

Annual Report 2024

Independent. Impartial. Transparent.

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PRESIDENT’S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to present the Annual Report for the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Administration Limited for 2024.

This has been a year of exceptional activity, change, and achievement for the Tribunal. We experienced a very significant increase in overall caseload (up by 62%), with an 82% rise in the number of cases received from the Solicitors Regulation Authority compared to 2023. This increase reflects the SRA’s progress in concluding a substantial number of legacy investigations. While this surge was originally forecast to affect only the first six months of the year, it in fact continued throughout 2024, placing sustained demands on the Tribunal’s resources and operations that carry over into 2025.

The cost of the Tribunal’s work in 2024 resulted in a 21% reduction in cost to the profession compared to 2023, equating to £14.95 per regulated person. This reduction was primarily due to the downsizing of the Tribunal’s premises and an adaptation to our forecasting process in relation to sitting days, which enabled a more accurate projection of the resources required for the year.

The Tribunal has also seen important changes at Board level, with two directors stepping down and being replaced as part of our ongoing governance development. We were pleased to welcome a new interim Financial Controller and two new Deputy Clerks, further strengthening our management, clerking and operational capacity at a critical time.

As ever, the Tribunal remains focused on safeguarding the public, maintaining confidence in the profession, and upholding the rule of law. I should like to express my sincere thanks to our staff, members, and directors for their professionalism, hard work, and dedication in what has been a demanding and transformative year. We look forward to working closely with all of our stakeholders in 2025 as we continue to deliver on our strategic priorities and drive excellence in everything we do.

I hope you find this report an informative read.

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 was 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 the Tribunal.

*until April 2025

THE SDT OFFICERS/DIRECTORS*

The SDT Officers

Alison Kellett	President
Paul Lewis	Solicitor Vice-President
Stephanie Bown	Lay Vice-President

Board and Membership Changes

In July 2024, Bellamy Forde stepped down from the Board of the SDTAL and as a Solicitor Member following his appointment as an Employment Judge. In October 2024, Paul Lewis resigned from his position as a Director but continued to serve as Solicitor Vice-President.

SDTAL Board of Directors

Alison Kellett	Chair
Paul Housego	Director
Stephanie Bown	Director
Robert Slack	Director

The Board appointed Paul Housego as a Director in October 2024.

*as at 31 December 2024.

THE SDT MEMBERSHIP*



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

SOLICITOR MEMBERS

Alison Banks	Dominic Green	Paul Housego
Alison Kellett	Edward Nally	Paul Lewis
Alyson Sprawson	Frosoulla Kyriacou	Peter Jones
Andrew Horrocks	Gerald Sydenham	Richard Nicholas
Angela Horne	Heidi Hasan	Teresa Cullen
Ashok Ghosh	James Johnston	Usman Sheikh
Bhavna Patel	John Abramson	William Ellerton
Callum Cowx	Lisa Boyce	
Carolyn Evans	Lisa Murphy	
Charlotte Rigby	Mark Millin	

LAY MEMBERS

Adair Richards	Gary Gracey	Robert Slack
Alan Lyon	Jenny Rowe	Sarah Gordon
Anthony Pygram	Katharine Wright	Stephanie Bown
Benjamin Walsh	Lesley McMahon-Hathway	
Carol Valentine	Linda Hawkins	
Colin Childs	Louise Fox	
Damian Kearney	Paul Hurley	
Elaine Keen	Priya Iyer	

*as at 31 December 2024.

STRATEGIC VISION

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.

INDEPENDENT IMPARTIAL TRANSPARENT

UNDERPINNING VALUES

- 1 To act with integrity, impartiality and excellence in fulfilling our role.
- 2 To positively contribute to the profession and continually improve professional standards.
- 3 To provide value for money for our services.

ABOUT OUR VALUES

Our values underpin the work we do, decisions we make and how we perform our role in legal regulation.

We handle every case with impartiality, ensuring fairness for all parties involved protecting the independence of the Tribunal and the reputation of the profession.

Beyond the adjudication of cases, we see our role within the regulatory framework to promote understanding of professional ethics and standards across the profession.

We are conscious of our responsibility to deliver value for money to the profession and public that we serve.

We seek to provide this value by managing our finances responsibly, using technology effectively and regularly reviewing our processes to enable continuous improvement.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 GOVERNANCE
The SDT is fit for purpose to deliver transparent justice in the changing evolutionary landscape of legal services enforcement.
- 2 ENHANCE TRUST & CONFIDENCE
The SDT 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.
- 3 EDI
The SDT aims to represent the diversity of the legal profession and provide a culture for staff and service users which respects everyone, is fair and non-discriminatory.
- 4 CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROFESSION
The SDT is committed to contribute to the profession in terms of skills and training and to sharing our experiences and our expertise to continually improve standards across the profession.
- 5 COST EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS
The SDT provides value for money for its services.

OUR FINANCES

The SDT is funded under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Legal Services Board (LSB) 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 with Companies House.

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

The LSB places significant emphasis on how we demonstrate value for money. One of the key measures it considers is the cost per court, which reflects how efficiently we deliver our core function – the hearing of disciplinary cases.

The cost per court is a key metric used by the LSB to assess both our financial management and the efficiency with which we deliver fair and timely hearings. While we remain committed to keeping this cost under control, certain factors – such as late adjournments or parties reaching an agreed outcome shortly before a scheduled hearing – can lead to unavoidable loss of court time, impacting overall cost efficiency. Information regarding Cost Per Court for 2024 is appended to this report.

As outlined in The Year in Review overleaf, we are actively taking steps to reduce the amount of court days lost.

In 2024, our budget was £2,517,316 which excluded the Depreciation and Amortisation as those are non-cash expenses and are linked to investment in tangible or intangible assets funded and purchased in previous periods.

This budget represented a decrease of 19.5% on 2023 running costs of £3,127,259 (i.e. excluding an additional £1.16m funding for office relocation received in 2023).

This decrease despite general price increases was mainly due to our relocation to smaller premises which were operational from January 2024.

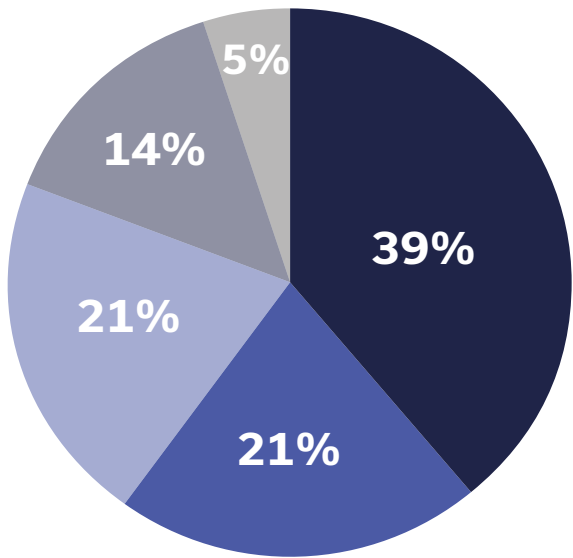
The actual cost of £2,593,404, including Depreciation and Amortisation, represents an amount of £14.95 per regulated person as of December 2024*. This represents a 21% decrease in the cost to the profession compared to 2023.

Cost per Regulated Person	2024	2023 Restated**
Total Cost	£2,593,404	£3,184.543
No of Regulated Persons	173,495*	167,957
Cost per Person	£14.95	£18.96

*Regulated person, used in the calculations above, are made up of practising solicitors, registered European lawyers and registered foreign lawyers. Source: SRA Data for Population of Practising Solicitors.
**The 2023 information above has been restated from the 2023 published Annual Report to correct an error.

2024 COSTS ALLOCATIONS

Below is a breakdown of how our budget was apportioned in 2024.



- Staff Costs
- Other Admin Costs
- Hearing Costs
- Building Costs
- Amortisation & Depreciation

	2024 (£)	%
Staff Costs	1,020,007	39%
Other Admin Costs	536,075	21%
Cost of Hearings	540,416	21%
Building Costs	353,628	14%
Amortisation & Depreciation	143,278	5%
Total	2,593,404	100%

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

OUR FIRST YEAR AT 45 LUDGATE HILL

2024 marked a significant milestone for the Tribunal as we completed our first year in our new premises at 45 Ludgate Hill. This move represented an opportunity to enhance our operational efficiency, modernise our hearing facilities and improve the overall experience for all Tribunal users.

As outlined in previous reports, considerable planning went into the design and fit-out of our new courtrooms, ensuring they are equipped to accommodate the evolving needs of the legal profession.

A key priority was maximising virtual participation, enabling seamless remote access for parties unable to attend in person. In addition, a strong emphasis was placed on integrating special measures for vulnerable witnesses, ensuring that those giving evidence in sensitive cases are fully supported throughout the process.

Our listing strategy prioritises in-person hearings as the default approach, while maintaining flexibility for parties to request remote participation where necessary. In the initial months, Tribunal staff, members, and stakeholders took time to familiarise themselves with the new surroundings, adapting to the enhanced facilities. The new offices have also provided an improved collaborative working environment for the administrative team, enhancing efficiency and teamwork.

In February 2024, we took a moment to honour the memory of our late colleague, Anne-Marie Roberts, who passed away in 2023.

Anne-Marie was a highly respected and much-loved Deputy Clerk of the Tribunal, known for her professionalism, dedication, and kindness.

In recognition of her invaluable contribution, Courtroom 1 was formally named in her memory, reflecting the respect held by all who had the privilege of working alongside her.

EXPANSION OF THE CLERKING/ ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Throughout 2024, the Tribunal continued to strengthen its administrative and clerking functions to support the increasing complexity and volume of cases.

