



Suzanne Hughes
Employee
7017418

[Employee-related decision Date: 4 January 2023](#)

Decision - Employee-related decision

Outcome: Control of non-qualified staff (Section 43 / Section 99 order)

Outcome date: 4 January 2023

Published date: 16 January 2023

Firm details

Firm or organisation at time of matters giving rise to outcome

Name: Harringtons Legal LLP

Address(es): Gazette Buildings, 168 Corporation Street, Birmingham, B4 6TF

Firm ID: 550930

Outcome details

This outcome was reached by SRA decision.

Decision details

1. Agreed outcome

1.1 Suzanne Hughes, a former employee of Harringtons Legal LLP, a recognised body (the Firm), agrees to the following outcome to the investigation of her conduct by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA):

- a. to the SRA making an order under section 43 of the Solicitors Act 1974 (a section 43 order) in relation to her that, from the date of this agreement:
 - i. no solicitor shall employ or remunerate her in connection with his practice as a solicitor
 - ii. no employee of a solicitor shall employ or remunerate her in connection with the solicitor's practice
 - iii. no recognised body shall employ or remunerate her.
 - iv. no manager or employee of a recognised body shall employ or remunerate her in connection with the business of that body



- v. no recognised body or manager or employee of such a body shall permit her to be a manager of the body
- vi. no recognised body or manager or employee of such body shall permit her to have an interest in the body except in accordance with the SRA's prior permission
- b. to the publication of this agreement
- c. she will pay the costs of the investigation of £300.

2. Summary of facts

2.1 Ms Hughes was employed by the Firm from 10 July 2006. Her roles included being a police station accredited representative where she would attend police stations or prisons on behalf of the firm and give advice to clients.

2.2 On 20 November 2019, the Firm reported to the SRA that Ms Hughes had been arrested for communicating with a client, now a serving prisoner, via a mobile phone that the client had not been authorised to have in his possession.

2.3 On 22 November 2019, the Firm dismissed Ms Hughes.

2.4 The subsequent police investigation established that the client was arrested on 13 June 2019 and requested the Firm represent him at the police station. Ms Hughes attended the client's police station interview on 14 June 2019.

2.5 Thereafter the client was remanded in prison and between 19 June 2019 and 22 October 2019, Ms Hughes:

- sent to the client's mobile phone two text messages and
- received and answered a total of 18 calls made from the client's mobile phone.

2.6 On 26 May 2022 at Birmingham Crown Court, Ms Hughes pleaded guilty to intentionally encouraging or assisting a prisoner communicating using an unauthorised mobile phone, contrary to Section 40d of the Prisons Act 1952. She received: • a six-month prison sentence suspended for 12 months and • was ordered to carry out 150 hours community service.

2.7 The police told the SRA about the conviction on 12 July 2022.

3. Admissions

3.1 Ms Hughes agrees and the SRA accepts, that her conviction means that it is undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice.

4. Why a section 43 order is appropriate



4.1 The SRA's Enforcement Strategy and its guidance on how it regulates nonauthorised persons, sets out its approach to using section 43 orders to control where a non-authorised person can work.

4.2 When considering whether a section 43 order is appropriate in this matter, the SRA has taken into account the admissions made by Ms Hughes and the following mitigation which she has put forward: (a) Ms Hughes made a full and frank admission of wrongdoing in her letter to the judge and apologised for her conduct.

4.3 The SRA and Ms Hughes agree that a section 43 order is appropriate because:

- a. Ms Hughes is not a solicitor.
- b. she was employed and remunerated by the Firm, a recognised body, at the time of her conduct.
- c. she has been convicted of an offence which makes it undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice.

4.4 Ms Hughes sent text messages to and answered multiple calls from an unauthorised mobile phone a prisoner was using in prison. The prisoner was also her client and by communicating in these ways, she encouraged and assisted her client committing further offences, contrary to that client's best interests.

4.5 As a police station accredited representative, she ought to have known that for her to do either of these things was against the law. Her behaviour questions the high standards of professional judgment which someone delivering legal services should demonstrate.

4.6 It is also undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice because the repeated and serious nature of her conduct, resulting in a conviction, lacked integrity and undermined public trust and confidence in the safe delivery of legal services. There is a risk that she would repeat this behaviour if she works in the delivery of legal services uncontrolled.

5. Publication

5.1 The SRA considers it appropriate that this agreement is published in the interests of transparency in the regulatory process. Ms Hughes agrees to the publication of this agreement.

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

6.1 Ms Hughes agrees that she will not deny the admissions made in this agreement or act in any way which is inconsistent with it.

7. Costs

7.1 Ms Hughes agrees to pay the costs of the SRA's investigation in the sum of £300. Such costs are due within 28 days of a statement of costs due being issued by the SRA.

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