

2023

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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WELCOME

INTRODUCTION FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am delighted to present the Annual Report for the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Administration Limited.

This has been a significant year for the Tribunal, with improvements in operational efficiency and management transformation.

The details of these changes are set out within the body of this Report.

By way of overview it saw a move into newly fitted out premises with state of the art court room facilities at 45 Ludgate Hill, a restructure of the staffing and management team, the appointment of a new Chief Clerk/CEO, and the launch of a revised, more user-friendly website.

In terms of service delivery, the Tribunal has continued to play an important part in safeguarding the public and maintaining the high standards associated with the profession.

There have been several high profile cases, with a 22% uplift in the number of hearing days which the Tribunal sat compared to 2022. In total there were 49 substantive hearings dealt with, over half of these resulting in the most serious sanction being applied, a strike off from the Roll.

I should like to thank all of the staff and members of the Tribunal who have worked hard in making their contribution this year. In the next year there are several ambitious objectives to deliver including a governance review of the Board and the management of a significant increase in the number of cases being referred by the SRA.

We look forward to working with all of our stakeholders to continue to deliver on our strategic goals and continue to drive up standards in the profession along with achieving excellence in the Tribunal's own processes and performance.

Alison Kellett
President

ABOUT US

The Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) is an independent statutory tribunal set up under the Solicitors Act 1974.

We hear cases of alleged misconduct by solicitors, registered European Lawyers, registered foreign lawyers and employees of solicitors' firms.

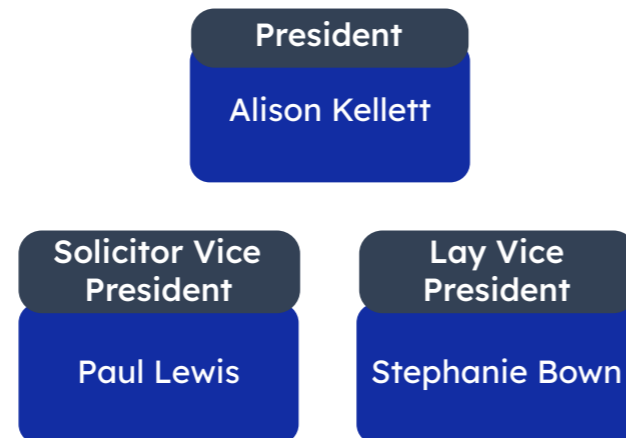
We decide on applications for restoration to the roll and the ending of suspension from practice and also hear appeals in relation to certain internal decisions by the SRA. Our decisions are subject to a right of appeal to the High Court.

The SDT has a President and two Vice-Presidents elected by its members (and collectively known as Officers).

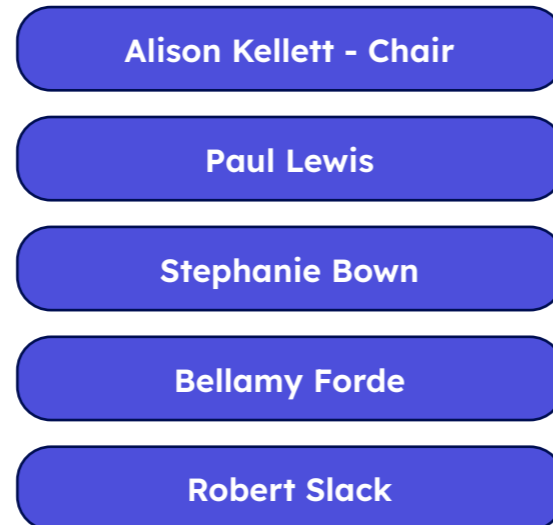
The SDT is supported by an administration company, the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Administration Ltd (SDTAL), which employs a small team who provide professional and administrative support for cases.

The Tribunal's Executive Team is headed by Deborah Baljit, who fulfils the dual role of Chief Executive of SDTAL and Clerk to the SDT and works with the SDTAL Board of Directors to lead and govern the Tribunal.

The SDT Officers



SDTAL Board of Directors



The Board members also make up the SDT's Policy Committee, which is responsible for making and approving decisions about its policies and procedures.

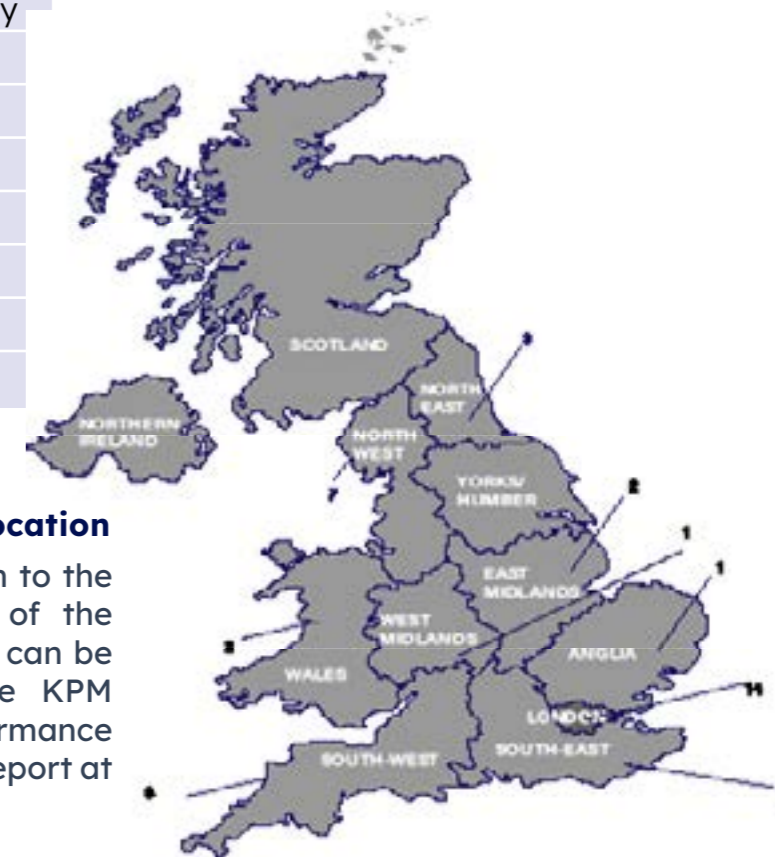
SDT MEMBERSHIP

Current Membership as of 31.12.2023

Solicitor Members	Lay Members
Alison Banks	Adair Richards
Alison Kellett	Alan Lyon
Alyson Margaret Sprawson	Anthony Pygram
Andrew Horrocks	Benjamin Walsh
Angela Horne	Carol Valentine
Ashok Ghosh	Colin Childs
Bhavna Patel	Damian Kearney
Callum Cowx	Elaine Keen
Carolyn Evans	Gary Gracey
Charlotte Rigby	Jenny Rowe
Dominic Green	Katharine Susan Wright
Edward Nally	Lesley McMahon-Hathway
Frosoulla Kyriacou	Linda Hawkins
Gerald Sydenham	Louise R Fox
Heidi Hasan	Paul Hurley
James Johnston	Priya Iyer
John Matthew Abramson	Robert Slack
Lisa Boyce	Sarah Gordon
Lisa Murphy	Stephanie Bown
Mark Millin	
Paul Housego	
Paul Lewis	
Peter Jones	
Richard Nicholas	
Teresa Cullen	
Usman Sheikh	
William Ellerton	

Geographical Location

Details in relation to the diversity profile of the SDT Membership can be found within the KPM 6 of the Performance Measurements Report at Appendix 1.



Appendix 1.

A Snapshot...

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Solicitor Members

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Lay Members

as of 31 December 2023.

Members are appointed by the Master of the Rolls for a term of 5 years which may be renewed upon application.

Changes to the Membership

2023 saw the retirement of Solicitor Member Holetta Dobson who was appointed to the Tribunal in 2015.

