



Standards charter

OFFICE HOURS

1. Chambers office hours are 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Thursday, and 9.00am to 5.30pm on Fridays. In emergencies, clerks can be contacted on the number given on the answerphone.

TELEPHONE CALLS

2. Telephone calls are answered by the clerk's room. Messages for Barristers can be left with the Clerks. Messages for clerks when they are unavailable can be left with the other clerks. These will be returned as soon as possible.

FAXES

3. The fax machine operates around the clock. During office hours the fax machines are checked regularly and barristers are notified by a message left in the message centre of the receipt of any fax for them if they are in Court. If the barrister is in Chambers the fax will be given to them once recorded on the Meridian system. If the barrister is at home they will be contacted and informed of receipt of the fax.

DX, POST AND E-MAILS

4. All mail and DX is opened, date stamped and distributed to barristers by 12pm on the date received. Mail that is addressed to the "Clerk to" will be opened, read and dealt with by the clerks. Mail addressed to the barrister by name only and marked Private, will be put unopened into the barrister's pigeonhole.
5. Briefs will be acknowledged by letter dispatched on the day of receipt.
6. Other correspondence will be dealt with in 5 working days.
7. E-mails – The options on the e-mail system have been set to automatically receive every 10 minutes. The Junior Clerks check for unread mail, download or forward, print and distribute messages throughout the day. Each clerk has their own e-mail address which is given out on request. The 'McAfee' Anti Virus Checker is used and automatically flashes a virus warning on the screen.

ACCEPTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HEARING

8. When a solicitor or other adviser requires advice on which barrister would be most suitable for a particular case the clerks are available to assist. A Barrister will not be double booked without the agreement of the solicitors concerned. However where a brief is not forwarded to chambers within 7 days of the telephone booking the barrister may be booked for another case unless the booking has been confirmed in writing by the solicitor.
9. An initial examination will be undertaken within 7 days, for acceptance of instructions and to check for any conflict of interest. Any problems will be notified to the client immediately and appropriate action agreed.

PAPERWORK

10. Solicitors can send instructions to counsel for paperwork without previously contacting a clerk but when this happens the nominated barrister may not be able to accept the instructions.

11. If a solicitor requires the work to be completed earlier than 21 days from receipt then he/she should indicate this on the backsheet. If the brief needs to be completed within 5 working days of receipt then it should be marked "Urgent" and if it is to be done within 24 hours of receipt then it should be marked "Very Urgent".
12. Instructions for work to be completed in less than 21 days should not be sent without the clerk's previous agreement.
13. If a time limit is to be exceeded then the barrister should inform the solicitor, or ask one of the Clerk's to contact the solicitor.
14. An initial examination will be undertaken within 7 days, for acceptance of instructions and to check for any conflict of interest. Any problems will be notified to the client immediately and appropriate action agreed.
15. Fees Policy – See Terms of Business & Basis of Fees Section

COMPLAINTS

16. Any complaints about a barrister or member of staff should in the first instance be made to the senior clerk. If he/she is unable to deal with the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant then the matter will be referred to the Chair of Chambers Meeting.

COURTWORK

17. A barrister instructed to attend court will be present at least 30 minutes prior to the hearing unless other arrangements have been made.

CONFERENCES

18. Conferences usually take place in chambers, but where there is good reason, they can be held at other locations by arrangement. Disabled access for conferences is available by prior arrangement.

RETURN OF COMPLETED BRIEFS

19. Completed briefs will be returned promptly accompanied by a feenote.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

20. Garden Court North Chambers was awarded Quality Mark for the Bar in Oct 2003, and is committed to maintaining and approving its Quality and Practice Management Standards

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

21. Garden Court North Chambers is committed to the implementation and promotion of equal opportunities and to ensuring an absence of direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religious belief, political persuasion or age.

DATA PROTECTION

22. Garden Court North Chambers is registered under the Data Protection Act.