

Price transparency Q&A

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Q1. Does the SRA want to dictate what firms charge?

We are not interfering in what firms charge, that is a matter for you, your clients and market competition. Whatever you choose to charge, we want that information made readily available on your website, so that members of the public and businesses can make informed choices when they are looking for legal help.

Q2. Is the SRA dictating what pricing models firms should use? ie stating a preference for fixed fees?

You are best placed to judge what pricing model works best for you and your clients whether that is fixed fees, hourly rates, or unbundled services. Whichever model you use, we simply require that you publish information which will help people understand the basis on which they would be charged.

Q3. Will the rules only apply to small/High Street firms?

The rules apply to all law firms who publicise that they offer services in the areas of law we have selected, regardless of the size of the firm.

Q4. Do the rules only apply to firms offering services to the public?

The rules also apply to firms who publicise that they provide services to business clients (of all sizes) in the areas of employment, debt recovery and licensing applications.

Q5. Do the rules only apply to firms who proactively market/seek to attract new clients?

If you put a list of services that you provide into the public domain (for example on your website, in a shop window, within directory listings etc) or proactively promote the specific services you offer in marketing or advertising materials, you must comply with the price transparency requirements.

Firms who only deal with clients on a full-service retained basis, or who exclusively work in areas not covered by the requirements, do not have to publish price and service information, although many may choose to.

Q6. Publishing price information will bind me to a specific cost. What if this proves to be unrealistic once a client briefs me on the full details of their case?

The information you publish is designed to provide people with a good indication of the likely costs you charge for a typical case.

You should bear in mind that your existing obligations under the SRA Code of Conduct 2011 remain relevant. Particularly outcome 1.13 on providing clients with the best possible information about the likely overall cost, both at the time of engagement and when appropriate as the matter progresses.

Q7. If I do not have a website, do the rules do not apply to me?

If you do not have a website, you must still provide the information on request in other formats for anyone who requests it.

And of course, you have existing obligations under our Code of Conduct, particularly outcome 1.13 on providing clients with the best possible information about the likely overall cost, both at the time of engagement and when appropriate as the matter progresses.

Q8. Does the requirements to publish complaints processes and the SRA clickable logo, only applies to firms captured within the price transparency requirements?

The requirement to publish details of your complaints procedures applies to all regulated firms, regardless of type, size or areas of specialism.

While initially a voluntary scheme, the requirement to publish the SRA clickable logo will also become compulsory for all firms, from a to be confirmed date in Spring/Summer 2019.

Q9. What if this makes the public just focus on price when choosing legal services?

Research consistently shows that the most important factor people consider when choosing a legal service provider is quality, closely followed by price. However, the majority struggle to find any pricing information at the moment.

Accessible information on services and price means that people will be able to make informed decisions about which providers offer the best value for money taking account of both these factors. The evidence shows that this does not mean they will automatically select the cheapest option.