



Solicitors
Regulation
Authority

SRA Regulatory Outcomes Report

December 2011

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1. Headline figures

In the fourth quarter of 2011 we have

- concluded **1,600** casework investigations
- risk assessed **1,645** allegations
- issued **63** sets of proceedings at the SDT
- issued proceedings at the SDT within an average of **5.4** months against a target of 6 months
- **11** individuals were struck from the roll
- effected **17** interventions
- effected **100%** interventions within target
- **1,735** claims in progress on the Compensation Fund with **£226m** pending
- paid **£3.52m** to claimants from the Compensation Fund
- received over **140,000** telephone enquiries from the public & profession
- answered **11,663** calls to our Professional Ethics Helpline
- answered **83%** of calls to the Professional Ethics Helpline within 45 seconds

2. Introduction

2.1 About this report

This report presents regulatory outcomes data for the SRA for the year to December 2011. It looks at the work that the SRA has carried out during this period and the outcomes of this work.

The report focuses specifically on outcomes data. Previous quarterly reports have included key statistics about the regulated community and this information can now be found on our website. Please see <http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports/statistics/regulated-community-statistics.page> for key facts and figures about the regulated community. We update this webpage every month with the latest data about the profession.

The outcomes data presented in this report are structured around the functions of the SRA based on our target operating model. The SRA is currently going through a period of organisational reform associated with the move to outcomes-focused regulation (see section 2.2). As part of this programme of reform, many units within the SRA are changing to reflect this new way of regulating and as a result some of the outcomes that we report on will change. In addition to this, our new IT systems mean that much of our business is starting to be conducted online and this will also impact on the outcomes that we report on. These ongoing changes mean that this report will continue to develop over the next few quarters as new functions become established and outcomes data for these functions become available.

If you have any feedback or queries regarding this report, or would like to receive it in an alternative format, please contact us at ManagementInformation@sra.org.uk

2. Introduction

2.2 Outcomes-focused regulation: the transformation of the SRA

OFR went live in this quarter.

From October to December 2011, the SRA met its objectives and key deliverables:

- The on-line Handbook, including the revised Code of Conduct, and which is one of the main foundations of OFR, came into effect on time and on target on 6 October 2011: <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/welcome.page>. From 6 October, all solicitors and law firms regulated by the SRA will be subject to the new regulatory approach which is underpinned by the Handbook.
- The SRA's Suitability Test went live on 6 October 2011: <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/suitabilitytest/content.page>
- The Order designating the SRA as a licensing authority for alternative business structures (ABS) was laid before Parliament on 1 December 2011 and came into force on 23 December.
- The SRA set the date of 3 January 2012 —the first working day after the New Year—as the date on which it will start accepting ABS applications. Depending on the complexity of the first applications received, the SRA expects to announce the first successful applicants in the second half of February 2012.
- Through the Joint Advocacy Group, or JAG (comprising the Solicitors Regulation Authority - SRA, the Bar Standards Board -BSB, and ILEX Professional Standards -IPS) has agreed a programme of further work so the Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates in criminal cases (QASA) can be implemented in stages from April 2012. The new approach is designed to ensure the final scheme protects the public interest across the wide variety of criminal advocacy practices, does not have any unintended consequences for those practices, and maintains momentum. On 14 December 2011, the JAG invited inviting tenders from organisations to deliver:
 1. the assessments for progression and reaccreditation, and
 2. the defined CPD for advocates which form part of the quality assurance scheme for advocates.
- Confirmed its use of Relationship Management to deliver the risk-based supervision of *large* and *global* firms, following a report on its piloting of relationship management since autumn 2010 with 19 volunteer firms. This forms a part of the move to OFR: <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/freedom-in-practice/ofr/pilot-report.page>. This will help the SRA meet its objective to ensure that its future regulatory approach will be more effective, proportionate and targeted.
- On 9 November, announced new arrangements for the governance of its relationship with The Law Society: <http://www.lawsocietymedia.org.uk/Press.aspx?ID=1539>, which will reinforce the SRA's operational independence, ensure the effective management of support services shared by the Law Society and SRA, and promote good working relationships between the representative body and the regulator.
- Launched a consultation on the implementation of financial protection changes on 25 November 2011 <http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/financial-protection-review.page>. The deadline for responses to the consultation is 17 January 2012.



2. Introduction

- Launched a consultation on 'The Regulation of International Practice' that sets out the SRA's proposals on how it might regulate the international practice of firms that have headquarters in England or Wales: <http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/regulation-international-practice.page> on 25 November 2011. The introduction of global entity regulation as proposed in the consultation paper will support international firms wishing to develop single, global businesses—but will work equally well for small and medium enterprises (SME) and niche businesses. The proposals cut through at least some of the regulatory maze facing international firms, supporting them in the development of single global businesses. If the proposals are accepted, firms will have greater flexibility to operate in any form that is allowed in other countries and bring into their partnerships anyone who is recognised as a lawyer in their home country. The deadline for responses to the consultation is 15 February 2012.
- Responded on 11 November to a major consultation exercise set up by the Legal Services Board (LSB): "Enhancing consumer protection, reducing regulatory restrictions", where we call for a fundamental review of the basis of the regulation of legal services in England and Wales (<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-responses/enhancing-consumer-protection-reducing-regulatory-restrictions.page>) In its response, the SRA sets out the need for regulation, both in the wider public interest and to promote and protect the interests of consumers. It sees the promotion of competition in the legal services market as an important aspect of both, but says competition, of itself, cannot achieve the wider public interest objectives that must be met. It is hosting a high-level invitation-only symposium on 22 February to take the discussions further.
- On 9 December, the SRA appointed a new Executive Director, with responsibilities for Regulatory Policy, Standards, Strategy and Research. This has necessitated a new Handbook and, alongside this, a host of policy review considerations. The launch of OFR and the development of regulatory policy and standards will continue to be a critical element of the SRA's work as we become a licensing authority for ABS and expand our focus to include the regulation of global entities: and the appointment of the new executive director strengthens and complements the SRA's existing senior management team.
- A major recruitment, induction and training programme for new staff in Supervision and Authorisation is underway.

3. Authorisation

The **authorisation** function ensures that those who enter the regulated system are fit to do so. Authorisation are responsible for making decisions on applications from firms and individuals to be recognised as approved suppliers of legal services and regulated by the SRA.

3.1 Regulatory applications

Applications that require in-depth investigation are escalated for casework. Regulatory applications are higher risk applications relating to areas such as practising certificate conditions, approval of employment or submission of accountants reports.

Outcomes of applications

The most common regulatory application type is the Regulation 3 application, which allows conditions to be placed on a solicitor's practising certificate when that certificate is renewed. The conditions may restrict where or in what capacity a solicitor can practise.

Although quarter four usually sees an increase in Regulation 3 applications, this quarter has seen a decrease. This has been due to a delay in the renewals process for 2011-12.

Caseworked Regulation 3 applications

Count of applications	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
Individuals already subject to Regulation 3	360	154	32	12
..of which..				
Restrictions continued	145	77	17	4
Restrictions varied	38	49	10	2
Restrictions lifted	177	28	5	6
Individuals newly subject to Regulation 3	459	119	40	26
..of which..				
Restrictions imposed	58	54	29	10
No restrictions imposed	401	65	11	16
Application refused	3	2	1	0
TOTAL	822	275	73	38

Ten applications were dealt with in respect of the SRA Recognised Bodies Regulations 2009 which enable the SRA to place conditions on a firm's recognition. Conditions were placed on one of the recognised bodies and one application was refused. There were a further eight applications dealt with for sole practitioner endorsement.

The unit also dealt with over 200 other applications, the majority of which relate to the requirement to file regular accountant's reports with the SRA. A comprehensive picture of the numbers of individuals being made subject to practising or registration conditions is shown on page 9.

4. Supervision

The **supervision** function provides a risk-based oversight of regulated firms and individuals. Supervision will constructively engage with all regulated firms to encourage firms to tackle risks to help improve standards and to provide the right outcome for clients.

4.1 Firm-based supervision

The Supervision Pilot tested and refined our supervisory approach to particular events and themes affecting regulated firms: an event might be a report of misconduct against a firm and/or individual and a theme is a particular area of work that might be affecting firms (see section 4.2). The pilot has tested two approaches - desk-based supervision and visit-based supervision—and the results from the pilot will be available shortly. These new supervisory approaches will be used to supervise firms that are not being relationship managed (see section 4.3).

4.2 Thematic supervision

As part of the supervision pilot, we have undertaken some thematic work. For example, we looked at first-tier complaints handling within firms. This involved visiting 100 randomly selected firms. The information obtained was valuable in looking at issues such as how firms describe and classify complaints. We will now further examine the data with a view to deciding how we can best drive improvements in this area.

4.3 Relationship management

Relationship Management is a supervisory tool that uses a dedicated resource. The approach was successfully tested in the [Relationship Management pilot](#) which recommended the use of this tool going forward. Relationship management will be applied where firms are in the highest impact band. These tend to be larger and more complex entities. As this new approach becomes established we will begin to report on outcomes.

4.4 Casework investigations

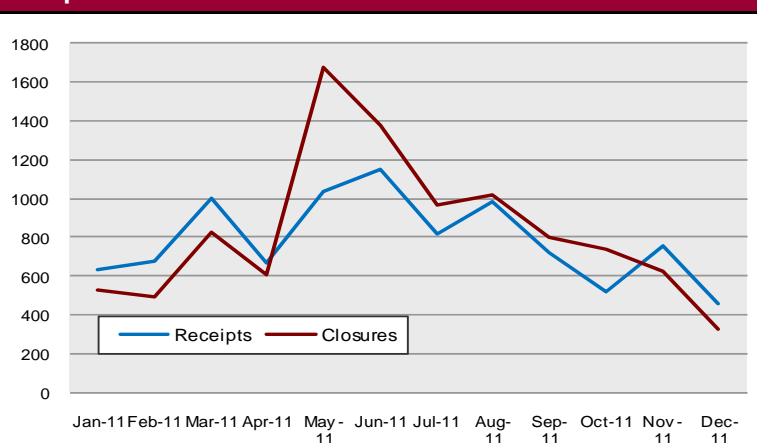
Casework investigations are currently taking place within the supervision and continuity units. The continuity unit is dealing with ongoing investigations and casework relating to firms that have not yet been assigned to a supervisor.

Casework investigation volumes

This chart shows new conduct and regulatory investigations alongside numbers closed each month. This chart does not include regulatory applications.

This quarter receipts have decreased by 31% compared to quarter 3. There was a particularly low number of allegations of misconduct received during December. The breakdown of outcomes of casework investigations can be found on page 9.

Receipts and closures



4. Supervision

This table provides an overview of the outcomes for investigations taking place within the supervision and continuity units. It should be noted that the number of matters with the outcome of 'SDT referral' will exceed the number of actual tribunal cases, as an individual may be investigated under several conduct or regulatory file references. These figures relate to the number of investigations conducted and not the number of individuals involved.

Outcomes of casework investigations

Outcome category	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	% variance from last quarter
Allegation upheld	364	358	367	239	-35%
*Letter of advice	221	230	270	155	-43%
*Finding and warnings	36	23	23	23	0%
*Rebuke / reprimands	64	44	30	18	-40%
SDT referral	75	89	63	70	11%
Ongoing other action / Added to existing disciplinary proceedings	301	532	273	132	-52%
No regulatory action required	1095	2606	1942	1159	-40%
TOTAL	1835	3585	2645	1600	-40%

* Note: The three categories 'letter of advice', 'finding and warning' and 'rebuke/reprimand' are the most common courses of regulatory action that may be taken in an investigation. It is also possible for multiple actions to be taken on one file. The total of these three categories do not necessarily add up to the number of investigations upheld.

Scale of regulatory actions (Increasing in severity)

Letter of advice – this is a letter advising the firm or regulated person that they have breached a rule. It is used where there has been a minor breach and where there is a low likelihood of it being repeated.

Finding and warning – this outcome is used where the breach of a rule has had a moderate impact on a client or member of the public and where there is a low/moderate likelihood of the misconduct being repeated.

Reprimand or severe reprimand – These two sanctions, severe reprimand being the most harsh, are used where the impact of the misconduct is high. The likelihood of repetition can vary greatly.

Referral to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) – the SDT is an independent tribunal and has wider powers in relation to the application of sanctions than the SRA. We will refer a firm or regulated person to the SDT for a decision when we consider our own powers are insufficient given the seriousness of the misconduct. Files culminating in referral for disciplinary proceedings are sent on to our Litigation and Legal Advice Unit who will examine the evidence available and merits of the case before confirming whether proceedings will be issued or an alternative outcome may be suitable.

Practising certificate & registration conditions

In addition to the disciplinary outcomes, the SRA can also impose conditions on a solicitor's practising certificate (PC). This is not a disciplinary sanction, but a regulatory measure.

Application of conditions

Count of individuals affected	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
Solicitors with PC conditions applied	218	107	46	19
REL's or RFL's with conditions applied	1	1	0	0

The SRA can regulate the way solicitors work by placing conditions on their practising certificates. Some conditions restrict the ability to practise, and others outline steps that must be followed. For example, an individual may be barred from holding client money, from working in particular areas or law, or may be required to undertake certain training. These are not intended to be punitive, but as pragmatic measures to ensure public protection.

We also have powers to place conditions on recognised bodies & recognised sole practices.

5. Risk Centre

The **Risk Centre** produce risk analysis to underpin risk-based decision-making across the SRA and is developing the approach and the processes through which risk will be measured and prioritised throughout our regulatory functions.

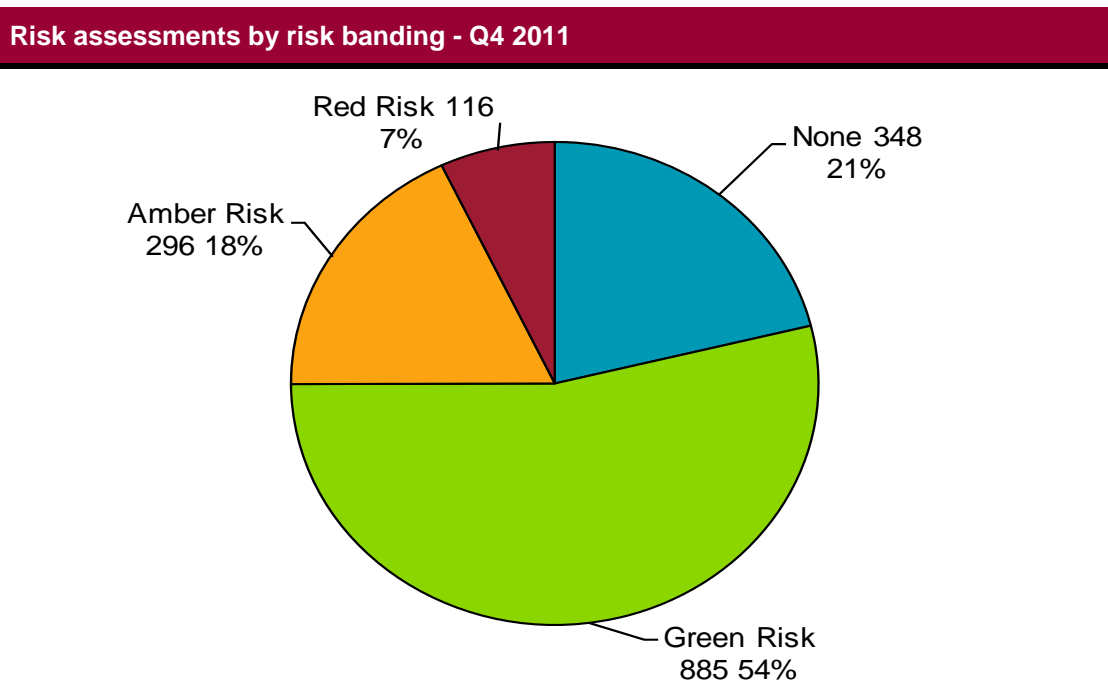
The risk centre also includes the **Risk Assessment & Designation Centre (RADC)**. The RADC is the primary gateway for the receipt of regulatory information other than confidential intelligence, which is gathered by our **Fraud & Confidential Intelligence Bureau (FCIB)**.

The RADC and FCIB work in parallel operating a consistent risk assessment process designed to be compliant with the Government's principles of better regulation:

- **Proportionate** Regulators should only intervene when necessary. Remedies should be appropriate to the risk posed, and costs identified and minimised.
- **Accountable** Regulators must be able to justify decisions, and be subject to public scrutiny.
- **Consistent** Government rules and standards must be joined up and implemented fairly.
- **Transparent** Regulators should be open, and keep regulations simple and user-friendly.
- **Targeted** Regulation should be focused on the problem, and minimise side effects.

Every report made to the SRA is assessed using a combination of tests to establish the level of risk the event presents. Each event is given a risk score and a red, amber or green (RAG) rating which the supervisor uses to help decide whether to action the event.

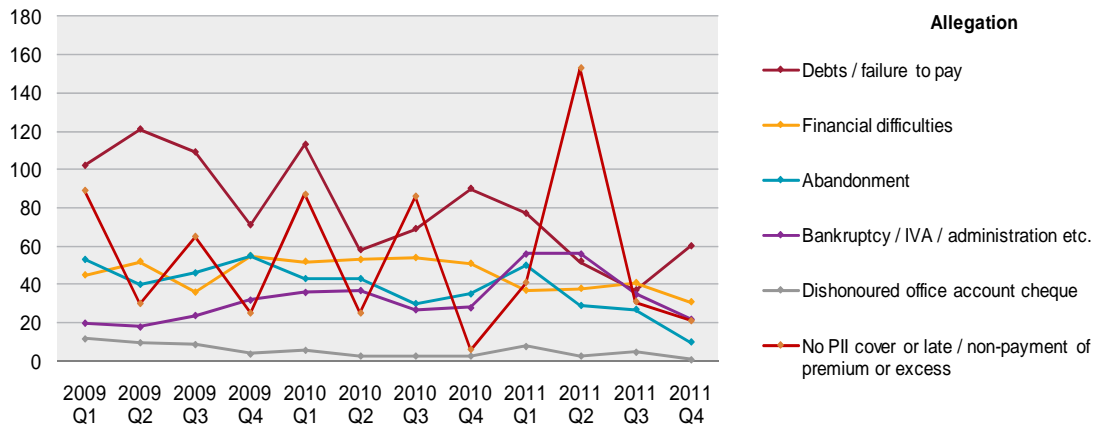
The chart below is based on information received into RADC and shows the output by risk banding for quarter 4 2011. Of the 1645 risk assessments carried out in the quarter, 21% were categorised as no risk, and 25% received an amber or red rating. The tests applied to determine the level of risk have been amended to reflect the introduction of OFR and the new Handbook. This means the data given below is not comparable with data reported in previous periods.



5. Risk Centre

The graph below shows the changes in some specific allegations which may indicate the increased/ decreased pressure on solicitors as a result of the current economic situation.

Indicators of economic pressures: allegations received



6. Intelligence and investigations

The **intelligence and investigation** function provides a formal investigation service which supports the SRA's other regulatory functions. This unit takes into account the SRA's risk-based approach and identifies and investigates issues that could result in formal regulatory sanctions or criminal prosecutions. The unit is made up of the **Forensic Investigations Unit (FI)** and the **Fraud & Confidential Intelligence Bureau (FCIB)**.

6.1 Forensic investigations

The **Forensic Investigations Unit** carry out targeted investigations of firms following the risk assessment of internal referrals from a variety of departments. Forensic investigators visit firms and adduce evidence of things such as the misuse of client money, serious misconduct or malpractice, dishonesty, fraud and money laundering. Accounts inspections make up the majority of visits by FI, although the unit also conducts investment business and Assigned Risk Pool monitoring visits.

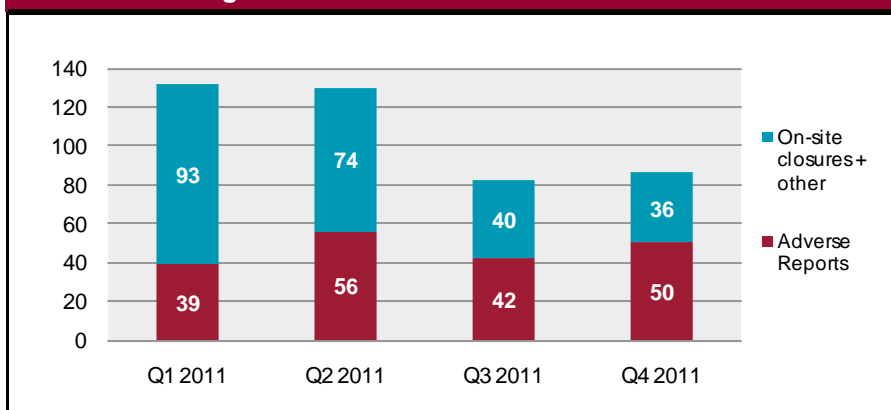
At the conclusion of an investigation, a closure letter is issued to the firm where the identified breaches or conduct are not material, or minor corrective action is required following an investigation. Alternatively, where there is evidence of serious breaches of the rules or professional obligations, misconduct or dishonesty, an adverse report will be issued which can result in regulatory sanction, disciplinary proceedings and / or intervention. The forensic investigation report will be referred to other departments within the SRA responsible for enforcement actions.

Forensic investigations summary

Year on year	12 months to Dec 10	12 months to Dec 11	Variance	Monthly average to Dec 11
New investigations authorised	567	490	-14%	41
Investigations concluded	466	442	-5%	37
Rescinded / other	19	48	153%	4

The table above shows throughput figures for accounts inspections conducted by the unit. The number of investigations opened and closed in any one month fluctuates. The table above shows that there has been a decrease in the number of investigations authorised (-14% decrease to 490) with a decrease in investigations concluded (-5% to 442) between the year to December 2010 and the year to December 2011. Visits are rescinded where no investigation took place (for example if the firm no longer poses such a risk, has closed down, or where it is appropriate to await the outcome of some other activity). The number of rescinded matters increased between the 12 months to December 2010 and December 2011, from 19 to 48 matters.

Forensic investigation outcomes



This chart shows the number of accounts inspection closures split by those which involved an adverse report, and other investigations concluded. 58% of the visits concluded in quarter 4 2011 had an adverse report compared to 49% for the same period in 2010.

There were no investment business monitoring visits concluded during quarter 4.

7. Legal and enforcement

The **legal and enforcement** function provides cross-cutting legal advice and support to the whole SRA. The unit conducts litigation, provides advice in proposed enforcement action and authorises and prosecutes SDT cases.

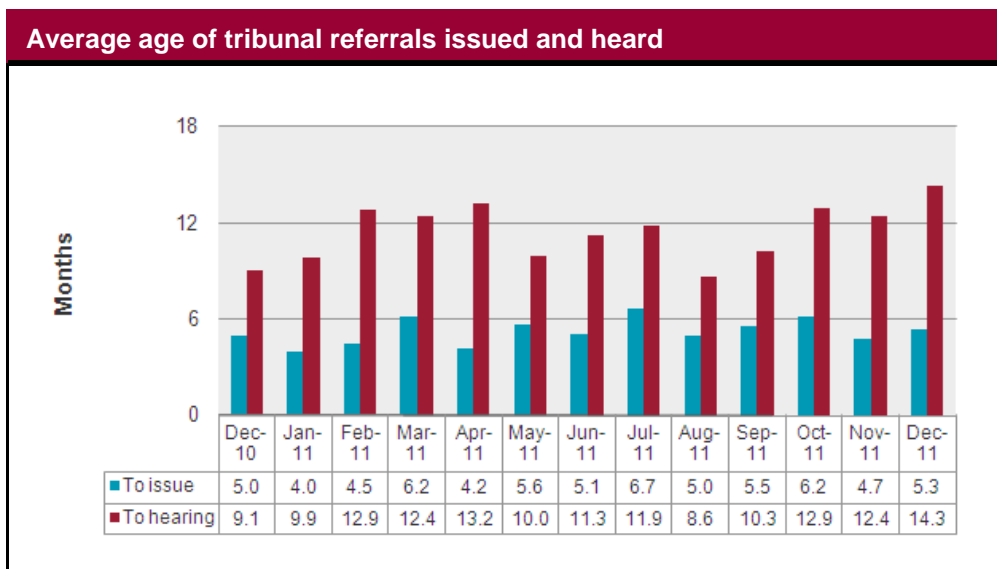
This area also includes the adjudication function which makes decisions relating to disputed, high profile or complex applications in accordance with the principles of regulatory decision-making.

7.1 Disciplinary proceedings

All investigations resulting in a referral for disciplinary proceedings are passed to our **Litigation and Legal Advice Unit**.

Each set of proceedings issued may be the culmination of several different casework investigations, concerning the same individuals or firm, that we choose to combine into a single case.

Our Legal Advocates (or solicitors that we appoint) will put together a case to issue before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT), and aim to do so within a target of 6 months. The SDT, in turn, aims to hear matters within 6 months of issue. This quarter, we issued 63 sets of proceedings.



The SDT has the power to strike a solicitor from the roll, suspend a solicitor from practice and to apply fines and reprimands. There are also some non-solicitors brought before the Tribunal by the SRA under Section 43 of the Solicitors Act 1974. This allows the SRA to restrict the employment of certain individuals within regulated firms where necessary.

Orders made by the SDT are recorded by the SRA when they come into effect, which in most cases is immediately, but in a few cases there may be a time lapse.

SDT orders

Year on year	12 months to Dec 10	12 months to Dec 11	Variance	Monthly average Last 12 months
Fined	115	108	-6%	9.0
Struck off	86	60	-30%	5.0
Suspended	50	54	8%	4.5
No order	19	10	-47%	0.8
Reprimand	40	16	-60%	1.3
Other	45	37	-18%	3.1
TOTAL	355	285	-20%	23.8

8. Post enforcement

The three key functions of **post enforcement** are to carry out interventions, recover costs and manage claims for compensation. The **interventions** team effect the closure of solicitors' practices or recognised bodies where it is necessary to protect clients' interests and money. Intervention officers instruct intervention agents and have day-to-day responsibility for the 'closure' process ensuring that clients' interests are protected. Interventions also includes the **cost recoveries** team which recover costs or debts that arise from the SRA's regulatory powers such as intervening in a firm or issuing disciplinary proceedings.

The **Claims Management Unit** provide redress for clients who have lost money due to their solicitor's dishonesty or failure to account.

8.1 Interventions

In the last quarter we effected 17 interventions, of which five involved reason to suspect dishonesty.

Interventions summary

Year on year		12 months to Dec 10	12 months to Dec 11	% variance
Interventions effected		64	62	-3%
..of which..	Suspected dishonesty	12	12	0%
	Non-dishonesty	52	50	-4%
..of which..	Individual(s)	0	0	N/A
	Sole practice	48	52	8%
	2 - 5 partner firm	16	10	-38%

The number of interventions effected in 2011 was 3% lower than in 2010.

The proportion of interventions that were into 2 - 5 partner firms has dropped by 38% in the last 12 months.

The majority of interventions are into practices run by a sole practitioner. In cases where the intervention is not into a sole practice then typically all partners within the firm (or members of an LLP / directors of a company) will be subject to the intervention. Occasionally we will intervene into the practice of an individual within a firm, leaving the rest of the firm to continue.

8. Post enforcement

Grounds for intervention

The circumstances in which we can intervene are set out in statute, and include a public interest test. The 5 most common grounds for intervention over the last 12 months are shown in the table below - many interventions take place for several different reasons so may have multiple grounds.

'Protect interests of clients / beneficiary' has been recorded as grounds for an intervention since the enactment of the relevant provisions of the Legal Services Act 2007 on 31st March 2009. This relates to situations where a solicitor has acted in such a way that the interests of former or potential clients require protection.

Most common grounds for intervention

For the 64 interventions in the 12 months to Dec 2010 and the 62 interventions in the 12 months to Dec 2011	12 months to Dec 2010		12 months to Dec 2011	
	No. interventions	% of interventions	No. interventions	% of interventions
Protect interests of clients / beneficiary	48	75%	45	73%
Accounts rule breaches	26	41%	31	50%
Code breaches	15	23%	30	48%
Reason to suspect dishonesty	12	19%	12	19%
Bankrupt / insolvency of LLP	6	9%	11	18%

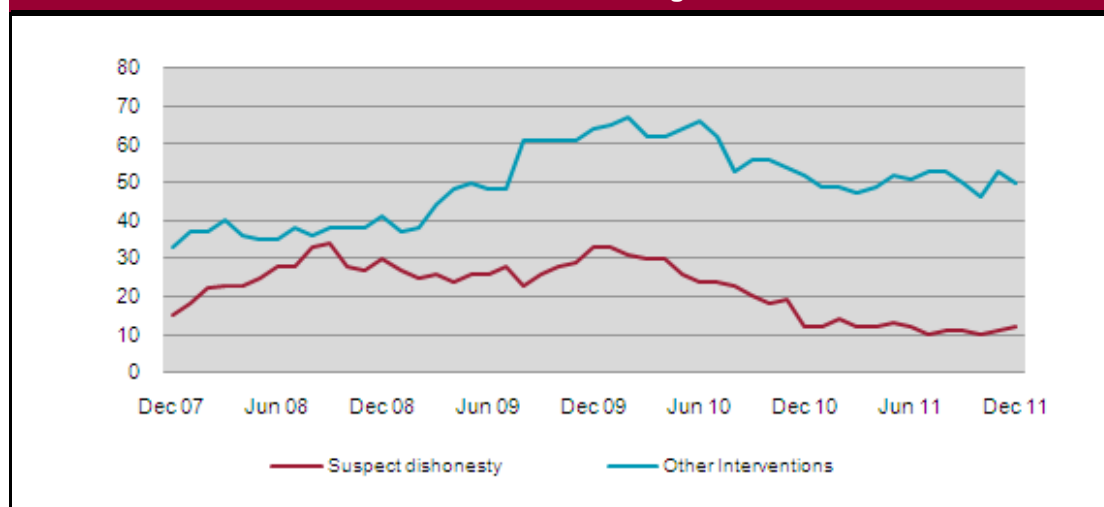
Timeliness

Where dishonesty is suspected, the unit's target is to effect the intervention within 3 working days of the resolution to intervene being passed. Otherwise the target is to effect the intervention within 5 working days. All of the interventions taking place in the last 12 months were within the target.

Long term trends

During the last 12 months the proportion of interventions where dishonesty was suspected has remained the same at 19%. The last quarter saw 29% of interventions with suspected dishonesty as a ground.

Number of interventions effected: 12 months rolling



8. Post enforcement

8.2 Claims management

The **Claims Management Unit** handles applications for grants from the Compensation Fund from people who have suffered financial loss due to a solicitor's dishonesty or failure to account for monies received.

The vast majority of claims on the fund relate to firms that have been intervened into. The Claims Management Unit also deals with claims for the repatriation of funds held in statutory trust following an intervention.

Claims and payments made in the last 12 months

This table shows a quarterly comparison of claims made on the fund and payments issued in the last 12 months. Figures are shown as currently recorded, but the value of claims may change during the course of an investigation.

Overview of claims and payments

	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
No. of new claims	661	495	543	319
Total amount claimed	£39.54 m	£19.37 m	£24.45 m	£15.47 m
£ paid out	£5.03 m	£2.93 m	£3.31 m	£3.52 m

The number of claims received decreased this quarter to the lowest level of the last four quarters. The average claim amount for quarter 4 was £48,500, a slight increase on the previous quarter.

New claims made on the fund

New claims received

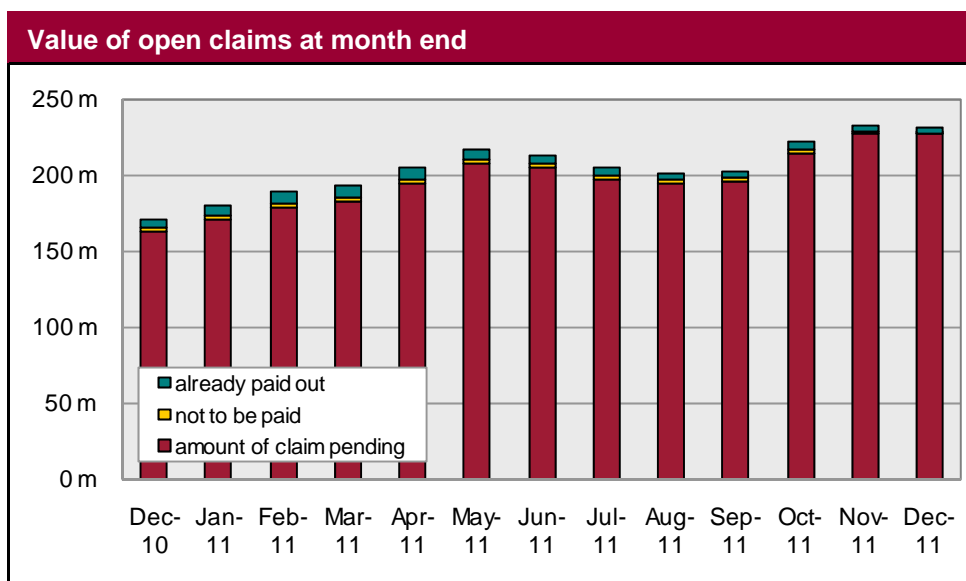
Number of claims by reason	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
General client money	498	189	141	100
Counsel fees	12	33	22	11
Mortgage fraud	9	61	88	21
Experts fees	9	30	26	33
Probate	17	22	22	33
Stamp Duty Land Tax	49	45	69	25
Retention	4	9	5	10
Unredeemed mortgage	2	2	12	7
Gross overcharging	2	3	4	1
Other* / unspecified	59	99	154	78
Total	661	493	543	319

* A large proportion of claims categorised as 'other' would be those relating to non-barrister professional fees.

8. Post enforcement

Ongoing claims

The graph below shows the total value of the 1,735 claims currently under investigation.



The value of open claims at the end of December was £226m. This is an increase of 16% since the end of September 2010.

Payments on application concluded

The following table shows whether claims that were closed in the last 12 months were paid, either partially or fully. This quarter has seen a decrease in the number of claims closed but an increase in the proportion that have been paid.

Claims closed

Payment status	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
No. of claims closed	899	809	725	466
Payment made	52%	40%	31%	43%
Not paid	48%	60%	69%	57%

There are a variety of reasons why a claim may not be paid, for example, the application may be withdrawn or the customer may not respond, or the claim may be outside the remit of the fund.

The next table shows the amounts claimed and paid on matters that were closed in each quarter. This does not relate to the amounts paid out within the quarter, these figures are shown on the previous page.

Payments on claims closed

Proportion paid	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011
Total amount claimed	£24.58 m	£20.42m	£26.42m	£21.43m
Total paid out	£8.99 m	£5.71m	£3.20m	£6.79m
% paid	37%	28%	12%	32%

9. Contact management

The **contact management** function handles and records contacts with regulated firms and individuals and the public, capturing relevant information and routing the information to the relevant regulatory function.

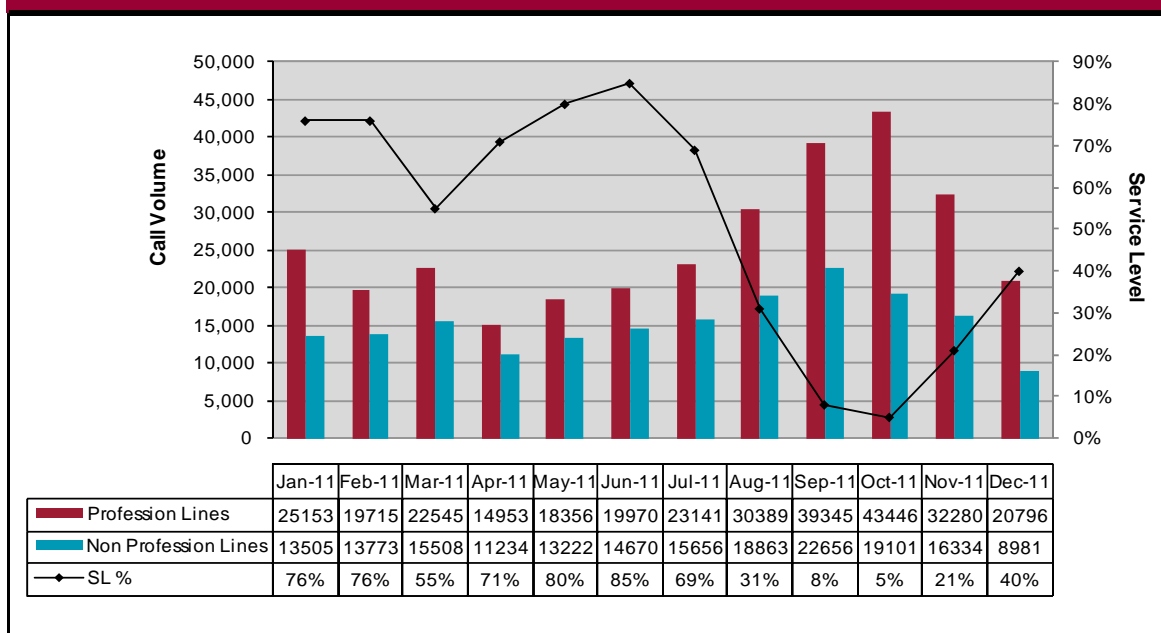
9.1 Contact Centre

The **Contact Centre** answer general enquiries and queries, both from the profession and the public. The contact centre offers dedicated lines for the profession, students and the public as well as a number of seasonal lines which take calls relating to specific areas of enquiry such as solicitor annual enrolment and practising certificate applications / renewals.

Enquiries from the profession

Over the last quarter, the Contact Centre received 96,522 calls from the profession and 44,416 calls from the public. Of the calls to the profession lines, 36,131 calls were to the main profession line and 60,391 calls were to the seasonal lines. Within the fourth quarter of 2011, 22% of calls were answered within 20 seconds, which is below the target of 80%.

Calls to the Contact Centre



The service level has been affected by a large increase in call volumes during September and October due to the launch of the first phase of the SRA's project to bring its application processes online. The SRA set up another call centre to help deal with the volume of calls and the service level has improved since October.

Enquiries from members of the public

As well as dealing with enquiries from the profession over the last quarter, the Contact Centre received 44,416 calls from members of the public, 32% of all calls received.

The Contact Centre also receive requests from members of the public who wish to trace a member of the profession, this might be, for example, connected to assistance they require from the solicitor or help with tracing their family history. We may also receive requests from members of the profession to trace another solicitor in order to assist them with work they have been requested to do for their clients.

9. Contact management

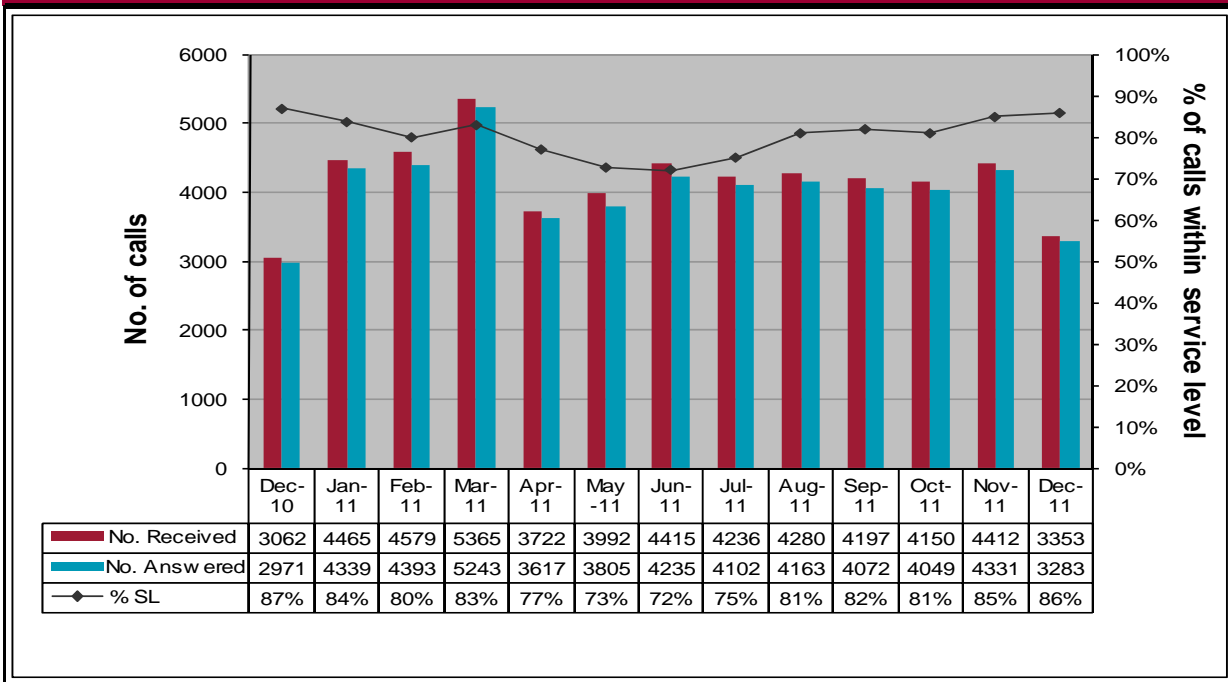
9.2 Professional Ethics Helpline

The **Professional Ethics Helpline** provides guidance to help solicitors comply with their professional obligations. The Helpline is open 5 days a week, and also deals with written and email enquiries. Helpline staff provide guidance on complex issues such as conflicts of interest and retainers.

The most common areas of enquiry received by the Helpline during the last quarter were:

- Practice Framework Rules
- Solicitors Accounts Rules
- Confidentiality & Disclosure / Publicity

Calls to the Professional Ethics Helpline



The service level for the Professional Ethics Helpline is for staff to answer calls within 45 seconds. The service level on the graph above shows the percentage of calls that were answered within this time.

The Professional Ethics Helpline aims to answer 90% of calls within 45 seconds. In the fourth quarter of 2011, 83% of calls were answered within target and just 2% of calls to the Helpline were abandoned. There were 14% fewer calls received by the Helpline in the fourth quarter of 2011 compared with the same period in 2010. A total of 11,915 calls were received and 11,663 answered in the quarter.

The Professional Ethics Helpline also send written advice to many enquirers.

The team aim to respond 90% of correspondence within 10 working days. In the fourth quarter of 2011, 87% of responses were issued within this service level. The team sent out 1,967 written responses, a 20% increase on the same period in 2010.

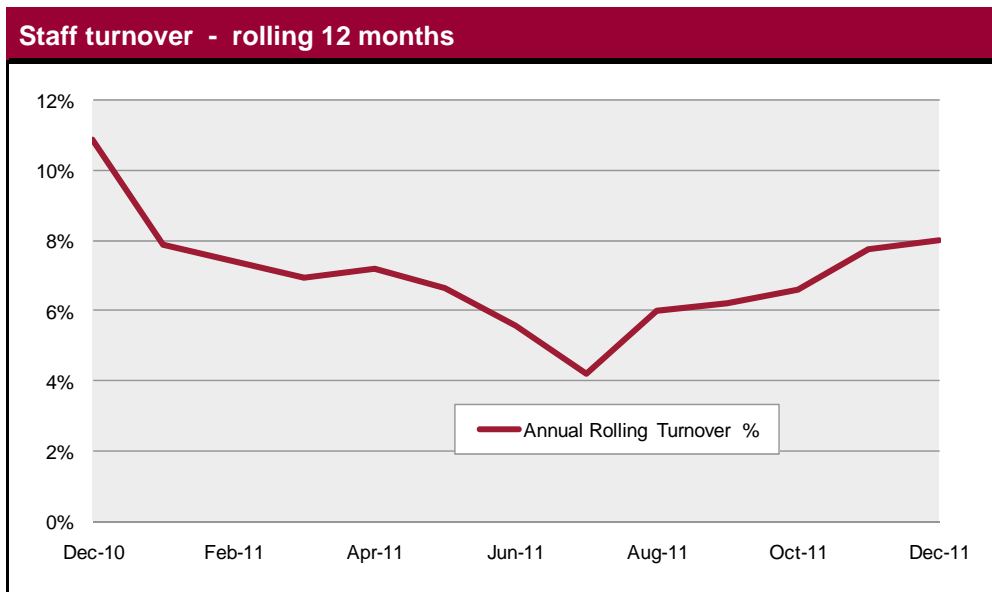
10. Resources

10.1 Budget

At the time of publication, the SRA year end figures had not yet been finalised. These will be included in the next quarter's report (Q1, 2012).

10.2 Human resources & development

As at 31st December 2011, the SRA has 507 full time equivalent (FTE) permanent employees. In addition, there are 43 FTE fixed term temporary employees and 68 FTE agency and contractor staff.



Staff turnover for the 12 months to December 2011 stands at 7.9%. The staff turnover calculation is based on the number of staff leaving in the previous 12 months as a proportion of average headcount during the same period.

Glossary

Abbreviations and internal terms

ABS	Alternative Business Structures
ARP	Assigned Risks Pool
ASC	Application by Solicitors' Clerk
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
DPs	Disciplinary Proceedings (taken before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal)
FCIB	Fraud & Confidential Intelligence Bureau - the SRA department responsible for intelligence gathering.
FI	Forensic Investigations Unit who deal with high risk cases requiring on-site investigation.
FTE	“Full-time equivalent”, a measure of the number of staff based on hours worked The budget FTE - actual FTE equals the number of vacancies
HRD	Human Resources & Development
Intervention	A formal decision of the adjudication panel to intervene into a solicitor's practice, which results in all monies and papers held by the solicitor being taken by the Law Society. Interventions are subject to a statutory appeal direct to the High Court
LDP	Legal Disciplinary Practice
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
LSB	Legal Services Board
OFR	Outcomes-focused regulation
PC	Practising Certificate
QLTT	Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (part of the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Regulations which closed to new applicants 1 September 2010)
QLTS	Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (the new scheme running from 1 September 2010 for lawyers wishing to transfer from other jurisdictions)
RADC	Risk Assessment and Designation Centre who risk assess all non-confidential incoming information
REL	Registered European Lawyer
RFL	Registered Foreign Lawyer
SDT	Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal
SRA	Solicitors Regulation Authority
Tribunal	The independent Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT)
WIP	Work In Progress - cases which are continuing