

Thinking of using legal services?





The SRA regulates more than **125,000** individuals and over **10,000** firms and their employees in England and Wales.

Solicitors and firms we regulate must have this phrase on their letterheads and website: 'authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority'.

What is the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)?

We are a frontline regulator for 125,000 individuals and over 10,000 law firms and their employees which include:

- all solicitors and firms providing legal services, working in England and Wales
- lawyers from Europe and overseas who register with us to work in England and Wales and
- people who aren't lawyers but either own, or work for, law firms or other organisations that we regulate.

They have to provide the right outcomes for anyone using their services and we aim to protect the public by acting when risks are identified.

Our headquarters are in Birmingham and we are independent from the Law Society which represents solicitors.

What do we do?

Every person and business that we regulate has to work in the best interests of people using their services, and also in the wider interests of the public. We have a Code of Conduct and a set of Principles which help them understand what they have to do.

We look at the behaviour and conduct of all those we regulate and the risks to the public that they create. We then take action to keep people safe, based on how serious those risks are.


We have powers that we can use to keep the public well protected. These can range from warning someone we regulate about their behaviour, right through to asking the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal to consider more serious cases. Most decisions that we take are shown on our website.

We also make sure that solicitors have the right qualifications and that businesses we regulate are well-run and properly insured. Some of our key functions are:

- monitoring the performance of organisations providing training courses for people wishing to become solicitors
- setting standards that people need to meet in order to qualify to provide legal services in England and Wales
- assessing the suitability of people who need to be regulated by us
- keeping the roll of solicitors
- making sure that lawyers from overseas meet our standards of training and suitability before they can practise as solicitors in England and Wales.



We set standards that have to be met by those we regulate



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 information to make a well-informed choice about the service, 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 you request it, of the charges

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

- be able to complain if things go wrong – to the firm itself or to the Legal Ombudsman – and to have the complaint 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 (please note that from April 2013, referrals in personal injury cases are banned by law)
- have confidence that the SRA can take action where people and firms we regulate are found not to meet the right standards

What if I want to change my solicitor?

You have the right to change your solicitor if you want to. Your solicitor may keep your file of papers or other items until you have paid the bill for any work they have already completed for you. If you decide part way through your case that you want to change solicitor, they do not have to give you your files until they have been paid.

What if my solicitor owes me money?

If you lose money because a solicitor is dishonest or hasn't paid money that belongs to you, you may be able to apply to our Compensation Fund if the amount is under £2 million. More information on the

Compensation Fund and an application form can be found on our website at www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems.page

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

If we have closed the firm, we appoint intervention agents, who will return your money and papers if possible. However, it is possible we will hold your money and files if the agent has been unable to identify who they belong to. If you think the firm has not accounted to you for money you have given it, or if you are seeking your papers, please contact us.





If you have a complaint you must always complain to your solicitor or firm first

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

First of all you should raise the problem with your solicitor or law firm. You may find that approaching things informally fixes the problem.

However if this does not work, you may want to complain to them. The solicitor or law firm is required to tell you about their approach to handling complaints and should tell you when they will respond. They also have to tell you about your right to take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman if they can't resolve it for you.

Give your solicitor a chance to resolve your complaint. If you need help with writing a complaint letter and some tips on timescales and how to make a complaint, take a look at the Legal Ombudsman's website:

www.legalombudsman.org.uk/consumer/toptips.html

If the solicitor or their firm fail to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you should then contact the Legal Ombudsman. You can reach them by telephoning 0300 555 0333, or emailing enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Reporting a solicitor to the SRA

Most complaints about solicitors are about poor service and the Legal Ombudsman is there to help you. If the Legal Ombudsman thinks your case involves a breach of our Principles, they will refer your case to us. We do not have powers to compensate

people for poor service or to reduce or refund someone's legal fees. We do, however, have powers to investigate situations that may mean someone we regulate has not met the right standards, and to take action to resolve those situations if required.

There is information about our Principles on our website here: www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page+principles.

If you think a law firm or anyone regulated by us may have breached any of them, and you haven't already contacted the Legal Ombudsman, you

may want to send information directly to us.

There are several ways to do this:

- 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 0370 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



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:
within the UK:
0370 606 2555
(calls charged at national rate)

International:
+44 (0)121 329 6800

Opening hours:
0800-1800 Monday/
Wednesday/Thursday/Friday
0930-1800 Tuesday



By post:
Consumer Affairs
Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN
DX 720293 Birmingham 47

If you would like this information in another format such as Braille, please contact us. This leaflet is also available in a range of community languages which can be found on our website at www.sra.org.uk/consumers/using-solicitor/community-languages.page

Support and advice for consumers about legal services, including video clips, is available at www.sra.org.uk/consumers