

## News

### *Youth court advocacy*

06 January 2022

A review of the training records of 122 law firms involved in youth court work found that 78 per cent of solicitors working in the youth court were taking the required steps to reflect on their skills, identify any gaps, and address their training needs.

Rule 3.3 of the SRA's Code of Conduct for individuals

[\[https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-solicitors/#rule-3\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-solicitors/#rule-3) says that solicitors must maintain their competence to carry out their work by regularly reflecting on what skills and knowledge they should have, assessing if there are any gaps and then taking relevant steps to address any issues. Evidence that they are doing this should be kept in their individual training record.

Of those solicitors who had reflected on their training needs, more than half said this led them to identifying and addressing specific gaps in their knowledge or skills. Steps taken typically involved self-reviewing relevant case law or changes to youth court procedures, external training or accessing resources such as podcasts on key issues.

In total, the review identified 356 solicitors who were involved with youth court work during the period 1 January to 31 December 2019. Regardless of whether they had reflected on their specific need or not, three quarters of these (76%) had undertaken some form of training during the review period.

However, only four per cent undertook any training on how to deal with vulnerable children and young people during the year, a key component of effective advocacy work in the youth court.

The review focussed on firms who had indicated that they were involved in youth court during 2019. This was selected as the year to review in order that the findings were not distorted by any potential impact the Covid-19 pandemic may have had upon how youth courts or law firms operate.

We are currently drafting new guidance to help those practising in this area based on the findings of this review [\[https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/training-records-solicitors-practising-youth-court/\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/training-records-solicitors-practising-youth-court/) .