

**ELLIS-FERMOR & NEGUS**  
**FAMILY LAW DEPARTMENT**  
**TERMS OF BUSINESS**

**Introduction**

These Terms of Business together with the accompanying letter confirming your instructions to us constitute the contract between us and the basis on which we will act on your behalf in the matter on which you have consulted us.

**Our responsibility for the work**

- (i) The Partners of the practice are ultimately responsible for all work done for clients. The accompanying letter confirms the person who will have day to day supervision of your file. In order to give an economical as well as an efficient service different tasks in your matter may sometimes be handled by lawyers within our firm other than the person with primary responsibility for the file. Routine tasks may be delegated to someone more junior whereas complex points may need to be referred to someone more senior.
- (ii) Where more than one area of law is involved the person dealing with the file may need to consult with a colleague who has different specialised knowledge.

**Our charges**

Our charges are primarily based on the time we spend dealing with the case. Time spent on your affairs will include meetings with you, and perhaps others, any time spent travelling, considering, preparing and working on papers, correspondence, and making and receiving telephone calls.

The current hourly rates, which we charge for the various grades of fee earner within this department are:

Partner & Solicitors (8 years + post qualification experience) £185.00 per hour  
Solicitor or Legal Executive (with 4years+ post qualification experience) £160.00 per hour  
Other Solicitors & Legal Executives £146.00 per hour

Legal Clerk or Trainee Solicitor £112.00 per hour

Collaborative Law Work £185 per hour

Routine letters that we write and routine telephone calls that we make and receive will be charged as units of 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an hour. Other letters and telephone calls will be charged on a timed basis. Routine letters that we receive will be charged as units of 1/20<sup>th</sup> of an hour.

These rates are reviewed annually on 6<sup>th</sup> April, and if your matter is still continuing at the next review date we will notify you of any increased rates.

In addition to the time spent, we may take into account a number of other factors which include the complexity of the issues, the speed at which action must be taken, the expertise or specialist knowledge that the matter requires, and if appropriate, the value of the property or subject matter involved. On the basis of the information currently available, we expect these factors to be adequately covered by the hourly rate set out above, but if the matter turned out to be more demanding than at present envisaged, we will notify you and indicate if this would entitle us to charge at higher than our normal rates.

Our charges are subject to VAT at the rate applicable when the work is done. Currently VAT is 20%.

Unless you have a current Legal Aid Certificate in force covering the work you ask us to do, our charges are your responsibility, even if the Court makes an Order enabling you to recover costs of the case from someone else.

**Legal Aid**

We are proud of the fact that we have a Franchise with the Legal Services Commission. This means that our firm has been specifically approved by the Legal Services Commission in certain areas of law to provide a quality assured service.

If you appear to be eligible for a Legal Aid Certificate this will be referred to in the accompanying letter, and a separate Fact sheet will be enclosed. Please refer to this for more information about Legal Aid.

Although the Legal Services Commission will meet your bill to us if you are granted Legal Aid, circumstances can arise where you may be liable to repay the Legal Services Commission. The details of how we charge and any information we may send you from time to time about the cost of your case to date are therefore still relevant to you.

If your financial circumstances change while your case is in progress so that you think you may be eligible for Legal Aid please notify us of this.

### **Estimates of time and cost**

Our accompanying letter sets out our best estimate of the time that your case is likely to take and the charges and expenses you are likely to have to pay us on the information available so far. However it is always difficult to predict these matters with accuracy where Court proceedings are or might be involved.

We will update our estimate approximately every 6 months but if you wish to have an up to date estimate at any time please ask us.

We will inform you if any unforeseen additional work becomes necessary e.g. due to any unexpected difficulties or if your requirements or the circumstances significantly change during the course of the matter.

### **Expenses**

During the course of your case it may be necessary to pay various expenses on your behalf including the cost of medical reports or court fees. Unless we agree differently in writing you will be responsible for paying for all these expenses. We are not obliged to make any payment for you, nor incur any liability until you let us have the money to cover it. VAT is chargeable on some disbursements, although some (such as Court Fees) are currently exempt.

### **Billing arrangements**

If you prefer, or if the amount of work required on your case is substantial we will render interim bills periodically whilst the work is in progress. Should an interim bill not be paid promptly, we reserve the right to suspend work until all amounts due are cleared.

