

The Tribunal's decision dated 21 January 2026 (sanction only) is subject to appeal to the High Court (Administrative Court) by the Applicant. The Order remains in force pending the High Court's decision on the appeal.

## SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12555-2024

### BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

JOHN KISHIN NAVANI

Respondent

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Before:

Mrs L Boyce (in the chair)

Mr G Sydenham

Mr B Walsh

Dates of Hearing: 11–12 December 2024 and 24 November 2025–5 December 2025

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### Appearances

Benjamin Tankel, barrister, of 39 Essex Chambers, 81 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1DD (instructed by Capsticks Solicitors of 1 St George's Road, London, SW19 4DR) for the Applicant.

Susanna Heley, solicitor, Russell Cooke Solicitors, 8 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4BX for the Respondent.

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## JUDGMENT

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*The identities of Persons A, B, C, D and E were known to all lawyers acting for the parties, to the Tribunal, and to all factual witnesses. Save as aforesaid, the publication in connection with these proceedings by any person of Persons A, B, C, D and E's name, or any matters personal to Persons A, B, C, D and E which might lead to identification of Persons A, B, C, D and E (including any still or moving picture of Persons A, B, C, D and E) is prohibited.*

## Allegations

1. The allegations against the Respondent, John Kishin Navani, made by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (“SRA”) are that while a solicitor and owner of The Independent Criminal Law Specialists (trading as Criminal Defence Solicitors) (“the Firm”):

- 1.1 Between around June 2016 and June 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person A, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 1.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcomes 2.1 and/or 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

- 1.2 Between around June 2017 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person B, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 2.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcomes 2.1 and/or 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

- 1.3 Between around June 2018 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person C, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 3.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcomes 2.1 and/or 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

- 1.4 Between around September 2018 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person D, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 4.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcomes 2.1 and/or 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

- 1.5 Between around October 2018 and February 2019, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person E, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 5.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcomes 2.1 and/or 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

- 1.6 Between around 21 December 2018 and January 2019, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person E, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or was sexually motivated, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 6.

In doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 6 and 9 and/or failed to achieve Outcome 11.1 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

### **Executive Summary**

2. This case concerns allegations brought by the Solicitors Regulation Authority against the Respondent, Mr John Kishin Navani, relating to his conduct while in a position of seniority, as a partner at Criminal Defence Solicitors LLP between June 2016 and February 2019.
3. The SRA alleged that the Respondent engaged in behaviour that was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying towards five individuals who worked at the Firm (Persons A–E) comprising five allegations 1.1–1.5, and in respect of Allegation 1.6, that certain conduct was sexually motivated in respect of Person E. The allegations were set out in six schedules comprising 50 particulars.
4. The Tribunal heard evidence from Persons A–E and other witnesses over hearings in December 2024 and November–December 2025. Person A’s evidence was initially taken out of turn for medical reasons and was heard in the absence of the Respondent, who withdrew after an application for an adjournment made on his behalf was refused. The Respondent participated fully in the remainder of the hearing, which included the evidence of all other witnesses and the cross-examination of certain aspects of Person A’s evidence after the Tribunal granted permission for her to be recalled.
5. The Tribunal determined that inappropriate conduct must be assessed against the relevant SRA Principles and Outcomes and for seriousness and culpability; it is not a residual category for conduct falling short of harassment or bullying. The Tribunal adopted the legal framework drawn from section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 for harassment, applied the widely accepted description of bullying, and considered sexual misconduct in light of *Shah v GMC* [2025] EWHC 899 (Admin). Sexual motive was assessed using the definition in *Basson v GMC* [2018] EWHC 505 (Admin).
6. The Applicant contended that the allegations, viewed collectively, revealed a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, escalating from seemingly minor incidents (such as demands for sweets and/or “treats” after holidays) to serious disciplinary meetings and, ultimately, the events following the Christmas party involving Person E. The Respondent denied most allegations in his Answer to the Rule 12 Statement, asserting that allegations against him were either fabricated or amounted to reasonable management instructions. He subsequently retreated from his position that the allegations were fabricated and amounted to collusion during the hearing. He however argued that the allegations were inconsistent and did not meet the threshold for professional misconduct.
7. The Tribunal found the evidence of Persons A–E to be truthful and credible. Minor discrepancies did not detract from the cogency of their accounts. The Respondent’s evidence was unconvincing and lacked credibility, and the Tribunal rejected suggestions of collusion or fabrication in respect of the complainants. Of the 50 particulars comprising six allegations, 43 were proved in their entirety, two were proved in part, and five were not proved. One allegation was found to be sexually motivated within the meaning of *Basson v GMC* [2018] EWHC 505 (Admin). The Tribunal’s

findings on each allegation, including breaches of Principles and Outcomes, are summarised in the tables below for Allegations 1.1–1.6.

### **Sanction**

8. The Respondent was made subject to a suspension order for a period of 12 months, such suspension itself being suspended for 24 months, together with a restriction for 24 months prohibiting him from participating in professional recruitment interviews or disciplinary investigations within any solicitors' firm. The Tribunal's decision on Sanction can be found [\[here\]](#).

### **Documents**

9. The Tribunal considered all of the documents in the electronic case bundle which included:
  - (a) The Applicant's Rule 12 Statement dated 30 January 2024, Schedules 1–6, and Exhibit Bundle JTC1.
  - (b) The Respondent's Answer dated 4 March 2024.
  - (c) The Applicant's Reply to the Answer dated 18 March 2024.
  - (d) The Applicant's Opening Note dated 12 January 2025.
  - (e) The Note on behalf of the Respondent dated 28 November 2025.
  - (f) The Respondent's Chronology dated 28 November 2025.

### **Preliminary Matters**

10. Application for an Adjournment
  - 10.1 During the hearing of 11 December 2024, which had been listed to hear Person A's evidence out of turn for medical reasons, there had been an application for an adjournment on behalf of the Respondent.
  - 10.2 The application to adjourn was refused. The Tribunal noted that the medical evidence provided was insufficient to justify an adjournment and that granting the application would undermine the need for cases to be dealt with fairly, justly, and expeditiously in accordance with the Overriding Objective.
  - 10.3 A listing on 13 January 2025 was vacated on the Respondent's application for medical reasons; the case was re-timetabled to resume in November 2025.
11. Withdrawal of the Respondent and Application to Proceed in Absence
  - 11.1 The Respondent subsequently withdrew from the hearing, and the Tribunal granted an application by the Applicant for the matter to proceed in his absence under Rule 36 SDPR 2019, applying the principles set out in *GMC v Adeogba* [2016] EWHC Civ 162.
  - 11.2 After which Person A, her partner and Person A's father gave evidence.

- 11.3 The hearing of the matter resumed on 24 November 2025, and the Respondent was represented and in attendance during the remainder of the hearing.

### **Factual Background**

12. The Respondent, who is a solicitor, was admitted on to the Roll on 16 December 1996.
13. He set up the Firm with Mr Noor-ul Lodhi in February 2000. In 2014 the Firm changed to an LLP, with the Respondent and Mr Lodhi remaining as equal partners.
14. The Firm conducts legally aided work with some residual practice in privately funded matters. The Respondent's role in the Firm is primarily managerial; with Mr Lodhi focusing on casework.
15. At the time of the alleged misconduct the Firm offered internships and pupillage.
16. Internships are no longer offered, and the Bar Standards Board ("the BSB") removed the Firm's authorisation to offer pupillage on 22 November 2019 following the complaints received in this matter.
17. The Respondent currently holds a practising certificate free from conditions.

### **Witnesses**

18. The oral evidence of complainants Persons A-E, is summarised below. The evidence referred to will be that which was relevant to the findings of the Tribunal, and to facts or issues in dispute between the parties. The following Witnesses gave oral evidence during the hearing:

#### 11–12 December 2024

- (a) Person A – Called by the Applicant.  
 (b) Person A's Partner – Called by the Applicant.  
 (c) Person A's Father – Called by the Applicant.

#### 24 November 2025

- (d) Person B – Called by the Applicant.

#### 25 November 2025

- (e) Person D – Called by the Applicant.  
 (f) Person C – Called by the Applicant.

#### 26 November 2025

- (g) Person E – Called by the Applicant.  
 (h) Person E's Sister – Called by the Applicant.

#### 27 November 2025

- (i) Person E's Flatmate – Called by the Applicant.  
 (j) Mike Shields (Forensic Investigation Manager, SRA) – Called by the Applicant.  
 (k) Katie Brooks (Forensic Investigation Officer, SRA) – Called by the Applicant.

1 December 2025

- (l) Person A – Re-called by the Applicant.
- (m) Noor Lodhi – Called by the Respondent.

