



DATA PROTECTION

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

In compliance with Section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA)

[v1 - as at 19th June 2026]

About This Procedure

This procedure has been approved by Andrew Willott in his capacity as both the COLP and Data Protection Officer (DPO) of this Practice. It is important that you read and apply it.

Our DPO (*Andrew Willott*) is the person responsible for this procedure. Report any concerns about how our Practice handles personal data complaints to the DPO. If the DPO is unavailable, report to our Practice Manager (*Andrew Barnett*) who will act as Deputy DPO.

All staff and other associated persons who have access to this procedure must comply with its requirements.

Failure to comply may be treated as gross misconduct and result in disciplinary action, in addition to any professional or criminal sanctions that may apply.

1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure sets out how Woolliscrofts Solicitors Limited (which trades as “Woolliscrofts Solicitors”) receive, acknowledges, investigates and resolves complaints from individuals about the way that our Company / Practice processes their personal data. It ensures compliance with the mandatory complaints handling requirements introduced by **Section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025**, which inserts a new **Section 164A into the Data Protection Act 2018**.

This procedure applies to all data protection complaints received by our Practice, whether made by clients, employees, third parties or their authorised representatives.

A data protection complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction from an individual who considers that our Practice has infringed data protection legislation in the way it has handled their personal information. This includes complaints about:-

- How personal data has been collected, stored, used, shared or deleted;
- The response of our Practice to a Subject Access Request or other data subject rights request;
- The security of personal data, including suspected data breaches;
- The accuracy of personal data held by our Practice;
- Direct marketing or electronic communications;
- Automated decision-making or profiling; and
- International transfers of personal data.

This procedure does not cover general service complaints, which are handled under the separate Complaints and Reporting Policy of this Practice. Where a complaint covers both service and data protection matters, both procedures must be followed in parallel.

This procedure applies to all Directors, Solicitors, non-qualified staff, Consultants, Locums, Contractors and any other person processing personal data on behalf of our Practice.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Data Protection Officer

As stated above, the DPO of this Practice is Mr Andrew Willott, whose contact details are as follows:-

E-MAIL: awillott@woolliscrofts.co.uk

POST: Woolliscrofts Solicitors, 6-10 Broad Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 4EU

TELEPHONE: (01782) 204000

The DPO has overall responsibility for the operation and oversight of this procedure, including:-

- Final decisions on complaint outcomes where escalation is required;
- Maintaining the Data Protection Complaints Register in his dual role as both the DPO and COLP of this Practice;
- Liaising with the ICO where complaints are escalated externally; and
- Reviewing complaint trends and recommending improvements.

2.2 Complaints Coordinator

Our Practice Manager (*Andrew Barnett*) is the firm's Complaints Coordinator.

The Complaints Coordinator manages the day-to-day data protection related complaints process, including:-

- Logging, acknowledging and tracking all complaints;
- Allocating data protection related complaints to the appropriate investigator;
- Ensuring acknowledgement and response deadlines are met; and
- Maintaining communication with the complainant throughout the process.

2.3 All Staff

All staff must:-

- Recognise and promptly escalate potential data protection related complaints to the Complaints Coordinator;
- Cooperate with investigations and provide information as required;
- Complete mandatory training on data protection complaints handling; and
- Not make admissions (*or do anything which could be construed as an admission*) or commitments to complainants without consulting our DPO or, in the event of our DPO being unavailable, to our Deputy DPO.

3. Complaints Handling Procedure

3.1 How to Make a Complaint

Individuals may make a data protection complaint to the firm through any of the following channels:

- **Email:** dpo@woolliscrofts.co.uk ;
- **Post:** Mr Andrew Willott, Data Protection Office, Woolliscrofts Solicitors Limited, 6-10 Broad Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 4EU (**and clearly marked / headed "DATA PROTECTION COMPLAINT"**)
- **Telephone:** (01782) 204000 (**PLEASE NOTE - complaints made by telephone must be followed up in writing**)
- **In person:** At any office of this Practice, addressed to Mr Andrew Willott - Data Protection Officer - **and clearly marked / headed "DATA PROTECTION COMPLAINT"**.