OUR VALUES

Strategic Vision Statement

We are an independent statutory body delivering impartial, transparent justice. We give trust and confidence to the public and the profession by providing consistent, independent and fair outcomes. We are efficient and cost-effective.

Values Underpinning our Strategic Vision:

To act with integrity, impartiality and excellence in fulfilling our role.

To positively contribute to the profession and continually improve professional standards.

Recognition of, and respect for all.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

GOVERNANCE

The Tribunal is fit for purpose to deliver transparent justice in the changing evolutionary landscape of legal services enforcement.

TO ENHANCE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PROFESSION

The Tribunal will act to enhance the trust and confidence of the public and the profession in its delivery of transparent, fair outcomes in an efficient, effective and consistent way.

EDI

The SDT aims to represent the diversity of the legal profession and provide a culture for staff and users which respects everyone, is fair and non-discriminatory.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROFESSION IN TERMS OF SKILLS AND TRAINING

The SDT is committed to sharing our experiences and our expertise to continually improve standards across the profession.

COST EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The Tribunal provides value for money for its services.

This is a selection of some of our cases in 2023 providing an indication as to the breadth of the matters which came before the Tribunal. Within this text, excerpts from the 2023 editions of the "SRA and SDT decision quarterly review" have been reproduced from Practical Law with the permission of the publishers and author Susanna Heley.

AML

In *SRA v Nisa-Zaman* [2022] 12334 none of the allegations were substantiated on the facts. Ms Nisa-Zaman had been accused of failure to have in place a compliant firm-wide risk assessment for AML purposes, and of dishonestly informing the SRA that there was one in place. The tribunal dismissed the allegations and found that Ms Nisa-Zaman had genuinely believed that a compliant policy was in place and had thought about the risks of money laundering as applied to her firm.

This case emphasised the SRA's increasing focus on AML issues and the way in which an allegation of dishonesty causes what might otherwise be considered purely administrative issues to be treated more seriously.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

SRA v Bretherton [2023] 12355 was the first case in which a solicitor was struck off for non-criminal sexual misconduct. The litany of allegations resulted in 70 proven particulars, involving three junior female members of staff, one of whom (Person A) was taking her first job as a legal apprentice after completing her A levels. The allegations involving her were the most numerous and prolonged, taking place between October 2017 and December 2018. The misconduct found involved quite explicit and controlling behaviour, including the exchange of sexual messages and abuse of the power dynamic in the relationship.

Allegations relating to another individual (Person B) were principally related to intrusive and controlling messaging. The conduct was less explicit and found not to be sexually motivated, but was controlling and unreasonable, causing significant harm to Person B.

The allegations related to the third individual (Person C) related to a single incident which, on the frank evidence of Person C, had not caused significant harm to Person C but was still inappropriate, "laddish" and childish, and damaging to the reputation of the profession.

The judgment contains detailed particulars of the findings against Mr Bretherton, which detail the extent to which Mr Bretherton was able to interact with Persons A and B personally and socially as well as professionally. The use of texting apps was a feature of the misconduct which contributed to the harm caused, in that the messages were seen as controlling and intrusive, and inappropriate in both content and volume.

CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

SRA v Li [2022] 11796 involved dishonestly misleading two immigration clients that applications had been submitted and as to the progress of their matter over a long period, fabricating a letter purportedly from the Home Office, and failure to co-operate with the SRA. Ms Li was struck off and ordered to pay £37,500 costs. Criminal convictions for conduct outside of practice remained a predictable source of regulatory consequences. The cases of *SRA v Ledvina* [2022] 12335, *SRA v Horsley* [2022] 12345, and *SRA v Pickles* [2022] 12346 involved a range of different criminal behaviours, including behaviours which had occurred when the individual was not in practice. Mr Ledvina had accepted a plea agreement in the US in relation to conspiracy to commit securities fraud and was struck off. Mr Horsley had been convicted of seven counts of dishonestly making false representations some years after ceasing practice and was also struck off. Ms Pickles had been convicted of driving under the influence of controlled substances and possession of controlled substances. She was not in practice at the relevant time and was not struck off, but was, nevertheless fined by the tribunal following an agreed outcome.

SOLICITORS STRAYING OUTSIDE AREA OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

In *SRA v Brookes* [2022] 12342 the respondent was a criminal solicitor who ventured into advising a friend on her family proceedings, and then acted inappropriately by pursuing an aggressive course of conduct against the other party, which he knew or ought to have known was likely to cause significant distress without proper cause. He was found to have attempted to take unfair advantage and to have been acting recklessly. He was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000 by way of agreed outcome.

In *SRA v Ghaiwal* [2022] 12254 the first respondent, Mr Ghaiwal, acted as a certificate provider for a lasting power of attorney (LPA). The donor of the LPA was a vulnerable person and Mr Ghaiwal was found to have failed to appreciate his obligations as a professional certificate provider in those circumstances. He had failed to ensure that the donor understood the purpose and scope of the authority that an LPA provides. He was fined £6,000 by way of an agreed outcome and ordered to pay costs of £11,000. In both cases, an experienced solicitor fell into difficulties when trying to help in an area of law which was not their own.

For further information visit: <https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/Browse/Home/Practice/PracticeComplianceManagement>

PROCEDURALLY UNUSUAL CASES

SRA v Amo [2023] 12433 was a slightly unusual application for non-party disclosure by a firm on the grounds that its employees would be witnesses in the proceedings and needed to have full information in order to act properly as witnesses. The tribunal rejected this application in fairly robust terms, emphasising that a witness is not a party to the proceedings.

The case of *Hinkel v Gheissari & Hooton* [2022] 12230 was also procedurally unusual in that it involved an application by Mr Hinkel, a lay applicant. A prior panel had partially certified a case to answer but the SDT considered an application by the respondents to reconsider that certification. The SDT found that it did have power to reconsider an earlier decision to certify a case to answer on the grounds of fundamental mistake and found that the case had only been certified because the certifying panel had been unaware of an unsuccessful application in 2019. Had the certifying panel been aware of that earlier case, it would not have asked the SRA to investigate and ultimately certified a case to answer in some respects. The SDT did not accept Mr Hinkel's submission that he had been "forced" to pursue an application because the SRA had declined to pursue his complaints and ordered him to pay costs of £291,000 to the respondents. The decision is subject to appeal.

The case is interesting on a number of levels. It is apparent that the certifying panel was not willing to grant the SRA unlimited time to conduct its own investigations. It had entertained requests for additional time for one year and then declined to grant more time, choosing instead to partially certify a case to answer on the information before it. It also establishes the SDT's expectation that even lay applicants will be expected to be transparent with the SDT about all relevant matters. The SDT was critical of the failure of the applicant to disclose the fact that an earlier application had been made arising out of the same underlying matter and the SRA had been asked to investigate in 2019. It had reported at the time that its investigation was concluded with no need for further action.

COSTS

Other, perhaps less anticipated, major developments occurred in the case of *SRA v Tsang* [2022] 12415 which involved a solicitor accused of not advising clients on high risks inherent in property development schemes. The single allegation was not proved and, unusually, the tribunal awarded costs of £75,000 against the SRA. The costs order was upheld on appeal. Up to that point this was largest costs order made against the SRA by the tribunal, a jurisdiction where there is no general rule that costs follow the event.

LAY APPLICATIONS

The cases in which dishonesty was alleged but not proven demonstrate the importance of subjective knowledge in relation to the alleged dishonest act. In *Davies v Greene* [2022] 12320 the state of knowledge of the accused solicitor was the essential issue in the case.

It was an unusual case as this was a lay application with a complex procedural history, including an earlier strike out of the application and restoration on appeal. Mr Greene was accused of giving dishonest evidence to a court in 2012. The application was brought by a former client of Mr Greene's firm who had been pursued for unpaid legal fees. The allegations were found not proven, with the SDT finding that, whilst Mr Greene's evidence had been inaccurate, it reflected his genuine belief at the time and was, accordingly, not dishonest. Mr Greene did not seek his costs of the unsuccessful application and the applicant's request for a partial costs order was refused.

There was a successful lay application in the case of *Fulton & Fulton v Flavel* [2022] 12349 in which the SDT essentially guessed at reasonable costs for the lay applicants in a most unusual costs ruling. The SDT granted Mr Fulton's request to hear his costs application in private to protect details of his personal financial position, with the result that the ruling is partially redacted.

Mr Flavel was found to have acted dishonestly in connection with assisting a family member to complete the seller's property information form (SPIF) during the sale of property to Mr and Mrs Fulton and was struck off.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SANCTIONS

The following two dishonesty cases received findings of exceptional circumstances, and the solicitors involved were therefore suspended rather than being struck off. The cases of *SRA v Stark* [2022] 12418 and *SRA v Arnison* [2023] 12437 both involved "moment of madness" dishonesty where confidential medical evidence was provided. These were brief instances of dishonesty in an otherwise unblemished career, there was no personal benefit and prompt reports were made to the SRA in both cases. These cases are interesting because they are the first known cases in which the SRA has ever formally accepted exceptional circumstances in this way and agreed a sanction other than strike off.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2023

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND RESTRUCTURE

Building on the 2022 Board-to-Board meeting with the Legal Services Board and the externally facilitated away day, the Tribunal partnered with a business psychology consultancy in early 2023 to drive a business transformation and restructure.

The work conducted in this programme was aimed at transforming and restructuring the Tribunal to enhance its overall efficiency and effectiveness. The project involved a comprehensive needs analysis, culture and wellbeing audit, and the redesign of job descriptions to align with the new strategic direction. The outcomes of this work include the identification of key issues, the stabilisation of the organisational structure, and significant payroll savings.

The project focused on addressing cultural issues and defining core competencies. It supported recruitment processes for key roles and identified significant payroll savings, accounting for redundancy, remediation, and assessment day costs. The project also involved delivering "Behaviours Matter" workshops, supporting redundancy and consultation processes, and recommending new employee benefits providers.

The business transformation and restructure project focused on auditing organisational issues, guiding the selection of a new CEO/Chief Clerk, and implementing transformative changes. The work delivered focused on improving the overall work environment, communication, and relationships within the Tribunal. Key themes addressed

included work environment, communication, opportunity, collaboration, respect, and leadership.

Key initiatives included the development of workshops and an innovative new structure to address challenges and facilitate positive outcomes. The approach was rooted in the Consultancy Cycle, involving strategic guidance, diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation. Interventions included improving communication, developing people skills among leaders, addressing relationships at work, and redesigning the organisational structure.

The project delivered a complete organisational restructure, promotions, redundancies, and new positions. Positive outcomes included the successful hiring of the Chief Clerk from existing employees, addressing workplace relationships, a review of organisational policies, and a roadmap for future activity.

The output of the program was delivered to good feedback from the Board, Members, and Staff at the General Meeting and Training Day. It serves as a foundation for the work scheduled to continue through 2024 and on into 2025, focusing on governance reform and professionalisation of the Board.

ACCOMMODATION

On 8 November 2023, the Tribunal finalised the lease agreement for its new premises at 45 Ludgate Hill. Work thereafter commenced with the fit out of the new premises which concluded on 23 December 2023.

To ensure the highest standards of quality and cost-effectiveness,

a competitive tendering process was conducted to select a contractor for the fit-out of the new premises. This process was rigorous and aimed at identifying the most capable and cost-efficient partner.

During the fit-out, the importance of sustainability was emphasised by re-using as much of our existing equipment. At the same time, the focus was on designing a space that met the functional needs of the Tribunal and created a productive work environment. With this approach, 80% of the furniture at the new premises was re-used from Gate House. Only 20% of the furniture in Ludgate Hill was purchased as new, due to the custom layout of the new premises necessitating this. The new SDT premises comprise of:

- Two court rooms, with sufficient sound proofing, audio visual & recording equipment;
- Two retiring rooms, suitable for Panel deliberations;
- A reception & refreshment area to accommodate visitors and facilitate training days;
- 4 discussion rooms for use of parties during the course of a hearing and alternatively where staff can work confidentially;
- Open plan working space for SDT staff;
- Two offices within the staff open plan area to enable staff to work in a more private setting when needed;
- Accessible toilet facilities;
- Kitchen facilities for staff.

INNOVATION TO HEARINGS

Zoom has now been adopted in both court rooms, moving away from the traditional court room recording system which was employed at the previous premises. This approach offers several advantages with the integration of Zoom allowing for high-quality audio recordings, which are easily accessible, simplifying the process for members of the public requesting access to recordings.

During the initial set-up of the court room, keen to ensure that those observing a case remotely were provided with an audio experience as clear as that of those present in the court room, advanced ceiling microphone technology was employed which is designed to capture audio from all participants accurately, providing clear sound quality for remote listeners. This technology ensures that words are clearly audible, adding to the transparency and accessibility of our proceedings.

Due to the serious nature of cases determined by the Tribunal, when discussing the appropriate layout, the protection of vulnerable witnesses was an important consideration. The chosen contractor understood the requirements and modified the court room to ensure the complete privacy and security of vulnerable witnesses when giving evidence. The modification creates a secure environment where witnesses can provide their evidence in full confidence, knowing they are shielded from Respondents.

WEBSITE

The re-designed SDT website was launched on 31 October 2023. Feedback received regarding user experience with the website was carefully considered. In response, the aim was to address these concerns through a comprehensive redesign. The objective was to enhance the overall user experience by implementing significant improvements based on the feedback received. The website remains an ongoing work in progress in terms of user-friendliness but includes the following enhancements:

Simplification of Language: Language was simplified throughout website to ensure clarity and accessibility for all users, reducing 'legalese' and making information easier to understand.

Improved Navigation: The website's navigation has been overhauled to ensure users can find the information they need quickly and effortlessly, reducing the time spent searching for relevant content.

Re-designed Forms: Forms have been re-designed to enhance functionality, ensuring they are easy to complete and submit. This change aims to reduce the time and effort required from users to submit applications.

Real-Time Information for Hearings: To aid transparency in proceedings, the re-designed website enables more information to be provided in real-time about hearings, which includes:

- **Hearing Status:** Up-to-date information on the status of a hearing is now visible providing users with information about the stage

of proceedings reached, e.g. Panel Deliberations.

- **Sanctions Information:** Upon conclusion of a hearing, the Sanction is published on the website so that the result of proceedings is available instantly. This transparency enables users to immediately access the outcomes of proceedings online, eliminating the need to contact the office for this information.
- **Improved presentation of allegation types:** enhanced details are available in relation to allegation types, allowing users to now view the specific rule breaches associated with each Judgment.

Information on Member Appointments and Biographies: To aid transparency, we have introduced a dedicated section on the website that provides the Year of Appointment and biographies of Members.

OUR FINANCES

THE SDT is funded under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Legal Services Board and the Law Society from a levy on solicitors and other regulated persons, included in their annual practising certificate fee.

A 3-year memorandum was signed on 6 September 2022. Our audited annual accounts are filed at Companies House.

We recognise the importance of cost-effective and proportionate regulation and aim to minimise costs by maximising efficiency in working practices wherever we can.

We make an annual budget application which is the subject of scrutiny and challenge by the LSB, before being approved for payment by The Law Society.

