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APPENDIX O: COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

This policy sets out the framework for the management and resolution of complaints by the Firm.

Scope

The policy covers all expressions of dissatisfaction from clients and prospective clients of the Firm and its ARs, made orally or in writing, in respect of investment or ancillary products and services carried out or provided by the Firm or its ARs.

This policy also covers complaints about minor, low-impact issues that can be resolved quickly and with minimal formality with the client's agreement.

Purpose and Outcomes

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the Firm's baseline approach to all complaints that fall within the scope set out above and in Section 12 of the Manual.

This policy aims to achieve the following complaint-related outcomes:

- Complaints are handled promptly, independently and fairly.
- Complaints are thoroughly investigated.
- Complainants feel listened to and taken seriously.
- Where a complaint is upheld, the complainant is put back into the position they would have been in had the event in question not occurred.
- Lessons are learnt.
- Root causes are analysed.
- Root causes are corrected.
- Future similar issues are either avoided or mitigated.
- Senior management, on the basis of sufficient and up-to-date management information, makes appropriate and informed decisions.

Commitment to Candour

Where appropriate and permitted by law, the Firm encourages open communication on complaint-related issues.

So far as is possible, appropriate, and non-prejudicial, clients and prospective clients can expect openness and transparency from the Firm and its ARs.

It is important that staff at all levels, including within ARs, act appropriately and in accordance with this and other relevant policies and procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Firm's partners have overall responsibility for approving and ensuring compliance with this policy and other relevant policies and procedures.

The Firm's Compliance Officer is also responsible for 'complaints oversight' and for ensuring this policy and relevant procedures meet applicable regulation, legislation, and best practice guidance. The complaints oversight role will normally include formal responsibility for investigation of the complaint matter, although investigations may also be delegated to other staff. However, if the complaint involves the Complaints Oversight Officer as the subject matter of the complaint, responsibility for the investigation will be allocated to another Senior Manager (as described in the Senior Managers and Certification Regime - SM&CR).

All staff have a responsibility to be aware of, understand and conduct themselves in full compliance with this and other relevant policies and procedures.

Equal Access

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the process of handling complaints promotes equal access.

Where possible and permitted, the Firm will operate with some flexibility in order to meet the potentially diverse range of needs of those that may wish to make a complaint.

Discrimination of any type against those who make a complaint or raise issues is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Time Limits

The Firm and its ARs will comply with the complaint time limits, as set out in applicable regulation and legislation. This will include, where applicable, time limits relating to referral of eligible complaints to the FOS, as per [DISP 2.8](#).

Where a complaint is submitted outside of these time limits, the Compliance Officer will determine, based on all available and material facts, whether or not to investigate the complaint. The Compliance Officer will endeavour to make their decision and communicate it to the complainant as soon as is practicably possible.

Reopening of Complaints

Where a complaint has been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the complaint will not be re-opened unless there is a compelling and appropriate reason to do so. For example, in response to a request by a relevant regulatory authority.

Reopening requests must be directed to the Compliance Officer without delay, who will assess the request before making a recommendation. The partners must discuss the recommendation before making and communicating a decision to all relevant parties.

Monitoring

Annual training and routine monitoring will be used to check, amongst other things, understanding of and compliance with this policy and other relevant policies and procedures.

Related Documentation

- The Compliance Manual, including whistleblowing policy and procedures.
- Client leaflet: 'Not Happy? Here's what to do.'

- Complaints register
- Privacy policy
- Consent form
- Training material
- Risk assessment
- Service agreements