

News release

Solicitors adapt to professional development changes

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The introduction of revised approach to maintaining and developing skills among solicitors has been well received by law firms.

Since we introduced the requirements known as 'Continuing Competence' in 2016, 40 percent of law firms report that they have increased the amount of learning and development support offered to their solicitors.

Half of firms (52 percent) say that levels of learning and development have remained unchanged, with just 9 percent reporting a reduction in the focus given to this area.

All solicitors are required to make a declaration on what training and development they have undertaken over the past 12 months as part of their annual renewal application. To help better understand the impact of the new approach we also conducted an online survey of 500 firms and solicitors and visited 20 firms.

Other key feedback on the continuing competence approach

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/continuing-competence/>] , included:

- Most firms and solicitors implemented the new regime without significant problems
- The new approach is seen as more flexible and able to adapt to individual needs and specialisms
- Most firms reported a reduction in the cost of learning and development by better focussing activity on specific roles and teams
- Some solicitors claim it is difficult to make time to reflect, identify and address their learning and development needs

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: "Keeping up to date is a fundamental part of how solicitors ensure they are delivering a good quality of service to their clients. It's good to hear that law firms are saying they keeping better tabs on their training needs, and that the new approach has given them more room to address skills gaps."

We did find that a small number of solicitors are consistently failing to return their continuing competence declaration, or in some cases are making a nil return. It will be writing to these individuals asking them to explain why this

is the case. If there is a failure to comply with regulatory requirements, the SRA will consider disciplinary action.

SRA resources to support the continuing competence regime include:

- providing examples of good training records, and explain how we use training records to monitor competence
- providing examples of managing the time involved in maintaining competence
- case studies and materials.

These can be found at: <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/cpd/toolkit/continuing-competence-toolkit.page>

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Note to editors

1. The SRA is the regulator of solicitors and law firms in England and Wales, protecting consumers and supporting the rule of law and the administration of justice. The SRA does this by overseeing all education and training requirements necessary to practise as a solicitor, licensing individuals and firms to practise, setting the standards of the profession and regulating and enforcing compliance against these standards. Further information is available at www.sra.org.uk
2. Contact the SRA press office via: 0121 329 6482