

SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12778-2025

BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

JOSEPH ELLIOT DAWSON

Respondent

Before:

Mrs F Kyriacou (in the chair)

Ms G Palmiero

Ms E Keen

Date of Hearing: 14 – 16 April 2026

Appearances

Delme Griffiths, Solicitor, of Blake Morgan LLP, One Central Square, Cardiff, CF10 1FS for the Applicant.

Kathryn Pitters, Counsel, of Broadway House Chambers, Devere House, Little Germany, Bradford, BD1 5AH for the Respondent.

JUDGMENT

Allegations

1. The allegation against the Respondent, Joseph Elliott Dawson, made by the SRA is that, whilst in practice as a Solicitor at Leigh Day Solicitors (“the Firm”):
 - 1.1 On or around 20 and 21 June 2023, he:
 - 1.1.1 created a letter falsely dated 26 May 2023, which stated that documents for inspection were enclosed.
 - 1.1.2 sent, or caused to be sent, the letter falsely dated 26 May 2023 to the defendant’s solicitor in a personal injury case under cover of correspondence dated 21 June 2023, which stated the 26 May 2023 letter had previously been sent.

In doing so, he breached any or all of:

- 1.2.1 Principle 2 of the SRA Principles 2019 (‘the Principles’),
- 1.2.2 Principle 4 of the Principles.
- 1.2.3 Principle 5 of the Principles; and
- 1.2.4 Paragraph 1.4 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs (‘the Code’).

Proved

- 1.2 On or around 20 June 2023, provided misleading information to his employer in respect of when the documents for inspection were first disclosed to another party in litigation.

In doing so, he breached any or all of:

- 1.2.1 Principle 2 of the Principles.
- 1.2.2 Principle 4 of the Principles.
- 1.2.3 Principle 5 of the Principles; and
- 1.2.4 Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

Proved

Executive Summary

2. It was alleged that the Respondent created a letter bearing a false date which stated that documents for inspection were enclosed. That letter was sent almost one month later, accompanied by an email asserting that the falsely dated letter had been sent previously. It was further alleged that, on or around the date the email was sent, the Respondent provided misleading information to his employer by confirming that disclosure had taken place on or around the date shown on the original letter, in order to demonstrate compliance with an order for directions and adherence to a court deadline.
3. Both allegations, including dishonesty and breach of integrity, were found proved and the Tribunal ordered that the Respondent be struck off the roll of solicitors.

Sanction

4. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll of Solicitors. The Tribunal's reason on Sanction can be found [\[here\]](#).

Documents

5. The Tribunal considered all the documents in the case which included:

Applicant

- Rule 12 Statement dated 4 June 2025 [\[here\]](#)
- Exhibit JD1
- Reply to the Respondent's Answer dated 30 September 2025
- Schedule of Costs dated 7 April 2026

Respondent

- The Respondent's Answer dated 10 September 2025 [\[here\]](#)
- The Respondent's Statement of means dated 17 March 2026

Professional Details

6. Mr Dawson was born in 1984 and admitted as a solicitor in May 2010. He joined the Firm in November 2016 as a member of the personal injury department and was a senior associate at the time the concerns were raised.
7. The Firm was instructed by Client A in respect of a personal injury case, and Mr Dawson had conduct of the matter. Gareth Thomas ("Mr Thomas") of Kennedys Solicitors ("Kennedys") was on record as acting on behalf of the Defendant.
8. Mr Dawson's practising certificate of 2023 to 2024 had the following conditions imposed:
 - He may act as a solicitor only as an employee and only where the employment has first been approved by the SRA.
 - He shall not provide reserved or unreserved legal services on his own account under 10.2(a) or (b) of the SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations.
 - He is not to be a compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) or compliance officer for finance and administration (COFA) for any authorised body.
9. The SRA's Authorisation team continued the same conditions for the Respondent's 2024 to 2025 practising certificate. At the time of the Rule 12 statement, however, the

practising certificate had not been issued to Mr Dawson, due to payment for the renewal of the certificate not having been made.

Preliminary Matters

10. Mr Griffiths requested that the anonymity of Client A, as set out in the Rule 12 Statement, be maintained for the purposes of the hearing and the judgment. The Tribunal confirmed that this was appropriate and in the interests of justice.

