

## TELEPHONE PROCEDURES (1 April 2016)



The first point of contact with members and the public is very often by telephone, be it at reception or at your desk. How we communicate via the phone is, therefore, a key element in [Tone of Voice](#) setting for the Law Society.

The way we speak on the phone should be guided by the three principles of our Tone of Voice, which are:

- 1) Courtesy and respect,
- 2) We serve, and
- 3) Clear and concise.

It is essential that we all display an efficient, courteous and professional image in the way we answer and use the phone. In order to create a professional image a number of telephone standards are set out below to ensure consistent, courteous and efficient use of the system. For further information on telephone use, see our [Enquiries Guide](#).

Service Standards:

Our key service standards to support our Service Statement are:-

1. Your phone should be answered within **four rings** (it goes to voicemail after 6 rings for internal calls and 8 rings for external calls)  
(George's Court; your phone should be answered within **three rings** (it goes to voicemail after 3 rings for internal calls and 6 rings for external callers))
2. Voice mails should be responded to within 4 working hours if possible
3. A 'live voice' is better than voice mail
4. Own an enquiry until you find an appropriate 'home' for it.

### ANSWERING:

Even in relation to internal calls, it is important to have set standards, not alone from the point of view of the image it projects, but also from the point of view of efficient communication. For instance answering by "hello", normally leads to an unnecessary follow-up question, "Is that...". As many external callers phone us directly to our Direct Dial Inward (DDI) number, professional telephone answering is even more essential.

### RECEPTION – LAW SOCIETY & LAW SCHOOL

#### **External:**

"Law Society of Ireland/Law School, good morning"

#### **Internal:**

*"Good morning, Reception, Carol speaking/here" – if caller unknown.*

*"Good morning (name, if known), Reception, Carol speaking/here" – if caller known.*

### ALL TELEPHONE USERS

#### **External:**

*"Good morning, [Section name], [your name first name and surname] speaking/here"*

e.g. *“Good morning, Accounts Section, Brigid Pender speaking/here”*.  
*“Good morning, Library, Mary Gaynor speaking/here”*.

When you cannot identify the origin of a call you must assume it is an external call and answer as above.

If you are not in an office / telephone grouping and the call can only be for you personally, then the Section name may be dropped.

*“Good morning, [your first name & surname] speaking/here”*

e.g. *“Good morning, Cillian Mac Domhnaill speaking/here”*

### **Internal:**

*Good morning, [callers first name]”*

e.g. *“Good morning Donna.....”*

### **When transferring an external call to another extension:**

*“Good morning, Cillian, Carol speaking/here. I have Mr.... on the line, he wishes to speak to you about .....”*.

When the call comes through:

*“Good morning, Mr....., Cillian Mac Domhnaill here, you have a query about .....”*.

Obviously, where an external caller is known to you, first name only can be used.

### **CALL FORWARD**

If you are away from your desk for a period of time you should ‘call forward’ to a relevant extension if there is an obvious option available. When you return, you should cancel or turn off call-forward.

Some users may wish to default to a call forward extension; others may use voicemail for this purpose. The objective is to ensure, where possible, that the caller gets a “live” voice.

If your phone is in call-forward, then the message will not be left in your voicemail box but rather in the voicemail box of the person to whom you are forwarded.

*George’s Court: the message will be left in your voicemail box and not in the voicemail box of the person to whom you are forwarded.*

### **VOICEMAIL PROCEDURES**

Voicemail is a tremendous business facility, and when properly used, can greatly improve the efficiency of communication, both internal and external. However, there are some pitfalls,

the main one being a sense of “alienation” on the part of callers if they perceive that they never get to talk to somebody. Many calls must be handled in real time and should not end up in Voicemail. Consequently, the use of Voicemail must be considered as a last resort, the order of priority being:

- **Answering**
- **Call-Forward to other extension**
- **Voicemail**

In order for the system to operate effectively, users must play an active role in managing their voicemail boxes and use all of the facilities and procedures outlined here. It is important that personalised greetings are used and kept up to date. It has been shown that callers who leave a Voicemail message assume that it will be acted on promptly. Our service standard is to respond within 4 working hours.