19. The Tribunal considered it appropriate to summarise the oral evidence of Persons A–E separately, given that their accounts formed the core of the allegations and were central to the issues in dispute. The summaries below reflect the substance of their testimony as heard by the Tribunal.

20. Person A’s Oral Evidence

20.1 Person A gave oral evidence, which in summary was as follows:

- (a) She described her employment at the Firm as six months as a caseworker, twelve months as a pupil, and six months as a barrister. She explained that the working environment was unpredictable, with the Respondent’s mood fluctuating between affable and aggressive, creating uncertainty for staff.
- (b) Person A gave evidence of several incidents which she said illustrated inappropriate behaviour and intimidation. Early in her employment, after attending a rape trial with the Respondent, he hugged her at a station in a way she found uncomfortable and, during the same journey, spoke about paying for sex with a prostitute and his dissatisfaction about paying for taxis. Similar comments about prostitutes were made on other occasions, though not frequently.
- (c) Person A described an occasion in the Crutched Friars office when, while on the phone to a client, the Respondent clicked his fingers, pointed at her, and called out “*oi cunt*” across the room before hanging up her call. She said this was aggressive and shocking. Another incident concerned her return from holiday without bringing sweets for colleagues. The Respondent summoned her, accused her of not being a team player, and convened what he called a disciplinary meeting in a glass conference room with two others present. During that meeting, which lasted about 30 minutes, he criticised her university background, threatened to blacklist her from pupillage opportunities, and told her to buy sweets. She said she became visibly distressed and cried; when she tried to leave, he stood over her, clenched his fists, and spoke through gritted teeth, causing her to fear physical harm.
- (d) Person A also recounted an occasion when the Respondent pressed her to disclose the reason for a hospital appointment, saying he would not approve leave unless she explained. When she disclosed it related to fertility issues, he remarked that “*at least she would not need maternity leave,*” which she found deeply hurtful. She said the Respondent regularly used threats of blacklisting to control staff and that this contributed to her remaining at The Firm longer than she wished. She denied allegations that she left under a cloud or ‘stole’ clients, stating she was approached by investigators a year after leaving the Firm and had not initiated the complaint.

## 21. Person B's Oral Evidence

### 21.1 Person B gave oral evidence which in summary was as follows:

- (a) She had been excluded from informal office activities—giving as examples the Super Draw lottery and occasions when coffee/sandwiches or treats were purchased and distributed to others but not to her (sometimes also not to Person D). She could not always date those incidents but said the lottery episode was in or around September 2018, consistent with the statement that she provided to the Solicitors Regulation Authority (“the SRA”). She also said she was told not to associate or be friendly with colleagues and that in practice she and Person D were discouraged from taking lunch together and this was an ongoing rule at the Firm with no reason given.
- (b) She said that toward the end of 2018, she felt her court exposure and opportunities were made contingent on compliance and that the Respondent’s words and manner gave her the impression that sign-off could be withheld without legitimate reason.
- (c) Person B described returning after her grandfather’s funeral in November 2017 and being asked by the Respondent: “*you don’t look sad, did you bring back any treats?*”, which she found upsetting and inappropriate. She recalled telling a colleague who was a pupil at the Firm about this at the time.
- (d) She said that at a staff meeting in November 2018 a training list was read out excluding her and Person D, with the Respondent looking at them and asking, “*have I missed anyone out?*”, which she experienced as deliberate humiliation.
- (e) As to addressing staff, she said the Respondent would call “*oi*” or click his fingers across the open-plan office, which she regarded as disrespectful. She accepted that there was not always line of sight between desks but said the office was small and the sound carried, and that clicking was audible across the room.
- (f) On the 14 December 2018 meeting, Person B described being called in without prior notice, told of an allegation involving waiting outside for Mr Anyanwu on 4 December, and was accused of “slagging” the Respondent off. She denied bullying or intimidation, explained that she had agreed to meet Mr Anyanwu after work, and said she was asked to write a handwritten note agreeing to leave. She referred to emails and notes in support of her account and explained the context of her resignation. While she accepted that she no longer had her own handwritten note from 14 December, she maintained that the tenor of the meeting was accurately reflected in her statement.
- (g) She accepted that some dates and sequences could be wrong and that her recollection of precise timing (e.g., when LEAP training lists were read) might be approximate. She maintained, however, that the pattern—exclusion, discouragement of association, rebuke for lunch breaks, and the tone/content of the 14 December meeting—was consistent, and she rejected the suggestion that she was motivated by malice. She said she had no reason to fabricate and that she pursued a complaint out of professional concern.

## 22. Person C's Oral Evidence

### 22.1 Person C gave oral evidence which in summary was as follows:

- (a) She described joining the Firm in June 2018 as a paralegal before being offered pupillage. She said the working environment was tense, with socialising discouraged and lunch breaks required to be staggered. She recalled being told early on by the Respondent that colleagues "*hated her*" (Person C) and warned her to "*watch her back*," which made her feel isolated and anxious.
- (b) She gave evidence of repeated shouting of "*oi*" and finger-clicking by the Respondent to get attention, which she found demeaning. She described several specific incidents, including the Respondent showing her a CV of an applicant and saying the candidate was "*very sexy*" and that he was "*always looking for a wife*." She also recalled him calling an intern a "*massive airhead*" and making derogatory remarks about universities, saying graduates "from Hatfield" [i.e., the University of Hertfordshire] were "*wasters and idiots*."
- (c) Person C stated that on 20 November the Respondent commented on her eczema, saying she looked "*disgusting*" and asking if it was "*catchy*." On 25 November, during a meeting, he referred to colleagues by reference to their skin colour, using phrases contrasting individuals by reference to "black" or "white", including formulations such as "black [name]" and "white [name]", or similar words to that effect. On 29 November, he called her an "*Apple whore*" while asking for help with his device. She also described being given two boxes of "Well Woman 70+" vitamins in the office after disclosing medical issues, which she considered humiliating.
- (d) She further gave evidence of an occasion when the Respondent shouted at her to end a client call, saying words to the effect that he came first, despite her explaining that the client was distressed. She said that matters culminated in a meeting on 17 December 2018, where the Respondent told her that her position was "*tenuous*" and that he "*did not want someone like her working at the firm*." She resigned shortly afterwards.
- (e) Person C confirmed that she made contemporaneous notes of incidents and later reported her concerns to the SRA and the BSB. She denied any suggestion of collusion with other complainants, stating that while some incidents were discussed at the time because they involved multiple staff, her formal complaint was made independently.

## 23. Person D's Oral Evidence

### 23.1 Person D gave oral evidence which in summary was as follows:

- (a) She described joining the Firm in September 2018 after an interview in which the Respondent asked whether she had a boyfriend and whether she planned to marry, adding "*I'm trying to figure out when you're going to go on maternity leave*." She said she found this inappropriate but accepted the role because training contracts in criminal law were rare.

- (b) She gave evidence of early interactions, including a lunch on her second day where the Respondent commented on her confidence, warned her about gossiping colleagues, and told her that her shoes were inappropriate, attributing this to comments allegedly made by others. She said this made her feel uncomfortable and excluded. She also described an occasion when, after requesting time off for a hospital appointment, the Respondent asked the nature of the appointment and why she was “*being coy*,” which she considered highly inappropriate, particularly as this was said in an open-plan office.
- (c) Person D stated that the Respondent made clear his dislike of Person B and discouraged her from associating with Person B. She referred to a disputed “buddy system” conversation and said that when she had lunch with Person B, the Respondent confronted her and accused her of ignoring instructions. She also described an incident where the Respondent brought sandwiches for staff but excluded Person B and herself, later offering her a salad and claiming he had not seen her.
- (d) She gave evidence of further incidents, including the Respondent asking the purpose of her annual leave and, on her return from visiting ill grandparents, saying “*You’re back. Where are the treats?*” and “*Who cares why you were gone, you still weren’t here so you should have brought treats.*” She also described occasions when the Respondent clicked his fingers or shouted “*oi*” to get attention, made a racially inappropriate remark during a diary meeting, and commented aggressively on her eyes and concentration in front of colleagues.
- (e) Finally, Person D described a disciplinary meeting in December 2018 during which the Respondent shouted at her, called her a “*liar*” and a “*bitch*,” and accused her of gossiping with Person B. She said she was left in tears and resigned immediately. She later reported her concerns to the SRA and the BSB. She denied any suggestion of collusion with other complainants and confirmed that, although some incidents were discussed contemporaneously because they involved multiple staff, her formal complaint was made independently.

