

News release

SRA issues first fixed penalties

16 November 2023

We have published details of the first fixed penalties we have issued since introducing the new fixed financial penalty regime.

The £750 fines published today are in relation to three firms for not complying with our transparency rules. Breaches included:

- failure to publish information explaining key stages and likely timescales relating to services
- failure to publish details on experience and qualifications of those working on some, or all, of the service areas covered by the rules
- failure to include information on disbursement costs and VAT in published prices

We have other live cases which might result in further fixed penalties for firms not complying with the transparency rules. Firms are sent notices of potential fines, with the opportunity to put the issue right. In many cases, the threat of penalties is resulting in firms becoming compliant.

If those firms who have been fined continue not to comply with the rules, they could potentially face a further fixed penalty of £1,500.

Paul Philip, Chief Executive of the SRA, said: 'Compliance is clearly not optional. Our transparency rules are there to benefit the public, helping people compare law firms' services and make informed choices. All those firms that are publishing the correct information rightly expect that we will take action against those who don't.

'We brought in fixed penalties so we could deal with non-complex breaches of our rules more swiftly. That saves everyone time, cost and stress. It also appears that the threat of fixed penalties is proving effective in bringing firms into compliance.'

Our transparency rules require all regulated law firms to publish price and service information relating to certain common services on their websites, or make it available offline if they do not have a website. They also require firms to publish information on complaints procedures, and to display our clickable logo to help consumers understand the protections they get from using a regulated firm.

Other areas where we could potentially issue fixed penalties, and has seen a resultant increase in compliance, include recent requests for firms to complete mandatory anti-money laundering and diversity data returns.

When we take disciplinary action, such as fining a firm, we will publish our decision on [the Solicitors Register](https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/register/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/register/>], which enables the public to look up the record of the solicitors and law firms we regulate.

Our new fixed penalty regime was introduced as part of wider reforms to our approach to issuing financial penalties. Under the reforms, we introduced a [schedule of fixed penalties](https://www.sra.org.uk/link/18de3563f0b949a08c2b26f00f097dc8.aspx#rule-111) [<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/18de3563f0b949a08c2b26f00f097dc8.aspx#rule-111>] for firms of up to £1,500. These apply to a small number of lower-level breaches of our rules enabling them to be dealt with more effectively and in a timely way.

The changes to our fining approach also saw the maximum level of fine that we can issue directly rise from £2,000 to £25,000 for traditional law firms.

Read the fines:

- [Crystal Law Limited](https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/615593/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/615593/>]
- [Ola Leslie Solicitors LLP](https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/612672/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/612672/>]
- [Williams Hortor Law and Mediation](https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/654640/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/solicitor-check/654640/>]