



Mellor Finance Ltd

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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1 Purpose

This policy and procedures detail how Mellor Finance Ltd (MFL) will deal with complaints.

MFL is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and, as such, will act in accordance to the Complaints rules as defined in the FCA Handbook, which will take precedence over the requirements of this policy and procedures.

2 Review of Policy and Procedures

This policy and procedures will be reviewed regularly, at least once a year, and amended as considered necessary by MFL's Management Body in the event of changing circumstances or regulations.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Management Body Responsibilities

The Management Body of MFL are responsible for the implementation of the Complaints Policy and for monitoring compliance with it.

The Management Body have appointed Carol Seery as MFL's Complaints Manager.

3.2 Complaints Manager Responsibilities

The Complaints Manager is responsible for the investigation of complaints.

3.3 Employee Responsibilities

All employees are expected to refer any verbal or written complaints to the Complaints Manager at the earliest opportunity and to cooperate fully with the Complaints Manager in its investigations. Employees undertake initial training or training on an annual basis to ensure their knowledge is up to date.

4 Definitions

4.1 Definition of a complaint

The FCA defines a complaint as any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction from or on behalf of a client, whether **justified or not**, which includes an actual or potential financial loss, material distress or material inconvenience.

The Financial Conduct Authority complaints rules apply to complaints:

- Made by, or on behalf of an eligible complainant
- Relating to regulated activity
- Involving an allegation that the complainant has suffered, or may suffer, financial loss, material distress or material inconvenience

4.2 Definition of eligible complainant

An eligible complainant is a complainant that is

- A consumer (a person acting outside their trade, business or profession)

- A micro enterprise (enterprise which employs fewer than 10 people and has a turnover or balance sheets that does not exceed EUR 2,000,000)
- A charity with an annual income of less than £6,500,000
- A trustee of a trust which has a net asset value of less than £5,000,000
- A consumer buy to let consumer
- A small business (enterprise which has an annual turnover of less than £6.5 million and employs fewer than 50 people or has a balance sheet total of less than £5 million)
- A guarantor

Complainants that are professional clients or eligible counterparties that are acting outside of their trade or professions in relation to the activity to which the complaint relates are considered to be consumers and, as such, eligible complainants.

If in doubt whether a complainant is an eligible complainant or not, MFL will treat them as an eligible complainant.

Only eligible complainants can refer their complaints on to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

5 Policy

It is MFL's policy to treat all complainants the same, however, eligible complainants are legally defined and have additional rights in law that MFL must acknowledge and adhere to. MFL has elected to treat all complaints in the same way for simplicity. Occasionally MFL may not know if a complainant is 'eligible' in which case it will treat them as such and if it becomes necessary, the Financial Ombudsman Service will establish the status of the complainant, not MFL.

MFL's clients and potential clients are able to submit complaints free of charge.

Complaints will be handled promptly, effectively and in an independent manner, obtaining additional information as necessary.

MFL will always communicate with clients and potential clients clearly in plain language that is easy to understand and will reply to the complaint without undue delay.

MFL will assess fairly, consistently and promptly:

- The subject matter of the complaint
- Whether the complaint should be upheld
- What remedial action or redress may be appropriate
- Whether another party may be solely or jointly responsible for the matter alleged in the complaint

MFL will promptly comply with any offer or remedial activity or redress accepted by the complainant.

MFL will consider a complaint closed when it has issued a final response.

5.1 Consumer Awareness

MFL has published Complaints Procedures that include contacts details of the Complaints Manager/Compliance Officer. The procedures are made available to clients and potential clients on request and when MFL is acknowledging a complaint. The procedures contain information about the Financial Ombudsman Service.

5.2 Timings

MFL has a maximum of 8 weeks to issue a final response to the complainant and it requires that this practice is followed (as a maximum timescale) for all complaints.

5.2.1 Complaints resolved by close of the third business day

If MFL satisfactorily resolves the complaint by close of business on the third business day following the receipt of the complaint then MFL will issue a written “Summary Resolution Communication” to the complainant, advising that it considers the complaint as resolved and inform the complainant, for eligible complainants, about their options for referring the complaint back to MFL or for onward referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service if they are dissatisfied.

In addition to sending a complainant a “Summary Resolution Communication”, MFL may also use other methods to communicate the information where:

- It considers that doing so may better meet the complainant’s needs; or
- The complainant and MFL have already been using another method to communicate about the complaint.

5.2.2 Complaints not settled within 3 business days

On receipt of a complaint MFL will send the complainant a written acknowledgement providing confirmation that it has received the complaint and is dealing with it.

MFL will ensure that the complainant is kept informed of the progress of the measures being taken for resolution of the complaint. MFL will write to complainants after four weeks if it has not reached a decision.

MFL will issue a final response to the complainant within 8 weeks and inform the complainant, for eligible complainants, about their options for onward referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Letter	Timing
Initial response letter	Promptly: by the next working day unless there are exceptional circumstances.
Holding letter	Optional until the eighth week. When the investigation has not involved a continuous dialogue the complaints manager may issue a holding letter after four weeks if the complaint remains outstanding. <i>The holding letter can be issued more frequently if necessary or desirable.</i>
Final response	By end of the eighth week after the receipt of the complaint in all cases, but sooner whenever possible. If, exceptionally, a full response is not possible by this time MFL must send out a holding letter explaining why it has not been able to issue a decision within the above time frame and when it expects to be able to provide a decision. It should however be noted <i>that it is a requirement that final responses are issued by the end of eight weeks after receipt of complaints.</i>

The final response will clearly set out:

- Whether MFL accepts or rejects the complaint
- The reasons for rejection, where applicable

- The intention to offer redress or remedial action, where applicable
- Details of the redress to be offered and any compensation offered with a clear method of calculation.

