

News release

Law firms improving customer service and complaints handling

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Data released today suggests law firms are getting better at resolving complaints made to firms, while most clients say they are happy with the quality of service from firms.

Last year four out of five complaints (81%) were successfully resolved by the firm themselves. This compares to 71% in 2012.

Overall there has been a slight increase in complaint levels within the profession, with 28,113 complaints made to firms in 2018. Since 2012, when 26,570 complaints were made, this number has risen gradually by an average of 250 complaints a year.

The percentage of people who say they are unhappy but don't complain has fallen from 49% in 2017 to 35% in 2018, as people have become more aware of their rights, and firms are raising awareness of their complaints procedures.

Publishing year-on-year industry complaints data was one of the key commitments we made when we introduced our new transparency rules in December 2018. Released alongside the complaints statistics we have published a report into Standards of Service within the profession.

This report highlights that most people (88%) are satisfied with the service they receive from solicitors and two-thirds (65%) said they felt solicitors offered good value for money.

While solicitors increasingly acknowledge the importance of offering good customer service there are differences in what factors the public and professions think are most important in achieving this. For example, while half of customers said they would highly value being provided a clear explanation of legal processes, only 23% of firms thought this important to provide.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: "People expect businesses to provide them with high levels of customer service on a day-to-day basis.

"Nowhere is this more important than when handling with complaints. By being open and constructive, firms can not only resolve issues quickly, but enhance their relationship with their client. This makes good business sense for everybody."

Other key findings from our report include:

- Most complaints received by firms are about delay, advice or costs.
- Over half of firms (55%) say it is important to train staff to respond to dissatisfied clients before they complain.

The SRA Transparency Rules, introduced in December 2018, include a requirement that all firms must publish details of their complaints procedures on their website.

Read our: firm first-tier complaints data report [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/first-tier-complaints-report/>]

Read our: report into Standards of Service within the profession [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/maintaining-standards-service-reducing-complaints/>] .