EXCEPTIONAL EXPENDITURE

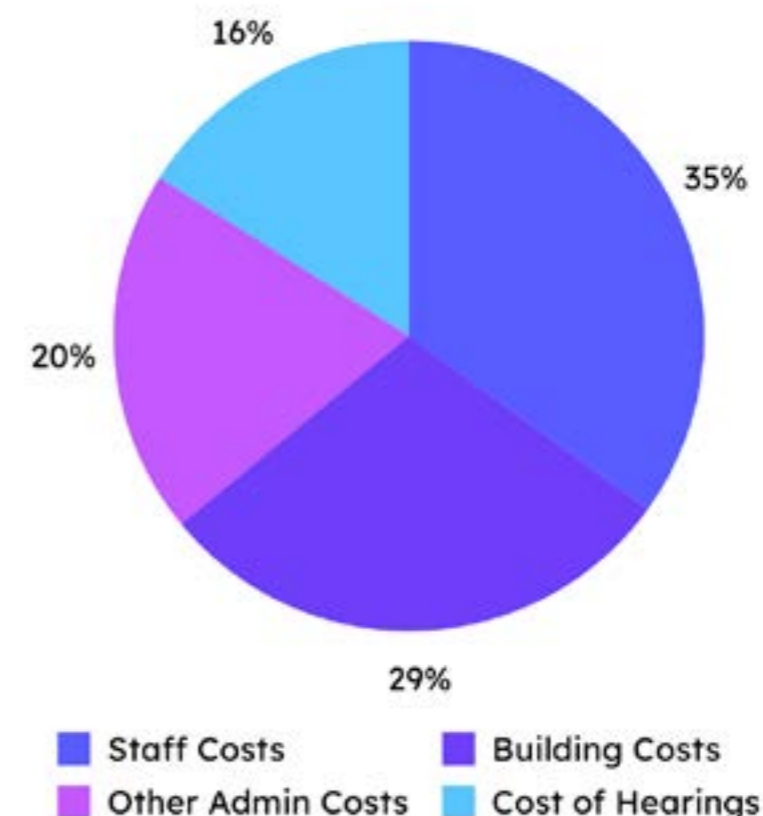
In 2022, having received notice that Gate House was to be marketed for sale, additional funding was applied for of £1,162,122 to cover the costs of relocation to new premises and dilapidation costs relating to Gate House. This additional funding was received in 2023.

New premises were secured at 45 Ludgate Hill, entering into a lease agreement on 8 November 2023.

Following the completion process, which experienced some delays, work commenced to fit out the premises, concluding on 23 December 2023.

We became fully operational at the new premises from 2 January 2024, utilising existing furniture and equipment where feasible.

HOW WE SPENT OUR BUDGET IN 2023



2023	£	%
Staff Costs	1,108,823	35%
Building Costs	939,867	29%
Other Admin Costs	634,540	20%
Cost of Hearings	501,313	16%
Total	3,184,543	100%

Cost per Regulated Person	2022 (£)	2023 (£)
Total Cost	3,154,010	3,184,543
No. of Regulated Persons	162,196	161,197
Cost per Person	19.45	19.76

CASE DATA

Applications received in 2023

SRA Applications	Lay Applications	Other Applications
84	16	12

The Tribunal received 110 applications in total in 2023.

Comparing year on year, the Tribunal received 5 fewer sets of proceedings from the SRA, with 89 applications being received in 2022 and 84 received in 2023.

There was a 24% reduction in the number of lay applications received in 2023.

In terms of 'Other Applications', as can be seen below, there was a reduction overall in this area. However there was an increase in the number of S44E appeals received in 2023. A S44E appeal allows a solicitor to challenge a regulatory decision of the SRA to the Tribunal.



The number of applications received in relation to restoration to the Roll and determination of indefinite suspension remained consistent with 2022.

Number of Sittings

In 2023, the Tribunal sat for 212.5 days compared to 174.5 days in 2022, an increase of approximately 22%. This figure encompasses all hearings listed in 2023.

Length of Hearings

This graphic shows a breakdown of the length of substantive hearings and applications e.g. for restoration to the roll or to end an indefinite suspension.



Case Management Hearings and Agreed Outcomes are not included in the data above.

Adjournments

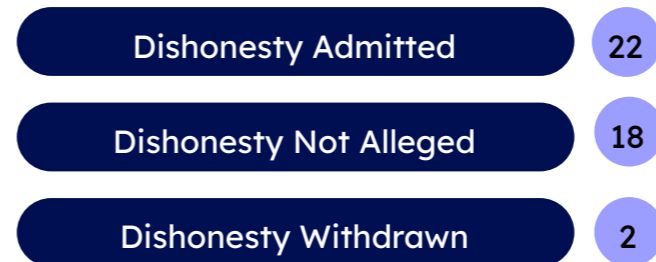


AGREED OUTCOMES

In 2023, a total of 38 Agreed Outcomes, were received with 36 being approved and two rejected. Of those 36 approved, this amounted to 41 individual Respondents receiving a Sanction from the Tribunal. Additionally, an Agreed Outcome received in late December 2022 was approved in January 2023. Therefore the data for this application overlaps between 2022 (when received) and 2023 (when approved.)

Dishonesty & Lack of Integrity

Of the 42 individual respondents whose cases were concluded by Agreed Outcome, the data below relates to the dishonesty aspect of allegations admitted.



In relation to lack of integrity, which falls under Principle 2 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011 and Principle 5 of the 2019 Code, 34 respondents admitted breaching these codes. It was not alleged in respect of 7 respondents and withdrawn in respect of 1.

Sanction by Agreed Outcome

Struck Off	25
Fine	10
Fixed Period Suspension	7

The graphic opposite provides information relating to the relevant rules in relation to allegations brought in Agreed Outcome cases against individual respondents.

In the cases where a fine was agreed by the Tribunal, the number of fines within each fine band were as follows:-

Level 1 - £0-2,000	1
Level 2 - £2,001-7,500	1
Level 3 - £7,501-15,000	6
Level 4 - £15,001-50,000	2

In relation to where a fixed period suspension was agreed, the length of those suspensions were as follows:-

1 Month	1
3 Months	3
6 Months	1
12 Months	1
18 Months	1

Of the 7 respondents who received a fixed period suspension, 6 also received restrictions on their Practising Certificate.

Allegations by Relevant Rule

SRA Principles	39%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 2011	18%
SRA Principles 2019	15%
Code of Conduct 2011	9%
Code of Conduct 2019 (Sols)	6%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 2019	3%
Indemnity Insurance Rules 2013	2%
Indemnity Insurance Rules 2019	2%
Code of Conduct 2007	2%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 1998, 1991, 1990, and Authorisation Rules 2019	2%
Authorisation Rules 2011	1%
Practice Framework Rules 2011	1%

SUBSTANTIVE HEARINGS

In 2023, the Tribunal held 49 substantive hearings. Due to the fact that cases received can contain multiple respondents, the total number of Orders made related to individual respondents following the 49 substantive hearings was 54. Details of the individual sanctions are listed below:

Struck Off	30
Fine	8
Fixed Period Suspension	7
Allegations Dismissed	6
Indefinite Suspension	1
Restriction Order	1
Reprimand	1

Dishonesty & Lack of Integrity

The data below relates to the dishonesty aspect of allegations determined during a substantive hearing.

Dishonesty Proved	27
Dishonesty Not Proved	7
Dishonesty Not Alleged	20

In relation to lack of integrity, this was found proved against 43 respondents. It was not alleged in respect of 5 respondents and found not proved in relation to 6.

In the 8 cases where the Tribunal issued a fine, the fines fell within level 3 and 4 of the fine banding as follows:-

Level 3 - £7,501-15,000	4
Level 4 - £15,001-50,000	4

In relation to where a fixed period suspension was imposed, the length of those suspensions were as follows:-

6 Months	2
12 Months	2
18 Months	1
24 Months	1
8 Years	1

Of the 7 respondents who received a fixed period suspension, 2 also received restrictions on their Practising Certificate.