#### 24. Person E’s Oral Evidence

24.1 Person E gave oral evidence as follows in respect of the two allegations 1.5 and 1.6:

##### *Allegation 1.5*

- (a) She described attending an interview in October 2018 where the Respondent asked intrusive personal questions, including whether she had ever had therapy, whether she felt abandoned by her parents’ divorce, and whether she had a boyfriend or planned to marry. She said these questions made her uncomfortable and were unrelated to the role.
- (b) She gave evidence of a lunch conversation during her internship in which the Respondent asked her to list “*five people she would hire and five she would fire*,” and steered the discussion toward criticism of colleagues. She recalled sexist remarks and comments about another staff member’s ethnicity, weight,

and career prospects. She also said the Respondent told her that a colleague took sick days during her period and would never achieve her ambitions.

- (c) Person E stated that the Respondent regularly asked personal questions during her internship, often in the kitchen or at the printer, and made remarks about her appearance, including suggesting she “*cover up her assets.*” She said these interactions created a sense of vulnerability and fear of losing her job, reinforced by warnings from another staff member that failing to comply with the Respondent’s wishes could lead to dismissal.
- (d) She described an incident involving a Secret Santa gift left at the Respondent’s flat, which led to repeated suggestions that she meet him outside work. When she tried to raise her discomfort, the Respondent laughed and said, “*Do you think I’m going to assault you?*” and added, “*You just think you wouldn’t be able to keep your hands off me.*” He also referred to her age and made comments about her body, which she found humiliating.
- (e) Person E said these behaviours, combined with the office culture and the Respondent’s comments trivialising her concerns, contributed to a hostile environment. She explained that while some incidents might appear minor in isolation, they formed part of a pattern that made her feel unsafe and undermined her confidence.

#### *Allegation 1.6*

- (f) Person E gave detailed evidence about events following the Firm’s Christmas party on 21 December 2018. She said the Respondent offered her a lift to the station but instead drove to his flat, despite her repeated requests to go home. She described rising panic during the journey and said she felt unable to object because of concerns about her career.
- (g) She stated that once inside the flat, the Respondent dimmed the lights, adjusted the sofa to recline, and suggested she lie down. He offered her a drink, told her to relax, and proposed meditation. He also asked her to help put his child to bed and suggested she could become a “*live-in nanny.*” Person E said these actions and comments made her feel trapped and fearful.
- (h) She recalled that the Respondent asked for a hug and a kiss before she left. She said this confirmed her impression that his behaviour was intended to cross professional boundaries and was sexual in nature. She left the flat shortly afterwards and later sent a text message intended to placate him because she feared losing her job.
- (i) Person E also gave evidence about subsequent interactions, including missed calls over the New Year period, which the Respondent attributed to his child, and conversations in which he shared personal details about his family. She said he pressured her to claim benefits to continue working for free and dismissed her concerns about gender safety, telling her that women were not “*getting assaulted all the time.*”

## Findings of Fact and Law

25. The Applicant was required to prove the allegations on the balance of probabilities. The Tribunal had due regard to its statutory duty under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998.
26. For the avoidance of doubt, the Tribunal read all of the documents in the case and made notes of the oral evidence of all witnesses. The absence of any reference to particular evidence should not be taken as an indication that the Tribunal did not read, hear or consider that evidence.

## Applicable Legal Framework

### *Inappropriate Conduct (Allegations 1.1–1.5)*

- (a) The Tribunal noted that “inappropriate” is not a freestanding category of misconduct. Conduct described as inappropriate was assessed by reference to the Principles and Outcomes pleaded—namely, whether it demonstrated a lack of integrity (Principle 2), undermined public trust (Principle 6), or failed to encourage equality and respect for diversity (Principle 9). The Tribunal then considered whether the conduct described breached any of the Codes pleaded. Where a breach was established, the Tribunal also considered whether the behaviour was sufficiently serious and culpable to amount to professional misconduct, applying the objective standard expected of a solicitor (*SRA v Day & Ors* [2018] EWHC 2726 (Admin)).

### *Harassment (Allegations 1.1–1.5)*

- (b) The Tribunal applied the definition of harassment in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010: unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, or of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. In deciding whether conduct had that effect, the Tribunal considered the complainant’s perception, the circumstances of the case, and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

### *Bullying (Allegations 1.1 – 1.5)*

- (c) Bullying is not defined in statute. The Tribunal adopted the widely accepted description that bullying includes offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes harm. Bullying may occur as a pattern or as a single incident, but the behaviour must be sufficiently serious to meet the threshold for professional misconduct.

### *Threshold for Seriousness*

- (d) The Tribunal recognised that not every instance of unwanted conduct or discourtesy will amount to harassment or bullying. The test is one of objective reasonableness, and the effect must be serious and marked rather than trivial or transitory. This threshold applies to all allegations, including those described as inappropriate, harassment, bullying, or sexual misconduct.

*Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Motive (Allegation 1.6)*

- (e) In relation to sexual misconduct, the Tribunal accepted that such conduct falls on a spectrum and is not automatically serious. The Tribunal also applied the approach in *Shah v GMC* [2025] EWHC 899 (Admin), considering context, degree, and impact before determining whether behaviour amounts to professional misconduct. For sexual motivation, the Tribunal applied the definition of sexual motive set out in *Basson v General Medical Council* [2018] EWHC 505 (Admin) at Paragraph 14, namely conduct intended to obtain sexual gratification or a future sexual relationship.

27. Applying these principles, the Tribunal proceeded to consider each of the particulars set out in each of the six allegations on their facts.
28. The Tribunal carefully considered each particular alleged to determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether it was proved. Where a particular was not proved, no further consideration was required. Where a particular was proved, the Tribunal considered whether it constituted a breach of the Principles or the Code alleged. Given the number of particulars pleaded and the volume of evidence received, a summary of the parties' positions and the Tribunal's findings have been set out in tabular form for each allegation.

Credibility Assessment

29. Credibility was central to the Tribunal's evaluation of the evidence. All testimony was assessed for truthfulness, reliability, and cogency, applying the civil standard of proof. The Tribunal considered consistency within each witness's account, corroboration from other evidence, plausibility, and the manner in which evidence was given. These considerations informed the detailed credibility assessments set out below and the Tribunal's overall conclusions on reliability.

Person A

30. **Allegation 1.1 - Between around June 2016 and June 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person A, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 1.**

The Applicant's Case

- 30.1 The Applicant's Case was set out in the Rule 12 Statement at paragraphs 16–17. The specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 1 to the Rule 12 Statement.

The Rule 12 Statement can be found [\[here\]](#).

### Procedural Clarification (Recall of Person A)

- 30.2 Person A was recalled by the Applicant and gave evidence with the permission of the Tribunal, following an application by the Applicant. The purpose of the recall was to enable the Respondent to cross-examine the witness on specific aspects of her earlier testimony. In the interests of fairness, the Tribunal recorded that any evaluation of the evidential weight of Person A's testimony would be conducted only after the conclusion of her recalled evidence.
- 30.3 In oral evidence, and under cross examination, Person A stated the following in summary:
- (a) She confirmed that the incident involving the Respondent shouting "*When I say jump you say how high*" and "*oi, cunt*" occurred while she was on a client call. She explained that the events happened within seconds and were part of the same interaction, rejecting any suggestion that they were separate occurrences. She acknowledged uncertainty about whether the Respondent hung up the phone or whether she did, attributing this to the passage of time and multiple similar incidents during her employment.
  - (b) On the disciplinary meeting concerning sweets, Person A maintained that it took place after her return from holiday in late August or September 2016 and insisted it occurred at the Crutched Friars office. She described being summoned to buy sweets from Tesco and reiterated that Julia, an office supervisor, was present at the meeting. When challenged on dates and office location, she was adamant that the meeting happened at Crutched Friars, despite suggestions that the Firm had moved by then.
  - (c) Regarding the "hug" incident after a rape trial, Person A accepted that her witness statement referred to the hug occurring on the final day of trial but clarified in oral evidence that it happened on the first day. She explained that any confusion about train stations or timing was due to the lapse of years and stressed that the substance of her account—the Respondent hugging her and making inappropriate comments—remained unchanged.
  - (d) Finally, Person A addressed discrepancies about her leaving date. She acknowledged that her witness statement recorded June 2018, whereas emails suggested August 2018. She accepted that the emails were likely accurate and explained that any inconsistency was inadvertent and not intended to mislead. She emphasised that her recollection of key events and the Respondent's conduct had not changed, even if minor details such as dates or locations were mistaken.