We will send a final bill after completion of the work. Payment is due to us within 30 days of our sending you a final bill. If you have a query about your bill, you should contact us straight away

We reserve the right to charge you daily interest on the bill at 8% p.a from the date on which payment of our bill is due if you do not pay our bill within this time.

Any regular monthly payments you make to us will be applied to your account to clear amounts billed to you. Outstanding accounts will attract interest from 30 days after the bill is delivered.

We will always use any amounts received to clear the oldest bill.

Unless there is specific written agreement to the contrary, our charges are payable whether or not a case is successfully concluded or a transaction completed. Even if your matter is not carried through to completion you must pay our charges for the work already carried out. VAT is payable on that amount and you will also be billed for any disbursements incurred.

In addition the common law entitles us to retain any money, papers or other property belonging to you which properly come into our possession pending payment of our costs, whether or not the property is acquired in connection with the matter for which the costs were incurred. This is known as a "general lien". We are not entitled to sell property held under a lien but we are entitled to hold property, other than money, even if the value of it greatly exceeds the amount due to us in respect of costs.

If we are conducting litigation for you, we have additional rights. In any property recovered or preserved for you whether it is in our possession or not and in respect of all costs incurred, whether billed or unbilled. We also have a right to ask the court to

make a charging order in our favour for any assessed costs.

If there is a problem with your bill

You are, of course, entitled to complain about your bill if you think there is something wrong. There may also be a right to object to the bill by making a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman and/or by applying to the court for an assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974.

Late Payments

In addition to the sum payable under our account you will be charged daily interest at 8% p.a. thereon from thirty days after the date of a bill.

**Credit Card** payments are charged in line with the charges passed on to us by the Bank. These charges are available on request. There are no charges for Debit Card payments.

**Cash** the maximum payment we will accept in cash is £2000

**Bank Transfers** if you want to remit money to us through the banking system or on-line our bank details are:- Barclays Bank Plc, Sort Code 20-63-25  
Account No: 10072982

Money Laundering Regulations

The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 ("the Act") creates a number of offences relating to the proceeds of crime which include making it a criminal offence for you to enter into a financial settlement with your husband/wife/partner if you know that any income, capital or property of whatever nature which you and/or your husband/wife/partner receives or retains as part of the settlement represents the proceeds of crime. The proceeds of crime include, for example, monies (however low in value) saved as a result of tax evasion or benefit fraud whether that money has been saved or spent.

If your Solicitor becomes aware of or suspects the existence of the proceeds of crime in your case (whether from you or any other person), in order to enable the Solicitor (or any other Solicitor) to continue with your case without you and s/he committing an offence under the Act, your Solicitor must report the irregularity to the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA).

SOCA will then give or withhold permission for your Solicitor to continue with the case. Even if SOCA gives permission for the case to continue, it can pass the information received to any relevant body such as the Inland Revenue and an investigation may take place at any time in the future.

It follows from the above that, if you have any concerns about irregularities in your financial position or that of your husband/wife/partner, you may wish to seek specialist accountancy advice to correct those irregularities before the financial issues arising from the breakdown of your marriage/relationship begin to be resolved. Be aware that accountants are also required to comply with the provisions of the Act.

If your own financial irregularities or those of your husband/wife/partner are not corrected before you consult a Solicitor and/or you do not tell your Solicitor the correct position about your financial affairs or those of your husband/wife/partner, if your Solicitor becomes aware of such irregularities during the course of the case, in certain circumstances, s/he and you are required by the Act to disclose those irregularities to SOCA. Further, in certain circumstances, your Solicitor may have to make a report to SOCA telling you that s/he has done so. Accordingly, one consequence of not telling your Solicitor about irregularities in your family's financial circumstances would be to find that s/he is required to inform SOCA of the correct position without discussing the matter with you. In rare circumstances, one consequence of this could be that you resolve your financial relationship with your husband/wife/partner only to find that you then become subject to an Inland Revenue investigation and/or criminal proceedings.

The obligations which your Solicitor has under the Act can in certain circumstances override the duty of Solicitor/client confidentiality. Please be aware that if we proceed with your matter these Terms of Business will result in you foregoing your right to client confidentiality in relation to any information we give to the SOCA.

If any fee earners engaged in your case spend time in addressing issues arising for you from the Act, that time will be charged in the same manner as any other work undertaken in relation to your case.