The standard procedure will be that your Voicemail should be switched on at all times, even after business hours. Call-forward overrides the Voicemail.

### **PERSONALISED GREETINGS**

You must record a personalised greeting **on a daily basis** to notify callers of your status for the day. The reasons for this are:

- It reassures external callers that the voice mail is used properly and is listened to regularly.
- It conveys an image of professionalism to external callers.
- It is an effective means of advising internal and external callers of an individual’s attendance status on a particular day.
- It keeps us all focused on the importance of using voice mail properly as a means of efficient and effective communication.

Obviously, within some Sections, the messages will be generic, e.g. “Complaints & Clients Relations Section”, rather than personal but the date must be re-recorded daily.

The standard wording is as follows:

#### **Personal:**

*“This is Alan Greene on Monday, the 23rd of November. I can’t take your call right now. If you need assistance, press 0 now for reception, or leave a short message after the tone and I will return your call as soon as possible”.*

#### **Grouped Phones or Section:**

*“This is Linda Kirwan, Complaints & Client Relations Section on Monday, the 23rd of November. I can’t take your call right now. If you need assistance, press 0 now for reception, or leave a short message after the tone and I will return your call as soon as possible”.*

### **Absence from an office for a period greater than one day:**

*“This is Cillian Mac Domhnaill. I am out of the office until Monday, the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. If you need assistance, press 0 now for reception, or leave a short message after the tone and I will return your call on my return”.*

It is essential that “press 0 now” appears in the middle of the greeting rather than at the end otherwise it is too late to dial 0.

To support our objective of getting a live voice as soon as possible this facility should only be used in relation to absences greater than one day and during leave periods. The alternative to using this facility is to use the **Call Forward** facility.

### **ACCESS YOUR MAILBOX REMOTELY**

The voicemail system can be accessed remotely to allow users change and access their messages if you are at meetings, are sick, on leave, or going to be late into the office. To access your mailbox remotely:

1. Dial 6724815, for Education dial 8815798
2. When the system answers key 9 plus your extension number, enter PIN number (if used) when prompted.
3. You now have full access to your mailbox
4. To change your daily message key in 7,4,6,1.

George’s Court: Dial 8798799. When the system answers enter your extension number followed by # key. Enter PIN number (if used) when prompted then \* key and you will then have full access to the voicemail system.

### **GENERAL VOICEMAIL PROTOCOLS**

#### **(a) Receptionists:**

The Receptionist will always enquire if a caller wishes to leave a message in voicemail before connecting to a voicemail.

In the case of an Executive with secretarial support the Receptionist will pass the call to the appropriate Secretary rather than offer the Voicemail.

#### **(b) Secretaries:**

Secretaries must always offer to take a message or put the call through to the Executive’s voicemail. Under no circumstances must voicemail be offered as the only option.

#### **(c) Internal Callers:**

Internal callers should not clog up each other’s voicemail boxes. Very often, an e-mail will be more efficient. However, if you are leaving a voice mail you should say what the call is in relation to (so that the other person can prepare an answer before returning the call) and leave your extension number for ease of return of call.

**(d) Sick leave:**

You should change your message remotely (health permitting). Alternatively, you should request somebody to call-forward your phone to another extension, thus overriding the voicemail.

**VOICEMAIL INSTRUCTIONS FOR RECEPTIONIST**

**(a) Workgroup or Secretary:**

Calls may be routed to workgroups or Secretaries as arranged within Sections. Only if persons in the workgroup or a Secretary are not available will the caller be put into voicemail by the Receptionist. The Receptionist must first ask the caller if they wish to be put into Voicemail.

e.g. *“I am afraid Mr. .... Is not available at present; would you like to leave a message on his Voicemail?”*

**(b) Non-Workgroup/Secretary:**

Where there is no obvious option for the Receptionist, she will advise that the person the caller is seeking is not available, and will offer put the caller into voicemail or to take a message. If a message is taken this should be sent on by email.