As part of this effort, we welcomed two Deputy Clerks, Shaun Moran and Olapado Akinyebo, to the clerking team, enhancing our capacity to manage hearings efficiently and ensuring the smooth running of Tribunal proceedings.

Additionally, we expanded the case management team with the recruitment of Charlotte Dunne as a Case Management Assistant and Olivia Chong as a Legal Research Assistant. Their roles provide essential support in case preparation, legal research, and the overall administration of Tribunal matters. We also said farewell to Senior Clerk Jonathan White, who left the Tribunal in April 2024 who played an important role in the work of the clerking team.

ENHANCING DIVERSITY DATA COLLECTION

The Tribunal remains committed to improving our understanding of the diversity of Respondents appearing before us.

Previously, we requested diversity information via email at the conclusion of proceedings. However, this approach yielded a very low response rate. In early 2024 we revised our methodology by integrating an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) form directly into the website and now request that Respondents complete the EDI form upon arrival at the Tribunal offices.

For remote hearings, clerks ascertain from Respondents whether they are willing to provide this information and a secure link to the form is shared during proceedings. This process has significantly increased participation and while we recognise that we are at the early stages of this data collection, we believe that the processes now in place will allow us to develop a more comprehensive picture of those appearing before the Tribunal.

As an independent Tribunal, we uphold the principle that each case is determined solely on its facts. However, this data collection may assist in identifying any patterns or trends — including whether individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds appear to be disproportionately represented among those brought before the Tribunal.

Our Key Performance Measures (KPM) Report, annexed to this document, provides an initial insight into this data, forming the foundation for further analysis and ongoing improvements in this area.

In addition to our internal efforts, we continue to collaborate with the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), which shares its diversity data with us on an annual basis. This collaboration contributes to the overall accuracy and reliability of the diversity data published.

LAUNCH OF THE TRIBUNAL PATHWAYS PROGRAMME – PLACEMENT SCHEME

In June 2024, we launched the Tribunal Pathways Programme, an initiative aimed at providing law students with a deeper understanding of the Tribunal's work and providing a commitment to legal ethics, diversity and professional development through a structured placement scheme.

The placement scheme reflects the Tribunal's values by promoting accessibility, integrity, and transparency. By establishing this programme, we seek to enhance opportunities for aspiring legal professionals while reinforcing our commitment to advancing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the profession.

Participants in the scheme gained firsthand experience of the Tribunal's functions, from case management, administrative procedures and determination of cases. By engaging with various aspects of the Tribunal's operations, students developed a well-rounded understanding of regulatory processes while enhancing their practical and professional skills.

Encouraging individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate not only contributed to greater awareness of the Tribunal's role but also provided participants with a meaningful learning opportunity about the legal regulatory framework and the disciplinary process.

As part of their placement, participants were assigned a project focusing on EDI improvements, allowing them to provide feedback on the scheme and propose enhancements.

At the conclusion of the placement, students presented their findings, offering valuable perspectives that will inform future iterations of the programme.

FURTHER MODIFICATIONS TO THE WEBSITE

In 2024, we continued to enhance our website to improve accessibility, transparency, and user experience. One of the key developments was the expansion of judgment entries, which now include the executive summary as part of each published judgment.

This enhancement allows users to gain a concise overview of the case, summarising the key aspects of the hearing, the issues considered, and the Tribunal's findings. By providing this brief outline upfront, users can quickly understand the nature of the case before accessing the full PDF judgment. This improvement ensures that Tribunal decisions are more accessible to all stakeholders, supporting better engagement with our processes and making legal outcomes easier to navigate.

These updates reflect our ongoing commitment to modernising Tribunal services, ensuring that all information is presented in a clear and user-friendly format while maintaining transparency and efficiency in how we share our decisions.

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY THROUGH SUMMARY FINDINGS

In response to the increasing number of non-party disclosure applications, we recognise the public's expectations in relation to greater transparency around proceedings. Additionally, there has been a rise in requests for the disclosure of case documentation before commencement of a substantive hearing.

We also acknowledge that parties involved in proceedings want to understand the Tribunal's decision as soon as possible, rather than waiting for the full published judgment, which can take several weeks.

To support this, in the latter part of 2024, we began trialling the announcement of summary findings at the conclusion of hearings. This process aims to provide clear and timely information about the Tribunal's decision, improving understanding for all stakeholders, including Respondents, legal representatives, press and the wider public.

At this stage, the initiative remains in its early development and 2024 marked the initial phase of implementation.

Refinements will continue throughout 2025, with the aim of fully rolling out the process in a way that balances transparency with the Tribunal's duty to ensure fairness and accuracy in its decision-making.

CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS/IMPROVEMENT TO TRIBUNAL PROCESSES

In October 2024, Alison Kellett, President of the SDT and Joanne Thomas, Listings Manager, were invited to attend a meeting of the Solicitors Assistance Scheme (SAS). This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the Tribunal's processes, exchanging perspectives on case management, listings and procedural applications.

The meeting facilitated dialogue on how the Tribunal operates and how it interacts with Respondents navigating regulatory proceedings and their legal representatives. While a range of topics were discussed, particular attention was given to the standard directions, allowing us to consider potential improvements in this area to assist parties in the efficient management of proceedings.

Based on the feedback received, we initiated a comprehensive review of our standard directions to ensure they reflect the needs and expectations of those interacting with the Tribunal.

This review was subsequently circulated to the Tribunal User Group to engage and gather feedback on various aspects of the proposed revised processes.

Following this, the amended processes were presented to the SDT Policy Committee for approval with a view to implementation in early 2025. We have outlined the new processes further on in this report under 'Lifecycle of a case'.

NOTABLE CASES

This is a selection of some of our cases in 2024 providing an indication as to the breadth of the matters which came before the Tribunal. Within this text, excerpts have been reproduced from Practical Law Practice Compliance and Management with the permission of the publishers, Thomson Reuters.

INDIRECT HARM

The respondent, a solicitor and a juror at the material time of the breach, admitted to committing an offence under the Juries Act 1974. She had conducted personal research on the subject matter of the trial, despite warnings from the judge not to do so, and disclosed her findings to other jurors in contravention of the Act.

The respondent received a prison sentence and her actions necessitated the discharge of the jury and abortion of the trial. This had to be retried before a new jury at a later date, at further cost and with significant impact on the parties and witnesses.

Breaches admitted:

- Principles 1, 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.

The Tribunal considered the respondent's mitigation, which included her voluntary admission of wrongdoing, expressions of genuine remorse and insight, her otherwise unblemished legal career, and her efforts to rebuild her life after serving her sentence.

The Tribunal noted that the respondent had been motivated by her intention to obtain a just outcome, but caused significant harm to the reputation of the profession and the witnesses in the trial, and determined that a suspension represented a proportionate sanction.

The Respondent was suspended for eight years and ordered to pay costs of £5,000.

ANTI-SEMITISM

A solicitor was alleged to have posted inappropriate and/or offensive comments on Twitter, some of which were construed as antisemitic in nature. He also sent inappropriate and/or offensive messages to the SRA.

Alleged breaches:

- Principles 2, 5 and 6 of the SRA Principles 2019.

The respondent accepted that his posts were the result of bad and hasty drafting but denied all allegations. He also argued that he had acted in a personal capacity, and therefore, his conduct fell outside the SRA's regulatory remit. The Tribunal sought expert evidence to examine the respondent's tweets, both individually and collectively, and concluded he was guilty of professional misconduct based on the balance of probabilities. The Tribunal noted that the respondent's conduct had lacked integrity and did not promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

Given the seriousness of the misconduct and its impact on the profession's reputation, the Tribunal considered a strike-off was appropriate. The respondent was found to have insufficient means to pay costs and so the Tribunal made no order as to costs. The Respondent was struck off the Roll of solicitors.

INAPPROPRIATE THREATS OF LITIGATION

A solicitor allegedly sent correspondences to a GP surgery and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), threatening legal action if his clients were not given exemption from COVID-19 vaccination requirements. He also made allegations of bad faith against the health organisations and sought relief that was unrelated to and disproportionate to his clients' grievances. The respondent denied all allegations.

Breaches found:

- Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.
- Paragraphs 1.2 and 2.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.

The Tribunal found all allegations proved on the balance of probabilities, noting that the respondent had no proper factual or legal basis for the claims and that his actions were deemed disingenuous, belligerent, disproportionate, and serious in nature. The Tribunal stated that the letters had been a tactical device to precipitate litigation against the government's public health measures. In mitigation, the Tribunal accepted that the respondent had not acted dishonestly (but was motivated by a genuine concern for public safety), had a previously unblemished regulatory record and had cooperated fully during the SRA's investigation. In light of this, the Tribunal considered that a fine was an appropriate sanction

The Respondent was ordered to pay fine (£15,000) and costs (£66,500).

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING

The respondents (a firm, and the individual with primary responsibility for the material client relationships) were alleged to have failed to carry out adequate customer due diligence and ongoing monitoring of clients involved in ship purchase transactions, contrary to the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 and Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017. They also failed to cease acting when appropriate or apply enhanced due diligence or enhanced ongoing monitoring.

Breaches admitted:

- Principles 6, 7 and 8 of the SRA Principles 2011.
- Outcomes 7.3 and 7.5 of the SRA Code of Conduct 2011.

Both respondents admitted the allegations and the Tribunal found all allegations proved. In determining the sanctions, the Tribunal considered the firms' size and resources, the Respondent's seniority and mitigating factors, which included their admissions and compliance, against aggravating factors, which included the repeated and sustained nature of the misconduct and that the firm had been subject to a previous Tribunal finding relating to compliance with AML regulations. Resultantly, the Tribunal determined that a financial penalty represented a proportionate sanction. The first respondent was ordered to pay a financial penalty (£500,000) and costs (£128,197.48). The second respondent was ordered to pay a financial penalty (£11,900) and costs (£54,941.77).

IMPROPER LITIGATION

The respondent, a manager, owner, COLP, COFA and MLRO of a firm, allegedly sent misleading letters to over 200 schools and GP surgeries during the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening legal action if they required face coverings, conducted routine lateral flow tests, or facilitated immunisation vaccination for children between the ages of 12 and 17. The respondent was also alleged to have encouraged other individuals to send similar letters.

Breaches alleged:

- Paragraph 1.2 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.
- Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.

The respondent denied all allegations, arguing that her letters were not threatening and were instead intended to inform the recipients of the risks of the vaccine, mask-wearing and lateral flow testing for children. The respondent added that she had genuinely believed that the COVID-19 measures were harmful to children based upon scientific evidence. She further submitted that she had approved the content of the letters but did not personally issue them to the schools or GP surgeries.

The Tribunal found on the balance of probabilities the allegations were proved in part. The Tribunal held that the unsolicited letters, which bore the firm's name, style and logo, would have been perceived as threatening by a lay person, irrespective of the respondent's actual intent. However, the Tribunal did not find that the respondent had encouraged other likeminded individuals to send similar letters to schools and GP surgeries.

It was of the view that the group did not require much encouragement from the respondent given their own motivation and aligned views. The Tribunal was also not satisfied that the threat of retributive legal action, albeit implied, were misleading.

In determining the sanction, the Tribunal noted that the misconduct was serious as the respondent had fallen short of the standards of integrity and probity expected of a solicitor. Her actions were deliberate, repeated and calculated over a short, but intensive, period of time. She also showed little, if any, insight into her conduct. However, in mitigation, the Tribunal accepted that no actual harm was caused, there were no allegations of dishonesty or lack of integrity involved and the respondent had a previously unblemished career. Resultantly, it concluded that a fine was an appropriate sanction.

The Respondent was ordered to pay a fine (£2,500) and costs (£30,000).

DISHONESTY

A director of a business, who was registered as a solicitor but had not been employed as one since 1994, admitted to committing blackmail under section 21 of the Theft Act 1968. He was sentenced to one year in prison, suspended for two years, and 240 hours of unpaid work.

Breaches found:

- Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Standards and Regulations 2019.

The Tribunal felt that the nature of the offence negated mitigating factors, such as the respondent's admission of the offence. As the misconduct was so serious, the Tribunal held that the respondent being struck from the Roll of Solicitors was an appropriate sanction.

The Respondent was struck off the Roll of Solicitors and ordered to pay costs of £4,158.

A practising solicitor at a borough council was alleged to have provided false and misleading information regarding an application to discharge an interim care order during her notice period. The respondent then left employment before the internal disciplinary proceedings concluded. The matter was reported to the SRA.

Breaches admitted: • Principles 2, 4, and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019. • Paragraph 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.

The respondent admitted to all the allegations, including dishonesty. In mitigation, the respondent cited personal health issues and a high caseload as factors contributing to her misconduct, in an otherwise unblemished career. The Tribunal found the respondent to be highly culpable for her misconduct as she had direct responsibility for the circumstances in which it arose, further noting that her actions were deliberate, repeated and dishonest, and took place over an extended period. Although the respondent did not benefit from her dishonest actions, it had caused severe distress and inconvenience to the client. Consequently, the SRA considered that strike off was the fair and proportionate penalty.

The Respondent was struck off and ordered to pay costs of £2,780.

COSTS

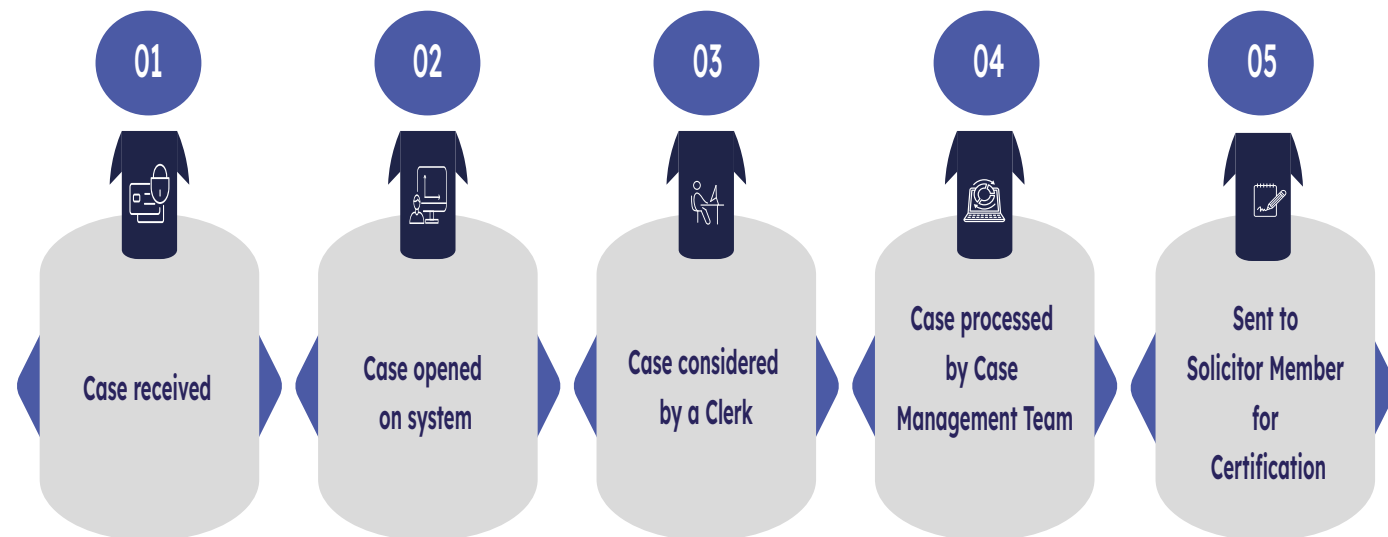
The respondent had allegedly failed to conduct adequate source of wealth and funds check for a single transaction that occurred over a decade ago. At the time, the SRA brought proceedings against the respondent, believing he was solely responsible for the due diligence failures. However, upon reviewing the respondent's submission, it appeared that the responsibility for any due diligence failures was shared between the respondent and other members of the firm. In light of this, the SRA submitted an application to withdraw the allegations, citing diminished public interest and the unlikely prospect of an order.

The Tribunal concurred with the SRA's position and granted the application. However, in determining the matter of costs, the Tribunal found that the proceedings had been improperly made as the applicant had failed to disclose crucial documents to the respondent in a timely manner. Specifically, the SRA knew that there was no proper basis for referring the matter to the Tribunal as early as May 2023, but only informed the respondent in August 2024. Therefore, the Tribunal considered that a costs order should be made against the SRA, stating this would not "cause a chilling effect on the regulator" but rather ensure the regulator acted in a fair, transparent and responsible way.

The Application to withdraw allegations was granted with the SRA ordered to pay costs of £184,000.

For further information visit Practical Law Practice Compliance & Management at:
<https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/Browse/Home/Practice/PracticeComplianceManagement>

LIFECYCLE OF A CASE*



* as of 2025

APPLICATIONS & CASE MANAGEMENT

The graphic above outlines the process for when cases are received from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) and members of the public known as ‘Lay Applicants’ and the initial administrative processes which are undertaken once the case is received.

Following on from step 5 above, if a Solicitor Member is in any doubt or difficulty in relation to the certification, the case will be referred to a Panel of 3 members for consideration - this applies to both proceedings received from the SRA and Lay Applicants.

Once a case has been certified, Part 1 Standard Directions are issued and a Case Management Hearing (CMH) is listed approximately 14 weeks from the date of certification of the case.

Part 1 Standard Directions provide dates for the Answer (the Respondent’s response to the allegations) to be served within 8 weeks and the Reply (the SRA’s response to

the Answer) within 10 weeks. Parties will be expected to have completed a checklist of requirements which should be filed with the Tribunal 1 week prior to the CMH.

If it has been agreed by the Tribunal and the parties that the listed CMH should be vacated as it is not required, Part 2 Standard Directions are issued administratively by the Tribunal to include a substantive hearing date and further directions in relation to service of Witness Statements, Statement of Means and Skeleton Arguments.

If the CMH is not vacated, the Substantive Hearing date and Part 2 Standard Directions referred to above are issued at the CMH by the Tribunal panel.

It is common for parties to indicate their intention to pursue an Agreed Outcome between the case being certified and the CMH. In such instances, a further CMH will be scheduled to consider the proposed Agreed Outcome.

SUBSTANTIVE HEARINGS

Tribunal hearings are conducted either in person at 45 Ludgate Hill, remotely via Zoom, or in a hybrid format — where the hearing takes place in person but some witnesses give evidence remotely.

Hearings are open to the public unless the Tribunal directs that a matter be heard in private. The Tribunal encourages members of the public to observe proceedings via Zoom allowing a much wider audience to attend and follow proceedings.

A typical Substantive hearing follows the following format:

- The SRA presents the case, outlining the allegations and the reasons the matter has been brought before the Tribunal.
- Evidence is presented, including the examination and cross-examination of the Respondent and any witnesses.
- Both parties deliver their closing submissions.
- The Tribunal considers the evidence and submissions to reach a determination on the case.
- The Tribunal delivers its decision on whether the allegations have been proved.
- Following the decision, submissions are made regarding mitigation and the issue of costs.
- The Tribunal retires and determines the sanction and costs.

