

Burch Phillips & Co (Burch Phillips & Co)
63a Station Road, West Drayton , UB7 7LR
Recognised sole practitioner
652439

[Agreement Date: 14 January 2025](#)

Decision - Agreement

Outcome: Regulatory settlement agreement

Outcome date: 14 January 2025

Published date: 3 February 2025

Firm details

No detail provided:

Outcome details

This outcome was reached by agreement.

Decision details

1. Agreed outcome

1.1 Burch Phillips & Co (the Firm), a recognised sole practitioner, authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), agrees to the following outcome to the investigation:

- a. Burch Phillips & Co will pay a financial penalty in the sum of £3,740, under Rule 3.1 (b) of the SRA Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedures Rules,
- b. to the publication of this agreement, under Rule 9.2 of the SRA Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedures rules; and
- c. Burch Phillips & Co will pay the costs of the investigation of £600, under Rule 10.1 and Schedule 1 of the SRA Regulatory and Disciplinary Rules.

Reasons/basis

2. Summary of Facts

2.1 Our Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Proactive Supervision team carried out an AML desk-based review at Burch Phillips & Co, to assess its



compliance with the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulation 2017 (MLRs 2017).

2.2 We identified AML control failings in relation to Client and Matter Risk Assessments (CMRAs) and a lack of policies, controls and procedures (PCPs). The firm failed to conduct CMRAs on its files between 22 August 2018 and 28 October 2024. It also failed to establish and maintain a set of PCPs between 22 August 2018 and 25 August 2024.

2.3 This resulted in a referral to our AML Investigations Team.

CMRAs

2.4 Between 22 August 2018 and 28 October 2024, the firm failed to conduct client and matter risk assessments (CMRAs), pursuant to Regulation 28(12)(a)(ii) and Regulation 28(13) of the MLRs 2017.

PCPs

2.5 Between 22 August 2018 and 25 August 2024, the firm failed to establish and maintain policies, controls, and procedures (PCPs) to mitigate and effectively manage the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing, identified in any risk assessment (FWRA), pursuant to Regulation 19(1)(a) of the MLRs 2017, and regularly review and update them pursuant to Regulation 19(1)(b) of the MLRs 2017.

3. Admissions

3.1 The firm admits, and the SRA accepts, that by failing to comply with the MLRs 2017, it has breached:

To the extent the conduct took place before 25 November 2019 (when the SRA Handbook 2011 was in force):

- a. Principle 6 of the SRA Principles 2011 – which states you must behave in a way that maintains the trust the public places in you and in the provision of legal services.
- b. Principle 8 of the SRA Principles 2011 – which states you must run in your business or carry out your role in the business effectively and in accordance with proper governance and sound financial risk management principles.

And the firm failed to achieve:

- c. Outcome 7.2 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011 – You have effective systems and controls in place to achieve and comply with all the Principles, rules and outcomes and other requirements of the Handbook, where applicable.



- d. Outcome 7.5 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011 – which states you comply with legislation applicable to your business, including anti-money laundering and data protection legislation

And from 25 November 2019 (when the SRA Standards and Regulations came into force) until March 2024, the firm breached:

- e. Principle 2 of the SRA Principles 2019 – which states you act in a way that upholds public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons.
- f. Paragraph 2.1(a) of the SRA Code of Conduct for Firms 2019 – which states you have effective governance structures, arrangements, systems and controls in place that ensure you comply with all the SRA's regulatory arrangements, as well as with other regulatory and legislative requirements, which apply to you.
- g. Paragraph 3.1 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Firms 2019 – which states that you keep up to date with and follow the law and regulation governing the way you work.

4. Why a fine is an appropriate outcome

4.1 The SRA's Enforcement Strategy sets out its approach to the use of its enforcement powers where there has been a failure to meet its standards or requirements.

4.2 The issues identified around not carrying out CMRAs and lacking PCPs are serious control failings, and the conduct had the potential to cause significant harm. The firm also undertakes over three quarters of its work in the field of conveyancing, a high-risk area in relation to money laundering and terrorist financing. This inevitably opened the firm up to an increased risk of being exploited by criminals.

4.3 It is a regulatory obligation for the firm to meet the requirements set out in the MLRs 2017, which the firm failed to do.