### The Respondent's Case

- 30.4 The Respondent's Case in response to the allegations against him is set out in the Answer to Rule 12 Statement which can be found [\[here\]](#)
- 30.5 The Respondent in oral evidence stated the following:

- (a) He denied pointing, clicking his fingers, or using foul language in an aggressive way. He said he does not use profanities and would never behave in the manner described by Person A.
- (b) He denied threatening to blacklist Person A or suggesting he could contact other firms to prevent her being hired. He said he was not capable of calling “400 firms in London” and would not make anyone believe he could damage their career prospects.
- (c) He denied telling Person A she was “not a team player” or convening a disciplinary meeting about sweets. He said there was no such meeting, and if there had been, notes would have been taken by Julia or Mr Lodhi. He maintained that Julia was not involved and that no disciplinary meeting ever occurred.
- (d) He denied belittling Person A’s educational background or forcing her to go to Tesco to buy sweets. He said this did not happen and noted that her own statement indicated she never went to Tesco.
- (e) He denied making insensitive comments about maternity leave when Person A requested time off for a hospital appointment. He said he did not persistently question her and did not ask about personal or feminine health issues.
- (f) He denied hugging Person A after the rape trial or making comments about using prostitutes. He said they were never close and he would not have discussed such matters with her.

### The Tribunal’s Findings

- 30.6 The Tribunal found Person A to be a clear, detailed, and generally consistent witness. Her evidence stood unchallenged on key points, and she was adamant that she was not lying. While she acknowledged minor mistakes in the evidence provided, these were candidly admitted and did not undermine her reliability. The Tribunal noted her straightforward manner, persuasive presentation, and occasional borderline assertiveness under cross-examination, which reinforced her credibility rather than detracted from it. The Tribunal further noted that Person A was approached only after the investigation commenced, which the Tribunal considered relevant when assessing motive.
- 30.7 The Tribunal noted that, save for limited challenges on dates and locations during recall, the Respondent elected not to cross-examine Person A and did not advance any clear reason why she would fabricate her oral or written account. His oral evidence was unconvincing, lacked substance, and did not displace the weight of Person A’s testimony.
- 30.8 In particular, the Respondent’s denial of using dismissive gestures and foul language was undermined by the consistency and detail of Person A’s account, which she said had “*stuck in her head ever since.*” His explanation that she volunteered information about personal matters was also implausible when viewed against the broader pattern of inappropriate questioning seen in interactions with other colleagues of Person A.

Similarly, his denial of convening a disciplinary meeting about sweets was contradicted by Person A's vivid description of the meeting, its participants, and her emotional reaction, which the Tribunal considered unlikely to have been fabricated. These examples reinforced the Tribunal's conclusion that the Respondent's evidence lacked credibility on material points.

- 30.9 Having considered all of the evidence in relation to Allegation 1.1; the Tribunal was satisfied to the requisite standard that allegations contained in Schedule 1 were proved. Two of the particulars (f) and (g), though proved as being inappropriate conduct, were determined not to be sufficiently serious enough to amount to professional misconduct. The Tribunal's findings on each particular (a)–(g) are set out in the table below for Allegation 1.1.

### Person A

	ALLEGATION 1.1	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	Whilst in the office he shouted at her, "When I say jump you say, <i>"how high"</i> and <i>"oi cunt"</i> or words to that effect.	Evidence unchallenged. Person A's account was accepted.	Proved		✓			2,6
(b)	Told her that if she did not do as he wanted, she would be [JTC1 p354-355 paras 4–6] <i>"blacklisted"</i> and no other firm or chambers would employ her.	Evidence unchallenged. Person A's account was accepted.	Proved		✓			2,6
(c)	Told her that by not bringing sweets into the office after her holiday [JTC1 p355–356 paras 7-11] she was not a team player and gave her a first warning.	Evidence unchallenged. Person A's account with amended holiday dates was accepted.	Proved		✓			2,6
(d)	Called her into a disciplinary meeting and told her she was not a [JTC1 p355–356 paras 7–11] team player due to not buying sweets for the office, that due to the university she went to she would not get a pupillage opportunity elsewhere and shouted at her with clenched fists, "don't you dare speak to down to me" or words to that effect.	Person A's account was accepted. Dates when 'Julia' was in the office though incorrect were very close and this did not materially undermine her evidence.	Proved		✓			2,6

	<b>ALLEGATION 1.1</b>	<b>FINDING</b>	<b>Proved/ Not Proved</b>	<b>Harassment</b>	<b>Bullying</b>	<b>Inappropriate</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Principles</b>
(e)	Having told the Respondent she required hospital treatment due to [JTC1 p356 para 13] difficulties having children, he said "Well at least you won't need to take maternity leave" or words to that effect.	Evidence unchallenged. The Tribunal accepted Person A's account. Fits with other similar accounts of inappropriate questions about medical matters.	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	9
(f)	On the way back from a court hearing, he hugged her and/or told [JTC1 p359 para 27] her about a time that he had used the services of a prostitute.	Evidence unchallenged. The Tribunal accepted Person A's account but did not consider that this reaches the threshold for professional misconduct.	Proved			✓	Not Misconduct	
(g)	Regularly made comments to her that he used the services of [JTC1 p359 para 27] prostitutes.	Evidence unchallenged. The Tribunal accepted Person A's account but did not consider that this reaches the threshold for professional misconduct.	Proved			✓	Not Misconduct	

**Person B**

31. **Allegation 1.2 - Between around June 2017 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person B, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 2.**

The Applicant's Case

- 31.1 The Applicant's Case was set out in the Rule 12 Statement at paragraphs 37–59. Specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 2 to the Rule 12 Statement.

The Respondent's Case

- 31.2 The Respondent's Case in response to the allegations against him is set out in the Answer to the Rule 12 Statement.
- 31.3 The Respondent gave oral evidence in respect of various particulars:
- (a) He denied deliberately excluding Person B from coffee or sandwiches. He explained that he occasionally bought sandwiches on impulse and left them on desks for those present, without intending to isolate anyone. He could not recall whether he waited for her to leave before distributing food.
  - (b) On the "buddy system," he said it was a pairing arrangement to ensure cover for urgent calls, not to prevent social interaction. Pairings were based on similar levels of experience and applied across the office. He denied telling Person B she could not go to lunch with colleagues.
  - (c) He denied ever threatening Person B's pupillage or implying her future depended on compliance. He stated he was not a barrister and had no authority over pupillage sign-off, which was handled by pupil supervisors and the head of advocacy.
  - (d) Regarding the alleged comment after her bereavement ("*You don't look sad, did you bring back any treats?*"), he said he knew she had attended a funeral but denied making the remark, describing it as something he would never say. He clarified that bringing sweets by staff members was not mandatory and he did not criticise those who did not.
  - (e) On training and appraisal issues, he denied excluding Person B from case management training or saying, "*what's the point of training her if she's going to be fired anyway.*" He said he did not recall attending the meeting where training dates were read out and would not have made a humiliating comment.
  - (f) He rejected allegations of shouting or belittling her about lunch breaks or implying that taking breaks would prevent her from going to court. He said timekeeping was not enforced strictly and denied using aggressive language or gestures.

- (g) Finally, he said the December 2018 meeting was convened under ACAS guidance following a concern raised by another employee and was intended as a fair investigation. He denied coercing anyone into making a complaint or targeting Person B because of her friendship with a colleague. He also denied saying she was not showing a “united front” or making comments about incompetence.

### The Tribunal’s Findings

- 31.4 The Tribunal found Person B to be a generally clear and consistent witness whose account was credible on the majority of issues. Two of the eight particulars of allegation 1.2 (a) and (d) were not proved to the requisite standard, but the Tribunal considered this was due to evidential weakness rather than any lack of credibility on her part.
- 31.5 In particular, the allegation concerning isolation was undermined by the limited corroboration and the practicalities of the office environment, while the allegation regarding LEAP training appeared to reflect a reasonable management decision. On all other particulars, Person B’s evidence was persuasive and supported by contemporaneous detail, including emails and notes, and corroboration from other witnesses.
- 31.6 The Tribunal considered the Respondent’s evidence to be weak and, at times, vague. His repeated reliance on generalised assertions such as “*I would never say that*” or “*I would never do that*” were unconvincing because it lacked specificity and failed to provide any plausible alternative account. Explanations offered were defensive rather than explanatory and did not engage with the detail of the allegations. The Tribunal therefore found his evidence on key issues failed to provide a cohesive or persuasive account.
- 31.7 Having considered all the evidence in relation to allegation 1.2, the Tribunal was satisfied to the requisite standard that six of the allegations were proved and was not satisfied that the remaining two were proved, for the reasons set out above. The Tribunal’s findings on each particular (a)–(g) are summarised in the table below for Allegation 1.2.