- The Tribunal announces its summary findings, the sanction imposed and details the costs order.

THE ORDER & JUDGMENT

Following the hearing, an Order is issued to the parties confirming the sanction imposed and any costs awarded.

A full written Judgment is subsequently prepared by the Clerk to the Tribunal and approved by the panel. This Judgment sets out the Tribunal’s findings and the reasoning underpinning its decision.

APPEAL PROCESS

Upon receipt of the Tribunal Judgment, parties have 21 days in order to lodge an Appeal with the Administrative Court. The Tribunal is not a party to appeals against its decisions.

PUBLICATION OF JUDGMENTS

The Tribunal publishes all final Judgments on its website as a public record, unless a direction to the contrary is made in a specific case.

Judgments are typically published a short time after they are issued to the parties and remain publicly accessible for defined periods, depending on the nature of the Order.

In serious cases—such as a strike-off or indefinite suspension—Judgments remain available for up to 60 years, subject to a successful application for restoration to the Roll. In other cases, such as fixed-term suspensions or financial penalties, Judgments remain online for a minimum of three years.

2024 CASE DATA



APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

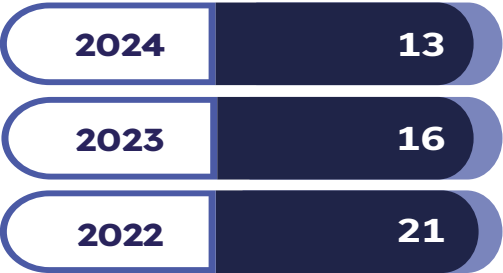
The Tribunal experienced a significant increase in overall caseload in 2024. Comparing figures with 2023, when 110 cases were received, this represents a 62% increase overall. The increase in cases referred from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) compared to 2023 (84) represents an 82% increase. This was primarily driven by the SRA’s efforts to address a historical backlog of cases.

OTHER APPLICATIONS

These applications relate to proceedings not received from the SRA but from previous Respondents looking to lift or vary an order previously imposed by the Tribunal or alternatively have been made the subject of an SRA internal sanction and wish to Appeal to the Tribunal.

As can be seen from the graphic opposite, there was an increase in applications received compared to 2023.

	2024	2023	2022
Application to remove/vary conditions	3	2	6
Application for Restoration to the Roll/Indefinite Suspension	3	4	4
Remitted Appeals	0	0	4
Application for Leave to Enforce Costs Order	0	0	3
S44E/46/14C Appeal	5	3	2
Review of Order of Solicitors’ Employees	6	1	1
Application for Re-Hearing	0	0	1



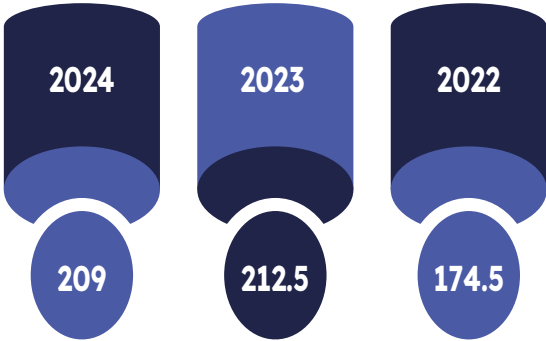
LAY APPLICATIONS

Lay Applications are applications submitted to the Tribunal directly by members of the public alleging misconduct against Solicitors. Although the Tribunal has no investigative powers, it provides guidance to support the submission of lay applications. Any applications warranting further investigation are referred to the SRA for review.

There was a slight decrease in the number of Lay Applications received in 2024, however they do continue to be received on a regular basis.

NUMBER OF SITTINGS

In 2024, the Tribunal sat for 209 days, reflecting a modest decrease of 1.65%. Despite a higher caseload received in 2024, this did not translate into an increased number of sittings days, with the impact of the rising caseload materialising in 2025. Of the 61 matters which concluded following a hearing (Substantive and for ‘Other Applications’), 28 were in person, 32 were remote and one was hybrid (mixture of remote and in person).



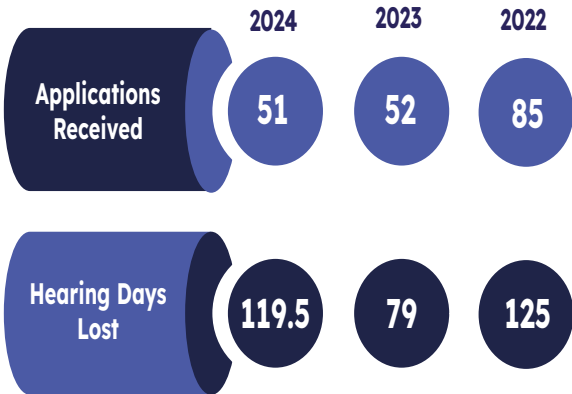
LENGTH OF HEARINGS

The graphic opposite shows a breakdown of the length of substantive hearings and ‘other applications’, e.g. for restoration to the roll or to end an indefinite suspension.

As shown, the majority of hearings typically span one or two days; however, the trend of cases concluded in three or four days remains.

Case Management Hearings and Agreed Outcomes are not included in this information

	2024	2023	2022
0.5 Days	2	0	8
1 Day	32	37	28
2 Days	15	11	14
3 Days	7	6	3
4 Days	5	7	4
5 Days	1	1	3
6 Days	2	0	1
7 Days	0	0	1
8 Days	0	1	1
9 Days	0	0	0
10-20 Days	2	1	0



ADJOURNMENTS

The number of adjournment applications remained largely consistent with 2023; however, the granted applications resulted in the loss of 119.5 hearing days, reflecting a 51% increase. Detailed information regarding the reasons for adjournments and the timeliness of applications is provided in the appended Key Performance Measurement (KPM) report.

SUBSTANTIVE HEARINGS

SANCTIONS

In 2024, the Tribunal held 53 substantive hearings. Due to the fact that cases received can contain multiple respondents, the total number of respondents upon which sanctions were imposed was 62.

Details of the individual sanctions are shown in the graphic opposite.

In the 17 cases where the Tribunal issued a fine, the number of fines within each fine band were as follows:

Level 1 - £0-2,000	1
Level 2 - £2,001-7,500	5
Level 3 - £7,501-15,000	3
Level 4 - £15,001-50,000	7
Level 5 - £50,001 - unlimited	1

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

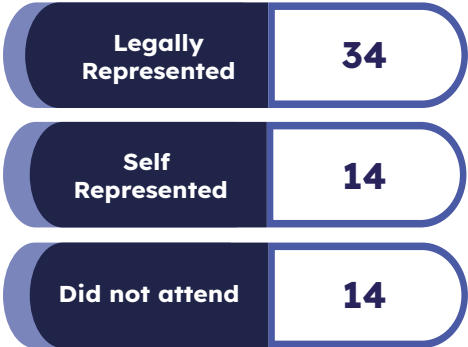
3 Months	1
6 Months	1
9 Months	2
12 Months	1

Regarding the three respondents who received restrictions on their practice, these restrictions were imposed in addition to fines for two individuals and a fixed-period suspension for one.



RESPONDENT REPRESENTATION

For the first time, we are publishing data on the representation status of Respondents – specifically, those who were legally represented, self-represented, or did not engage with the proceedings. In cases where Respondents did not attend the Substantive Hearing, matters were determined and found proved in their absence.



DISHONESTY & LACK OF INTEGRITY



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

Additionally, in relation to lack of integrity, which falls under Principle 2 of the Code of Conduct 2011 and Principle 5 of the 2019 Code, this was proved in relation to 41 Respondents, not proved in relation to 10 Respondents, not alleged in relation to 9 and withdrawn in relation to 2.

ALLEGATIONS PROVED BY RELEVANT RULE

This graphic outlines the specific rules breached in cases where allegations were found proved against individual Respondents.

As shown, breaches of the SRA Principles 2019 represent the most frequently proven allegations before the Tribunal which include dishonesty (Principle 4) and Lack of Integrity (Principle 5).



AGREED OUTCOMES

In 2024, a total of 40 Agreed Outcomes were submitted, of which 34 were approved and 6 were rejected. This reflects a modest increase compared to 2023, when 38 Agreed Outcomes were received. Of the 34 Agreed Outcomes approved, this resulted in Sanctions against 37 individual respondents, this is due to some cases having multiple respondents.

Details regarding the timeliness of Agreed Outcome submissions and their impact on sitting days are provided in the appended 2024 Key Performance Measurement Report. This section of the report will address the sanctions imposed and provide information on the admitted breaches of rules.

SANCTIONS

This graphic opposite details the sanctions imposed in 2024 with a comparison in relation to previous years.

The restriction order mentioned relates to conditions imposed on a practising certificate and was applied to 4 respondents who also received a fixed-period suspension.

In the 9 cases where a fine was imposed, the number of fines within each fine band were as follows:

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

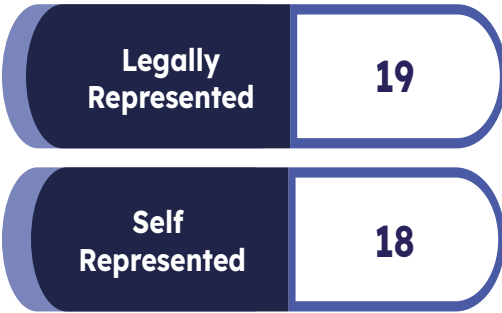
In relation to the 9 respondents where a fixed period suspension was imposed, the length of those suspensions were as follows:-

< than 1 year	2
12 Months	3
24 Months	3
5 years	1



RESPONDENT REPRESENTATION

As with Substantive hearings, we are publishing data on the representation status of Respondents who have entered into an Agreed Outcome.



