

SRA Update

Issue 111 - January 2023

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Welcome to the latest issue of SRA Update, and a happy New Year. While we might have taken some time off for Christmas, the legal services sector didn't, and there are a number of things to update you on. The Government's financial sanctions regime – which applies to all firms, not just those captured by anti-money laundering regulations – continues to be tightened, with trust services work now included. We have more information on that.

We also want your views on some minor changes we are making to our Standards and Regulations in response to your feedback. Our latest gender and ethnicity pay gap reports have been reported - we have an obligation under the Legal Services Act to encourage a diverse profession, so it's only right that we look to make sure our own workforce reflects those it serves. Publishing pay gap data is part of making the changes we all want to see.

Paul Philip

Chief Executive

[Keep up to date with the financial sanctions regime](#)

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/sanctions-regime-stay-compliant/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/sanctions-regime-stay-compliant/)

We have published guidance to help you understand your obligations under the Government's financial sanctions regime. This situation is fast-developing – the regulations changed just before Christmas to include a ban on providing trust services to those connected with Russia, while the regime continues to expand and now includes Haiti. Our guidance should help you keep up to date.

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[Standards and Regulations - minor amends to our rules](#)

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/)



We are consulting on a series of minor amendments to our Standards and Regulations to clarify our rules. This comes after feedback from stakeholders.

[Read more about: Standards and Regulations - minor amends to our rules](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/>]

[Grant won to develop dispute resolution approaches](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/dispute-resolution-approaches/)

[<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/dispute-resolution-approaches/>]

We have been awarded a grant from the latest round of Regulators Pioneer Fund (RPF) to explore ways to increase the use of technology-enabled dispute resolution to help individuals and businesses resolve legal issues, without the need to go to court.

[Read more about: Grant won to develop dispute resolution approaches](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/dispute-resolution-approaches/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/dispute-resolution-approaches/>]

[Pay gap reports published](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/pay-gap-reports-published/)

[<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/pay-gap-reports-published/>]

We have published our latest gender pay gap and ethnicity pay gap reports, and continue to encourage others in the legal sector to do the same. While publication of the gender pay gap report is a legal requirement for organisations with more than 250 employees, there is no current obligation to publish an ethnicity pay gap data.

[Read more about: Pay gap reports published](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/pay-gap-reports-published/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/pay-gap-reports-published/>]

[Webinar - immigration services thematic review and guidance](https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home)

[<https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home>]

If you want to learn more about our thematic review on immigration services and the subsequent guidance we published, then watch our free webinar on Wednesday 25 January. Learn about the good – and not-so-good - practice we found, and about the checklists that could help your firm improve their services.

[Read more about: Webinar - immigration services thematic review and guidance \[https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home\]](https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home)

Keep cyber safe with essentials programme

[\[https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme\]](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme)

The National Cyber Security Council has launched a new fully funded programme aimed at helping smaller firms have the most basic of protections in place to guard against cybercrime. Support is offered to help you get certification from the council, which helps keep you and your clients safe. This programme will be open for three months so apply now

[Read more about: Keep cyber safe with essentials programme \[https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme\]](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme)

Get ready for Keeping of the Roll this year

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/annual-exercise-solicitors-practising-certificates/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/annual-exercise-solicitors-practising-certificates/)

This year, we are planning to reintroduce a requirement for solicitors without a current practising certificate to apply to remain on the roll. Ahead of this it is important that all solicitors without a practising certificate check that their contact details within mySRA are up to date.

[Read more about: Get ready for Keeping of the Roll this year \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/annual-exercise-solicitors-practising-certificates/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/annual-exercise-solicitors-practising-certificates/)

Familiarise yourselves with new ombudsman rules

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/)

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) has consulted on a number of changes to its scheme rules, which come into effect on 1 April, 2023. LeO is keen for you to look at what's being proposed so that you know what it means for you and how it might affect you.

[Read more about: Familiarise yourselves with new ombudsman rules \[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/)

Your health, your career

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/)

Are you worried about your health affecting your work? Life as a solicitor can be challenging and the demands and pressures can easily build up. We can signpost you to sources of help and make adjustments for you if you are in difficulty.

[Read more about: Your health, your career](#)

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/)

Welcome to the Compliance News section of the latest issue of SRA Update, and a happy New Year to you all. This section flags the Government's financial sanctions regime – which applies to all firms, not just those captured by anti-money laundering regulations – continues to be tightened, with trust services work now included. We have more information on that.

There's also new guidance on supervising staff, which all firms have an obligation to do. And it's now more than three years since our transparency rules became compulsory. They have been proven to bring a business benefit to firms by attracting more potential clients. We are undertaking work to see who is complying with the rules and will be taking increasingly robust action where firms are falling short.

Paul Philip

Chief Executive

Supervision of staff, new guidance

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/effective-supervision-guidance/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/effective-supervision-guidance/)

We have published guidance on supervising staff. Our Codes of Conduct outline how firms have a responsibility for making sure employees keep their skills and knowledge up to date and that client matters are handled properly. This can particularly be challenging now that hybrid working looks here to stay.

[Read more about: Supervision of staff, new guidance](#)

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SLAPPs - don't get caught up in abusive litigation

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/solicitors-warned-slapps/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/solicitors-warned-slapps/)



We are concerned, alongside increasing public concern, about the use of abusive litigation aimed at silencing legitimate critics, known as strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). To help you make sure you are not acting inappropriately, and also to help you recognise and report where others may be doing so, read our recently issued warning notice.

[Read more about: SLAPPs - don't get caught up in abusive litigation](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/solicitors-warned-slapps/)
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Transparency rules - more checks on website information

[<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-107-transparency-rules-checks/>]

We will soon be starting a rolling programme of checks on all law firm websites to make sure you are complying with our transparency rules. Ahead of this, please take a moment to double check you are compliant with all of our transparency requirements.

[Read more about: Transparency rules - more checks on website information](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-107-transparency-rules-checks/) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-107-transparency-rules-checks/>]

Focus on AML

Keep up to date with the financial sanctions regime

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Report rounds up our work

[<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/aml-annual-report-2021-22/>]

The work we do to supervise all firms that are caught by anti-money laundering regulations is captured by a recently-published report. It encapsulates what we did in 2021/22, including our firm visits, reviews

and enforcement work, as well as numbers on suspicious activity reports among other things.

[Read more about: Report rounds up our work](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/aml-annual-report-2021-22/)

[<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/aml-annual-report-2021-22/>]

[Is there a risk when using cryptocurrency?](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/money-laundering/guidance-support/aml-questions-answers/#collapse_8a34)

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The development of new technologies brings with it both opportunities and risks. Cryptocurrency is one such technology and we have been asked about any anti-money laundering implications. You can read more in our AML Q&As page.

[Read more about: Is there a risk when using cryptocurrency?](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/money-laundering/guidance-support/aml-questions-answers/#collapse_8a34)

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