Storage of papers and documents

Once our charges are paid you are entitled to have all the papers relating to your case if you wish. Otherwise we will keep your file for 6 years. Then it will be destroyed. We do not normally make a charge for retrieving stored papers or deeds in response to continuing new instructions to act for you. If you require us to retrieve documents for some other purpose we reserve the right to make a charge.

We may in future transfer paper files held in storage to electronic or digital form. If this happens and we are subsequently asked to retrieve it we will supply you with a reconstituted paper file or in electronic/digital form if you prefer.

### **Termination**

You may terminate your instructions to us in writing at any time subject to our right to keep all your papers and documents whilst there is money owing to us for our charges and expenses.

We may decide to stop acting for you only with good reason, e.g. if we become aware of a professional conflict of interest or if you do not pay an interim bill. We must give you reasonable notice that we will stop acting for you. If you or we decide that we will no longer act for you, you must pay our charges and expenses as set out earlier.

### **Complaints**

We are committed to high quality legal advice and client care. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the service you have received or about the bill, please raise them in the first place with the lawyer dealing with your matter. If that does not resolve the problem to your satisfaction please contact the Client Care Partner, Simon Hale, who is based at our Beeston Office. We have a procedure in place which details how we handle complaints which is available at: <http://www.ellis-fermor.co.uk/resources/complaints-procedure.html> or on request. If you are not satisfied with our handling of your complaint you can ask the Legal Ombudsman at PO Box 15870, Birmingham, B30 9 EB to consider the complaint. Normally, you will need to bring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving a final written response from us about your complaint.

### **Electronic Communication**

We are able to communicate with you by e-mail as well as by post, fax, and telephone. If you correspond with us by e-mail, we shall take that as a request for us to correspond with you by e-mail. If you do not wish us to communicate by e-mail please let us know. E-mail communications cannot be guaranteed to be secure or error-free and may be lost or delayed. If you wish to communicate with us by e-mail you do so at your own risk. Email communications will be dealt with in the same timeframe as post unless the Fee Earner assesses the nature of the e-mail to be urgent. We are not responsible for and cannot accept liability for any damage of any nature caused by or resulting from the use of email or other electronic communications. Important instructions should be confirmed by post.

### **Limit of Liability**

The firm is covered by professional indemnity insurance for claims up to £5,000,000. It is an express term of our contract with you that our liability to you or any other person entitled to claim against us for any reason arising out of our acting for you in this matter is limited to £5,000,000. By signing the accompanying letter of engagement you are accepting (for yourself and on behalf of any other person whose interests you are representing) that our liability is limited to this figure.

### **Undertakings**

Nothing is to be regarded as an undertaking by us unless we have expressly stated that it is an undertaking and the undertaking has been signed by a Solicitor of the Firm.

### **Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000**

For the purposes of compliance with these regulations, where your instructions to us have not been given at a face to face meeting, we would inform you that your matter may not be completed within 30 days, unless otherwise agreed.

### **If we carry out any Financial Services or Insurance Activities**

Financial Services -

The firm is not authorised under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 but we are able in certain circumstances to offer a limited range of investment services to clients because we are members of the Solicitors Regulation Authority. We can provide these investment services if they are an incidental part of the professional services we have been engaged to provide.

**General Insurance -**

We are not authorised by the Financial Services Authority. However, we are included on the register maintained by the Financial Services Authority so that we can carry on insurance mediation activity, which is broadly the advising on, selling and administration of insurance contracts. This part of our business, including arrangements for complaints or redress if something goes wrong, is regulated by The Solicitors Regulation Authority. The register can be accessed via the Financial Services Authority website at [www.fsa.gov.uk/register](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/register).

We must advise you, however, that if we arrange any insurance we do not do so on the basis of making a full assessment of needs and benefits.

Signed.....

Dated.....

**Money held on your behalf**

We will account for a fair sum in lieu of interest on money held in a general client account. This will not necessarily reflect the highest interest obtainable. Our full policy on the payment of interest is available on request.

**Financial Services Compensation Scheme –**

If we hold money for you in our General Client Account it is currently placed with either Barclays Bank or Lloyds Banking Group. It is important that you are aware that the £85,000 Financial Services Compensation Scheme indemnity applies to each individual. So, if you hold other money in the same bank, then the limit will remain £85,000 in total (ie your money will be aggregated with the money we hold for you in the same bank). Remember that some deposit-taking institutions have several brands, but the £85,000 limit applies per institution (not to each brand). You should check with your bank, or with the FSA, for more information.