Factual Background

11. The underlying claim arose following an accident involving Client A on a cruise ship in September 2018. Quantum remained in dispute. On 17 April 2023, directions were issued by the court in respect of the claim:
 - Disclose lists of documents by 28 April 2023.
 - Request inspection of documents by 5 May 2023.
 - Provide the requested documents for inspection within 14 days of the request.
12. Mr Dawson provided the necessary disclosure list for Client A to Kennedys on 15 May 2023, nearly three weeks after the directed date. Mr Thomas responded to Mr Dawson on the same day, requesting disclosure of several documents contained on the list, to be provided within 14 days, i.e. by 29 May 2023.

20 June 2023

13. On 20 June 2023, Mr Thomas emailed Mr Dawson advising that the documents requested on 15 May 2023 had not been received. Mr Dawson was on annual leave that day, and the email was instead reviewed by his line manager, Ms Clare Campbell.
14. Ms Campbell examined Client A's file on the Firm's case management system and observed that, notwithstanding Mr Dawson's absence on leave, he appeared to be actively working on the file. She identified a letter on the system entitled "*LET to Def Sol re Inspection*" ("the Letter"), which had been created on 22 May 2023 but was dated 26 May 2023. The Letter, addressed to Mr Thomas and dated 26 May 2026 was marked "Sent by email" but otherwise appeared incomplete and contained no substantive content.
15. There was no evidence that the Letter had been finalised or sent, either by email, as it purported to state, or by recorded delivery post. The Letter remained marked as 'open' on the IT system throughout the day, during which time it was edited on a number of occasions and additional content was added to the saved version.
16. In subsequent email correspondence, Ms Campbell asked Mr Dawson to explain the position. He stated that inspection had taken place under cover of a letter sent by post, together with CD-ROMs containing the inspection documents. He acknowledged uncertainty as to why the Letter appeared blank on the system and subsequently stated that he had begun 'reconstructing' it, using a file note dated 19 May 2023, which was

almost identical to the content of the original letter. He explained: *“I’m not sure what has happened with the original content of the letter as I saw it was blank too and then I’ve started to copy back in the content, taken from the file note”*.

17. On Ms Campbell’s request, Mr Thomas agreed to refrain from taking further steps to enforce the order for inspection until the end of the following business day.

21 June 2023

18. On 21 June 2023, as directed by Mr Dawson, a paralegal employed by the Firm emailed Mr Thomas providing an electronic link providing access to certain documents and records: two items of correspondence from Mr Dawson, together with the requested inspection documents. The Firm’s IT records confirmed that the folder containing the inspection documents was created on that date. The correspondence accessible via the link comprised the following:

- A letter dated 21 June 2023, which stated, *“Copy Letter dated 26 May 2023. For clarity, we can confirm that the letter was originally sent by first-class post to the above address with the documents contained on discs. We note, however, that you have confirmed that this has not to date been received. Having not heard further as to Inspection following the due date in the emails exchanged on other issues in the last three weeks, we had assumed that the same had been received”*.
- The letter of 26 May, labelled *“Sent by email only”*, but stated, as set out above, to have actually been sent by first-class post, together with the documents on disc. This letter was described in the covering 21 June 2023 letter, as a ‘copy’.

19. Mr Thomas had not received Mr Dawson’s letter dated 26 May 2023 prior to the email and link sent on 21 June 2023.

20. The Firm’s investigation

- 20.1 Due to concerns regarding multiple and changing versions of the Letter over the course of 20 June 2023, the Firm’s IT team undertook an investigation of its systems. This included a review of metadata within the case management system, the L-drive, a central PC, and system backups. No version of the Letter was found to have been saved during the period from 22 to 26 May 2023. The metadata showed that the Letter was modified on 20 June 2023.

- 20.2 The IT investigation did not identify any record of Mr Dawson printing the Letter, which would have been necessary to send the documents (both a covering letter dated 26 May 2023 and the CD-ROMs containing the inspection documents that Mr Dawson said had been created on 25 May 2023) by post. In addition, Mr Dawson had no recorded time entries consistent with drafting the Letter over the week commencing 22 May or preparing physical inspection discs on 25 or 26 May 2023.

- 20.3 Mr Dawson stated that the inspection discs were created at approximately 19:00 on 25 May 2023. However, his timesheet recorded that he was working on a different matter until 18:53 and had left the building at 18:58 on that day.

- 20.4 A disciplinary hearing in respect of Mr Dawson's conduct took place on 24 July 2023. An appeal was subsequently lodged but was unsuccessful. Mr Dawson's employment with the Firm ended on 25 July 2023.