**Person B**

No.	ALLEGATION 1.2	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	Isolated her from colleagues by deliberately [JTC1 p204-206] failing to include her in office activities and/or telling employees not to associate with her.	Person B did not know who set up the lottery WhatsApp but assumed it was the Respondent. Person D didn't know about it. No direct instruction not to associate with her. the Respondent's account was accepted that he gave sandwiches to people he saw and left the rest on the table. Reasonable management direction in a small office for staff of equivalent experience not to go to lunch at the same time. No evidence from Mr Anyanwu that he was told not to associate with Person B. Insufficient evidence overall	Not Proved				Not Considered	
(b)	Threatened not to sign off her pupillage for [JTC1 p205 para 32] no good reason.	The Respondent's account that he did not know pupillages needed to be signed off was not accepted. The Tribunal accepted Person B's evidence on this point.	Proved		✓			2,6

No.	ALLEGATION 1.2	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(c)	Having returned to work after her [JTC1 p206 para 37] grandfather's funeral, he said "You don't look sad, did you bring back any treats" or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person B's account. Consistent with other similar accounts. Witness gave credible evidence on this point.	Proved		✓			2,6
(d)	Deliberately left her out of training for the [JTC1 p206 para 41] new case management system.	Management decision as to who gets training. Not proved that Person B was deliberately left out.	Not Proved				Not Considered	
(e)	Shouted at her for taking a lunch break and [JTC1 p207 para 45] implied that if she continued to take lunch breaks, she would not be permitted to go to court.	The Respondent wanted them to take short lunch breaks. The Tribunal accepted Person B's account. Court attendance used as threat to achieve this aim.	Proved		✓			2,6
(f)	Shouted "oi" or clicked his fingers in order to [JTC1 p207 para 46] get her attention.	The Tribunal accepted Person B's account. Three people gave consistent accounts with stark similarities in the way they described it.	Proved		✓			2,6
(g)	Held a disciplinary meeting without notice, [JTC1 p208–209 para 53–59]. during which he said "You have been slagging me off and I have been slagging you off; there has been talking behind backs" or words to that effect.	The Respondent accepted saying that tone of the meeting wasn't investigative. The meeting had disciplinary tone to it and Person B was suspended until further notice. No notice given of the meeting and Firm procedures were not followed.	Proved		✓			2,6

## Person C

32. **Allegation 1.3 Between around June 2018 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person C, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 3.**

### The Applicant's Case

- 32.1 The Applicant's Case was set out in the Rule 12 Statement at paragraphs 60–88. Specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 3 to the Rule 12 Statement.

### The Respondent's Case

- 32.2 The Respondent's Case in response to the allegations against him is set out in the Answer to the Rule 12 Statement.
- 32.3 The Respondent's oral evidence in answer to the allegation 1.3:
- (a) He denied making comments attributed to him about Person C's intentions to leave the Firm or remarks suggesting that another staff member disliked her. He said he did not have such conversations and would never have said such things.
  - (b) He did not recall asking Person C about her graduation year or showing her a CV of another candidate. He denied searching Google images or suggesting he was "*looking for a wife*," stating he was not in the habit of such conduct and would not have had the CV at his desk because recruitment materials were handled by others under office policy.
  - (c) He denied belittling Person C's educational background or calling her intern "*a massive airhead*." He said he would not have used such language and did not recall making derogatory comments about any University. He maintained he would not seek to harass or demean staff and expressed surprise at the allegation.
  - (d) He denied making comments about Person C's appearance or eczema, including telling her she looked "*awful*" or needed foundation. He said he would not have described her condition as "*disgusting*" and did not know she had eczema. He suggested the notes were not contemporaneous and said he would not make such remarks even in jest.
  - (e) He denied making racially indiscreet comments during a staff meeting, referring to "*black Donna and white Donna*." He said he did not recall attending the meeting and would not have used those words in the way described. He explained that his attendance at meetings was limited due to childcare responsibilities.
  - (f) He denied calling Person C an "*Apple whore*" or repeating the term after she objected. He said he was unaware of the phrase and would not use language he did not understand. He agreed the term would be inappropriate and said he could not speculate why she alleged it.

- (g) Regarding the “Wellwoman” vitamins incident, he admitted giving Person C two boxes of “70+” Wellwoman tablets but said this was intended as a gesture of help after general conversation about vitamins. He denied knowing she had medical issues and said he obtained the products through family connections and discounts. He maintained there was no improper motive.
- (h) On the December 2018 meeting, he denied threatening Person C’s pupillage or saying her position was “tenuous.” He said he did not recall using phrases such as “*you’ll lose your position*” or “*I make the final call*.” He accepted the meeting was handled poorly and described the process as “amateurish,” but said the intention was to investigate complaints, not to dismiss her.

### The Tribunal’s Findings

- 32.4 The Tribunal found Person C to be a clear, honest, and credible witness. Her evidence was detailed and supported by contemporaneous notes on nearly all the particulars comprising Allegation 1.3, which the Tribunal considered a strong indicator of reliability. She gave her evidence in a straightforward manner and remained consistent under questioning. Of the ten particulars, nine were proved to the requisite standard; the single allegation not proved was due to evidential uncertainty about what was said, rather than any lack of credibility on her part.
- 32.5 The Tribunal found the Respondent’s evidence in relation to Allegation 1.3 to be unpersuasive. The Tribunal noted that the Respondent relied heavily on blanket denials rather than engaging with the specifics of the particulars. This defensive posture, coupled with the absence of explanatory or corroborative detail, rendered his evidence unreliable on material points.
- 32.6 Having considered all the evidence in relation to Allegation 1.3; the Tribunal was satisfied to the requisite standard that nine of the particulars were proved and one was not proved for the reasons set out above. The Tribunal’s findings on each particular (a)–(j) are set out in the table below for Allegation 1.3.

### Person C

No.	ALLEGATION 1.3	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	Whilst in the office, told her that another colleague "really really hated [JTC1 p271, paras 4-6] her" because she got pupillage and/or that she should "watch out" and/or that people talked about her or words to that effect.	Part of overall power and control to make people feel uncomfortable. The Tribunal accepted Person C's account.	Proved		✓			2,6
(b)	Whilst in the office, shouted "oi" or clicked your fingers as a method [JTC1 p271 para 8] of getting her attention.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account. Three people gave consistent accounts with stark similarities in the way they described it.	Proved		✓			2,6
(c)	Showed her a CV of an applicant for a training contract and said that [JTC1 p271–272 para 9] the applicant was "very sexy" and/or that he was "always looking for a wife" or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account.	Proved			✓	2.4	6,9
(d)	Said that she was lucky to be working in law as the people who [JTC1 p272 para 12 and p286–301] attended her university were "wasters" and "idiots" or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9

No.	ALLEGATION 1.3	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(e)	Told her that her face looked "awful", "red and blotchy", like she had [JTC1 p273 para 16 and p286-301] a "rash" and that she ought to cover it up with foundation as it was "disgusting" and/or asked whether it was catching or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9
(f)	In a staff meeting called out her name by mistake instead of another [JTC1 p273-274 para 18 and p286-301] colleague and then stated "ah well its black Donna and white Donna. Or should I say black [Person C] and white [Person C]" or words to that effect, in reference to the employees' skin colour.	Evidence before the Tribunal was inconsistent and unclear as to what was exactly said. Not proved to the requisite standard.	Not Proved				Not Considered	
(g)	Called her an "Apple whore" and/or a "whore" for her use of Apple [JTC1 p274 para 19] products, or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account. Gone beyond "Apple whore" and used "whore" in the normal sense to be abusive.	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	2,6,9

No.	ALLEGATION 1.3	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(h)	Having disclosed to you a personal medical condition, he gave her a [JTC1 p274 paras 23–26] box of "Wellwoman" tablets in front of other members of staff and told her that they would make her better and stop her taking time off for medical appointments, or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account. If the Respondent wanted to get vitamins, he could have bought something appropriate. Designed to humiliate. The Tribunal further accepted that he told Person C that the tablets would stop her taking time off for medical appointments.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9
(i)	Whilst in the office, shouted at her to end a call with a client and said [JTC1 p276-277 paras 32-33] words to the effect that he came first, and she was to do what she was told.	The Tribunal accepted Person C's account. The Respondent's conduct in this regard determined to be a pattern. Part of his domination of the office. Person E overheard this.	Proved		✓			2,6
(j)	On 17 December 2018, conducted a meeting during which he [JTC1 p280–283] threatened her with the loss of her pupillage without providing any reason or instigating formal disciplinary proceedings.	Some reasoning is given in the meeting notes, so the Tribunal did not accept that no reason was provided as notes are contemporaneous. Did not instigate formal disciplinary proceedings. The Respondent did threaten Person C with loss of pupillage.	Proved in Part		✓			2,6

**Person D**

33. **Allegation 1.4 Between around September 2018 and December 2018, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person D, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 4.**

The Applicant's Case

- 33.1 The Applicant's Case was set out in the Rule 12 Statement at paragraphs 89–118. Specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 4 to the Rule 12 Statement.

The Respondent's Case

- 33.2 The Respondent's Case in response to the allegations against him is set out in the Answer to the Rule 12 Statement.

- 33.3 The Respondent gave oral evidence in respect of various particulars alleged:

- (a) He denied asking inappropriate personal questions during the initial interview, such as whether Person D had a boyfriend or intended to marry. He said he had no recollection of this and stated that if Noor Lodhi had been present, he would have intervened immediately. He acknowledged that such questions would be wrong but maintained they were never asked.
- (b) He denied taking Person D out to lunch or making comments about her confidence, colleagues gossiping, or her shoes. He said he did not recall any such conversation and would not have commented on footwear, noting that office attire was managed by the office manager. He described the allegation as implausible and said he had little time for "*chit-chat*" given his other commitments.
- (c) He denied making inappropriate enquiries about a hospital appointment or asking why Person D was "*being coy*." He said the Firm's policy required staff to make up time for absences and that this applied consistently. He maintained he would not have asked about the nature of medical appointments and suggested any discussion may have related to time-off arrangements rather than personal details.
- (d) He denied asking the purpose of Person D's annual leave or making remarks about bringing back treats. He said he could not recall any such conversation and considered it unlikely, as he was not concerned about whether staff brought treats to the office.
- (e) He denied using dismissive gestures or saying "*oi*" to get Person D's attention. He said he would not have addressed staff in that manner.
- (f) He denied making comments about Person D's eyes or suggesting she was not concentrating. He said he would remember such a conversation if it had occurred and maintained he never raised his voice or made remarks about her

appearance. He rejected the suggestion that he said she “*liked to think she was a partner.*”

- (g) He disputed the suggestion that his tone was aggressive or that he made offensive comments in front of colleagues. He said he did not recall any such incident and considered the allegation inconsistent with his usual conduct.

### The Tribunal’s Findings

- 33.4 The Tribunal found Person D to be a clear and credible witness. Her evidence was detailed, internally consistent, and supported by corroboration on key points. She gave her testimony in a measured and straightforward manner and did not seek to exaggerate. Of the particulars considered, the majority were proved; the single particular not proved resulted from insufficient evidence rather than any lack of credibility. In addition, one allegation was proved in part, with the element not proved again attributable to evidential insufficiency.
- 33.5 The Tribunal considered the Respondent’s evidence on Allegation 1.4 to be weak. He offered generalised denials without engaging with specifics or providing any coherent alternative explanation, which undermined its credibility.
- 33.6 Having considered all the evidence in relation to Allegation 1.4, the Tribunal was satisfied to the requisite standard that a majority of the particulars were proved, with one incident proved in part and one incident found not proved for the reasons set out above. The Tribunal’s findings on each particular (a)–(h) are set out in the table below for Allegation 1.4.

## Person D

No.	ALLEGATION 1.4	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	During her interview asked her whether she [JTC1 p232–233 paras 4–5] had a boyfriend or was planning on getting married in the future.	The Tribunal accepted Person D's account.	Proved			✓	2.4	6,9
(b)	Told her that colleagues had commented about her dress sense and that she should [JTC1 p233 para 6] not wear the shoes that she had been wearing.	The Tribunal accepted Person D's account.	Proved		✓			2,6
(c)	Told her that she would need to take a [JTC1 p233 para 7] hospital appointment as annual leave and asked about the nature of the appointment.	The Tribunal accepted that he did say she could stay late and do it on her account, so first part of allegation not proved.  The Tribunal accepted Person D's account that the Respondent asked about nature of appointment.	Proved in Part			✓	2.4	6,9
(d)	Told her not to associate with Person B [JTC1 p233 para 8].	Person D's account suggested the instruction was implied rather than explicit. The Tribunal considered this Insufficient evidence to reach threshold.	Not Proved				Not Considered	

No.	ALLEGATION 1.4	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(e)	Having returned from annual leave to visit [JTC1 p235 paras 14–15] her ill grandparents, he said " <i>You're back. Where are the treats</i> " and/or " <i>Who cares why you were gone, you still weren't here so you should have bought treats</i> " or words to that effect	The Tribunal accepted Person D's account. Witness gave credible evidence on this point.  Consistent with other similar accounts.	Proved		✓			2,6
(f)	Shouted "oi" and/or clicked his fingers to get her attention; [JTC1 p238 para 32].	The Tribunal accepted Person D's account. Three other witnesses gave consistent accounts with stark similarities in the way they described it.	Proved		✓			2,6
(g)	Approached her in the office and said " <i>what's [JTC1 p276 para 34] wrong with you? Your eyes are really weird; you do this really weird thing with your eyes ... are you even concentrating? Do you know how to concentrate .... your eyes are too weird I don't know what to make of you</i> " or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person D's account.  Partially corroborated by Person A.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9

No.	ALLEGATION 1.4	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(h)	Held a disciplinary meeting without notice [JTC1 p240-241] during which he shouted at her that she was a "bitch" and/or a "liar" or words to that effect.	<p>Similar phrasing to the '<i>Apple whore</i>' comments.</p> <p>The Tribunal accepted Person D's account. The Respondent stated that it was an investigatory meeting but did not have that tone.</p>	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	2,6,9

## Person E

34. **Allegation 1.5 and 1.6** - The Tribunal heard the evidence relating to Allegations 1.5 and 1.6 together. Both Person E and the Respondent addressed both sets of allegations during the course of their oral evidence. For clarity, the Tribunal has summarised that evidence in a single section below, although each allegation has been considered separately in the findings.
- 34.1 **Allegation 1.5** - **Between around October 2018 and February 2019, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person E, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or bullying, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 5.**
- 34.2 **Allegation 1.6** - **Between around 21 December 2018 and January 2019, when in a position of seniority in relation to Person E, he engaged in conduct towards her, which was inappropriate and/or amounted to harassment and/or was sexually motivated, including in respect of any or all of the matters set out in Schedule 6.**

### The Applicant's Case - Allegations 1.5 and 1.6

- 34.3 The Applicant's Case in respect of Allegation 1.5 is set out in the Rule 12 Statement at paragraphs 119–145. Specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 5 to the Rule 12 Statement.
- 34.4 The Applicant's Case was set out in the Rule 12 Statement in respect of Allegation 1.6. Specific particulars alleged are itemised in Schedule 6 to the Rule 12 Statement.

### The Respondent's Case – Allegations 1.5 and 1.6

- 34.5 The Respondent's Case with respect to Allegation 1.5 is set out in his Answer to the Rule 12 Statement.
- 34.6 The Respondent's Case in respect of Allegation 1.6 is set out in his written Answer to the Rule 12 Statement.
- 34.7 The Respondent gave oral evidence in respect of both allegations, which is summarised below:

#### Allegation 1.5

- (a) He denied asking inappropriate personal questions during the interview, such as whether Person E was going to cry, whether she had received therapy, or whether she felt abandoned by divorced parents. He said he could not recall the details but maintained that any discussion of mental health was raised by her, not him.
- (b) He denied asking Person E to list “*five people she would hire and five she would fire*” or making personal comments about colleagues. He said he did not have time for lunches or long conversations and would not have commented

on staff in that way. He also denied remarks about other employees, including comments about periods or career prospects.

- (c) He denied asking about her boyfriend or making remarks suggesting she reminded him of his ex-wife. He said he did not know her relationship status and would not have made such comments.
- (d) He denied making inappropriate enquiries about the purpose of her annual leave or hospital appointments. He said the Firm's policy required staff to make up time for absences and that any discussion was about practicalities, not personal details.
- (e) He denied making remarks about bringing back treats after annual leave. He said he could not recall such a conversation and considered it unlikely.
- (f) He denied persistently asking Person E to meet outside work or making her feel uncomfortable. He said he never suggested anything untoward and rejected any suggestion of sexual intent.
- (g) He denied making comments about her clothing in a sexual way. He said he may have mentioned office dress standards but did not refer to her body or use inappropriate language.
- (h) He explained that missed calls over the New Year period were likely caused by his young son accidentally pressing dial. He denied deliberately calling her repeatedly.
- (i) He accepted that he met Person E at Pret a Manger in January but said the meeting was about offering her a full-time position. He denied that the conversation was heated or that he behaved flirtatiously.