DISHONESTY & LACK OF INTEGRITY



Of the 37 respondents whose cases were concluded by way of Agreed Outcome, the graphic opposite relates to the dishonesty aspect of allegations admitted.

Additionally, in relation to lack of integrity, which falls under Principle 2 of of the Code of Conduct 2011 and Principle 5 of the 2019 Code, 27 Respondents admitted breaching these codes. It was not alleged in respect of the remaining 10.

ALLEGATIONS BY RELEVANT RULE

This graphic outlines the specific rules breached in cases where allegations were admitted by individual Respondents.

Breaches of the 2019 Principles are the most prevalent type of admitted allegation in Agreed Outcomes, mirroring the pattern of proved allegations seen in Substantive Hearings.



OTHER APPLICATIONS

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. By way of context, detailed below is a brief overview of the types of applications considered:

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 (usually a Solicitor’s Employee) to lift or cancel a restriction placed on them under Section 43 of the Solicitors Act 1974.

Those applying to be restored to the Roll, should have regard to the time which has elapsed since the original Order striking them off the Roll was made. An Applicant cannot expect to have their name restored to the Roll within six years of the original Order save in the most exceptional circumstances.

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.



In addition to the above Orders, there were 11 matters in which individuals applied to withdraw their application therefore did not proceed to a hearing and 2 matters where the SRA withdrew the proceedings.

The number of cases and orders of this nature has remained consistent with 2023, with eight similar matters heard in both years.

COSTS & FINES

In 2024, the total costs imposed increased by 20% compared to 2023, rising from £1,584,591.39 to £1,906,756.91.

The graphics opposite represent the following:

- Total costs and fines issued in 2024;
- Apportionment of Costs following Substantive Hearings, Agreed Outcomes and ‘Other Applications’;
- Apportionment of Fines following a Substantive Hearing or Agreed Outcomes.

‘Other Applications’ primarily refer to matters not brought by the SRA, but by former Respondents seeking to lift or vary orders previously imposed by the Tribunal, or appealing internal SRA sanctions. This category may also include hearings that, while not classified as Substantive Hearings, nonetheless address significant issues—such as Applications to Dismiss or to withdraw proceedings.

Of the total costs awarded, £219,000 were ordered to be paid by the SRA following matters where allegations were found not proved, a withdrawal of an appeal against an SRA internal sanction and following an application by the SRA for proceedings to be withdrawn.

There has been a significant increase in fines imposed following Substantive Hearings, rising from £163,750 in 2023 to £747,401 in 2024. Fines imposed via Agreed Outcomes have also increased, rising from £116,502 in 2023 to £150,374.02.

TOTAL COSTS AND FINES



COSTS APPORTIONMENT



FINES APPORTIONMENT



THE YEAR AHEAD

As we look ahead to 2025, the SDT remains committed to continuous improvement and innovation in the delivery of transparent, fair, and efficient justice.

Building on the foundations laid in 2024, our focus will be on enhancing performance, accessibility, and inclusivity across all areas of our work.

In the coming year, we will continue with expansions to our digital infrastructure, including the development of a new Governance section on our website to improve transparency regarding the SDTAL Board and its structure. We will also reintroduce the virtual tour feature to support vulnerable witnesses in preparing for their hearings.

We will deliver a programme of training for both Tribunal Members and staff. This includes new Chair training to enhance the consistency of proceedings, as well as refreshed training in robust case management.

Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy will be further advanced through specialist training modules for both staff and Members, with a focus on disabilities, socio-economic awareness, and unconscious bias.

We remain focused on outreach and education. In 2025, we will expand our placement programme and university engagement, supporting career development and increasing public awareness of the Tribunal's role. Feedback from participants will guide the development of these initiatives, helping to ensure they promote inclusion and social mobility.

To further enhance transparency and public understanding of our decisions, we will implement the delivery of contemporary summary judgments at the conclusion of hearings. These will provide immediate, accessible explanations of panel decisions before the full written judgment is published.

In the year ahead, we will continue improving how we work to ensure that the Tribunal continues to be effective, transparent and forward-looking - committed to delivering fair outcomes and safeguarding the reputation of the solicitors' profession.

Key Performance Measurements Report - 2024

Independent. Impartial. Transparent.

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WELCOME TO THE SDT 2024 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS REPORT

At the SDT we are committed to ensuring that our processes are fair, efficient, and transparent. We continuously assess our performance against key metrics to ensure that we are operating effectively and meeting the expectations of our stakeholders.

This Key Performance Measurements (KPM) Report for 2024 provides an overview of how we have performed over the lifecycle of proceedings. It highlights areas of success, the challenges we've faced, incorporating both data and feedback as well as outlining the steps we are taking to further enhance our processes.

Over the past year, we have experienced a very significant increase in caseload; however, we have continued to ensure that cases are concluded efficiently and expeditiously. The now routine use of hybrid hearings, updates to our website functionality, and greater stakeholder engagement have all played a role in making our processes more user-friendly and transparent.

This report brings together key data and insights, reflecting on what we have achieved and areas for continuous improvement which we hope readers will find interesting. By continuously measuring our performance, we remain committed to upholding trust in the Tribunal and the wider legal profession.

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) 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 (relating to Solicitor employees), Determine of Indefinite Suspension, Application for a Re-hearing, Variation of a Condition on Practising Certificate, Appeal S44E (Appeals against SRA decisions), Costs Order and Application to Activate Suspension

Target: 85% of proceedings issued within 5 working days.

(C) Lay Applications

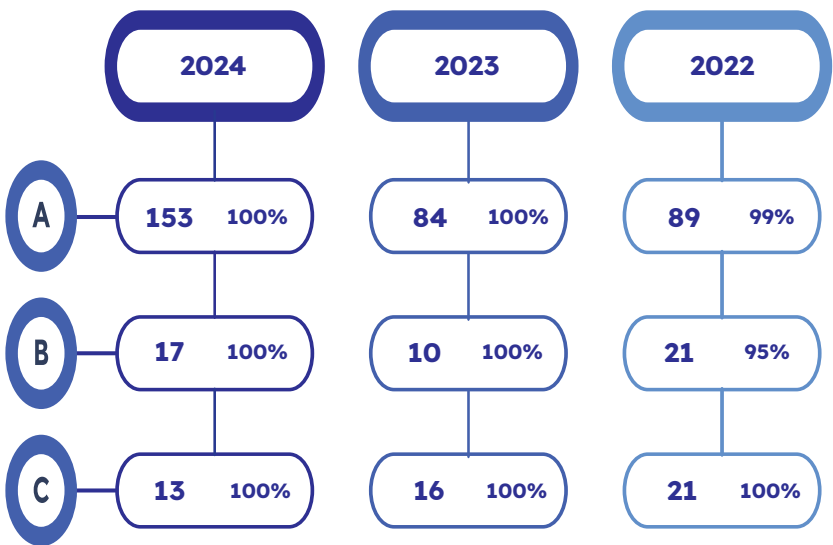
Target: 90% of lay applications to be considered by a Member of the Tribunal and, if required, a Division of the Tribunal within 8 working days.

COMMENTARY

In 2024, the Tribunal experienced a 62% increase in **overall** caseload and an 82% increase in cases referred by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) compared to 2023. This increase was primarily driven by the SRA's efforts to address a historical backlog of cases. The impact of this increase extends well into 2025, as the majority of these cases are scheduled for listing during this year.

Despite the substantial increase in applications received, the Tribunal successfully maintained its high standard, achieving KPM1 A and B with 100% of cases being issued within 5 days and KPM 1 C being issued within 8 days.

The table overleaf details the breakdown of the applications received in 2024 and provides a comparison with previous years.



BREAKDOWN OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

APPLICATIONS	2024	2023	2022
Rule 12 (SRA)	153	84	89
Rule 12 (Lay Application)	13	16	21
Application to remove/vary conditions	3	2	6
Rule 17 Application - Restoration/Lift Suspension	3	4	4
Remitted Appeal	0	0	4
Application for Leave to Enforce Costs Order	0	0	3
Appeals S44E/46/14C	5	3	2
Rule 19 - Review of Order of Solicitor employees	6	1	1
Rule 37 - Application for Re-Hearing	0	0	1
TOTAL	183	110	131

LAY APPLICATIONS



Whilst there was a slight decrease in the number of Lay Applications received in 2024, they continue to be submitted on a regular basis.

Recognising that Lay Applicants may be unfamiliar with the SDT's procedures, the Tribunal offers guidance to assist with the submission of lay applications. Senior Clerks and the Case Management Team are available to respond to queries on procedural matters and to support applicants in navigating CaseLines, the Tribunal's electronic document management system.

With regard to the applications received, it continues to be the case that while many Lay Applicants provide detailed accounts of their concerns about a solicitor, a firm, or a third party's solicitor, they frequently do not include sufficient supporting evidence to demonstrate alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and/or Principles. However where concerns raised by a Lay Applicant have the potential to constitute a breach of the Code and/or Principles, the SDT will refer the matter to the SRA for investigation before making a final certification decision.

Lay Applicants are provided with a Memorandum fully outlining the Tribunal's decision.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

In 2024, the Tribunal issued 153 sets of proceedings in relation to cases received from the SRA.

Those 153 proceedings equated to 163 individuals and 12 recognised bodies (Firms).

