious language and legal or technical terms. They may seem commonplace to you but these can be confusing and intimidating to people who are not familiar with the legal profession.

Be timely: State the timeframe for how long you will take to investigate and respond so the complainant isn't constantly checking for a response.

Take it seriously: Ensure that it is clear that you are taking the complaint seriously. Overly informal language, poor grammar or processes can suggest that no formal investigation is underway. For example, to say you will "have a word" can leave people unsure of whether the complaint is being dealt with through a proper process.

Don't be afraid to apologise: If appropriate, start with a proper apology. Avoid burying it at the end of lengthy letters. The research highlighted phrases such as "I'm sorry you have felt the need to complain" or "I'm sorry you feel this way" came across as disingenuous and patronising. If you have made a mistake in the delivery of your service simply say "sorry" without caveats and conditions.

Acknowledge stress or inconvenience caused: For many, the decision to make a complaint is not taken lightly. Complaining is seen as a negative activity and people lack confidence in the process and fear jeopardising their relationship with the service provider.

Demonstrate to the client that you appreciate their feedback: Also, use the opportunity to improve your service.

Be clear: It is useful to use bold headings to structure the response around the detail of the complaint.

Escalation: Ensure that your signposting information to the Legal Ombudsman (service complaints) and CLSB (professional conduct complaints) is clear and accurate as this acts to reassure complainants.

The full research report can be found on the Legal Ombudsman website

Email: enquiries@clsb.info

Phone: 0161 956 8969

Website: www.clsb.info

Costs Lawyer Standards Board
Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR