

Client Care Policy

Confidentiality Statement

This manual/policy is classified as the confidential property of Charles Strachan Solicitors. Due to the sensitive nature of the information contained herein, this manual is available only to those persons employed by the practice. This manual remains the property of Charles Strachan Solicitors and may be repossessed at any time and authorised use or duplication of this manual is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary or Legal Action.

CONTENTS

	Page No
1. Introduction & Policy Statement	2
2. Competence	3
3. Confidentiality	3
4. Commitment	4
5. Courtesy	5
6. Dress & Demeanour	5
7. Fee Earner Responsibilities	5
8. Receptionist Responsibilities	6
9. Confirmation of Instructions	7
10. Client Feedback	7
11. Policy Review Information	9

Client Care Policy

1. Introduction & Policy Statement

Charles Strachan Solicitors is committed to providing a quality service to all clients. The practice's services should be recognised as being expert, accurate and appropriate. The practice strives to ensure that its advice is cost effective and communicated in a manner that is appropriate for each client. The practice is also committed to providing a truly professional service: it seeks to act with integrity and strict confidentiality in all its dealings with clients.

Our client care policy describes what this commitment means in practice and what our clients can expect from us. We will endeavour to adhere to the principle of putting our clients first, thereby ensuring that service excellence is an integral part of the planning and delivery of all services to our clients.

In order to achieve client service excellence, Charles Strachan Solicitors aims at all times to:

- provide clients with a high quality, professional and consistent service;
- act in accordance with the [Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2007] and other relevant regulatory requirements;
- act in a respectful and courteous manner in all dealings with clients;
- represent our clients' best interest;
- ensure all our staff fully understand and are committed to client care in all their interactions with clients;
- ensure we communicate effectively with our clients and with an agreed mode of communication upon request; and
- give clear legal advice.

At Charles Strachan Solicitors we make sure that our clients receive a client care letter that fully explains the level of service they will receive. In addition, we will name the person responsible for individual matters, their position in the practice and their qualifications. The client care letter will give the name of the supervisor responsible for each matter, and the name of the person who is responsible for dealing with any complaints.

In order that we can continually improve our service, we actively encourage and value feedback from our clients. We will use various methods to elicit

Client Care Policy

feedback, including client satisfaction surveys and post-matter questionnaires. In addition, we monitor and evaluate client complaints to identify and address shortcomings and failings in our standard of service. Such feedback is essential to help continually gauge client perceptions of our service.

Charles Strachan Solicitors has the above measures in place to ensure we achieve our goal of providing a quality service. This policy will be reviewed annually around 1st April by Ian Paterson and Sarah Bryant as part of the annual review of client care and as part of the annual review of risk, both of which are in line with the Law Society's Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS) Core Practice Management Standards.

2. Competence

The practice will accept instructions only where it can meet its commitment to the provision of an expert and professional service to clients. Where instructions would be beyond the expertise or the capabilities of the practice they will be declined. In any cases of doubt as to the ability of the practice to act appropriately for the client, A Director should be consulted. The practice's professional indemnity cover is limited to £3,000,000.00 per claim. We will not accept instructions where the consideration exceeds £2,000,000.00 million.

3. Confidentiality

The practice is under a professional and legal obligation to keep details of clients' matters confidential. This obligation, however, is subject to a statutory exception, which may require a solicitor who knows or suspects that a transaction on behalf of a client may involve money laundering or terrorist financing to make a disclosure to the National Crime Agency.

If the practice is required to make a disclosure in relation to a client matter, the practice may not be able to inform the client that a disclosure has been made. The practice may also have to cease acting in the client's matter for a period of time and may not be able to tell them the reasons for it.

Client Care Policy

Under the new Law Society Conveyancing Protocol we are required to make the transaction as transparent as possible and to share information with others to assist in the efficient management of each transaction or chain of transactions. Before doing so we must obtain the client's consent. If the client consents to the disclosure of information about the transaction, other transactions in the chain or any change in circumstances, this information should be disclosed. We should encourage clients to withhold the authority to disclose in exceptional circumstances only.

In most circumstances it will also be inappropriate to reveal that the practice is in receipt of instructions from any named client. If you are ever in doubt as to whether you should reveal whether the practice acts for a given client, or give out his, her or its address, check with a Director. Breaches of confidentiality could cause considerable problems for the practice and will be treated by the Directors as a serious disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality can be put into jeopardy by thoughtless conversations and quick meetings in the reception area. Client business should not be discussed in the reception area. Wherever possible, a client should be escorted into a meeting room when they come in to sign a document or bring papers in. What should be a short and uncomplicated visit can easily change if the client asks questions and they should be entitled to do so out of the earshot of other clients or visitors.

All staff should keep personal conversations in the reception area to a minimum. The impression gained by clients overhearing conversations in the reception area can be quite negative.