Witnesses

21. The written and oral evidence of witnesses is quoted or summarised in the Findings of Fact and Law below. The evidence referred to will be that which was relevant to the findings of the Tribunal, and to facts or issues in dispute between the parties. For the avoidance of doubt, the Tribunal read all of the documents in the case and made notes of the oral evidence of all witnesses. The absence of any reference to particular evidence should not be taken as an indication that the Tribunal did not read, hear or consider that evidence. The following witnesses gave oral evidence:

- Gareth Thomas
- Steve Bailey
- Clare Campbell
- Meenesh Patel
- Joseph Dawson

Findings of Fact and Law

22. The Applicant was required to prove the allegations beyond balance of probabilities. The Tribunal had due regard to its statutory duty, under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, to act in a manner which was compatible with the Respondent's right to a fair trial and to respect for their private and family life under Articles 6 and 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Integrity

23. With reference to its consideration of integrity, the Tribunal had regards to [Wingate v SRA](#) EWCA Civ 366.

“Integrity is a useful shorthand to express the higher standards which society expects from professional persons and which the professions expect from their own members ... [Professionals] are required to live up to their own professional standards ... Integrity connotes adherence to the ethical standards of one's own profession”.

Dishonesty

24. In its determination of the issue of dishonesty the Tribunal the considered the test set out at paragraph 74 of [Ivey v Genting Casinos \(UK\) Ltd t/a Crockfords](#) [2017] UKSC 6.
25. When considering dishonesty, the Tribunal applied the two-step test and first established the actual state of Mr Dawson's knowledge or belief as to the facts, noting that the belief did not have to be reasonable, merely that it had to be genuinely held. It then considered whether that conduct was honest or dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.

26. **Allegation 1.1 Whilst in practice as a Solicitor at the Firm on or around 20 and 21 June 2023, Mr Dawson: (1.1.1) created a letter falsely dated 26 May 2023, which stated that documents for inspection were enclosed; (1.1.2) sent, or caused to be sent, the letter falsely dated 26 May 2023 to the defendant’s solicitor in a personal injury case under cover of correspondence dated 21 June 2023, which stated the 26 May 2023 letter had previously been sent. In doing so, he breached any or all of: (1.2.1) Principle 2 of the SRA Principles 2019 (‘the Principles’); (1.2.2) Principle 4 of the Principles; (1.2.3) Principle 5 of the Principles; and (1.2.4) Paragraph 1.4 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs (‘the Code’).**

The Applicant’s Case

- 26.1 Mr Griffiths case was based on the core factual proposition that Mr Dawson did not send the Letter, dated 26 May 2023, and which purportedly enclosed inspection documents, on that date, nor leave it in the post room on the evening of 25 May. The Letter was instead created after the event, on 20 June, and falsely and misleadingly presented as a contemporaneous document. It was sent to Kennedy’s on 21 June by email and referred to as a ‘copy’ of a letter dated 26 May.
- 26.2 Mr Griffiths first turned to the chronology of events and the background pressure to which Mr Dawson was subject. As confirmed in evidence by Ms Claire Campbell, Mr Dawson’s line manager, Mr Dawson had been subject to a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) in November 2022 and was also issued with a final written warning in February 2023. As a result, Mr Dawson was on notice that further perceived failings in his performance would result in his dismissal. This placed him under pressure to avoid a finding of non-compliance with a court order. Mr Griffiths also submitted that aspects of the PIP were specifically relevant to the allegations, including that Mr Dawson had previously failed to progress cases and meet court deadlines; there had been past failings in the context of disclosure; and his time recording was poor, resulting in an obligation to send daily records to his line manager.
- 26.3 When Mr Thomas pursued the matter of non-receipt of disclosure on 20 June, Ms Campbell received that email in her capacity as supervisor. She was immediately concerned that the deadline for disclosure had been missed. She logged into the matter to check. She saw the Letter on the system, dated 26 May, but it was entirely blank except for the header and signature block. There was a further, similar blank letter dated 9 June. Ms Campbell also received a notification that Mr Dawson was working on the file, even though he was on annual leave that day. The blank letter said “*By email only*” but Ms Campbell checked and there was no corresponding email sent that day.
- 26.4 Ms Campbell checked several times during the day on 20 June and confirmed in evidence that the content of the Letter, still dated 26 May 2023, was being added/created on that day or repopulated after the enquiry arose, rather than being a pre-existing document. Each time she returned to the system that day, the letter looked different. Mr Dawson himself accepted in an email that he had started “*copying back in the content taken from the file note*”.
- 26.5 Ms Campbell asked Mr Dawson at 12.21 on 20 June whether, given that he claimed the email label was erroneous, he had any evidence of “*recorded or other traceable post*” and whether he had a bundle of the inspection documents. She also checked his time

recording records, which showed that he did not work on Client A's file on 25 or 26 May. In response, at 16.48, Mr Dawson acknowledged that he was reconstructing the Letter, based on the contents of a file note dated 19 May 2023.

26.6 The Firm's IT witnesses, and notably Mr Patel, gave evidence that:

- The case management system was comprehensively searched for any populated letter, including shadow copies, dated 26 May 2023.
- System backups (referred to as 'snapshots'), taken every two hours between 22 May and 26 May 2023, were restored and searched.
- No populated version of a 26 May letter was found at any time other than that that was stated to be reconstructed on 20 June. The only documents in the client file that were located were a blank template letter dated 26 May (originating from 22 May), and another blank letter dated 9 June; and
- There was no evidence of any outage of Citrix or other IT systems during the relevant period causing the system to crash and therefore account for the loss of the completed Letter.

26.7 Mr Griffiths submitted that if a letter enclosing documents had genuinely been created and sent on 26 May, it would exist in some form on the system or backups. Its total absence strongly supported the case that it was not created at that time. Mr Dawson had been unable to put forward any evidence to refute Mr Patel's evidence.

26.8 Mr Dawson's account required the letter to have been printed on 25 May to accompany physical documents (CD-ROMs). Printing at the firm was governed by a secure 'follow-me' printing system, explained in evidence by Mr Bailey, which recorded every print job. Print logs obtained from DataQuest, which were independent, external, and system-generated, showed the absence of a print job by Mr Dawson for the relevant letter at any time between early April and mid-June 2023, despite Mr Dawson asserting that the letter had been finalised on 25 May and that he had placed it in the Out tray (along with the CD-ROMs) in the post room on the evening of 25 May. Circumstantially, Mr Griffiths also noted that all other correspondence on Client A's file had been sent by email, not post. The Applicant also relied on evidence produced that Mr Dawson's time recording records showed that on 25 May he spent more than eight hours working on different client matter that day, without spending any time on Client A's matter.

26.9 Mr Griffiths submitted that the absence of any print record and time recording was powerful evidence that no such printing or other substantive work on client A's file had occurred on 25 May.

26.10 Mr Dawson asserted that he had compiled documents, transferred them to discs and sent them out under cover of the Letter. However, the absence of any relevant folder on the firm's IT system containing the records and documents for inspection by Mr Thomas before 21 June meant there was no identifiable source from which those discs could have been created.

- 26.11 On the contrary, the inspection documents eventually sent to the defendant were stored in an L-Drive folder on the firm's system. IT evidence showed that the relevant folder was created at 12:26 pm on 21 June 2023. No earlier folder containing the same body of documents was found. The June folder contained 211 files in 5 sub-folders, matching exactly what was later disclosed.
- 26.12 Mr Patel and Mr Bailey also confirmed in evidence that no record of the documents or disclosure could be found on the central PC, to which the inspection documents would needed to have been added in order to be transferred to a CD-ROM. Mr Dawson acknowledged in cross-examination that when disclosure was effected on 21 June, CD-ROMs were not sent and their content was transferred digitally. Furthermore, the Letter dated 26 May that was recreated and purported to be an accurate duplicate of that actually sent on 26 May did not refer to CD-ROMs. Mr Griffiths submitted that, if no inspection documents existed in compiled form before 21 June, the statement in the Letter that documents were enclosed could not have been true.
- 26.13 Consistent with his chaser email of 20 June, Mr Thomas gave clear, unchallenged evidence that neither the Letter nor any inspection documents were received before 21 June.
- 26.14 Mr Griffiths also invited the Tribunal to consider Mr Dawson's behaviour and the lack of contemporaneous protest or explanation. When alerted to non-compliance on 20 June he did not immediately assert that a letter had already been properly sent and received, nor produce contemporaneous proof (a sent email, print record or tracking data) or check with the Firm's IT team. Instead, he chose to access the file from home and begin working on the Letter.
- 26.15 On 21 June 2023, Kennedy's were sent inspection documents and a letter enclosing: "*Copy letter dated 26 May 2023*". This correspondence represented that the Letter had been previously sent. Given that the Letter had not existed in completed form, had not been received and was created or repopulated on 20 June, characterising it as a 'copy' of a previously sent letter was misleading at best and dishonest at worst. It was not disputed that Mr Thomas had not received the inspection documents until 21 June.
- 26.16 In summary, Mr Griffiths noted that some strands of evidence might conceivably have been circumstantial. Taken together, however, the evidence formed a coherent and compelling narrative and Mr Dawson's defence was not plausible. As his primary case, Mr Griffiths cited the existence of the blank letter dated 26 May on 20 June, the absence of any populated version of the Letter on the firm's systems before 20 June that supported the Applicant's case and this, in turn, was supported by secondary evidence in the form of the factual context, namely that Mr Dawson's time-recording and printing entries did not support his version of events and that the Letter was never received by Kennedy's. Finally, he submitted that the behaviours and responses of Mr Dawson on or around 20 June 2023, when the Letter was recreated, suggested plausible motivations for Mr Dawson to lie about having effected disclosure before 29 May.

The Respondent's Case

- 26.17 Ms Pitters strenuously denied the allegations on Mr Dawson's behalf.

- 26.18 It was common ground that a document titled, “*LET to Def Sol re Inspection*” first existed on the system on 22 May 2023, well before the disclosure deadline of 29 May 2023. The document title itself demonstrated that, as of 22 May, Mr Dawson had actively turned his mind to compliance with inspection obligations, undermining any suggestion that the later letter was invented ex post facto. Ms Pitters submitted that a solicitor fabricating a letter after the event would have no reason to have created a specifically titled inspection-related letter days before the disclosure deadline. Under cross-examination, Mr Dawson said “*I believe, I can’t be 100% certain, but I think it is correct that the letter was populated on 22nd of May*”. He then confirmed that he had saved the letter correctly, but an IT system error must have caused the content to be lost. When questioned about the IT teams’ searches, which failed to show a populated version of the Letter on either the case management system, the L-Drive or the system back-ups, Mr Dawson’s case was, “*I don’t have any explanation unfortunately as to why the previously populated letter was showing as blank on their searches*”.
- 26.19 A contemporaneous file note dated 19 May 2023 recorded detailed work relating to the inspection documents. This note:
- predated the deadline.
 - was relied upon by Mr Dawson immediately when the issue arose on 20 June.
 - was discussed during the internal investigation; and
 - was never challenged as inauthentic by the firm despite extensive scrutiny.
- 26.20 Ms Pitters submitted that the file note dated 19 May was powerful corroborative evidence that the substance of the inspection response existed before 26 May, and the later ‘copy’ letter was derived from genuine prior work, not invented content.
- 26.21 On 19 May 2023 Mr Dawson recorded 1 hour (10 units) on Client A’s file. Although the narrative was incorrect, the amount of time precisely matched the estimate recorded in the 19 May file note, demonstrating that the substantive inspection preparation work was completed well before the deadline and that the time record and file note corroborated each other.
- 26.22 Time on Client A’s file was also recorded by Mr Dawson for 22 May 2023, the same day the letter first appeared on the system. Evidence from Ms Campbell accepted that 18 minutes (as recorded) was a reasonable amount of time for preparing the inspection letter and that the time records were consistent with preparation of the inspection response, well ahead of the deadline and prior to posting.
- 26.23 Ms Pitters accepted that Mr Dawson did not record time on 25 May 2023 for Client A. Mr Dawson’s explanation for this was that the work done that day was purely administrative (copying CDs etc), and it was not his practice to “*routinely*” record time spent on administrative tasks since it would not normally be recoverable on assessment. Ms Pitters submitted that the absence of time recording did not establish that the work was not done and that this approach was entirely consistent with Mr Dawson’s normal practice.

- 26.24 Ms Pitters submitted that there was a legitimate reason for postal service of the documents for inspection. It was undisputed that the radiology evidence already existed in CD format, and the use of CD-ROMs and the central computer for copying discs was standard practice within the firm. Ms Campbell confirmed in evidence that it was not unusual for Mr Dawson to copy and post discs. The Firm did not keep a log of ordinary post, but it was suggested that using recorded delivery was not a mandated Firm policy at the time.
- 26.25 There was no evidence that Mr Dawson did not access the L-Drive or the central PC on 25 May. Mr Patel could not be conclusive in his evidence as he only searched Mr Dawson's personal documents file and the exceptions area for his team, being the main areas on the Firm's system and confirmed that it was possible that the documents had been saved elsewhere on the system and existed.
- 26.26 Mr Thomas stated in evidence that he did not receive the letter or discs and was frank in confirming that he did not investigate what had gone wrong once inspection was provided in June. Ms Pitters submitted that non-receipt by the defendant's solicitors was not evidence that the Letter was never sent, particularly in circumstances where routine post was not logged.
- 26.27 Mr Dawson had accepted that a blank version of the letter appeared on the system on 20 June. It was submitted, however, that multiple plausible and innocent explanations existed:
- a document may have been printed without being saved.
 - content may be drafted and deleted between system backups; or
 - system instability, Citrix issues, or crashes may have interfered with saving the document.
- 26.28 Ms Pitters submitted that the IT evidence could not safely support the conclusion that the populated Letter never existed before 20 June. She referred to Mr Patel's evidence, in which he accepted, in cross-examination, that:
- documents could be printed without saving.
 - the two-hour "snapshot" system was not infallible as documents could be created and deleted within the two-hour slot; and
 - Citrix logs for 25/26 May 2023 were not available for analysis.
- 26.29 Ms Pitters further submitted that the existence of a 21 June electronic folder did not prove that inspection had not been provided earlier via the CD-ROMS. As to the Applicant's reliance on the fact that a folder containing the inspection documents was created on the L-Drive on 21 June 2023, Mr Dawson's evidence was that it was entirely plausible that this folder was created because inspection was re-sent, electronically, at that stage, not because the documents had never been collated before. Mr Patel had stated that he could not confirm whether or not discs had been created on 25 May using the central computer.

26.30 Ms Pitters also submitted that the Tribunal could not safely rely on the printing logs as definitive proof that no letter was printed on 25 May. The printing report relied upon by the Applicant was not checked against raw data, appeared to show implausibly low printing volumes overall and was produced late in the internal process. This absence of any entry relating to the printing of the Letter was explained as an error.

26.31 Further, it was said, Mr Dawson's behaviour on 20 June and subsequently was transparent, responsive, and co-operative and fundamentally inconsistent with dishonest intent given that, on 20 June, when the issue arose, he:

- immediately acknowledged the letter appeared blank.
- told Ms Campbell he would use the file note to recreate a copy.
- worked openly on the document throughout the day.
- labelled the letter clearly as a 'copy'; and
- made no attempt to conceal what he was doing.

26.32 The Applicant's submission that the Letter, dated 26 May but sent on 21 June, was false and misleading was incorrect, for the reasons that it was labelled as a 'copy', it closely mirrored the 19 May file note, it did not introduce new content, and was sent with the inspection documents themselves. Ms Pitters submitted that, at its highest, the Applicant's case amounted to criticism of wording or semantics, but not to proof of dishonesty or lack of integrity. The use of the term 'copy' for a document which had no substantial differences from the original was not a breach of the Principles or the Code.

26.33 Two agreed character references of Natalie Rodgers, Mr Dawson's current line manager, and Matthew Cordall, head of legal practice at Mr Dawson's current employer, attested to Mr Dawson's honesty and integrity and, it followed, to a lack of propensity to act dishonestly.

26.34 Ms Pitters reminded the Tribunal that there was no prior finding, allegation, or pattern of dishonest conduct and that the allegation was entirely out of character and unsupported by any wider evidence.

In summary, it was submitted that that:

- A genuine letter dated 26 May 2023 was created before the disclosure deadline and sent on or around 25 May 2023 alongside the requested inspection documents.
- The letter later appearing blank on the firm's system on 20 June was the result of IT or system issues, not fabrication. The IT evidence was incomplete and incapable of excluding innocent explanations.
- The letter sent on 21 June 2023 was a good-faith copy of a letter previously sent, not a fraudulently backdated document.
- Mr Dawson had no propensity towards dishonest or unethical conduct.

- The non-receipt by Mr Thomas did not establish that the Letter and documents had not been sent; and
- Mr Dawson had acted openly and transparently once the issue arose.

26.35 The Applicant's case relied on inferences from incomplete or imperfect IT records, which fell short of the clear and cogent evidence required to establish dishonesty, lack of integrity, or breach of the Principles. The burden of proving Mr Dawson's dishonesty or breach of the Principles had not been discharged.