Complaints may be made by the data subject directly or by an authorised representative. Where a representative submits a complaint, our Practice must verify their authority to act before disclosing any personal data.

The right to make a data protection complaint must be communicated to individuals through the Privacy Notice of our Practice, responses to data subject rights requests, the Website of our Practice and client engagement letters where appropriate.

3.2 Step 1 — Receipt and Logging

All data protection related complaints must be logged with the Data Protection Complaints Register immediately upon receipt. The register is held by our DPO at the Head Office of our Practice. The following information must be recorded:-

- Date and time of receipt of the complaint;
- Name and contact details of the complainant (*and representative, if applicable*);
- Channel through which the complaint was received;
- A summary of the complaint, including the personal data and processing activities in question; and
- Unique reference number assigned to the complaint.

If it is unclear whether a communication constitutes a data protection related complaint, treat it as one. The ICO expects complaints to be interpreted broadly.

3.3 Step 2 — Acknowledgement

Our Practice must acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 30 calendar days. The 30-day period begins the day after receipt, regardless of whether that day falls on a weekend or bank holiday. Where the 30th day falls on a non-business day, our Practice has until the next working day to issue the acknowledgement.

The acknowledgement must:-

- Confirm receipt of the complaint and provide the reference number;
- Identify the Complaints Coordinator as the point of contact;
- Provide an indication of the expected timeframe for investigation and response; and
- Inform the complainant of their right to complain to the ICO if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

3.4 Step 3 — Investigation

The duty to investigate begins when the complaint is received, not when the acknowledgement period expires. Our Practice must take appropriate steps to investigate without undue delay, including:-

- Reviewing the personal data and processing activities that are the subject of the complaint;
- Gathering relevant information from internal teams, systems and records;

- Consulting the DPO or external advisers where the complaint raises complex or novel issues;
- Considering whether the complaint reveals a personal data breach requiring separate notification under **Articles 33 and 34 UK GDPR**;
- Considering whether other data subjects may be affected by the same issue.

The investigation must be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint. Simple complaints may be resolved immediately. Complex complaints will require a more detailed investigation.

Target timeframe: Our Practice aims to complete investigations and provide a final response within 45 days of receipt. Where this is not possible, the complainant must be provided with a progress update explaining the reason for the delay and a revised timeframe.

3.5 Step 4 — Outcome and Response

Our Practice must inform the complainant of the outcome without undue delay. The outcome communication must include:-

- A clear explanation of the findings of the investigation;
- What action our Practice has taken or will take in response;
- The reasons for the decision, particularly if the complaint is not upheld;
- Information about the complainant's right to escalate the complaint to the ICO, including:-

ICO website: ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint

ICO telephone helpline: 0303 123 111

Post: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

The outcome must be communicated in writing. Where the complaint was made verbally, the outcome must still be confirmed in writing.

3.6 Complaints Involving Data Processors

Where a complaint relates to processing carried out by a third-party data processor on behalf of our Practice, the Complaints Coordinator must:-

- Notify the processor of the complaint and request relevant information to support the investigation;
- Ensure the data processing agreement requires the processor to cooperate with complaint investigations;

- Remain responsible for communicating with the complainant — our Practice as controller is accountable for the response.

Where a complaint is misdirected to our Practice but relates to processing for which another organisation is the controller, our Practice must inform the complainant promptly and, where possible, redirect the complaint to the correct organisation.

3.7 Complaints Involving Children

Complaints from or about children must be handled with particular care. Our Practice must respond in plain, clear language and assess the child's competence to understand and exercise their rights. If our Practice is subject to the Age Appropriate Design Code, we must ensure compliance with the requirements in Standard 15 of that Code.

