Solicitors Regulation Authority

News release

SRA publishes latest suite of annual reports

23 June 2022

We have published our latest annual reports [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/corporate-reporting-202021/] on our operational work during 2020/21. The reports cover areas including education and training, enforcement, approval of new firms and solicitors, and the activity of the Compensation Fund. A full annual report on preventing money laundering is published separately in October.

Key facts highlighted within these reports include:

- Alternative business structures now make up more than ten per cent of firms.
- More than 1000 candidates across 26 countries signed up for the first SQE assessment.
- Overall reports of concerns about solicitors rose to 10,400, after a fall in 2019/20 during the pandemic.
- 273 reports of potential anti-money laundering breaches came in, significantly up from 196 the previous year.
- The continued growth of the legal sector in Wales, with Welsh firms now accounting for a combined turnover of over £442 million, up ten per cent in five years.
- £26.9 million was paid out from the Compensation Fund, against an average of £14.8 million across the last seven years

Our Upholding Professional Standards Report covers our enforcement work and includes a review of the diversity characteristics [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/upholding-professional-standards-2020-21--diversity-monitoring-supporting-report/] of solicitors involved, alongside a supporting report setting out the detail.

Findings in this area for 2020/21 were in line with a similar analysis for 2019/20 published last December, and again show an over representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors, and men, in both concerns raised with us and investigated when compared with the diversity of the profession as a whole.

We have commissioned independent research [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/research-disproportionate-

outcomes-2022/] into the societal and structural factors that may be driving the over representation in reports made to us, as well as continually reviewing our own decision making, and improved diversity data collection.

Anna Bradley, Chair of the SRA Board ,said: 'These reports provide an overview of our work last year. Together they show that we are, overall, doing a good job of maintaining standards and protecting legal service users where necessary. But there is also room for improvement, for instance, in concluding cases in a timely way. This is in everyone's interest – the public and the profession – which is why the Board takes a strong interest in our improvement programme.

'We also take a special interest in our work to address the long-standing pattern of over representation of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic solicitors reported to us and in our processes. We know the reasons for this will be complex, which is why we have commissioned in-depth research. We are looking forward to the findings, so we can take whatever steps we can to change the picture for the future.'

Our full suite of annual reports cover these key areas:

- Authorisation [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/authorising-profession/]
- Client Protection [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/client-protection-interventions-and-the-compensation-fund--202021---corporate-report/]
- Education and Training [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/education-training-2020-21/]
- Upholding Professional Standards [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/upholding-professional-standards-202021/]