4.4 The SRA considers that a fine is the appropriate outcome because:

- a. The agreed outcome is a proportionate outcome in the public interest because it creates a credible deterrent to others and the issuing of such a sanction signifies the risk to the public, and the legal sector, that arises when solicitors do not comply with anti-money laundering legislation and their professional regulatory rules.
- b. There is no evidence of harm to consumers or third parties.
- c. The firm recognises that it failed in its basic duties regarding statutory money laundering regulations and regulatory compliance, as identified during our desk-based review and subsequent investigation.



4.5 The firm has cooperated fully, has admitted the breaches, shown remorse and remedied the breaches, and there is low risk or repetition.

4.6 A fine is appropriate to maintain professional standards and uphold public confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons. A financial penalty therefore meets the requirements of rule 4.1 of the Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedure Rules.

5. Amount of the fine

5.1 The amount of the fine has been calculated in line with the SRA's published guidance on its approach to setting an appropriate financial penalty (the Guidance).

5.2 Having regard to the Guidance, the SRA and the firm agree that the nature of the misconduct was more serious (score of three). This is because it failed to conduct CMRAs on files and document them from 22 August 2018 to 28 October 2024, in breach of Regulation 28 of the MLRs 2017. Also, between 22 August 2018 and 25 August 2024, the firm failed to establish and maintain policies, controls, and procedures (PCPs) to mitigate and effectively manage the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing, in breach of Regulation 19 of the MLRs 2017.

5.3 The SRA considers the of the misconduct was medium (score of four). The nature of conveyancing is considered high-risk, owing to the risk of abuse of the system by criminals. We note the firm undertakes the majority of its work in scope of the money laundering regulations, via conveyancing. This puts it at a greater risk of being used to launder money. There is no evidence of there being any direct loss to clients or actual harm caused as a result of the firm's failure to ensure it had proper documentation in place.

5.4 The nature and impact scores add up to seven, placing the conduct in penalty bracket Band 'C'. The Guidance indicates a broad penalty bracket of between 1.6% and 3.2% of the firm's annual domestic turnover is appropriate.

5.5 The SRA and the firm agree a financial penalty in the band 'C2', equating to a financial penalty of 2% of turnover. This is because the firm should have been aware of its statutory obligations under the MLRs 2017, with the aggravating factor that it performs a significant amount of work in conveyancing, but there is no evidence of any harm being caused or of an unwillingness to improve. Based on the firm's annual domestic turnover, the fine results in a basic penalty of £4,400.

5.6 The SRA considers that the basic penalty should be reduced by 15%, in terms of mitigation discount, to £3,740. This reduction follows the following factors in the Guidance that apply to this case:



- a. The firm has implemented a new CMRA process, bringing itself back into compliance. It also provided six examples of matters where the CMRAs were carried out using the new process.
- b. The firm drafted a compliant set of PCPs, along with a proliferation financing risk assessment.
- c. It has admitted the breaches and remedied the harm caused by documenting an appropriate CMRA on all live files, besides those files which are awaiting further information from the client.
- d. The firm has shown a positive attitude towards the investigation and has cooperated with the SRA's AML Proactive Supervision and Investigations teams.

5.7 The firm does not appear to have made any financial gain or received any other benefit as a result of its conduct. Therefore, no adjustment is necessary to remove this and the amount of the fine is £3,740.

6. Publication

6.1 Rule 9.2 of the SRA Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedure Rules states that any decision under Rule 3.1 or 3.2, including a Financial Penalty, shall be published unless the particular circumstances outweigh the public interest in publication.

6.2 The SRA considers it appropriate that this agreement is published in the interests of transparency in the regulatory and disciplinary process. The firm agrees to the publication of this agreement.

7. Acting in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement

7.1 The firm agrees that it will not deny the admissions made in this agreement or act in any way which is inconsistent with it.

7.2 If the firm denies the admissions or acts in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement, the conduct which is subject to this agreement may be considered further by the SRA. That may result in a disciplinary outcome or a referral to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal on the original facts and allegations.

7.3 Acting in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement may also constitute a separate breach of principles 2 and 5 of the Principles and paragraph 3.2 of the Code of Conduct for Firms.

8. Costs

8.1 The firm agrees to pay the costs of the SRA's investigation in the sum of £600. Such costs are due within 28 days of a statement of costs due being issued by the SRA.

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