The Tribunal's Findings – Allegation 1.1

26.36 The Tribunal noted that Mr Dawson had accepted that he had recreated the Letter, using the file note of 19 May 2023, which was admitted by agreement to the Tribunal as late evidence.

26.37 The Tribunal accepted Mr Thomas' evidence that he did not receive the Letter until he received the version referred to as a 'copy' pursuant to the email dated 21 June, which gave the impression that the Letter had been sent earlier.

26.38 The Tribunal found, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr Dawson did not create the Letter in the week commencing 22 May 2023 nor send it, together with CD-ROMs, to Kennedy's by placing it and the discs in the Firm's post tray on the evening of 25 May.

26.39 In reaching its decision the Tribunal took account of the following:

- It did not find Mr Dawson to be a credible witness. In his live testimony, he gave unambiguous evidence that he had created and populated the Letter, dated 26 May, on 22 May, the Monday of that week, when he was working from home. This contrasted with paragraphs 14 and 15 of his Answer, in which he stated that the Letter "*had been produced on 25 May 2023 (dated 26 May 2023)*".
- There was no evidence that the inspection documents had been collated in readiness for dispatch on or around 26 May.
- There was no evidence of posting and recorded delivery had not been used, notwithstanding the sensitive nature of the medical evidence on the discs.
- When confronted with Mr Thomas' assertion that he had never received the Letter, Mr Dawson failed to assert immediately that he had sent it, and he did not take any steps to raise a ticket with the IT department at the Firm to locate the allegedly missing letter.
- The Tribunal found Mr Bailey and Mr Patel, the Firm's IT witnesses, to be credible and accepted their evidence that they had carried out thorough searches and no trace of the Letter, in its final form, could be found on the Firm's case management system or L-Drive over the week beginning 22 May or subsequently, until 20 June.

- Under cross-examination, Mr Dawson was unable to provide a plausible explanation as to how he was able, on 25 May, to finalise and print the Letter, allegedly populated on 22 May, without that letter having been saved on the Firm's system in the interim.
- There was no evidence to support the contention that the Letter had been printed. Mr Dawson asserted that the print log, provided in evidence and produced by a third-party supplier, was inaccurate, and yet he could not identify any other purported missing entries.
- Mr Dawson testified that he recorded the time allegedly spent creating the Letter on 22 May on that date, but the Tribunal found that it was more likely that the 18-minute time entry of Client A's matter that day related to a different email that was sent to Kennedy's on that date and which was shown to the Tribunal.
- It was conspicuous that no time was recorded against Client A's file on 25 May when the letter was finalised, according to Mr Dawson's Answer, and the inspection documents purportedly collated and burned on to discs. This was notwithstanding that Mr Dawson recorded more than eight hours of chargeable work that day. The recorded time also showed that he was working on a different matter before 7pm, when he said that he was undertaking the tasks for Client A. The Tribunal did not accept Mr Dawson's explanation that the work he said he was doing for Client A was administrative in nature and did not merit any time recording, notwithstanding that it may, ultimately, have been deemed to be non-chargeable. He was too senior not to make a proper distinction between recording and billing time.
- The Tribunal found it was inherently unlikely that Mr Dawson would have sent the discs, which contained sensitive medical information, by ordinary post, particularly as he may have needed to show that he had complied with the court's order for directions.
- Mr Dawson was repeatedly unable to provide sufficient actual or inferential evidence to support his version of events.

26.40 Having found the factual matrix of Allegation 1.1 proved, the Tribunal considered the alleged Principal breaches.

Principle 4 and Paragraph 1.4 of the Code

26.41 The Tribunal applied the test for dishonesty stated by the Supreme Court in Ivey v Genting Casinos [2017] UKSC 67, namely that when Mr Dawson created the Letter on or around 20 June 2023 and then asked for it to be sent to Mr Thomas, he was aware that:

- The court order required him to provide the inspection documents within 14 days of the request, i.e. by 29 May 2023.
- He had not provided the inspection documents by the directed date.

- He had not drafted contemporaneous correspondence to Mr Thomas dated 26 May 2023.
- By dating the correspondence 26 May 2023, he was creating the untrue impression that the Letter had been sent on that date, and therefore compliance with the court's direction had been maintained.
- The letter of 21 June 2023, which stated that the Letter had been sent on 26 May, would reinforce the incorrect impression to the recipient as to the Respondent's compliance with the court order.