#### Allegation 1.6

- (a) He accepted that he drove Person E after the Christmas party but said this was because she insisted on sorting out her phone, which had overheated after his son had been using it during the event. He said his priority was to drop his mother home due to family health concerns and denied any improper motive.
- (b) He denied inviting Person E into his flat for any inappropriate reason. He said she entered because she was insistent about fixing her phone and helped carry bags. He maintained that his focus was on resolving the phone issue and putting his son to bed.
- (c) He denied making suggestive remarks, offering her a drink, or asking her to relax. He said he did not show her around the flat or encourage her to stay and was trying to get her to leave to catch a train.
- (d) He denied asking for a hug or a kiss or suggesting she stay over. He said he repeatedly tried to persuade her to leave and even offered £20 for transport when she became upset.

- (e) He denied discussing financial arrangements, suggesting she become a “*live-in nanny*,” or making comments about meditation or benefits. He said these topics were never raised.
- (f) He denied any sexual motivation and said the entire episode was driven by her insistence on fixing the phone and his obligation to resolve the issue. He described the situation as inappropriate only because of the time and inconvenience, not because of any misconduct on his part.

### The Tribunal’s Findings

- 34.8 In relation to Allegation 1.5, the Tribunal found Person E to be a clear and credible witness. Her evidence was detailed, consistent, and supported by plausible explanations. Despite incisive cross-examination on all issues, she gave her testimony in a measured and reflective manner, answering questions directly and without exaggeration or embellishment.
- 34.9 The Respondent’s evidence on Allegation 1.5 lacked credibility. His explanation for the interview questions was inconsistent and unconvincing. He claimed that Person E volunteered information about therapy and mental health, yet the questioning about personal matters—including relationship status and family background—was initiated by him and reflected a broader pattern seen in other interviews. His denial of asking her to list “*five people she would hire and five she would fire*” was also undermined by the level of detail in Person E’s account, which the Tribunal considered unlikely to have been fabricated. These inconsistencies reinforced the Tribunal’s conclusion that the Respondent’s evidence on this allegation was unreliable.
- 34.10 Turning to Allegation 1.6, the Tribunal found Person E’s account compelling. Her explanation of events following the office party was coherent, supported by circumstantial detail, and preferred over the Respondent’s, whose account lacked plausibility and did not withstand scrutiny. In particular, his explanation for why Person E entered and remained in his flat shifted between portraying her as insistent and asserting that he was merely accommodating her to resolve a phone issue. These explanations did not convincingly account for actions such as dimming the lights or asking her to assist with his child – both of which the Tribunal accepted occurred.
- 34.11 On a consideration of the evidence relating to all of the nine particulars comprising Allegation 1.6, the Tribunal found eight of the particulars proved, with only one of the particulars, particular 1.6(a), not proved to the required standard. Two other particulars (1.6(b) and 1.6(e)), though proved, were not considered to be suitably serious to amount to misconduct.
- 34.12 The Tribunal further found that the conduct proved under Allegation 1.6 was sexually motivated within the meaning of *Basson v GMC* [2018] EWHC 505 (Admin), in that it demonstrated an expectation of a future sexual relationship when viewed cumulatively with the Respondent’s proven behaviour under Allegation 1.5.
- 34.13 The Tribunal’s findings on each particular for Allegations 1.5 and 1.6 are summarised in the tables below.

**Person E**

No.	ALLEGATION 1.5	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	During her interview for the position of intern, asked whether she was going to [JTC1 p156–157 paras 5–9] cry and/or whether she had ever received therapy and/or whether she felt abandoned by her parents' divorce or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account. Find that the initiative came from the Respondent in relation to the content of the discussion.  Consistent with other inappropriate comments made in other interviews.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9
(b)	During a lunch, asked her to list five people she would hire and five she would [JTC1 p157–158 paras 14–18] fire or words to that effect and/or made personal comments about three employees.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved			✓	Not Misconduct	
(c)	Asked personal questions about her relationships status and/or, asked whether [JTC1 p159 paras 20–21] she tolerated bad behaviour from her boyfriend because of the way she had been raised or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved			✓	2.4	9

No.	ALLEGATION 1.5	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(d)	Whilst in the office, told her she could claim disability benefit with her mental [JTC1 p171–172 para 71] health or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved		✓		2,4	2,6,9
(e)	Suggested that she go to his flat to pick up her Secret Santa present and/or that you meet for coffee on the weekend; [JTC1 p173–178 paras 77–97].	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account. She said it was an A4 size gift bag. The Respondent did not mention that there was more than one bag until he gave oral evidence and that was not put to her.	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	2,6,9
(f)	When confronted about how uncomfortable it made her feel when he suggested seeing her out of work hours, he said, [JTC1 p173–178 paras 77–97] "Do you think I am going to assault you?" And/or "You just think you wouldn't be able to control yourself if we were alone, you wouldn't be able to keep your hands off me" And/or I shouldn't have told you to cover up your assets Or words to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account in relation to all three comments.	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	2,6,9

No.	ALLEGATION 1.5	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(g)	Persisted in asking her why she would not meet up with him outside of work hours; [JTC1 p173–178 paras 77–97].	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved	✓			2.1/2.4	2,6,9
(h)	Suggested that her mental health was the reason she did not wish to meet up with him outside or work and/or that she was vulnerable and/or unwell or words [JTC1 p173–178 paras 77–97] to that effect.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved		✓		2.4	2,6,9
(i)	Held a meeting at Pret a Manger with Mr Anyanwu where he confronted her [JTC1 p179–182 paras 102–118] about her decision to leave the Firm.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved		✓			2,6

**Person E**

No.	ALLEGATION 1.6	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(a)	Having told her that he would give her a lift to the station, he took her to his [JTC1 p164–165, paras 43–44] flat late in the evening.	Evidence inconsistent on this point. Person E's Sister and flat mate under impression Person E had gone to get a new phone.	Not Proved				Not Considered	
(b)	Asked her to help him put his son to bed; [JTC1 p165–166, para 46].	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved			✓	Not Misconduct	
(c)	Having told him she needed to go home, he showed her around his flat and [JTC1 p165–166, paras 46–47] told her not to tell anyone else that she had been there.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account. Point not challenged in cross-examination.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6
(d)	Having repeated that she needed to get home, he asked her to sit down and [JTC1 p166, para 48] dimmed the lights.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6
(e)	Told her that she could be a live-in nanny for his son; [JTC1 p166–167, para 50]	The Tribunal accepted E's account.	Proved			✓	Not Misconduct	
(f)	Having told him she needed to go home for at least the third time, he told her [JTC1 p167, para 52] to relax and/or suggested she try meditation.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6

No.	ALLEGATION 1.6	FINDING	Proved/ Not Proved	Harassment	Bullying	Inappropriate	Outcomes	Principles
(g)	He adjusted the sofa she was seated on such that it became reclined and/or [JTC1 p167, para 53] he told her to lie down on the sofa.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6
(h)	Having told him she needed to go home for at least the fourth time, he told her [JTC1 p167, paras 54–55] that he could not give her a lift as his son was in bed and suggested that she could stay the night.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account. Her evidence was supported by her flatmate's evidence.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6
(i)	Requested a hug and a kiss when she left.	The Tribunal accepted Person E's account.	Proved	✓			11.1	2,6

### Overall Assessment of Credibility

- 34.14 The Tribunal found that each of the witnesses—Persons A, B, C, D, and E—were truthful and honest witnesses who gave convincing, accurate, and credible evidence. Minor discrepancies concerning dates and other peripheral matters did not detract from the weight, persuasiveness, or cogency of their accounts. For example, the Tribunal considered the evidence of Person E’s sister and flatmate in relation to Allegation 1.6(a). While their understanding of events differed from Person E’s account on that point, this did not materially undermine the reliability of her evidence overall. The Tribunal was satisfied that, taken in the round, Person E’s testimony remained consistent and reliable. Persons A, B, C, D, and E were extensively cross-examined, and their evidence was tested without any significant damage to their credibility or the accuracy of their accounts.
- 34.15 The Tribunal also noted significant recurring themes across the complainants’ evidence, including inappropriate personal questioning during interviews, comments about appearance or dress, dismissive or demeaning language, and conduct that blurred professional boundaries. These patterns were reinforced by corroboration from witnesses who observed incidents first-hand and, in some instances, by contemporaneous notes. The Tribunal further noted the evidence of repeated queries raised by the Respondent against those who had not brought sweets or ‘*treats*’ back to the office after returning from holidays covered by annual leave. This appeared in allegations concerning Persons A, B, and D. While each allegation was determined on its own merits, the existence of these themes provided relevant context and supported the reliability of the complainants’ accounts.
- 34.16 There was no evidence that any of the witnesses had any motive to lie, and no indication of collusion, fabrication, or contamination of their evidence. The Respondent had alleged in his written Answer that certain complainants (notably Persons B and E) colluded and fabricated allegations. However, during oral evidence he expressly resiled from that position, acknowledging that, having heard their testimony, he no longer maintained that view. The Tribunal regarded this shift as relevant to its overall assessment of the weight to be placed on his evidence.
- 34.17 Mr Lodhi gave evidence in support of the Respondent. The Tribunal noted his long-standing professional and personal relationship with the Respondent, which was relevant when assessing the weight of his testimony. While Mr. Lodhi expressed categorical disbelief in the allegations and offered explanations about office procedures, his evidence was marked by generalised assertions and frequent statements of poor recollection. On key issues—including interviews, disciplinary meetings, and remarks about appearance or personal matters—his account consisted largely of denials without supportive detail. Where reasons were advanced, they were speculative and often based on personal opinion rather than factual observation. His evidence was unpersuasive, lacking cogency and probative value.
- 34.18 The Tribunal found the Respondent’s evidence to be particularly lacking in credibility. His oral account was marked by frequent assertions of poor recollection and broad denials, often accompanied by formulaic statements such as “*I would never say that*” or “*I do not recall,*” without any coherent alternative explanation. Where reasons were advanced, they were found to be inconsistent, contrived, and lacking in substance. The

