

 <p>Solicitors Complaints Committee Northern Ireland SCCP2-EXT1</p>	<p>Solicitors Complaints Committee Solicitor Complaints Office Extension Request Policy</p>
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Overview

This policy provides the approach of the Solicitors Complaints Committee, and by extension the Solicitor Complaints Office, to the consideration of extension requests made during the complaint process.

Where a complaint is received, the Solicitor Complaints Office will write on behalf of the Solicitors Complaints Committee to seek written responses from the solicitor and/or firm to whom the complaint relates. During the complaints process, the Solicitors Complaints Committee may request additional information or comments from either party within a specified timeframe.

If there is an exceptional situation that makes it difficult for you to comply with our request within a given timeframe, it is important that you contact us as early as possible to inform us of any difficulty in responding within this timeframe.

If you are a solicitor and we have requested information or documentation from you and you fail to provide this within the requested timeframe without being authorised an extension, a report will be provided to the Law Society notifying them of your failure to comply with a direction of the Committee which may lead to further regulatory involvement or disciplinary action.

If you are a complainant and we have requested information or documentation from you and you fail to provide this within the requested timeframe without being authorised an extension, we may treat your complaint as abandoned and close our investigation.

It is understood that there may be some circumstances beyond the control of parties that require additional time to provide full responses. It is not appropriate to raise such concerns,

or ask for an extension, only as you near or pass the original deadline we have set. We expect that any issues are raised promptly upon receipt of the request so that everyone has the ability to fully engage with our processes to ensure a balanced consideration.

Extension Request Process

Extension requests must be received in writing using our extension request form which you can find [here](#). We will require you to provide the full reason why the extension request is required, and confirmation of the extension timeframe sought. If your request relates to a health condition, please provide any relevant evidence.

Your request will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

All requests should be sent by:

- Email to: enquiries@scc-ni.org
or
- By post to: The Solicitor Complaints Office
Law Society House
96 Victoria St,
Belfast,
County Antrim,
BT1 3GN

What happens next?

You will receive an acknowledgement of your written extension request which will be considered by the Solicitors Complaints Committee at the earliest opportunity.

The granting of and duration of any extension request made will be decided on a case-by-case basis, on your individual circumstances and balanced with our priority of progressing cases swiftly.

Save for extreme circumstances, no more than two extensions will be granted in any one matter.

How is it decided what is exceptional circumstances?

In the majority of requests, there should not be any issue granting a necessary extension. In all cases however, consideration must be given to the practicalities of extending the process and the steps that may be required to:

- Maintain and uphold high standards of professional service
- Protect clients and the public
- Uphold public confidence in the provision of legal services

The following is a list of circumstances that could constitute grounds for granting an extension:

- Unforeseen circumstances
- Medical conditions or illness

This is not an exhaustive list.

There may be some instances where a request for an extension of time cannot be granted and if this arises, we will advise you as soon as possible and provide a reason why.

Any agreed extensions will be recorded on file.

Extension requests and durations will be kept under review to make sure it is still required and continues to meet your needs and does not hinder the matter being dealt with.

Providing medical evidence

In most instances, we will not require sight of any medical evidence to support your extension request but should the same become necessary for any reason, we will let you know what we require and why.