

## Your health, your career

The legal profession can be a highly pressurised and stressful working environment. If that becomes acute, it can have a serious impact on your personal health and wellbeing and your ability to work effectively.

If this happens, the first thing to do is talk to the relevant people at your firm. All firms are bound by our Principles and the Codes of Conduct and should [treat staff fairly and with respect](#) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/workplace-environment/>] and provide support when needed.

If you cannot turn to your employer, please let us know – we may be able to help you manage your responsibilities before things get worse.

[Open all \[#\]](#)

### **Worries about your practice**

If you have concerns about your work or professional responsibilities, you can contact our [Professional Ethics helpline](#) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/>] who can answer your questions and offer guidance. They can also refer you to other sources of help and assistance.

Ethics advisors can help with a range of difficult situations, including:

- dealing with worries about your firm's cashflow or debts
- struggling to manage your workload
- trying to close down your legal practice amidst health problems
- managing complaints from demanding clients.

## How we helped

### **A solicitor closing down his practice on retirement**

Mr X was a sole practitioner who had run his own business for 40 years. Due to serious illness, he had not been able to keep on top of his practice and realised he had to retire. He was feeling overwhelmed and did not know how to proceed or where to get help.

Mr X contacted us for advice, and our dedicated team was able to outline his options and prepare a plan for him. We agreed to call Mr X every fortnight to help him stay on track and answer his questions. We also arranged a visit to his office at his request to make sure everything was in order.



Mr X found the closing down plan very helpful, as it focused his mind on the key actions and made sure he did not miss anything important. He also appreciated the regular contact with us and was able to close down his practice properly without putting his health at further risk.

### **A solicitor with financial difficulties**

Mrs R called us in distress to explain that she could not pay her firm fees due to financial difficulties and was afraid she may have to close her practice.

We told her about the help offered by the Solicitors' Assistance Scheme and how to get in touch with them. We also talked her through paying her fee and referred her to sources of help and assistance should she need it in the future. Mrs R was grateful for the information and said wished she had contacted us sooner.

## **[Help if you are being investigated](#)**

We know it is stressful when things go wrong at work, and if this ends up in a report to the SRA about you, this will only add to the pressure.

To help you understand what to expect and how we make our decisions, see our [guidance](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/investigating-you/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/investigating-you/].

The person handling your investigation can answer your questions and if you are not well, may be able to provide reasonable adjustments. This means doing things differently to help you through our processes if you have a disability, health problem or mental health issue.

You can read more about [our approach to reasonable adjustments](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-policies/policy/reasonable-adjustment-policy/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-policies/policy/reasonable-adjustment-policy/] and typical adjustments we can make include:

- Allowing you more time when you make an application to us or respond to our enquiries (we will tell you if we cannot extend a time limit set by law).
- Agree for you to have someone with you during an interview or firm visit.
- Provide a single person to manage your communication with us if several departments are involved.

Some reasonable adjustments are straightforward, but for others we may need medical evidence. You can read more about our [approach to health issues and medical evidence](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/sra-investigations-health-issues-and-medical-evidence/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/sra-investigations-health-issues-and-medical-evidence/].

## **How we helped**



## **A solicitor being contacted from different departments**

Mr T's firm was being shut down and we had one team working with him to make sure this was done properly. A second team was investigating an outstanding issue of concern and a third team was liaising with Mr T about charges and funds.

Mr T told us he was suffering from depression, and this was all getting too much for him. He explained that he found it stressful dealing with the various departments on different matters and was struggling to keep on top of it all.

We offered Mr T one point of contact, a person he could contact about all the outstanding matters. They agreed to call Mr T once a week (on a specified day and time) to update him about all three matters. Mr T felt he was able to handle the situation much better this way and was more in control of the situation.

## **A solicitor was struggling to deal with our inquiries**

Following a complaint, we wrote to Ms D and asked her for information to help with our inquiry. When we did not hear back from her, we visited Ms D's practice and discovered she had been unwell for some time.

Ms D told us she had family problems and was going through a divorce. She was also seeing her doctor about her anxiety and stress.

Once Ms D provided medical evidence, we assessed the situation and decided there was no risk to clients if we put our investigation on hold for a limited period. We agreed to this, having monthly contact with Ms D and after six months, she was feeling much better and was able to help us.