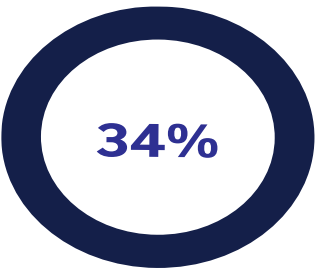
The Tribunal has collated information in relation to Respondent type and position which may be of interest.



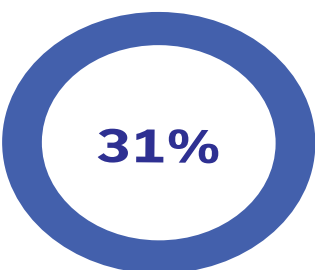
ALLEGATION THEMES

Upon receipt of an application from the SRA, we also record within our Case Management system, information in relation to the general themes of allegations brought relating to dishonesty, lack of integrity and Accounts Rules

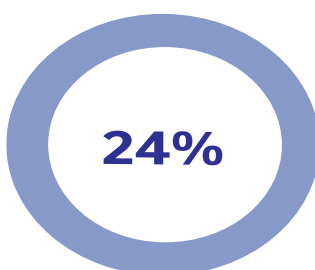
breaches. The graphic below shows the percentage of the 153 cases received containing these themes. The remaining 11% related solely to Accounts Rules breaches or did not fall within any of these categories.



DISHONESTY & LACK OF INTEGRITY



LACK OF INTEGRITY ONLY



DISHONESTY, LACK OF INTERGRITY COMBINED WITH ACCOUNTS RULES BREACHES

Additionally, we record information in relation to cases which involve sexual misconduct and criminal convictions.

Of the cases received from the SRA in 2024:

- 10 related to a criminal conviction only
- 7 related to sexual misconduct only
- 5 related to both sexual misconduct and a criminal conviction

Due to the evolving nature of cases received from the SRA, we have further adapted our Case Management System to record when cases are received relating to vexatious litigation and counter-inclusive behaviour.

The enhancement of our system to capture these cases streamlines the reporting process, facilitates the preparation of briefing notes and supports the identification of lessons learned from outcomes.

KPM 2 – DETERMINATION OF PROCEEDINGS 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 other hearing format, 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

COMMENTARY

Performance in this area has faced significant challenges in 2024.

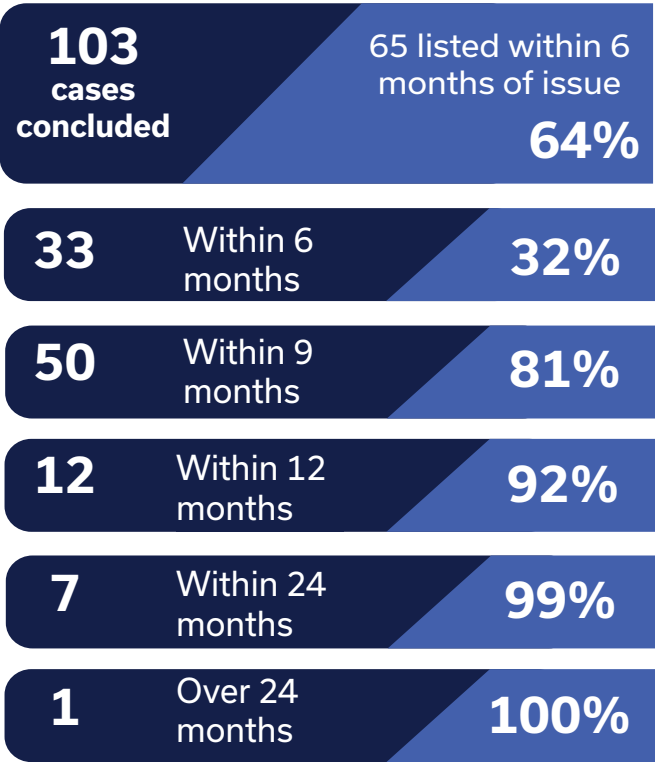
With regard to KPM2A, 64% of cases were listed within six months of issue in 2024, compared to 100% in 2023.

This decline is primarily attributed to the substantial 82% increase in cases received from the SRA in 2024, as previously noted in relation to KPM1.

When scheduling cases for substantive hearings, multiple factors must be considered, including courtroom capacity and clerking resources.

The significant rise in case volume in 2024 placed additional pressure on Tribunal resources, impacting our ability to meet previous listing timelines.

In relation to KPM2B, this area has also encountered challenges during the 2024 reporting period. A combination of the significant increase in caseload and fluctuations in staffing levels throughout the year impacted our ability to conclude cases within the standard six-month



timeframe.

Cumulatively this reduced our ability to meet the KPM. However, despite these challenges, we adapted our processes and the majority of cases were concluded within nine months.

ADJOURNMENTS DATA

Adjournment applications remained largely consistent with 2023, with 51 being received, one fewer compared to the previous year.

The table below shows the breakdown of adjournment applications received by party.

Application by	Total	Granted	Refused
Appellant*	1	1	0
Applicant	15	13	2
Joint	6	6	0
Ordered by SDT	5	5	0
Respondent	24	19	5
TOTAL	51	44	7

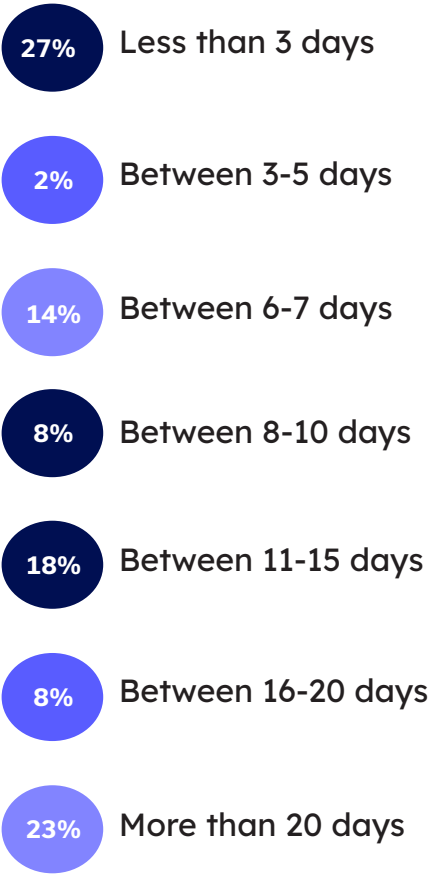
The primary reason for requesting an adjournment of proceedings was the ill-health of respondents, which accounted for 33% of all adjournment applications.

This was closely followed by the Applicant being unprepared for the hearing (16%), the Respondent being unprepared for the hearing (14%), and the Agreed outcome negotiations (6%). Some other reasons for adjournment include unavailability of legal representatives (6%), insufficient time estimates (4%) and other proceedings pending (4%).

Although the number of adjournment applications remained largely consistent with the previous year, the granted applications resulted in a loss of 119.5 hearing days, reflecting a 51% increase compared to 2023, when 79 days were lost.

This rise in lost hearing days is attributed to the receipt of more complex cases from the SRA, which typically have longer hearing estimates.

In terms of receipt of applications for adjournment, the highest proportion of applications were submitted less than 3 days before the hearing, the breakdown is detailed below:



The late submission (and subsequent granting) of adjournment applications create challenges in listing further cases at short notice to backfill lost hearing days.

Rescheduling is further complicated by the need to consider witness availability and the availability of the parties involved.

*Individual who is appealing a decision of the SRA.

AGREED OUTCOMES

There was a modest 5% increase in the number of Agreed Outcomes received in 2024. However, this was accompanied by a small decrease in the number of approvals compared to 2023. As can be shown from the data below, there was also an increase in the number of applications rejected.

To provide further context to the graphic below, while a total of 40 Agreed Outcome applications were received in 2024, these related to only 33 cases. The discrepancy arises due to Agreed Outcome applications being submitted in cases involving multiple respondents and a separate application being submitted for each.

	2024	2023	2022
Total Received	40	38	50
Approved	34	36	46
Rejected	6	2	4

Upon receipt of an Agreed Outcome, 68% were considered by a Panel within 7 days.

Of the Agreed Outcome applications received, 52% were submitted more than 28 days in advance of the substantive hearing, while 48% were received within 28 days of the hearing.

The impact on court time lost resulting from the receipt of Agreed Outcomes amounted to 117 days, representing a 41% increase compared to 2023.

This increase is attributable to parties reaching agreements in more complex cases, which were associated with longer hearing estimates.

Associated Sanctions

The 34 agreed outcomes approved in 2024 resulted in 37 sanctions.

19 of the Respondents who entered into an Agreed Outcome were legally represented.

The sanctions can be categorised as follows:

- 18 Struck off
- 9 Fine
- 9 Fixed Period Suspension
- 1 Section 43 Clerk Order

In relation to the sums of fines ordered, these ranged from £3,500 at the lowest to £27,500 at the highest.

KPM3 - COST PER COURT

	2024	2023	2022
No of Court sitting days	209	212.5	174.25
Member Fees & Expenses	£692,679	£614,098	£441,354
Administrative Expenses	£1,752,036	£1,987,699	£2,658,802
Total Spend	£2,444,715	£2,601,797	£3,100,156
Average Cost per Court	£11,697	£12,244	£17,791

As shown above, the average cost per court in 2024 was £11,697, marking a reduction of around 4.5% in comparison to 2023.

When submitting the 2024 budget to the Legal Services Board, we estimated that the Tribunal would sit for 208 days. As demonstrated above, this projection was highly accurate, with the actual figure exceeding the estimate by just one additional day. The funding for this extra sitting day has been allocated from the Tribunal's Designated Reserves.