Additionally, where the client is an eligible complainant, MFL will:

- Explain that where the complainant disagrees with MFL's decision they must refer the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service within six months of the date of this letter or the right to use this service is lost, and
- Enclose a copy of the Financial Ombudsman Service's standard explanatory leaflet

MFL will consider a complaint closed when it has issued its final response.

5.3 Complaints forwarding

MFL may promptly forward the complaint in writing to another party if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the other party may be solely or jointly responsible for the matter alleged in the complaint. If a complaint is forwarded, MFL will inform the complainant promptly in a final response of why the complaint has been forwarded to another party and provide the complainant with the other party's contact details.

If MFL receives a forwarded complaint, the complaint will be treated as if MFL has received the complaint directly and the same time limits will apply from the date on which MFL has received the forwarded complaint.

5.4 Complaints time barring

If MFL receives a complaint which is outside the time limits for referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service, it may reject the complaint without considering the merits but will explain this to the complainant in its final response.

Unless MFL consents, the Financial Ombudsman Service will not consider a complaint if the complainant refers it to the Financial Ombudsman Service:

- More than six months after the respondent sent the complainant its final response
- More than six years after the event complained of
- More than three years from the date on which the complainant became aware that he had cause for complaint

5.5 Financial Ombudsman Service

MFL will co-operate fully with the Financial Ombudsman Service in resolving any complaints made against it and agrees to be bound by any awards made by the Ombudsman. MFL undertakes to pay promptly the fees levied by the Financial Ombudsman Service.

5.6 Analysis

MFL will conduct root cause analysis of any complaint received and record any appropriate actions taken. Complaints will be analysed for any reoccurring patterns and all lessons learnt will be incorporated into future training and development. The causes of complaints will be recorded in the Management Information and will be used with the prioritisation of dealing with the root causes.

6 The procedure

Refer any complaint verbal or written to the Complaints Manager/Compliance Officer at the earliest opportunity.

The Complaints Manager/Compliance Officer will then,

1. Make an initial assessment of the complaint, contacting the complainant for further information if required. This can be done via telephone, email or any other appropriate means of communication.
2. If there is sufficient information and the complaint can be resolved within 3 business days, then proceed to step 9.
3. If the complaint cannot be resolved within 3 business days, send out an initial response letter to the complainant using the Initial Response Letter Template, adding the details known about the complaint by the next working day, stating that the complaint has been received and is being dealt with.
4. Investigate the complaint impartially obtaining additional information from MFL and/or the complainant as necessary.
5. Enter the complaint onto the Complaints Log and create a Complaint Record.
6. Assess fairly, consistently and promptly:
 - a) The subject matter of the complaint
 - b) Whether the complaint should be upheld
 - c) What remedial action or redress (or both) may be appropriate
 - d) If appropriate, whether it has reasonable grounds to be satisfied that another party/respondent may be solely or jointly responsible for the matter alleged in the complaint.
7. If appropriate, forward the complaint to the relevant party/respondent and advise the complainant in writing why the complaint has been forwarded to the other party and provide the other party's contact details.
8. If the complaint is unresolved after four weeks, send out a holding letter using the Holding letter template, advising an expected resolution date.
9. If the complaint is resolved, communicate MFL's position on the complaint to the complainant and inform them about their options, including that they may be able to refer the complaint to an alternative dispute resolution entity (Financial Ombudsman Service for eligible complainants) or that the complainant may be able to take civil action, using the Final Response Letter template. If the complaint was resolved within 3 days, use the Summary Resolution Communication instead.
10. In the final response letter, clearly set out whether MFL accepts or rejects the complaint, the reasons for rejecting any complaint or where MFL accepts the complaint, and intends to offer redress or remedial action, details of the redress to be offered, any compensation offered and a clear method of calculation.
11. In the final response letter to eligible complainants, enclose a copy of the Financial Ombudsman Service's standard explanatory leaflet, provide the website address of the Financial Ombudsman Service and inform the complainant that if they are still dissatisfied with MFL's response, the complaint may now be referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service.
12. Comply promptly with any offer of remedial action or redress accepted by the complainant.

13. Conduct a root cause analysis in the case of any complaint and record with the appropriate action having been taken. Record any actions within the individual complaint record.
14. Liaise with senior management if any changes need to be made to MFL's procedures based on the analysis.
15. Update the Complaints Log and Complaints Record with the final decision including details of the amount of any redress offered.

7 Record keeping

MFL will keep a record of each complaint received and the measures taken for its resolution, including any redress offered, and retain that record for three years from the date the complaint was received.

8 Complaints reporting

Twice a year, MFL will provide the FCA with a complete report concerning complaints from eligible complainants. Complaints that have been forwarded in their entirety to another party will not be included in the report.

9 Breaches of the Complaints Policy and Procedure

Any breaches of the Complaints Policy and Procedures will be recorded on MFL's breach log in conjunction with its Regulatory Breach policy.

10 Annex

Financial Ombudsman Service

Address: The Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, London E14 9SR

Tel: **0800 023 4567** (free for most people ringing from a fixed line) or **0300 123 9123** (cheaper for those calling using a mobile) or **44 20 7964 0500** (if calling from abroad)

Email: complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk