

Any questions? See our website for more information and support –
www.sra.org.uk/consumers

How to contact us

@ Email:
contactcentre@sra.org.uk

Website:
www.sra.org.uk/consumers

Phone: 0870 606 2555
(calls are charged at national
rate), Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

By post:
**Solicitors Regulation
Authority,
Ipsley Court,
Berrington Close,
Redditch B98 0TD**

Thinking of using legal services?

If you would like this
information in another
format – such as large print
or Braille – please phone us
on **0870 606 2555** (inside
the UK), Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm, or email
contactcentre@sra.org.uk





The SRA regulates more than **120,000** individuals and firms in England and Wales.

What is the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)?

The SRA regulates more than 120,000 individuals and firms in England and Wales. Individuals include solicitors, registered European lawyers (RELs), and registered foreign lawyers (RFLs).

We are the independent regulatory body of the Law Society and we regulate:

- solicitors in England and Wales
- law firms in England and Wales
- non-lawyers, who can be either managers or employees of firms that we regulate; and
- other types of lawyer, such as registered foreign lawyers (RFLs) and registered European lawyers (RELs)
- non-lawyer owners or part-owners of Alternative Business Structures (ABS)*

We aim to protect the public by ensuring that those we regulate meet high standards, and by acting when risks are identified.

We do not represent solicitors; the Law Society is the representative body.

What do we do?

We set the Principles and Code of Conduct which those we regulate have to abide by in providing legal services. We take an outcomes-focused, risk-based approach to regulation to make sure that these individuals and firms operate independently and with integrity, both in the interests of their clients, and in the wider public interest.

We make sure that those we regulate are qualified and insured to provide legal services, by:

- setting qualification standards in England and Wales

- monitoring the performance of training organisations mentoring students training to become solicitors
- assessing the suitability of individuals
- administering the Roll of solicitors, and
- making sure that lawyers from overseas (RELs and RFLs) meet our standards of training, suitability and English language requirements before they can practise as solicitors in England and Wales.

We have a range of disciplinary sanctions available to us, from issuing warnings to referring a firm or individual's conduct to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. We may publish our regulatory decisions on our website.

* The SRA expects to receive parliamentary approval to license ABS late December 2011.



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We can provide information to help you choose a solicitor

Can you help me choose a solicitor?

We cannot give legal advice or tell you which solicitors or lawyers to use. We do, however provide information to help you choose a solicitor, including:

- how to find a solicitor or firm on our website www.sra.org.uk/use-solicitor
- how to get the best from legal services, and what to expect from a solicitor.
- details of any regulatory action

we've taken in our 'Check a Solicitor's Record' feature on our website.

Thinking of using legal services?

If you use a solicitor or a firm regulated by us you should:

- receive all the information you need to make a well-informed choice about the service you need, and who should provide it to you;
- know how much it will cost or how the cost will be calculated,

and be given a clear explanation at the end of the transaction, and at any time on request, of the charges;

- receive a good level of service from appropriately trained and qualified people who comply with the law and our requirements;
- receive advice and services from advisers who put your best interests first and respect the confidentiality of your situation;

- be able to make a complaint if things go wrong – to the firm itself or to the Legal Ombudsman – and the complaint should be dealt with fairly and quickly;
- receive compensation if it is found that things went wrong and you are entitled to make a claim – either from the firm's own resources or from its insurer;
- be able to rely on your solicitor or firm referring you on to someone who is right for the job; you should be told if either party gets any benefit (financial or otherwise) from that referral;
- feel assured that the SRA takes action where the solicitor or firm are found not to meet standards.

What if I want to change my solicitor?

Your solicitor has the right to keep your file of papers or other items until you have paid the bill. If you decide part way through your case that you want to change solicitor, they will not give you your files until you pay them.

What if my solicitor owes me money and has not paid it?

If you have lost money because a solicitor has been dishonest or not paid money that belongs to you, you can apply to the Compensation Fund which we administer. We can only consider applications for amounts below £2million. You can get more information on the conditions for applying to the Compensation Fund and an application form from our website at www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/compfund/

You have closed my solicitor's practice – what should I do?

If we have to close down your solicitor's practice because it has been abandoned, the partners have died, or we suspect malpractice (i.e. the solicitor has been negligent, broken a contract or not kept to their responsibilities), we will give you the information you need to get back your files, documents or money.





I've got a problem with my solicitor – what should I do?

You must always complain to your solicitor or firm first.

You will not be able to take your complaint further – whether to the Legal Ombudsman or to us – if you have not done so.

You may find that approaching the problem informally at first will resolve things. However, if this does not work, your solicitor should always give you information on their official complaints procedure and your right to take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

Once you have made a complaint, the firm must tell you in writing how they will handle the complaint and when they will respond. You must give your solicitor a chance to resolve your complaint before the Ombudsman can get involved – usually you should allow your

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lawyer at least eight weeks. Further help, including a template of a complaint letter and more hints and tips on how to make a complaint and the timescale within which it should be made, is available on the Legal Ombudsman's website www.legalombudsman.org.uk/consumer/toptips.html

If you have already complained to the solicitor or firm and they have not resolved the complaint to your satisfaction, you can contact the Legal Ombudsman by telephoning them on **0300 555 0333**, or emailing them at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

When you should report a solicitor to the SRA

Most of the time complaints about solicitors are about poor service, and therefore should be sent to the Legal Ombudsman. If the Legal Ombudsman thinks your case involves a breach of our Principles, they will refer your case to us. Likewise, if you report a solicitor to us for poor service, we will refer you to the Legal Ombudsman. We do not have the power to award compensation for poor service, or to reduce or refund your legal fees.

However, you should report the matter directly to us if you think a firm or anyone regulated by us has breached an SRA Principle.

There are several ways to send your information to us: by completing our report form www.sra.org.uk/report-solicitor-form and sending it to the address overleaf; emailing us: report@sra.org.uk; or calling our contact centre on **0870 606 2555**.

The Legal Ombudsman deals with all aspects of poor service, such as delayed or unclear communication; problems with your fees, or loss of documents.