Tribunal considered that these deficiencies, coupled with the absence of supporting detail, rendered his evidence unreliable on material points.

34.19 The Tribunal having considered carefully all of the witness evidence, reached the conclusions that the bulk of the allegations put were truthful and accurate and reflected the true nature of the Respondent's actions and behaviour.

34.20 The Tribunal's findings informed its assessment of seriousness and sanction as set out below.

### **Previous Disciplinary Matters**

35. The Respondent has an unblemished regulatory history.

### **Mitigation**

36. The following matters were advanced in mitigation on behalf of the Respondent:

- (a) The misconduct consisted of verbal and behavioural improprieties rather than physical acts. His conduct was careless, spontaneous, and insensitive rather than premeditated or planned. While serious and falling below the standards expected of a solicitor, the behaviour occurred within a compressed timeframe and was not part of a sustained campaign.
- (b) The Respondent faced exceptional personal pressures during the relevant period. He was a single parent with sole responsibility for a young child and was managing significant professional demands. These circumstances, while not excusing the misconduct, provide context for the Respondent's poor judgment during that time.
- (c) The Respondent expressed genuine remorse and some degree of insight. He acknowledged that his conduct fell below the required standard and wrote to the Tribunal to convey his apologies (although the letter was not read out during the hearing). Having heard the complainants' evidence, he accepted the harm caused and recognised that his initial stance alleging fabrication was misplaced.
- (d) The Respondent has practised as a solicitor for over 25 years without any prior disciplinary findings. He established and managed a firm providing access to justice through criminal legal aid and offering opportunities to those seeking entry into the profession. The Firm was regarded as committed to diversity and as reflected in testimonials and thank-you notes seen in evidence, some of which referred to the Respondent personally.
- (e) The events that had formed the core of the allegations proved against him occurred between 2016 and early 2019. There had been significant delays not attributable to the Respondent, which, together with the prolonged uncertainty, seriously affected his mental health such that he is now in receipt of ongoing support.

## Sanction

37. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (February 2025, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition) and adopted the structured approach to sanction articulated in *Fuglers and others v SRA* [2014] EWHC 179. In determining the appropriate sanction, the Tribunal first assessed the seriousness of the misconduct, considered the purpose for which sanctions are imposed, namely, to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession, and uphold proper standards of conduct—and then identified the sanction that would best fulfil that purpose in light of the findings made.
38. The Respondent's culpability was assessed by the Tribunal to be medium given the fact that a majority of the incidents were spontaneous and opportunistic rather than premeditated or deliberate. However, the Tribunal considered that the Respondent's seniority and experience imposed a heightened duty to maintain professional standards. The breach of trust involved in his actions was significant and ought reasonably to have been avoided given his level of managerial and professional experience.
39. The Tribunal assessed the harm caused by the Respondent's actions as significant, as evidenced by the impact statements of the complainants. All were young women entering the profession with high hopes and aspirations. The Tribunal accepted that the misconduct caused considerable distress and undermined their confidence at a formative stage in their careers. The tone of their individual impact statements and oral evidence revealed to the Tribunal their pride in overcoming the experience and continuing in their chosen field. The harm was compounded by the substantial imbalance of power and the Respondent's position of authority, which rendered the complainants particularly vulnerable.
40. The Tribunal identified the following aggravating features of the Respondent's conduct:
  - (a) A repeated pattern of inappropriate behaviour over a significant period.
  - (b) Abuse of power and coercion, compounded by a substantial imbalance of authority.
  - (c) The Respondent sought to take undue advantage of at least one complainant whom the Tribunal considered to be vulnerable.
  - (d) Proven sexual misconduct in relation to one allegation.
  - (e) Certain conduct in several of the allegations met the definition of harassment under section 26 of the Equality Act 2010, in that it had the purpose or effect of violating dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating environment.
41. The Tribunal considered mitigating factors advanced on behalf of the Respondent. It recognised that he had fully cooperated with the regulator and engaged with the process. The Tribunal also noted the Respondent's letter of apology said to have been written to the Tribunal—which the Tribunal placed very little weight on given its unread contents. The Tribunal determined that the Respondent's insight was limited and largely reactive,

amounting at best to an acknowledgment of the impact of the complainants' evidence rather than a full or genuine understanding of his own misconduct.

42. The Tribunal reminded itself that the purpose of sanction is not to punish the Respondent but to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession, and uphold proper standards of conduct (*Bolton v Law Society* [1994] 1 WLR 512). The Tribunal considered whether a financial penalty alone would meet those objectives but concluded that the seriousness of the misconduct, particularly the finding of sexual motivation in respect of one allegation, required a sanction that reflected the gravity of the misconduct and maintained public confidence. The Tribunal also considered whether strike-off was necessary but determined that, in light of all of the mitigating factors and the absence of dishonesty or misuse of client funds, this would be disproportionate.
43. The Tribunal therefore determined that a suspension order was appropriate, given the overall nature and seriousness of the misconduct. It further considered whether the suspension should take immediate effect but concluded that a suspended suspension would adequately protect the public and uphold professional standards, given the absence of further issues since the events in question. However, the Tribunal determined it necessary to impose a further restriction prohibiting the Respondent from participating in recruitment interviews or disciplinary investigations within any solicitors' firm, to address the underlying concerns raised by the proven allegations. For the avoidance of doubt, this restriction does not extend to participation in regulatory investigations conducted by the SRA or other approved regulators.

### **Costs**

44. On behalf of the Applicant, Mr Tankel sought recovery of costs in the sum of £163,950.46 as set out in the Applicant's Costs Schedule dated 17 November 2025 and invited the Tribunal to make a summary assessment. He submitted that proportionality and reasonableness were the key issues in determining the amount to be awarded given the Tribunal's findings. He submitted that given the Tribunal's familiarity with the case and its management, a summary assessment would avoid further delay and expense.
45. Ms Heley, on behalf of the Respondent, submitted that a detailed assessment was appropriate given the complexity and length of the proceedings, the level of costs claimed, and concerns regarding duplication and necessity. She asserted that a costs judge would be better placed to scrutinise whether the costs were reasonably incurred and proportionate.
46. Having considered the submissions of the parties, the Tribunal determined that the Applicant's costs should be subject to detailed assessment. The Tribunal considered that a detailed assessment was the appropriate course to ensure fairness to both parties, given the size of the costs claimed and the issues raised regarding necessity and duplication.

### **Statement of Full Order**

47. The Tribunal ORDERED that JOHN KISHIN NAVANI, Solicitor, be SUSPENDED from practice as a solicitor for a period of 12 months to commence on

05 December 2025, that period of suspension to be suspended for 2 years from the same date subject to compliance by the Respondent throughout that period with the term of the Restriction Order imposing a condition on practice set out in sub-paragraph 47.1 below.

47.1 The Respondent shall be subject to conditions on practice imposed by the Tribunal for a period of 2 years to commence on 5 December 2025 as follows:

47.1.1 The Respondent may not be involved in professional recruitment interviews and/or disciplinary investigations within any solicitors' firm.

47.2 The Tribunal further ORDERS he do pay the Applicant's costs of these proceedings, such costs to be subject to detailed assessment unless otherwise agreed.

Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of January 2026

On behalf of the Tribunal

*L. Boyce*

L. Boyce  
Chair