**(c) Press 0 for assistance:**

All recorded messages will offer the caller the facility to revert to reception (0) for assistance.

**(d) Loop:**

If a call returns to Reception through a loop, then the Receptionist should offer to take a message or put the caller into the Voicemail box of the person they originally requested.

**SOME INBUILT VOICEMAIL FACILITIES**

- (a) No answer after 8 rings for internal calls and 6 rings for external calls (**George’s Court, 3 rings**), user’s personal greeting is played. Automatic divert to voicemail if there is no answer or busy and phone not call-forwarded (only if a mailbox is assigned to the number).
- (b) Maximum recording time is set at 60 seconds
- (c) You can put a security code on your Voicemail box if you choose.
- (d) Messages will automatically be deleted after 30 days (**George’s Court: 14 days**) as otherwise disk will get full.
- (e) If a phone is call-forwarded and there is no answer from the second extension, a message will be left in the second extension’s voicemail box (**George’s Court: message will be left on the first phone extension’s voicemail**).

### **3 – WAY CONFERENCE CALL FUNCTIONALITY**

Our telephone system has the functionality to allow you to have a simultaneous conversation with another two called parties in the following way.

- You + 2 other extensions.
- You + another extension plus an external call.
- You + 2 external calls.

This is very easy to do. Note: you can set this up at any stage during a conversation; it does not have to be done at the start of the call

- Make first call in the normal way.
- When the call has been answered, advise the caller that you are placing them on hold, now press the XFER/RECALL button.
- Dial the second number (9 first for external line).
- When the second call is answered 3 Way will be displayed, press this key to commence your 3-way conference call.
- To end the calls, just hang up.

For George's Court:

- Make first call in the normal way.
- Press the 'More' soft key and then ConFrn soft key to open new line.
- When the call has been answered, advise the caller that you are placing them on hold.
- Dial the second number (9 first for external line).
- Press "ConFrn" soft key again to commence your 3-way conference call.
- To end the calls, just hang up.

### **DO NOT DISTURB**

Most phones have a do not disturb (DND) facility. There are very few occasions on which it is appropriate to use this facility. Executives with secretarial support should never have to use this facility. If "quiet time" is required, then the call-forward facility should be used. If secretarial staff require "quiet time" where possible, the phone should be call-forwarded to another person in the Section or to voicemail. If this is not feasible, then the responsible manager must approve the use of DND.

### **ON HOLD**

You should note that if you put a call on **Hold** it will revert to you after one minute.

Rarely, should you put somebody on hold for more than one minute. Offer to call the person back instead.

If you need to hold for more than one minute, then if possible, you should not use the hold facility, but rather keep the line open or use the transfer '**xfer**' facility which allows you to speak to another extension for more than one minute.

(George's Court: If you put a call on Hold your phone will beep after 30 seconds to remind you the call is on Hold. If you have the volume of your phone turned down, you will not hear this beep).

### MUTE George's Court

If you need to hold a caller but do not need to phone somebody else then you should use the mute button.

### CALL BACK

No external caller should ever be asked to call back. A message or contact details must be taken and passed on to the appropriate person promptly. Calls should be returned as soon as possible once you have become available. No call should be unanswered for four working hours after you become available.

Where a comprehensive message has been left which indicates that the caller is not expecting/requiring an immediate response, then time may be taken to follow up the query before responding.

E-mail is often an appropriate response to a telephone call.

**This call-back policy does not apply to the Complaints Section where a separate call-back policy is in operation.**

### DDI (Direct Dial Inward)

You should use discretion regarding whom you give this number to. You must never give another staff member's DDI number to an external caller without their approval.

Executives with Secretaries should consider whether it is appropriate to give your Secretary's DDI number to certain regular callers. This has the advantage of relieving the caller of an unnecessary link in the chain, i.e. Reception.

**If you have any queries on the above please do not hesitate to contact **Martin Kearney (4888), Michael Keys (4889), Damien Carr (4909) or Michalis Kirimlidis (4742) or any member of the IT Section for assistance.****