4. Commitment

Buying or selling property is recognised as being an extremely stressful time. All clients are entitled to expect a real commitment from the practice in handling their instructions, and for the practice to attach appropriate priority to their requirements. A professional service does not involve becoming emotional, and this should be borne in mind in wording correspondence. If it is necessary to issue a client's ultimatum, make sure it is clear that the practice is acting on the client's instructions.

5. Courtesy

All clients are entitled to be dealt with in a respectful and courteous manner. This will have many implications, from not keeping clients waiting in the reception area without explanation, to showing them the way to and from meeting rooms. Staff should also be courteous when communicating via telephone calls and e-mails, as well as showing genuine interest in the client's matter and any concerns about it. This can be done simply by the practice being seen to do its best to help them.

6. Dress and demeanour

It is important that the practice should project a sense of professionalism at all times, particularly in its dealings with clients. First impressions gained by clients do matter. Everybody should dress in a manner which is appropriate for their practice and respects the attire required by certain religions and/or beliefs.

Professionals should also try to conduct themselves in a way that will reassure clients and enhance the practice's commitment to client service. This can be achieved by appropriate behaviour both in and outside the office towards clients, business contacts, suppliers and other third parties. A positive, respectful and professional approach will have a significant impact on any client.

7. Fee-earner responsibilities

Fee-earners must take responsibility to:

- make a reservation as soon as possible when meeting rooms are required;
- ensure they meet clients from reception and show clients back to reception;
- ensure that clients are not kept waiting;
- ensure that clients are shown hospitality and are provided with appropriate refreshments (coffee, tea, etc.);

Client Care Policy

- if there is a delay of more than 10 minutes, advise reception of the reasons for the delay and give a time estimate for when the client will be seen;
- inform their secretary (if any) of their whereabouts in the building;
- ensure that reception and their secretary (if any) are informed if they leave the premises other than at lunchtime, telling them when they are leaving the practice's office(s) and their expected time of return.

8. Receptionists' responsibilities

The reception area is our 'shop window' and is critical to the first impression that visitors will gain of the practice. Receptionists should take responsibility to ensure that:

- all visitors are greeted appropriately and advised of any current delay;
- the relevant member of staff is contacted immediately via phone;
- clients are escorted to the relevant meeting room, if appropriate;
- clients are provided with suitable refreshments;
- the reception area is clean and tidy;
- Any deliveries from suppliers or clients should be dealt with immediately;
- newspapers and magazines are up to date and are neatly arranged;
- the practice's publicity material is made available to clients and is kept in presentable condition, and that floral displays (if any) are fresh;
- any colleagues discussing inappropriate topics, e.g. a client matter, are advised to vacate the reception.

If there is a delay of over 10 minutes the receptionist should endeavour to:

- offer an apology to the client;
- phone the member of staff and request an update to inform clients;
- inform clients of the reasons for the delay and actions to remedy;
- escort clients to the relevant meeting room, if appropriate;
- provide clients with suitable refreshments.

If there is a delay of over 20 minutes the receptionist should:

- offer an apology to the client;

Client Care Policy

- phone the member of staff and advise that they, a member of their team or secretary are required to deal with the situation;
- suggest a different appointment time, or organise the fee-earner's secretary to do so, if directed to by a colleague.

9. Confirmation of instructions

The general rule is that at or near the outset of every matter the client should receive confirmation of:

- the name and status of the person acting, along with details of the principal responsible for the overall supervision of the matter (contained in the practice's initial opening letter for conveyancing, which should always be sent);
- a written estimate of costs and disbursements in the practice's standard form;
- the terms and conditions of business under which the practice acts in residential conveyancing instructions.

10. Client feedback

A client's experience can have a significant impact on a practice. It could result in repeat business or a positive referral to a prospective client. To help Charles Strachan Solicitors continually improve its service, feedback from clients should be actively encouraged and valued. There are various methods to elicit feedback, including client satisfaction surveys and post-matter questionnaires. Which method is used will depend on what is most appropriate for the practice or the client. Feedback will be regularly reviewed and escalated to management level.

At the close of the file, every client is sent a feedback questionnaire (Forms FF 6- Family, F40- Criminal, CC8-Conveyancing) with a request to return it to the relevant office. The feedback forms are then kept in a Central Register in each office with a copy kept on the client's file for reference. The feedback forms are reviewed annually by one of the Directors in the Practice.

Client Care Policy

The practice should also monitor and evaluate client complaints to identify and address shortcomings and failings in its standard of service. Such feedback is essential to help continually gauge client perceptions of the practice.

Our client care policy and feedback is the responsibility of Ian Paterson and will be reviewed at least annually in April by the senior management team as part of the annual review of risk and in accordance with our obligations to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, Law Society (CQS protocol) and Legal Services Commission Standard Quality Mark.

Client Care Policy

11. Policy Review Information

Implementation Date: April 2012

Review Date: April 2018

Person responsible for review : Ian Paterson

Employee acknowledgement to confirm that they have read and understood the contents of the policy and received the necessary training to fully understand the contents and implementation of.

Signed: _____

Name : _____

Date: _____