

Reporting an individual or firm

We work with solicitors, firms, other types of lawyers and non-lawyers to make sure they comply with our Principles [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page#principles>], to make sure they behave independently, fairly and with integrity to best serve the interests of their clients and the public interest. We welcome information about dishonesty or breaches of our Principles [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page>]; however, we are not able to deal with issues of poor service.

The Legal Services Ombudsman deals with complaints about poor service. Poor service includes failures to keep you properly informed about your legal matter. The SRA deals with failures to comply with professional obligations such as a duty to keep your affairs confidential or duty to act honestly and with integrity. Some failures to comply with professional obligations can also amount to poor service. The Legal Ombudsman's website will help identify how you can best receive help. If you report poor service to the Legal Services Ombudsman and they consider it amounts to a failure to comply with professional obligations they will also pass the matter to the SRA for us to consider. The Legal Services Ombudsman may direct a firm or individual pay you compensation for poor service. The SRA cannot award compensation to you. Our powers are regulatory and include taking action against the firm or individual concerned such as helping them to comply with their obligations or, where the issue is serious, controlling the way they work in the future.

If you have a problem with your solicitor, please read the following information carefully to find out

- how to complain to your solicitor [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#how-complain](http://www.sra.org.uk#how-complain)]
- how and when to complain to the Legal Ombudsman [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#legal-ombudsman](http://www.sra.org.uk#legal-ombudsman)]
- when you should report your solicitor or firm to the SRA [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#when-report-sra](http://www.sra.org.uk#when-report-sra)]
- how to report a solicitor or firm to the SRA [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#how-report-sra](http://www.sra.org.uk#how-report-sra)]
- what we will do when you report your solicitor to us [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#what-we-will-do](http://www.sra.org.uk#what-we-will-do)], and
- our service levels [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#service-levels](http://www.sra.org.uk#service-levels)], our role and legal powers [[link: http://www.sra.org.uk#role-legal-powers](http://www.sra.org.uk#role-legal-powers)]
- We regulate more than 10,500 law firms in England and Wales. Our mission is protect the public and set the standards of professional behaviour for solicitors and others we regulate. You may want to know what kind of things you can complain to us about and find out what action we can take on your complaint. Perhaps you'd also like to know how to make a complaint to us. To learn more, download our leaflet below or keep reading this web page.

Making a complaint to the SRA: What you need to know (PDF 2 pages, 744K)

[<http://www.sra.org.uk/documents/consumers/complaint-sra-need-to-know-leaflet.pdf>]

How to complain to your solicitor

You must always try complaining to your solicitor or firm first. In most cases you will not be able to take your complaint further—whether to the Legal Ombudsman or to us—if you have not already done so.

You may find that approaching the problem informally at first will resolve things. However, if this does not work, your solicitor should always give you information on their official complaints procedure and your right to take the complaint to the Legal Ombudsman.

When you make your complaint, you should

- make a complaint as soon as possible, once you are clear what the issue is and while it is fresh in your mind;
- be clear on what your complaint is about and how you would like it to be resolved—keep a note of the relevant points that you would like to address;
- make a note of who you spoke to, and what was said—this will come in handy if you need to chase your complaint up or take it further;
- keep calm, and be polite—even though you may be very frustrated, it is much easier to get the result you want by being reasonable; and
- give them some time to resolve your complaint—the Legal Ombudsman suggests up to eight weeks.

Further help, including a template of a complaint letter and more hints and tips on how to make a complaint, is available on the Legal Ombudsman's website [link:

<http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/>]. If you have difficulty accessing services, or expressing yourself clearly, organisations such as Citizen's Advice [link: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>] may be able to help you.

How to follow up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman

If you have already complained to the solicitor or firm that you have a problem with, and they have not resolved the complaint to your satisfaction within eight weeks of your complaint, you can then take your case to the Legal Ombudsman [link: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/>]. You must usually have complained to your solicitor or firm or they will not accept your complaint.

The Legal Ombudsman deals with all aspects of poor service, such as

- delayed or unclear communication
- problems with your fees, or
- loss of documents.

The Legal Ombudsman can

- order the lawyer or firm to apologise,
- order the lawyer or firm to refund all or part of your fees
- order the lawyer or firm to return your documents, and
- pay compensation if you have lost out due to poor service.

The Legal Ombudsman's investigators aim to resolve cases quickly and informally by helping you and the firm or lawyer to come to an agreement. If they are unable to do that, an Ombudsman will be asked to make a decision. Those decisions are legally binding and they can enforce them through the courts if necessary.

The Ombudsman is trained to recognise matters of dishonesty and breaches of our Principles [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page#principles>], and has a Memorandum of understanding (PDF, 3 pages, 66K) [[link: http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/downloads/documents/work_other_bodies/100106-MoU-Legal-Ombudsman-and-SRA-FINAL.pdf](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/downloads/documents/work_other_bodies/100106-MoU-Legal-Ombudsman-and-SRA-FINAL.pdf)]

with the SRA and other legal regulatory bodies (such as the Bar Standards Board [[link: http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/)] and ILEX Professional Standards [[link: http://www.ilex.org.uk/ips/ips_home.aspx](http://www.ilex.org.uk/ips/ips_home.aspx)]) to report such cases for investigation.