Allegations by Relevant Rule

SRA Principles 2011	36%
SRA Principles 2019	17%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 2011	11%
Code of Conduct 2019 (Sols, REL's, RFL's)	11%
Code of Conduct 2011	10%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 2019	7%
Code of Conduct for Firms 2019	3%
SRA Overseas Principles 2013	3%
Solicitors Accounts Rules 2011	0.50%
SRA Overseas Principles 2019	0.50%
Practice Framework Rules 2011	0.25%
Authorisation Rules 2011	0.25%
Money Laundering Regulations 2017	0.25%
Authorisation of Individuals Regulations	0.25%

OTHER HEARINGS

The SDT is responsible for adjudicating upon applications made under the provisions of the Solicitors Act 1974 (as amended) ("the Act"), such as applications for restoration to the Roll, the variation/removal of conditions upon practice and S44e Appeals and revocation of a S43 Order.

A S44E Appeal allows a solicitor to challenge a regulatory decision of the SRA to the Tribunal. Revocation of a S43 Order refers to an application by an individual to lift or cancel a restriction placed on them under Section 43 of the Solicitors Act 1974.

The Tribunal publishes a Guidance Note on Other Powers, the purpose of which is to assist the parties, the public and the legal profession in understanding the Tribunal's decision-making process in applications such as those referred to above.

The graphic below outlines the nature of specific applications determined in 2023.

Removal of Conditions	2
Restoration to Roll - Granted	1
Restoration to Roll - Refused	1
Enforcement of Costs	1
Variation of Conditions	1
Revocation of S43 Order - Refused	1
S44e Appeal	1

There were 4 cases where the application was withdrawn and so did not proceed to a hearing. Additionally, in 2 cases following a hearing, the proceedings were stayed by the Tribunal and in 1 case proceedings were dismissed.

FINES & COSTS

Fines

In 2023, there was a 26% reduction in fines issued by the Tribunal compared to 2022 (£381,004).

The graphic below demonstrates the total sum of fines issued in 2023 and how those fines were apportioned by hearing. Information regarding amount of fines within each band is detailed earlier on in the report.



Apportionment By Hearing Type



Costs

In 2023, there was also a 13% reduction in the amount of costs ordered by the Tribunal compared to 2022 (£1,832,533.75).

The graphic below demonstrates the total sum of costs and apportions those costs by hearing.

In relation to the sum of £57,105.02 apportioned under applications, this includes an amount of £37,869.77 which the Tribunal ordered be paid by the SRA following a successful S44e appeal.

Apportionment By Hearing Type



LOOKING AHEAD

KEY DELIVERABLES IN 2024

In 2024, the SDT will embark on a strategic recruitment campaign to expand our resources and meet the increase in SRA referrals.

In line with commitment to enhancing efficiency and transparency, improvements to our website will continue to be assessed, ensuring that it remains user-friendly and informative. In relation to the strategic objective to contribute to the profession in terms of skills and training, the implementation of a summer internship scheme offering students valuable exposure to the workings of the Tribunal will be explored.

A comprehensive review of policies and guidance notes will be undertaken to ensure they remain clear, relevant and up to date. In response to an increase in non-party disclosure applications, SDT will be looking into the disclosure of documentation on cases, balancing transparency with confidentiality to

meet the growing public interest.

In support of EDI commitments, new ways to collect and analyse Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data will be reviewed. Furthermore, the commitment to implementing our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, integrating responsible and sustainable practices into the Tribunal's operations will be continued.

A behavioural framework will be developed and implemented to guide our work culture and interactions, in collaboration with an external consultant, enhancing a values-driven approach to work within the Tribunal.

The governance review will continue in 2024, ensuring that the Board possess the necessary skill sets required to drive the strategic objectives of the SDT, facilitate proper scrutiny and assess the potential for expansion of the Board.

APPENDIX 1 - KPM REPORT

2023 Key Performance Measurements Report

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the SDT's KPM Report in respect of 2023.

Our Work

The SDT is a statutory tribunal, constituted under s.46 of the Solicitors Act 1974). We are independent of the Law Society, (the membership body for Solicitors), and the Solicitors Regulation Authority Limited ("SRA"), the regulator for the solicitors' profession. The SDT's oversight body is the Legal Services Board ("LSB").

The principal function of the Tribunal is to adjudicate upon alleged breaches of the rules and regulations applicable to solicitors and their firms. The SDT also determines allegations made against individuals who are not qualified solicitors, but who are employed or paid by solicitors.

Additionally, the SDT is the appeal body in relation to internal decisions made by the SRA in accordance with the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (Appeals and Amendment) Rules 2011.

The Tribunal does not investigate allegations or prosecute cases.

The majority of applications to the SDT are made by the SRA: 'the Applicant'. However, members of the public are able to make a direct application alleging professional misconduct to the Tribunal: 'the Lay Applicant'. Those against whom allegations are made are known as 'Respondents'.

The Applicant and the Respondent have a statutory right of appeal against substantive decisions of the SDT to the High Court. Interim decisions of the SDT, predominantly arising in the course of case management, can also be subject to Judicial Review by the High Court upon application of either party.

The work of the SDT is designed to meet the overarching public interest which comprises of (i) protecting the public from harm, (ii) the declaration and upholding of proper standards within the profession and (iii) maintenance of public confidence in the regulatory framework.

Key Performance Measurements ("KPM's")

In order to ensure that we carry out our role effectively and efficiently the LSB and the SDT have agreed a number of KPM's. The KPM's are designed to ensure that we meet the overarching public interest and provide the tool against which we are measured.

This report presents the SDT's performance in 2023 in relation to them.

Deborah Baljit
CEO and Chief Clerk
15 March 2024

KPM 1 - ISSUE OF PROCEEDINGS

Proceedings to be issued or notification of non-certification sent to the Applicant within a set number of calendar days of date of receipt of Originating Application (in the correct format) at the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal as below:

(A) Solicitors, Former Solicitors, Registered Foreign Lawyers, Registered European Lawyers, Clerks and Recognised Bodies

Target:

85% of proceedings issued within 5 working days.

(B) Restoration to the Roll, Revocation of a s.43 Order, Application to Determine an Indefinite Suspension, Application for a Re-hearing, Application to Vary a Condition on Practising Certificate, Appeal S44E, Costs Order and Application to Activate Suspension

Target:

85% of proceedings issued within 5 working days.

(C) Lay Applications

Target:

90% of lay applications to be considered by a Member of the Tribunal and, if required, a Division of the Tribunal within 8 working days.

Year	Performance Measure	No of Cases	Target Met (%)
2023	A	84	100%
	B	10	100%
	C	16	100%
2022	A	89	99%
	B	21	95%
	C	21	100%

Table 1

Year	Quarter	Applications Received:		
		A	B	C
2023	1	24	2	5
	2	16	0	3
	3	20	4	6
	4	24	4	2
2022	1	15	7	8
	2	21	5	4
	3	28	3	2
	4	25	6	7

Table 2

BREAKDOWN OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

CASE TYPE	2023	2022
Rule 12 Application (SRA)	84	89
Rule 12 Application (Lay)	16	21
Application to vary/remove conditions	2	6
Rule 17 Application – Restoration to Roll/Lift Suspension	4	4
Remitted Appeal	0	4
Application for Leave to Enforce Costs Order	0	3
Section 44E Appeal	3	1
Section 46 Appeal	0	1
Rule19 – Review of Order of Solicitors’ employees	1	1
Rule 37 – Application for Re-Hearing	0	1
Total	110	131

Table 3

In 2023, the Tribunal received five fewer cases from the SRA compared to in 2022.