The increase in member fees and expenses in 2024 compared to 2023 is attributed to the return to a higher number of in-person hearings and the introduction of cancellation fees in August 2024, capped at a maximum cancellation payment of 2 days. This was brought in due to the high volume of late submissions for an agreed outcome or adjournment. While there has been an increase in this specific area, it is important to note that the overall expenditure for 2024 has decreased significantly compared to previous years.

The loss of hearing days due to agreed outcomes or last-minute adjournments has

a direct impact on the cost per court, as cases being removed from the list at short notice lead to underutilised court resources and inefficiencies. This issue increases the average cost per court, as fixed expenses remain unchanged despite reduced activity.

Following a consultation with the User Group Committee in October 2024, the Tribunal has revised its listing approach and implemented new processes in relation to its Standard Directions designed to mitigate this challenge. These changes aim to enhance the efficiency of hearing scheduling and ultimately improve the cost per court, ensuring that resources are used more efficiently and cost-effectively moving forward.

The impact of these changes, however, are not expected to become fully apparent until 2026, as the majority of cases scheduled for 2025 were received in 2024 and therefore listed under the previous system. This means that the benefits of the revised listing approach will take time to materialise.

KPM 4 - PRODUCTION OF JUDGMENT

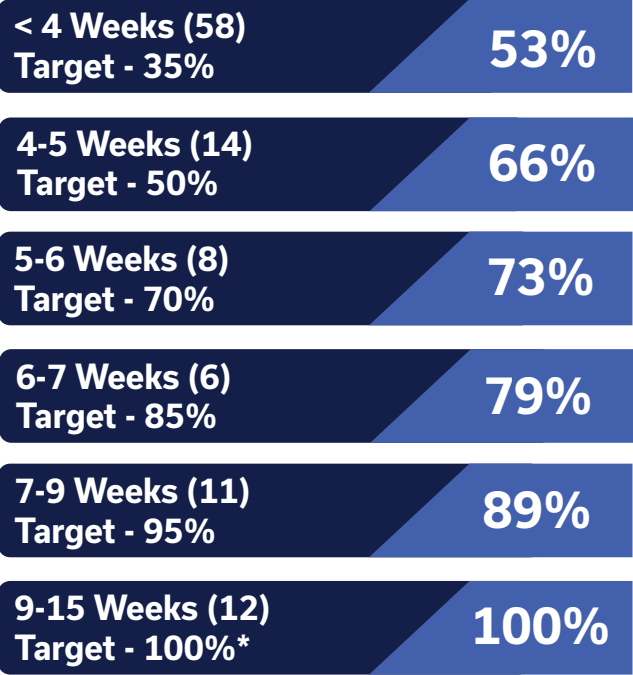
In total in 2024, there were 109 Judgments issued. While we exceeded the Key Performance Measure (KPM) overall, with 54% of judgments issued to the parties within seven weeks, this represents a decline compared to 2023, when 72% were sent out within four weeks.

We did not reach the target for the issuing of judgments within the 6-7 and 7-9 week periods with 79% of judgments issued within 6-7 weeks (against a target of 85%) and 89% issued within 7-9 weeks (against a target of 95%). A review of the data indicates that these delays primarily occurred during quarters 3 and 4 which coincided with a period of staff shortages and training, as outlined below.

During this period, we had cause to place reliance on temporary resources whilst a recruitment exercise was being undertaken for two Deputy Clerks and we faced a shortage of staff within the existing clerking team throughout the year for various reasons.

Additionally, once the recruitment exercise was complete, the requirement to train the two new Deputy Clerks, who joined the Tribunal in quarter 3, along with the increased length and complexity of cases, further contributed to delays in the timelines for issuing judgments.

There is a discrepancy in the figures between KPM2 and 4 - this is due to more than one Judgment being produced in some cases with multiple respondents where they have been dealt with separately.



In terms of improvements to accessibility of Judgments, we undertook modifications to our website to include the publication of the executive summary within the judgment link. This change was implemented to provide users with a brief overview of the judgment allowing them to understand the decision without having to read the entire document, thereby providing a concise summary of the judgment's content at a glance.

In Q4 of 2024, the Tribunal commenced the implementation of announcing summary findings at the conclusion of proceedings for appropriate cases. The objective was to provide parties and the public with a clear overview of the Tribunal's reasoning behind its decisions in order to enhance transparency and understanding of the outcomes. The rollout of this practice will continue throughout 2025, with ongoing refinements where necessary.

*1 judgment is presently being signed off by the Panel however will be issued within the 9-15 week window.

KPM 5 - APPEALS



APPEALS RECEIVED

Decisions of the SDT are subject to appeal to the Administrative Court.

Any party subject to an SDT order may appeal the decision if they believe there has been an error in law, fact, or procedure.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) also has the right to appeal a decision if it considers that the outcome is unduly lenient or that an error has been made.

Lay Applicants who have had their applications refused may also appeal the decision to the Administrative Court.

Appeals must be filed within 21 days of the SDT's written decision being issued.



APPEALS OUTSTANDING



APPEALS LODGED BY RESPONDENT

In 2024, the Tribunal received a total of five appeals. Of these, four related to cases concluded in 2024, while one concerned historical proceedings from 2017. The four appeals related to 103 matters concluded in 2024 represent an appeal rate of 3.9%.

The appeals received in 2024 remain pending. Of the five appeals, the stated grounds include two appeals relating to findings, one asserting that the Tribunal was wrong in law, one appealing the sanction imposed, and one concerning the 2011 Appeal Rules.

Update in relation to appeals from 2023:

Of the 12 appeals received in 2023 (four of which related to cases concluded in 2022), eight remain pending, two were dismissed, and two were upheld.

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. Any significant points arising from an appeal are shared with the membership through a briefing note prepared by the clerking team as part of an education/lessons learned process.

KPM 6 - TRIBUNAL STAFF & MEMBERSHIP

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.

COMMENTARY

During this reporting period, changes to the staffing team at the SDT have resulted in a shift in the demographic data for KPM6 compared to 2023.

Notable changes include 16% of the team now being under the age of 25, along with an increase in staff representation from Black and Asian backgrounds.

Additionally, there has been an increase in religious diversity within the team. The composition of the Tribunal's membership has changed from 2023 due to the resignation of a solicitor member.

The demographic data relating to practising population has been compiled via the SRA Diversity data tool.

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
No Disability	90%	85%	100%
Disability	6%	11%	0%
Prefer not to say	4%	4%	0%

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Buddhist	1%	0%	8%
Christian	41%	50%	67%
Hindu	2%	4%	8%
Jewish	2%	4%	0%
Muslim	6%	4%	0%
Sikh	2%	0%	0%
Other religion/belief	2%	0%	0%
No religion/belief	36%	34%	17%
Prefer not to say	8%	4%	0%

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Asian	12%	9%	16%
Black	3%	2%	16%
Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Groups	3%	0%	10%
Other Ethnic Group	1%	0%	0%
White	77%	89%	58%
Prefer not to say	4%	0%	0%

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Female	53%	48%	75%
Male	45%	52%	25%
Prefer not to say	2%	0%	0%

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Other	0%	0%	0%
Bi-sexual	1%	2%	0%
Gay-Lesbian	3%	0%	0%
Heterosexual	89%	93%	100%
Prefer not to say	6%	5%	0%

	Practising Population	SDT Members	SDT Staff
Under 25	0%	0%	16%
25-34	30%	2%	0%
35-44	29%	8%	25%
45-54	22%	17%	25%
55-64	13%	43%	34%
65+	4%	30%	0%
Prefer not to say	2%	0%	0%

KPM 7-10

USER SATISFACTION

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)
- 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:

- If you contacted the Tribunal's administrative team, did you feel they listened to and understood your needs?
- Were you able to access/attend the hearing effectively?
- If you visited our website, was it useful and/or did it help you prepare for your hearing/case?
- During the hearing did you have sufficient time and opportunity to present your case/evidence to the Tribunal?

In 2024, out of 131 questionnaires distributed, 22 were completed and returned, resulting in an overall completion

rate of 17%. In 2023, 164 questionnaires were distributed, with 34 responses received, leading to a completion rate of 21%.

However, direct year-on-year comparison is not possible, as the number of questionnaires circulated each year varies depending on the number of cases concluded and the number of parties involved in each case. This fluctuation impacts the response rate and makes it difficult to draw direct statistical comparisons between the two years.

The table below shows the number of questionnaires sent and received in 2024 and the response rates broken down by feedback group.

Group	Sent	Returned
Respondent (Non SRA)	49	9
Applicants (Non-SRA)	8	2
Legal Representative (Non SRA)	24	6
Legal Representative (SRA)	50	5

We are engaging with the third party provider to consider if there are way to improve data collection in this area as it remains low, albeit recognising that Respondents in particular may not wish to engage with the Tribunal at the conclusion of the process.

KPM 7 & 8

The table below shows how 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?'

Group	Total Responses Received	Answered Yes (Target 70%)	Answered No	Answered N/A (not included in % calculation)
Respondent (Non SRA)	9	4 (100%)		5
Applicants (Non-SRA)	2	1 (100%)		1
Legal Representative (Non SRA)	6	6 (100%)		
Legal Representative (SRA)	5	5 (100%)		
Total				

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

Group	Total Responses Received	Answered Yes (Target 90%)	Answered No	Answered N/A (not included in % calculation)
Respondent (Non SRA)	9	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	4
Applicants (Non-SRA)	2	1 (100%)		1
Legal Representative (Non SRA)	6	6 (100%)		
Legal Representative (SRA)	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	
Total				

KPM 9 & 10

The table below shows how 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?’

