

# Providing information and intelligence to the SRA

Last updated 20 January 2015

## Background

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) protects the public by regulating law firms and individuals who provide legal services. We set standards necessary to ensure that clients receive a good service and that the rule of law is upheld. Our work focuses on firms and behaviour that causes risk to the public, and through this work we receive information from many different sources.

Our role is separate from the Legal Ombudsman (LeO) [[link: http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/)]. The LeO also receives information from a range of sources, but it is an independent service for consumers looking to resolve complaints about service provided by their lawyer or firm, or seeking financial compensation.

We can receive reports from anyone who has concerns about a law firm or an individual that we regulate. This can include

- members of the public, or people representing them such as relatives or Members of Parliament
- lawyers and employees of law firms, or
- other regulators and professional bodies.

However, we do not take forward personal complaints made against firms. We are a risk-based regulator with limited resources that we use to tackle risks to the public interest.

This note explains

- our interest in receiving information
- how we deal with reports that are made to us, and
- how we decide whether to keep in contact with someone reporting information to us.

## Giving information to the SRA

People who are concerned about the service provided by their lawyer or law firm should contact the LeO. If the LeO identifies issues that need our attention they can refer information to us, and we can also refer information to them. We have an agreement in place to support this arrangement which we call our Memorandum of Understanding (PDF, 3 pages, 66KB) [[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)]. You can also download our Legal Ombudsman Protocol (PDF, 6 pages, 114KB) [<http://www.sra.org.uk/documents/consumers/legal-ombudsman-protocol.pdf>].

We are concerned by behaviour by law firms that indicates serious risk to the public such as financial wrongdoing or dishonesty. We welcome reports about these matters.

Information we receive may be used in our investigations. That might include it being disclosed to the law firm it relates to. If information is provided to us on a confidential basis, we will take appropriate steps to protect your identity.

People sending very sensitive information, or who are concerned about the firm in question knowing it has been given to us, may wish to talk to our Fraud and Confidential Intelligence Bureau [<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/fraud-dishonesty.page> ] .

## How we handle information provided to us

We acknowledge all initial reports of information by

- thanking the person providing the information, and
- confirming how we handle information we receive.

Sometimes we may decide to contact a person who has already provided information to us. This depends on the circumstances in each case. For example, this might happen if

- we believe they have, or have access to, further information which we need to take the right action, and/or
- we think they 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> ] .

## How we apply risk assessments to information we receive

We direct our resources to the areas of greatest risk to the public interest, and high-risk issues are given priority. All information we receive is given a risk score based on many different types of risk. Information on how we do this is available in our incoming reports assessment [<http://www.sra.org.uk/riskassess/> ] .

The risks we are concerned about develop over time in response to changes and trends in the law, the legal services market and in how law firms work. We regularly explain how we assess risk online and in papers that we publish.

Depending on the information someone provides, we may take different types of action, including

- keeping the information for future use in deciding whether a particular law firm poses a risk to the public—we call this outcome "No engagement at present" [<http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitor-report/no-engagement-at-present.page> ]
- using the information to supervise a law firm more closely, and
- using the information as part of a formal investigation of a particular law firm.

## How we approach equality and diversity when we receive information

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy [<http://www.sra.org.uk/diversity/> ] helps us operate fairly when we receive information, and we make sure our services are accessible. Ways that we do this include

- providing information and support through this website, making sure it is accessible [<http://www.sra.org.uk/accessibility> ] , and

- working with professional equality groups and consumer representative groups to raise awareness of SRA policies and procedures.

We are committed to providing reasonable adjustments and can provide our information in an alternative format upon request. We also consider any other reasonable adjustments required by people sending us information and intelligence. Read our Reasonable adjustments policy [<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/reasonable-adjustment-policy.page>] for more details about this.

We carry out equality impact assessments [<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/impact-assessments/assessments.page>] on all of our procedures to help identify actions relating to positive or adverse impacts they may create.

## How we apply our approach

Our approach applies to

- all information received by the SRA, and
- all new, ongoing and closed SRA investigations.

This procedure does not apply to

- requests made to us under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 [[link: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents)] in line with the Law Society's Code of Practice (PDF, 5 pages, 62K) [[link: http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Get-in-touch/Freedom-of-information/Freedom-of-information-code-of-practice/](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Get-in-touch/Freedom-of-information/Freedom-of-information-code-of-practice/)],
- receiving information defined as "intelligence", which we handle in accordance with the National Intelligence Model [[link: http://www.sra.org.ukhttps://ict.police.uk/national-standards/intel/](http://www.sra.org.ukhttps://ict.police.uk/national-standards/intel/)]
- situations where we have an agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding in place with those reporting information to us, and
- any circumstances covered by the following SRA policies:
  - Managing unreasonable behaviour towards SRA staff [<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/complaints/unreasonable-behaviour-policy.page>], and
  - Transparency, protecting the public, and reasons for investigations [<http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/we-are-investigating-you/transparency-public-protection-and-reasons-for-investigations.page>]

## More information

The SRA's contact centre [<http://www.sra.org.uk/contact-us>]

The SRA's Fraud and Confidential Intelligence Bureau

[<http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/fraud-dishonesty.page>]

Email: [fraud@sra.org.uk](mailto:fraud@sra.org.uk) [[link: http://www.sra.org.ukmailto:fraud@sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.ukmailto:fraud@sra.org.uk)]