4. Record-Keeping and Monitoring

4.1 Data Protection Complaints Register

Our Practice must maintain a comprehensive Data Protection Complaints Register recording details of all data protection related complaints and the steps taken to resolve them. The Register must include:-

- Complaint reference number, date received and channel of receipt;
- Identity of the complainant and their representative (if any);
- Summary of the complaint and the personal data or processing at issue;
- Date of acknowledgement;
- Details of the investigation undertaken, including evidence reviewed and persons consulted;
- Outcome and date of the final response;
- Any remedial action taken;
- Whether the complaint was escalated to the ICO;
- Lessons learned and any systemic improvements identified.

Complaint records must be retained for 7 years and stored securely in compliance with the Data Protection Policies of our Practice.

4.2 Monitoring and Reporting

In view of his dual capacity as both the DPO and COLP of our Practice Andrew Willott, in his capacity as COLP, must on a bi-annual basis, record the following matters:-

- Total number of data protection related complaints received in the period;
- Breakdown by complaint type, channel and business area;
- Acknowledgement and response times against targets;

- Outcomes: upheld, partially upheld, not upheld;
- Remedial actions taken and systemic improvements implemented;
- Any complaints escalated to the ICO and their status; and
- Trends and emerging risks identified from complaint data.

The Secretary of State may introduce regulations requiring controllers to report complaint data to the ICO. Our Practice must maintain records in a format that can be disclosed on request.

4.3 Training

All staff must receive training on this procedure as part of their data protection induction, with annual refresher training thereafter. Training must cover how to recognise a data protection complaint, the requirement to escalate complaints immediately, the statutory timeframes, and the importance of not making admissions or the like without consulting the DPO.

Training completion must be recorded and monitored. Our DPO is responsible for ensuring training materials are updated following any changes to legislation, ICO guidance or this procedure.

4.4 Interaction with Other Procedures

Where a data protection complaint also engages another firm procedure, both must be followed in parallel. Key interactions include:-

- **Complaints and Reporting Policy** — where a complaint also raises service quality issues under the SRA Standards and Regulations;
- **Data Protection Breach Reporting Procedure** — where a complaint reveals a personal data breach requiring notification under **Articles 33/34 UK GDPR**;
- **Data Subject Access Request Policy** — where a complaint relates to the handling of a Subject Access Request or other data subject rights request; and
- **Whistleblowing Policy** — where a complaint raises concerns that may also constitute a Protected Disclosure.

5. Regulatory Framework and References

5.1 Legislation

- **Data Protection Act 2018, Section 164A** (as inserted by **DUAA Section 103**) — statutory duty to facilitate and respond to data protection complaints;
- **Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, Section 103** — the provision inserting the new complaints duty into the **DPA 2018**;

- **UK General Data Protection Regulation, Article 77** — the right of data subjects to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority; and
- **UK GDPR, Articles 33 and 34** — data breach notification obligations (*where a complaint reveals a breach*)

5.2 SRA Standards and Regulations

This procedure supports compliance with:

- **SRA Principle 2** — public trust and confidence (*handling complaints transparently*)
- **SRA Principle 5** — integrity (*responding honestly to complaints*)
- **SRA Principle 7** — best interests of each client
- **SRA Code of Conduct for Firms, paragraph 2.1** — effective governance structures, arrangements, systems and controls.

5.3 Regulatory Guidance

- **ICO guidance: 'How to deal with data protection complaints'** (*published 12 February 2026*)

Record of Review

Version	Date	Reviewed By	Changes Made	Approved By
1.0	June 2026	Andrew Barnett <i>(Practice Manager & Risk Manager)</i>	Initial version — new procedure for compliance with DUAA S.103	Andrew Willott <i>(DPO & COLP)</i>

Next review date: June 2027 or sooner if there are changes to data protection legislation, ICO guidance, or the data processing activities of our Practice.

Acknowledgment

I confirm that I have read, understood and agree to comply with this procedure.

Name:	
Position:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Please return this acknowledgment to our DPO, Andrew Willott.