Group	Total Responses Received	Answered Yes (Target 70%)	Answered No	Answered N/A (not included in % calculation)
Respondent (Non SRA)	9	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	2
Applicants (Non-SRA)	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	
Legal Representative (Non SRA)	6	6 (100%)		
Legal Representative (SRA)	5	3 (100%)		2
Total				

The table below shows how 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?’

Group	Total Responses Received	Answered Yes (Target 70%)	Answered No	Answered N/A (not included in % calculation)
Respondent (Non SRA)	9	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	2
Applicants (Non-SRA)	2	2 (100%)		
Legal Representative (Non SRA)	6	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	
Legal Representative (SRA)	5	5 (100%)		
Total				

COMMENTARY

The Tribunal’s administrative team continues to receive positive feedback regarding the assistance they provide, maintaining the trend observed in previous years.

Overall, feedback on access to hearings remains largely positive. However, four participants in this feedback group marked this question as not applicable, which has impacted the statistical analysis, as these responses are not included in the final calculations. However, responses do suggest that there are further opportunities to enhance accessibility and support for this group.

Regarding the Tribunal’s website, while the target for user satisfaction was met, feedback from those who did not respond positively highlights areas for improvement and further refinement.

Encouragingly, the target indicating that feedback groups felt they had adequate time and opportunity to present their case before the Tribunal has been achieved.

We recognise that response rates remain relatively low in comparison to the number of feedback requests circulated. Given the nature of the work of the Tribunal, securing feedback can be challenging, particularly when Respondents have faced outcomes that may significantly impact their professional careers.

In addition to multiple-choice responses, survey participants are invited to share open-ended comments on their experience, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. A selection of this feedback is outlined below:

What went well:

‘Initially I was representing myself and I struggled with tasks like uploading documents - I really appreciated the help offered by the admin team’

‘Everything runs to plan and queries dealt with’

‘Very good reception staff - understood what a horrible experience being taken to the SDT is even if the defence succeeds as it did in my case’

‘Hearing was effective and the Tribunal clearly tried to engage in the issues.’

Even better if:

‘Panel members drawn from a wider section of the public.’

‘The standard directions were less prescriptive and more relevant.’

‘Sometimes there are unexplained delays, for example if an application is being considered, if that happens it would be helpful to have a brief update and expected timescale for resolution.’

This mechanism serves as a valuable tool for gaining insight into stakeholder experiences at the Tribunal.

The summary above provides a snapshot of the feedback received. However, some participants also provided feedback on the Tribunal’s decision, which falls outside the scope of the feedback sought, as well as feedback on their interactions with the SRA.

We have carefully considered the feedback regarding Standard Directions and as referenced in KPM3, have engaged with the User Group Committee to implement enhancements to our processes and Standard Directions.

We are exploring the integration of an active feedback mechanism into our website, similar to our approach with EDI data collection, to enhance the quality and depth of feedback received and reduce reliance on feedback being gathered solely at the conclusion of proceedings.

Our website now allows us to track user analytics and identify the areas users engage with most frequently. In 2024, the website attracted 48,580 users, generating 487,488 page views, with each visit averaging approximately 4.5 pages viewed.

Additionally, we can monitor outbound link activity. For example, in December 2024, a Substantive hearing listed resulted in the Zoom link for the proceedings being accessed 1,459 times.

This high level of engagement underscores the value of hybrid hearings in enhancing accessibility and facilitating greater public participation in proceedings.

By analysing the analytics data referenced above with insights from the feedback questionnaire, we will utilise this information to enhance the website’s functionality, ensuring it delivers greater value to visitors.

Additionally, we will assess which areas require increased visibility and prominence.

EDI DATA COLLECTION RESPONDENT DATA

For the first time, we are able to report on the demographics of respondents appearing before the Tribunal in conjunction with the sanctions imposed. Historically, this information has been challenging to capture; however, we have successfully addressed this gap through a revised approach.

By integrating an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) form into our website and amending our data collection process, we have seen an improvement in responses enabling us to better analyse this information.

As a result, we are now able to present demographic data for a number of individuals who appeared before the Tribunal in 2024 marking a significant step forward in our commitment to transparency.

For some sections, given the small number of individuals involved, we have intentionally generalised the demographic data and not included the number of individuals to which the data relates to protect the anonymity of respondents and avoid inadvertent identification.

As we continue to collect more data in the future, we aim to build upon this foundation, providing a clearer and more comprehensive picture over time.

STRIKE OFF

43 Respondents struck off in 2024, demographic data available for 5.

Ethnicity

4 identified as White British.
1 identified as Filipino.

Disability

1 reported having a disability.
2 reported no disability.
2 preferred not to disclose.

Gender

3 were male.
2 were female.

Age

1 was aged 36-45.
3 were aged 45-55.
1 was aged 56-65.

Sexual Orientation

All 5 identified as heterosexual.

Religion

All 5 identified as Christian.

FINE

26 fines handed down in 2024, demographic data available for 8.

Ethnicity

5 identified as White.
3 identified as Asian.

Disability

1 reported having a disability.
5 reported no disability.
2 preferred not to disclose.

Gender

5 were male.
3 were female.

Age

2 were aged 36-45.
4 were aged 46-55.
1 was aged 56-65.
1 was aged over 65.

Sexual Orientation

All 8 identified as heterosexual.

Religion

2 identified as Christian.
1 identified as Hindi.
3 identified as Muslim.
2 identified as having no religion.

SUSPENSION

13 Respondents were made subject of a suspension in 2024 however the demographic data received has been intentionally generalised to avoid inadvertant identification.

Among those who chose to provide demographic information, individuals represented a range of ethnic backgrounds, including those from minority ethnic groups, while some preferred not to disclose.

Age representation was primarily within the 46-55 range, though some individuals preferred not to disclose this information. Most respondents who disclosed their sexual orientation identified as heterosexual, with others opting not to disclose.

Religious beliefs varied, with respondents identifying with a range of faiths, while a notable proportion chose not to disclose their religion.

We also retain demographic data for Respondents whose allegations were found not proved and individuals who submitted applications to the Tribunal under Rules 17-19 of the Solicitors Disciplinary Proceedings Rules 2019 or appeals against internal decisions of the SRA.

However, due to the limited volume of this data, there is a risk of inadvertent identification.

At this stage, the dataset is not sufficiently robust to allow for meaningful reporting however we hope to present more sufficient data in these areas in 2025.

DATA SHARING WITH THE SRA

For a number of years we have collaborated with the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to verify the sanction data included in their Diversity Monitoring Reports. The most recent report for the period 2022/2023 (from 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023), was published on [20 December 2024](#). By working with the SRA, we assist in verifying the accuracy of the sanction data for a specified period, ensuring the information presented in their report is correct.

In terms of the findings in the SRA report, they were able to present data relating to 111 individuals who appeared before the Tribunal however there were limitations on what could be reported in order to avoid the risk of identification.

Key takeaways from the report included:

- During the specified period, the gender distribution of cases concluded by the Tribunal was 78% male and 22% female, with gender data available for 110 out of 111 individuals.
- The ethnicity breakdown for concluded cases was 59% White and 41% Black, Asian, and minority ethnic, with

ethnicity recorded for 102 of the 111 individuals.

- Regarding sanctions by ethnicity, 62% of individuals struck off were White, while 38% were from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, with ethnicity known for 58 of the 63 individuals struck off.
- Similarly, among those fined, 59% were White and 41% were from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, with ethnicity recorded for 22 of the 23 individuals fined.
- The SRA also provided a breakdown by age of individuals who were struck off as follows: 25% (16-44), 32% (45-54), 25% (55-64) and 17% (65+).

Additionally, the report featured a section on the demographic data of Respondents whose cases were concluded by Agreed Outcome during the specified period. Again, in order to avoid identification, there were limitations on what information could be published. However their findings included:-

Sex: 54% of women and 41% of men reached an agreed outcome rather than proceed to a hearing.

Ethnicity: A smaller percentage of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic individuals reached an agreed outcome in their cases (36%). In contrast, 53% of White individuals concluded their case via an agreed outcome.

Age: A larger proportion of individuals aged 64 and under concluded their cases through a hearing rather than an agreed outcome:

58% for those aged 25-44
71% for those aged 45-54
60% for those aged 55-64

In contrast, for the 65+ age group, a smaller percentage concluded their case through a hearing (30%) compared to those who reached an agreed outcome.

The full report can be found on the SRA website via the link opposite.

THE YEAR AHEAD

As we continue to enhance our processes, the year ahead will see the SDT focusing on several key areas to improve efficiency, transparency, and stakeholder engagement.

One of our primary areas of refinement will be the summary findings provided at the conclusion of hearings. We will ensure the clarity and conciseness of these findings, making key points well-structured and easily accessible to all relevant parties.

Additionally, we will explore ways to shorten our judgments without compromising their integrity. This will involve evaluating opportunities to streamline content, enhance the use of relevant linked documents, and refine the layout, all while upholding the highest standards.

Furthering our commitment to transparency, we will take steps to enhance stakeholder understanding of our processes. This includes improving the way we communicate procedural updates and decision-making frameworks, ensuring that all those who interact with the Tribunal have a clear view of our operations.

Recognising the increasing role of technology in legal services, we will also explore innovative ways to utilise our website to provide better access to information, deliver greater value for money and enhance user experience. This may include improvements to digital accessibility and interactive guidance for those engaging with the Tribunal.

Moreover, we will be closely monitoring the implementation of new procedural changes to assess their impact on operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This will include an evaluation of how these

refinements influence the cost per court sitting.

Through these efforts, we aim to make meaningful improvements to the way we operate, providing a more efficient, transparent, and accessible Tribunal for the public and profession.