LAY APPLICATIONS

A total of 16 lay applications were received in 2023, a reduction of 24% from 2022 (21 applications)

	2023	2022
Lay Applications Received	16	21
Number not certified without adjournment to SRA for investigation	10	18
Number not certified following adjournment to SRA for investigation	1	3
Number of Applications received either incomplete or discontinued	5	0

Table 4

Acknowledging that Lay Applicants are not familiar with the SDT’s processes, the SDT provides guidance to help with the submission of a lay application. Senior Clerks and the Case Management Team are readily available to address queries regarding procedural matters and provide assistance with utilising CaseLines, the Tribunal’s electronic document management system. When developing the SDT’s new website (launched in October 2023) significant emphasis was placed on ensuring easy access to information and providing a user-friendly experience from a Lay Applicant’s perspective.

In relation to applications received, it remains the case that whilst many Lay Applicants provide detailed descriptions of concerns related to their solicitor/firm or a third party's solicitor, they often fail to give sufficient supporting evidence to any alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and/or Principle breaches.

If a Lay Applicant raises concerns which potentially could amount to a breach of the Code and/or Principle, the SDT will request the SRA to conduct an investigation before making a definitive certification decision. Whilst the SDT does not have the power to investigate potential breaches, the lay application process remains integral in providing the public with a valuable alternative avenue for lodging complaints. This, in turn, enhances public confidence and transparency in the regulatory process.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION & ALLEGATIONS GENERAL THEMES

In 2023 the Tribunal issued **84** sets of proceedings in relation to cases received from the SRA. The 84 cases equated to **97** individual respondents and **3 Recognised Bodies**. The Tribunal has collated information in relation to Respondent type, position and the areas of practice which may be of interest. It is important to note that some Respondents' practice in multiple areas of law. This accounts for the different totals in tables 5 and 7.

Respondent Type	No of Respondents	
	2023	2022
Solicitor	92	98
Registered Foreign Lawyer	2	1
Unadmitted Person	3	1
Recognised Body	3	0

Table 5

Areas of Practice	2023
Conveyancing	30
Wills & Probate	19
Civil Litigation	16
Personal Injury	14
Family	10
Commercial Property	8
Commercial Litigation	8
Litigation	8
Criminal	7
Employment	6
Immigration	4
Property	3
Mental Health/Capacity	3
Related to Administration of Practice	2
Not related to Practice	2
Financial Regulation	2
Private Equity	2
Accounts	1
Public and Tribunal Law	1
Money Laundering	1
Insurance	1

Table 7

Respondent Position	2023	2022
Associate	14	29
Consultant	4	3
Individual	47	17
Non-admitted	1	1
Other	2	1
Partner	16	35
Sole Practitioner	13	14
Firm	3	0

Table 6

ALLEGATIONS – CASE GENERAL THEMES*				
Accounts Rules Breaches	Misuse of Client Account	Dishonesty	Lack of Integrity	Total no of Cases
	✓			2
			✓	17
✓			✓	5
		✓	✓	41
✓		✓	✓	5
✓	✓	✓	✓	10
	✓	✓	✓	2

Table 8

*Two cases did not fall within the General Themes and are therefore not recorded above.

NUMBER OF CASES WHERE AREAS OF MISCONDUCT WHICH:		
Matched areas of Practice	Partially matched areas of Practice	Did not match areas of Practice
40	18	26

Table 9

CASES RECEIVED RELATING TO:	
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT	CRIMINAL CONVICTION
12	10

Table 10

COMMENTARY

The Tribunal has noted a decrease in the number of applications received from the SRA. However, the type of cases and allegation themes has resulted in more complex cases with increased time estimates.

There has been an increase of cases in relation to allegations of sexual misconduct. In 2023, 12 such cases were issued compared to 3 in 2022 and 1 criminal conviction arising out of a sexual offence. In respect of such cases, the Tribunal has noted a wider press and public interest. Substantive hearings continue to be held in public, with observers being able to attend via Zoom.

There has been a marked increase in the number of individuals facing allegations of professional misconduct, from 17 in 2022 to 47 in 2023.

Dishonesty and lack of integrity remains a recurrent theme in the nature of allegations levelled against Respondents.

AGREED OUTCOMES

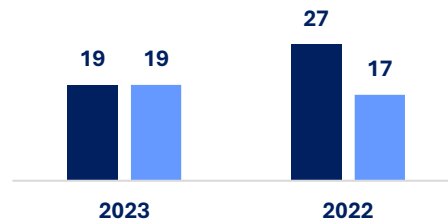
Description	2023	2022
Number of Cases on which AO received	37	41
Cases with more than 1 AO	1	7
Total number of AO's Received	38	50
Agreed Outcomes Approved	36	46
Agreed Outcomes Rejected	2	4

Table 11

Days of Court Time affected:

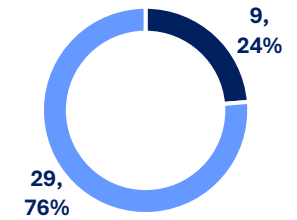
2023	2022
83	86

Number of Days Agreed Outcome Application received in relation to listed substantive hearing:



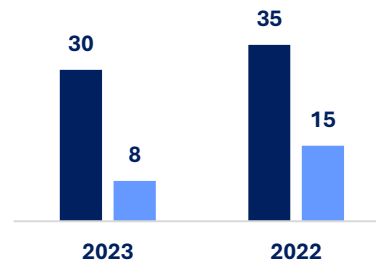
■ Less than 28 days ■ More than 28 days

Health Issues affecting Proposed Sanction in 2023:



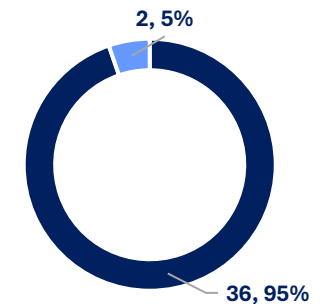
■ Yes ■ No

Number of days of Agreed Outcome Application being considered by a Panel after receipt:



■ Within 7 Days ■ More than 7 days

Method of Consideration:



■ On the Papers only
■ At a CMH after consideration on papers

COMMENTARY

The timeliness of applications for proceedings being disposed of by way of an Agreed Outcome has improved in 2023. The Tribunal has noted more accurate forecasting data from the SRA as regards matters in which an Agreed Outcome is likely to follow. Consequently, this has led to more accurate allocation of resources, predominantly sitting days and Panel requirements.

The Tribunal has continued to apply anxious scrutiny to Agreed Outcome proposals. Agreed outcome proposals are considered at the first available opportunity so as to provide certainty for the parties and to ensure the best deployment of Tribunal resources.

KPM 2 – DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION BY HEARING

(A) **Target:**

75% of cases first listed for substantive hearing date within 6 months of issue;

(B) **Target:**

Final Determination of application, by substantive hearing or otherwise, from the date of issue of proceedings to take place within: –

60% 6 months of issue

80% 6-9 months of issue

95% 9-12 months of issue

100% 12-24 months of issue

KPM 2A	2023		2022	
	Total number of cases heard	Total %	Total number of cases heard	Total %
75% of cases first listed for substantive hearing within 6 months of issue	101	100	103	100

KPM2B	2023	2022
	Cases Heard	Cases Heard
	101	103
Within 6 months	72	82
%	72%	80%
Within 9 months	9	11
%	81%	90%
Within 12 months	3	7
%	87%	97%
Within 24 months	12	3
%	99%	100%
Over 24 Months	1	N/A
%	100%	N/A

Table 12

KPM 2 - ADJOURNMENT ANALYSIS

Application by	No of Adjourment Applications	Granted Applications	Refused
Respondent	32	16	16
Applicant	12	10	2
Joint Application	4	3	1
Ordered by Tribunal	3	3	0
Appellant	1	0	1
Total	52	32	20

Table 13

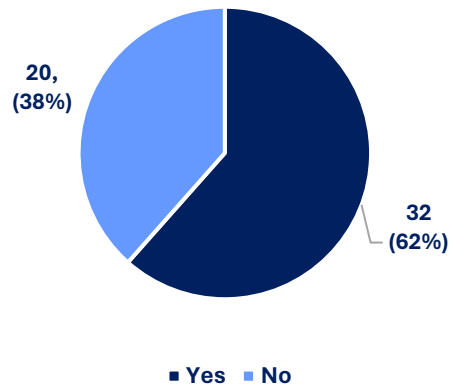
Hearing days lost due to Adjourment Applications:

79

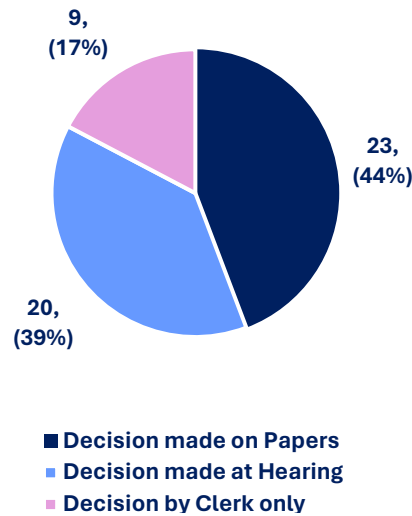
Adjourment Reasons



Adjourment Application made 21 days or less before hearing:-



Method of Consideration by the Panel:



COMMENTARY

The Tribunal continues to list substantive hearings expeditiously. The vast majority of hearings are listed within six months of a case having been issued. The default position is that the Tribunal lists substantive hearings in person with the proviso that either party can apply for the hearing to be heard remotely and provide reasons for doing so.

Whether a hearing is in person at our premises or remote, members of the public and the press are able to observe proceedings via a remote link to the courtroom.

The vast majority of applications to adjourn are made by/on behalf of the Respondent, mostly on the ground of ill health of the Respondent. The Tribunal requires medical evidence to support any assertions made by the Respondent in relation to their health and the likely impact that may have on their ability to attend/participate in a hearing.

As regards applications to adjourn proceedings made on behalf of the Applicant, they can be categorised as (a) additional time required to investigate the ill health of a Respondent, (ii) witness availability and/or (iii) availability of representative.

All applications need to be supported by good reasons as the Tribunal needs to balance the request along with the overarching public interest in ensuring cases are dealt with expeditiously.

KPM 3 – COST PER COURT

	2023	2022	2021
No. of courts (<i>Sitting days</i>)	212.5	174.25	239
Members fees & Expenses	£614,098	£441,354	£500,904
Administrative Expenses	£1,987,699	£2,658,802	£2,580,729
Total Spend	£2,601,797	£3,100,156	£3,081,633
Average cost per court	£12,244	£17,791	£12,894

Table 14

COMMENTARY

The number of court sitting days in 2023 was 212.5. This was an increase of 21.9% on 2022.

On an exceptional basis additional funding of £1,162,122 was received in 2022 specifically to cover the cost of the SDT relocating to new premises in 2023. As this was not part of the Tribunal's business as usual these costs are not included in the Total Spend.

Based on total spend of £2,601,797 the average cost per court (draft) for 2023 has been significantly reduced down to £12,244.

The increase in Member's Expenses is driven by the higher number of sittings that have taken place in person following the end of the pandemic.

Administrative costs (£1,987,699) made up 76.4% of total costs and are a significant reduction of £671,103 (25.2%) on 2022.

Building Costs were lower as the SDT reduced its office space at the end of 2022, occupying two floors at Gate House as opposed to the previous three. Savings in this area related to lower rent, service charges and business rates. Dilapidation costs in relation to the vacant floor were accrued in 2022 but ended up higher than anticipated with £19,500 being included in this year's accounts.

During 2023, SDT incurred additional costs relating to restructuring its operations, this was offset by savings in other areas such as staff & office costs. During the course of 2023 staff numbers reduced from 12 to 9 with the organisation working to fill the vacant positions.

KPM 4 – PRODUCTION OF JUDGMENT

Target:

Following final determination of the application, judgment to be served on the parties within:-

35% <4 weeks

50% 4-5 weeks

70% 5-6 weeks

85% 6-7 weeks

95% 7-9 weeks

100% 9-15 weeks

	2023		2022	
No of Judgments	101		104	
≤ 4 weeks	73	72%	82	79%
4-5 weeks	6	78%	8	87%
5-6 weeks	6	84%	4	90%
6-7 weeks	7	91%	6	96%
7-9 weeks	6	97%	1	97%
9-15 weeks	3	100%	3	100%

Table 15

There was an increase in the percentage of judgments completed more quickly, within 6-7 weeks in 2023 compared to 2022. Additionally, the percentage of judgments completed within 7-9 weeks saw an increase in 2023. This increase may be attributed to several factors, such as complex issues arising during the course of a hearing, which are fully documented within the judgment to provide a comprehensive understanding of the proceedings. The duration of the hearing itself, including the presentation of witness evidence, could contribute to the extended timeframe for judgment production.

KPM5 - APPEALS

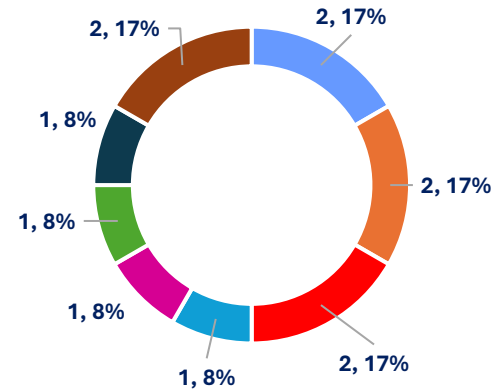
Received in 2023	
No. of cases concluded in year	101
Appeals lodged relating to 2023 cases	8
Appeals lodged in 2023 relating to 2022 cases	4
Status of above Appeals	
Appeals withdrawn/resolved by consent	0
Appeals dismissed/voided	0
Appeals upheld in whole or part	2
Appeals outstanding	10

Table 16

Received in 2022	
No. of cases concluded in year	103
Appeals lodged relating to 2022 cases	6
Appeals lodged in 2022 relating to 2021 cases	2
Status of above Appeals	
Appeals withdrawn/resolved by consent	2
Appeals dismissed/voided	4
Appeals upheld in whole or part	0
Appeals outstanding	2

Table 17

Reasons for Appeal - received in 2023



- Findings
- Costs
- Findings, Sanction, Procedural Irregularity
- Costs, Procedural Irregularity
- Findings, Wrong in Law
- Wrong in Law
- Findings, Sanction
- Procedural Irregularity

COMMENTARY

The Tribunal received 12 appeals in 2023, 10 of which remain outstanding so are outside the scope of this commentary.. There was an increase in appeals compared to 2022 but this is not regarded as significant. The Tribunal continues to publish full reasons for its decisions within its judgments so that all parties and the public can understand the rationale behind them.

KPM 6 – TRIBUNAL & STAFF DIVERSITY

Ensure that the diversity profile of the SDT’s staff team and its membership reflect the diversity of the population it serves, and the solicitors’ profession (of England and Wales) in particular.