You can contact the Legal Ombudsman by

- calling them on 0300 555 0333
- visiting the Legal Ombudsman website [[link: http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/)], or
- emailing them at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk [[link: http://www.sra.org.ukmailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.ukmailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)].

When you should report a solicitor to the SRA

We deal with cases where firms or those we regulate have breached the SRA Principles. Most of the time, complaints about solicitors are about poor service, and therefore should be sent to the Legal Ombudsman [[link: http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/)]. If the Legal Ombudsman thinks your case involves a breach of our Principles, they will refer your case to us. Likewise, if you report a solicitor to us for poor service, we will refer you to the Legal Ombudsman; read our Memorandum of understanding (PDF, 3 pages, 66K) [[link: http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/downloads/documents/work_other_bodies/100106-MoU-Legal-Ombudsman-and-SRA-FINAL.pdf](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/downloads/documents/work_other_bodies/100106-MoU-Legal-Ombudsman-and-SRA-FINAL.pdf)] for more information on this arrangement. We do not have the power to award compensation for poor service, or to reduce or refund your legal fees.

However, you should report the matter directly to us if you think a firm or anyone regulated by us has breached an SRA Principle [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page#principles>] .

You can also report a firm or someone regulated by us for non-payment of professional fees (such as agent or expert fees) if

- you have a County Court judgment in respect of the fee, and
- the judgment relates to the practice in connection with providing a legal service.

There are some issues we do not investigate. However, we always consider allegations of dishonesty or discrimination.

If we have closed a firm and you believe that the firm owes you money, you may be able to make a claim from our Compensation Fund [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/solicitor-owes-money.page>] .

The SRA has stopped authorising solicitors who wish to act as an Insolvency Practitioner.

If your complaint is in connection with the solicitor's appointment under the Insolvency Act 1986

please contact the Recognised Professional Body [link: <http://www.sra.org.uk><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/insolvency-practitioners-recognised-professional-bodies/recognised-professional-bodies>] that is now authorising the individual. If the solicitor has taken an appointment and is not authorised by a Recognised Professional Body then he or she may be committing a criminal offence.

If your complaint is in relation to the legal services provided by a solicitor Insolvency Practitioner please refer back to the guidance on this page.

How to report a solicitor or firm to the SRA

When reporting, please

- set out your concerns clearly,
- identify individuals you consider responsible,
- attach any evidence you have in support.

To send your information to us:

- Complete our report form (DOC 184K, 2 pages) [<http://www.sra.org.uk/documents/consumers/report-solicitor-form.doc>] and send it to
Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN
or
- Email us at report@sra.org.uk [link: <http://www.sra.org.ukmailto:report@sra.org.uk>];

For guidance on the complaints process, call our contact centre [<http://www.sra.org.uk/contact-us>]. Note that we cannot provide advice about your issue, however we can point you in the right direction.

What we will do

We acknowledge all initial reports of information by

- thanking you for providing the information, and
- confirming how we handle your information.

Sometimes we may decide to contact you again if

- we believe that you have, or have access to, further information which we need to take the right action, and/or
- we think you may be required to act as a witness or to provide a witness statement—more information about this is available in our guidance to witnesses [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/guidance-witnesses.page>].

Read more about our approach to handling information that you have sent to us [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/providing-information.page>].

Read more about the different regulatory outcomes [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor->

[check.page#outcome-types](#)]

Our service standards

As far as we can be, we are open and transparent.

If you are unhappy with your dealings with us, you can complain to us

[\[http://www.sra.org.uk/complain\]](http://www.sra.org.uk/complain) .

Our role and powers

Our aim is to work with individuals and firms we regulate to ensure they comply with SRA Principles [\[http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page#principles\]](http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page#principles) set by us.

Where there is a failure to comply with the Principles, we take into account the risk posed to the public and consumers to help us decide how best to ensure they are protected. Where the risk posed is serious we can take formal enforcement action, such as limiting or restricting the way they work. In very serious cases, we can close a firm or ensure an individual is unable to practice in the future. Find out more about how we regulate [\[http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page\]](http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page) .

We may publish our regulatory decisions [\[http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/recent-decisions/recent-decisions.page\]](http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/recent-decisions/recent-decisions.page) .

We have extensive powers, however, we do not have the power to resolve complaints about poor service. Neither can we require a law firm to compensate you.

Video: I'm unhappy with my lawyer - what shall I do?

More videos: Managing your relationship with your lawyer [\[http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/using-solicitor/get-best-solicitor.page#video\]](http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/using-solicitor/get-best-solicitor.page#video)]