

In the unfortunate event that during or on completion of works there seems the need to raise a complaint, the client or the member may contact The Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) directly. This contact will initiate the APL's "Complaints Resolution Procedure".

Complaints are treated seriously and are responded to within 2 working days of their receipt.

All APL members are required to have a written complaints procedure. In the light of a complaint where their own procedure fails, and a resolution cannot be achieved, APL members are required to follow the agreed APL procedure.

It is important to note that complaints are contractually between the parties involved and that the APL is simply acting as a facilitating 3rd party during the duration of this procedure.

COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

1. Unresolved complaint arrives from a client or member by email, telephone or post to the APL.
2. The APL administrator will check current membership status of the landscaper in question.
3. If the business is not an APL member, the APL is unable to assist further in regard to the complaint however, it will advise the complainant to either contact their local Trading Standards office or Citizen Advice service for further help;
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>
4. If for any reason the landscaper in question is not a current APL member but is using any of its associated logos i.e. APL, HTA or TrustMark, the APL administrator will initiate the infringement policy procedure. A letter and email should be forwarded to the landscaper instructing them to remove all references immediately. If the landscaper does not comply within the deadline set (usually 30 days), the APL administrator will inform the local Trading Standards office, and TrustMark directly.
5. If the landscaper in question is an APL member, the APL administrator will establish what communication, if any, has taken place between both parties. If no communication has taken place, where possible the APL will instruct the complainant to attempt to resolve the issues either verbally with written confirmation, or in writing (by hand or email). This needs to be completed within 5 days.
6. In the meantime, the APL administrator will contact the respondent to notify them of the complaint, and to recommend they communicate with the complainant to resolve the issues.
7. If there is no response within 5 days, the APL will contact the respondent and advise them of the next steps. It is important to note that **both** parties must engage in the process. If not, alternative actions will be suggested by the APL and the case will be closed. If it is the member who failed to comply, then the APL Complaints Panel will be notified.
8. If the issues cannot be resolved through this stage, the APL administrator will send the APL Complaints Initiation Form to the complainant to detail their complaint. The form and any relevant supporting information i.e. contract documentation, email communications, photographic evidence etc., must be returned to the APL by post or electronically within 7 days.

9. On receipt of a completed APL Complaints Initiation Form from either party, the case is then classed as an official complaint. A Complaint Response Form is then sent to the respondent to reply within 7 days.
10. At this point, the APL administrator will create a case file on the member's CRM record so that all the correspondence details are logged to the system.
11. It should be noted that if the APL member does not respond to any communication from the APL in connection with the complaint made against them, the case will be referred to the APL Disciplinary Panel.
12. On receipt of the completed APL Response Form the APL General Manager will review the case together with the APL Complaints Panel, with necessary input from any appropriate APL Committee Members (dependent on the complaint and technical issues) If it is felt necessary, the APL will arrange for a site visit to take place by the APL General Manager and an independent consultant, committee member or another party with sufficient experience to comment and provide a report of the works. Both the APL member and their client are invited to attend this site inspection.
13. The report will be drawn up within 5 days after the visit and made available to both parties and where possible suggestions of a suitable course of action. Please note, these are just suggestions and have no legal jurisdiction or right to enforce. Both parties may either take this advice or, seek an alternative course of resolution which the APL can advise on.
14. After the reports have been served, this completes the APL involvement in the case. Reports are advisory and offered strictly as suggestions as part of this facilitation process. The APL will step back from the case but will be willing to advise on the next steps via Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The case will be recorded and closed APL systems and no further facilitation will take place.
15. The APL will not be able, or willing to facilitate in any financial negotiations on behalf of the client or member.
16. It should be noted that if it is identified that works within the complaint point to substandard performance by the member and there is a resistance by said member to correct their work. The member will be suspended, and an investigation will be conducted. This could lead to possible expulsion from the APL membership.
17. If at any stage during this process either party take legal action, the APL will not be able to take any further part in the process and will step down. However, dependent on the final outcome, the APL Disciplinary Panel will review the APL Member's membership status, to ensure they continue to comply with TrustMark and the APL Code of Conduct.
18. It should be noted that if a member receives more than 1 complaint against them in a 12 month period, this will be investigated by the APL disciplinary panel and could result in suspension for up to 6 months as per the APL disciplinary procedure.