## **Other sources of help**

### **Organisations that help and support lawyers**

There are a number of organisations who help legal professionals with personal and professional issues.

[Law Society \[https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/contact-or-visit-us/helplines/\]](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/contact-or-visit-us/helplines/) - The Law Society's free and confidential helplines include:

- Practice Advice Service - support on legal practice and if you are experiencing bullying harassment or discrimination at work.
- Lawyerline - help with guidance on client care and handling complaints



- Pastoral care helpline – personal, financial or employment difficulties.

[LawCare \[http://www.lawcare.org.uk/\]](http://www.lawcare.org.uk/) - LawCare provides free, confidential emotional support to anyone working in the law.

[Solicitors' Assistance Scheme \[http://www.thesas.org.uk/\]](http://www.thesas.org.uk/) - The Solicitors' Assistance Scheme offers free confidential help, advice and guidance to solicitors with a professional or personal problem, from a fellow practitioner.

[The Solicitors' Charity \[https://www.thesolicitorscharity.org/\]](https://www.thesolicitorscharity.org/) - The Solicitors' Charity provides financial, emotional and practical support to help people get back on track when times are hard.

## **Charities**

[MIND \[https://www.mind.org.uk/\]](https://www.mind.org.uk/) - Information and support about mental health

[Samaritans \[https://www.samaritans.org/\]](https://www.samaritans.org/) - Support and guidance to help with issues such as financial worries, stress, depression and suicidal feelings

## **Healthcare**

[NHS \[https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/\]](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/) - Advice and support on stress, anxiety and depression

## **Professional associations and groups**

Groups set up by fellow solicitors and other lawyers who may provide peer support and friendship.

[Sole Practitioner Group \[https://spg.uk.com/\]](https://spg.uk.com/)

## **Women**

[The Association of Women Lawyers London \[https://www.awslondon.co.uk/\]](https://www.awslondon.co.uk/)

[Women in the Law UK \[https://www.womeninthelawuk.com/\]](https://www.womeninthelawuk.com/)

[TLS: Women Solicitors Network \[https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/women-lawyers/\]](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/women-lawyers/)

## **Disability**

[TLS: Disabled Solicitors Network \[https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/lawyers-with-disabilities/about-the-disabled-solicitors-network\]](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/lawyers-with-disabilities/about-the-disabled-solicitors-network)

[The Association of Disabled Lawyers \[https://www.disabledlawyers.co.uk/\]](https://www.disabledlawyers.co.uk/)



## **Ethnic Minority**

[Association of Asian Women Lawyers \[http://www.aawl.org.uk/\]](http://www.aawl.org.uk/)

[Association of British Tamil Lawyers \[https://abtl.org.uk/\]](https://abtl.org.uk/)

[Association of Muslim Lawyers \[https://wearethecity.com/directory/the-association-of-muslim-lawyers/\]](https://wearethecity.com/directory/the-association-of-muslim-lawyers/)

[Birmingham Black Lawyers \[https://www.linkedin.com/company/birmingham-black-lawyers/\]](https://www.linkedin.com/company/birmingham-black-lawyers/)

[Black Solicitors Network \[https://www.blacksolicitorsnetwork.co.uk/\]](https://www.blacksolicitorsnetwork.co.uk/)

[Black Men In Law \[https://www.linkedin.com/in/bmlnetwork/\]](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bmlnetwork/)

[British Ghanaian Lawyer Union \[https://bglu.org/\]](https://bglu.org/)

[British Nigerian Law Forum \[https://bnlf.org.uk/\]](https://bnlf.org.uk/)

[TLS: Ethnic Solicitors Network \[https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/\]](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/)

[Sikhs in Law \[https://sikhsinlaw.co.uk/\]](https://sikhsinlaw.co.uk/)

[Society of Asian Lawyers \[https://www.societyofasianlawyers.co.uk/\]](https://www.societyofasianlawyers.co.uk/)

[Society of British Bangladeshi Solicitors \[https://sbbs.uk/\]](https://sbbs.uk/)

[UK Society of Chinese Lawyers \[https://ukscl.org/\]](https://ukscl.org/)

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