ETHNICITY	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Asian	12%	9%	11%
Black	3%	4%	11%
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	3%	0%	11%
Other Ethnic Group	1%	0%	0%
White	77%	87%	67%
Prefer Not to Say	4%	0%	0%

RELIGION	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Buddhist	1%	0%	0%
Christian	41%	52%	67%
Hindu	2%	4%	11%
Jewish	2%	4%	0%
Muslim	6%	4%	0%
Sikh	2%	0%	0%
Other Religion or Belief	2%	0%	0%
No Religion or Belief	36%	32%	11%
Prefer Not to Say	8%	4%	11%

DISABILITY	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
No	90%	85%	100%
Yes	6%	11%	0%
Prefer Not to Say	4%	4%	0%

Table 18

GENDER	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Female	53%	46%	67%
Male	45%	53%	33%
Prefer Not to Say	2%	0%	0%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Other	0%	0%	0%
Bi-Sexual	1%	2%	0%
Gay-Lesbian	3%	0%	0%
Heterosexual	89%	94%	89%
Prefer Not to Say	6%	4%	11%

AGE	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
25-34	30%	2%	0%
35-44	29%	8%	22%
45-54	22%	19%	33%
55-64	13%	43%	45%
65+	4%	28%	0%
Prefer Not to Say	2%	0%	0%

Table 19

COMMENTARY

The tables presented above offer a comparison between the diversity profile of the Tribunal's members and staff with those of practising solicitors across the wider population and the population we serve. For this analysis, we have compared the representation of our staff and Membership against the demographic data collected in 2023 by the SRA via their Diversity data tool.

OUTLINE TO FEEDBACK SURVEY

Performance Measures 7-10 aim to monitor user satisfaction in 4 key areas:

- Response of the SDT administrative team;
- Access to hearings;
- Experience of using the SDT website;
- Time and opportunity for parties and advocates to present their case.

Data in respect of these measures is gathered via a user feedback survey which is sent out 3 times during the year, each covering a 4-month period. Surveys were sent to participants in cases are categorised as follows:-

- Respondents (Non-SRA)
- Respondents (SRA)
- Applicants (Non-SRA)
- Legal representatives (SRA)
- Legal representatives (Non-SRA)

We work with a third-party provider to maximise efficiency and ensure anonymity of data, and to encourage participation. Recipients of the survey are asked 4 questions (set out below).

In 2023, out of the 164 questionnaires distributed, 34 were completed and returned, resulting in an overall completion rate of 22%. This marks an improvement from the previous year (up 5%) where the completion rate stood at just 17% but is still well below the level where this is considered sufficient.. The Tribunal has taken steps to address this and it is hoped that this will see a marked improvement in this percentage in 2024.;

The table below shows the number of questionnaires sent and received in 2023 and the response rates broken down by feedback group.

	Number of Questionnaires Sent	Number of Questionnaires Received	Individual Completion rate (%)
Respondent Non-SRA	68	19	28%
Legal Rep Non-SRA	32	8	25%
Legal Rep SRA	49	6	12%
Applicant Non-SRA	15	1	6%
Total	164	34	

Table 20

KPM7

70% of those who contacted the Tribunal’s administrative team felt that their needs were listened to and understood by the staff they contacted.

The table below shows how the different feedback groups responded to the question: **‘If you contacted the Tribunal’s administrative team, did you feel they listened to and understood your needs?’**

Table 21

Feedback Group	Number who answered Yes (target: 70%)	Number who answered No	Number who answered Not Applicable (not included in % calculations)
Respondent (Non-SRA)	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	3
Legal Rep (Non-SRA)	8 (100%)	0	0
Applicant (Non-SRA)	0	0	0
Legal Rep (SRA)	6 (100%)	0	0
Total	29	2	3

While the Tribunal cannot offer legal advice, our administrative staff understand that appearing before the Tribunal can be an overwhelming and stressful experience for Respondents. Staff are available to assist with procedural inquiries or in relation to general enquiries from the public, guide individuals to the appropriate resources better suited to address their query.

KPM8

90% of parties and advocates could access the hearing effectively (including those hearings held remotely).

‘The table below shows how the different feedback groups responded to the question: **‘Were you able to access/attend the hearing effectively?’**

Table 21

Feedback Group	Number who answered Yes (target: 70%)	Number who answered No	Number who answered Not Applicable (not included in % calculations)
Respondent (Non-SRA)	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	7
Legal Rep (Non-SRA)	7 (100%)	0	1
Applicant (Non-SRA)	0	0	0
Legal Rep (SRA)	6 (100%)	0	0
Total	24	2	8

In relation to remote hearings, when parties receive an invitation, they are provided with instructions on how to access the proceedings. We have developed guidance on Zoom hearings, accessible on the Tribunal website, outlining how these proceedings are managed. Tribunal staff are available to assist parties encountering difficulties when accessing documents. While feedback predominately suggests the current system enables effective access, we continuously seek ways to improve it.

KPM9

70% of those who are a party or advocate in a case who referred to the Tribunal’s website found the information on the Tribunal’s website was useful/helped them prepare for their hearing/case.

The table below shows how the different feedback groups responded to the question: ‘If you visited our website, was it useful and/or did it help you prepare for your hearing/case?’

Feedback Group	Number who answered Yes (target: 70%)	Number who answered No	Number who answered Not Applicable (not included in % calculations)
Respondent (Non-SRA)	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	7
Legal Rep (Non-SRA)	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	0
Applicant (Non-SRA)	0	0	0
Legal Rep (SRA)	6 (100%)	0	0
Total	22	5	7

Table 22

With the relaunch of the Tribunal's website in October 2023, we anticipate continued positive feedback regarding the site's navigation and accessibility to information. The redesign of the site prioritised enhancing user experience and promoting a greater understanding of the Tribunal's function

KPM10

KPM 10: 85% of parties and advocates felt that they had sufficient time and opportunity to present their case to the Tribunal during the hearing.

The table below shows how the different feedback groups responded to the question: ‘During the hearing did you have sufficient time and opportunity to present your case/evidence to the Tribunal?’

Feedback Group	Number who answered Yes (target: 70%)	Number who answered No	Number who answered Not Applicable (not included in % calculations)
Respondent (Non-SRA)	11(74%)	4 (26%)	5
Legal Rep (Non-SRA)	7 (100%)	0	1
Applicant (Non-SRA)	0	0	0
Legal Rep (SRA)	6 (100%)	0	0
Total	24	4	6

Table 23

While parties provide a hearing timetable in advance of the hearing to assist in efficient case management and hearing estimates, clerks and Panel Members recognise that unrepresented Respondents, unfamiliar with the process, may require more time to present their case and are mindful of this issue.

ETHNICITY DATA

During the feedback process, participants are requested to provide their gender and ethnic background in order to gather additional data about these protected characteristics and, in the longer term, help us understand any possible link with people’s experiences of the Tribunal.

The tables below show the responses received in 2023 with a comparison against the previous year.

Despite the low response rate to the feedback, the data below indicates a rise in participants opting not to disclose their ethnicity or gender information.

In addition to the Feedback Survey undertaken by a third-party, following the conclusion of the proceedings and Tribunal’s Judgment being issued to the parties, an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form is sent to the parties. Within the form, participants are advised that the purpose of requesting this sensitive information is in order for the Tribunal to monitor the outcomes for solicitors who appear before it to ensure there is no disproportionality based on protected characteristics and ensuring the confidentiality of information provided. In 2023, 111 monitoring forms were sent to either individual Respondents or their instructed legal representatives with a 4% response rate. The details of which are summarised below:

FEEDBACK SURVEY DATA		
Ethnicity	Response	
	2023	2022
Asian/Asian British	3%	7%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0%	0%
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	0%	0%
White	68%	79%
Other	0%	0%
Prefer Not to Say	29%	14%

FEEDBACK SURVEY DATA		
Gender	Response	
	2023	2022
Female	17%	20%
Male	57%	66%
Other	0%	0%
Prefer Not to Say	26%	14%

DIVERSITY MONITORING FORM DATA	
Gender	
Female	25%
Male	75%
Ethnicity	
White	75%
Other	25%
Age	
46-55	50%
Over 65	50%
Sexual Orientation	
Straight	75%
Gay Man	25%
Ethnicity	
Christian	75%
No Religion or Belief	25%

We appreciate the significance of comprehensive diversity data and acknowledge that the low response rate is a clear indicator that the current process requires improvement. Therefore for 2024, we are taking proactive steps to address this issue and have implemented a new system for collecting diversity data.