26.42 An honest solicitor would have explained that the deadline had been missed and that a new letter was being sent. Even if Mr Dawson had believed the Letter had been sent on 26 May, an honest solicitor would not have sought to pass off the version sent to Mr Thomas on 21 June as a 'copy'. Mr Dawson acted dishonestly by the standards of ordinary decent people who would consider it dishonest for a solicitor to create a document to give, or likely give, the impression that it had been created on an earlier date.

26.43 By doing so, Mr Dawson, on the balance of probabilities, failed to act with honesty and therefore breached Principle 4 of the SRA Principles, and Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

Principle 5

26.44 Mr Dawson's actions amounted to a failure to act with integrity, that is with moral soundness, rectitude, and steady adherence to an ethical code, in breach of Principle 5 of the SRA Principles, and as set out in Wingate v SRA [2018] EWCA Civ 366.

26.45 Mr Dawson was in a position of trust and responsibility as a solicitor. A solicitor acting with integrity would not have acted in a manner that attempted to create a misleading impression as to when documents were originally provided for inspection in compliance with directions under a court order. On the balance of probabilities, Mr Dawson breached Principle 5 of the SRA Principles.

Principle 2

26.46 The trust that the public places in solicitors, and in the provision of legal services, to discharge professional duties with integrity, probity and trustworthiness depends upon the reputation of the solicitors' profession as one in which every member, of whatever standing, may be trusted to the ends of the earth. Mr Dawson was in a position of trust and responsibility as a solicitor, and he was responsible for ensuring that the administration of justice was properly adhered to. Members of the public would have expected Mr Dawson to act in a straight-forward and transparent manner with colleagues, and other members of the profession. This clearly included not providing information that he knew to be inaccurate, and correcting any misleading impressions caused by that information.

26.47 By his actions, and on the balance of probabilities, Mr Dawson abused the trust placed in him by his colleagues and members of the public, and profession, and did not conduct

himself in a manner that maintained public trust in him and the provision of legal services, and therefore breached Principle 2 of the SRA Principles.

27. **Allegation 1.2 Whilst in practice as a Solicitor at the Firm on or around 20 June 2023, Mr Dawson provided misleading information to his employer in respect of when the documents for inspection were first disclosed to another party in litigation. In doing so, he breached any or all of: (1.2.1) Principle 2 of the Principles; (1.2.2) Principle 4 of the Principles; (1.2.3) Principle 5 of the Principles; and (1.2.4) Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.**

The Applicant's Case

- 27.1 The Applicant's core factual proposition was that on 20 June 2023, when concerns arose about non-compliance with a court order, Mr Dawson made positive assertions to his line manager, Ms Campbell, that inspection had already been performed and documents had already been sent, when that was not true.
- 27.2 Mr Griffiths submitted that Allegation 1.2 "stands and falls" with Allegation 1.1, because the misleading statements to the employer were premised on the same asserted but untrue purported disclosure on or around 26 May.
- 27.3 The purported disclosure on or around 26 May was a response to a court-ordered obligation to provide inspection documents. Mr Dawson's failure to engage with his duty potentially exposed the Firm and its client to procedural sanctions and regulatory and professional risk.
- 27.4 Mr Dawson was on a performance improvement plan, subject to a final written warning and on annual leave on 20 June when the breach was flagged. Mr Griffiths suggested that this context explained the motive for Mr Dawson providing reassuring but misleading information to his supervisor, Ms Campbell, as he was at risk of losing his job if he was found to have missed a deadline.
- 27.5 On the morning of 20 June 2023, Ms Campbell became aware, from Kennedy's email, that inspection documents had not been received. She was concerned that the firm was in breach of a court order and began reviewing the file on the case management system. This was the point at which Mr Dawson's representations to his employer became critical.
- 27.6 In his early communications on 20 June, Mr Dawson told Ms Campbell, "*the inspection was done last month*" - a positive assertion of compliance which was misleading when, on the Applicant's case, inspection was not carried out before 21 June.
- 27.7 Mr Dawson represented to Ms Campbell that the Letter had already been sent to the defendant's solicitors enclosing inspection documents. This assertion was later repeated and refined by Mr Dawson at 12.06pm, when he was pressed by Ms Campbell, that the Letter and documents "*would have been [sent] by post*". This was inconsistent with the firm's usual practice. There were no records of postage and no tracking data. It was submitted that the qualifying nature of Mr Dawson's language was inconsistent with a genuine recollection of having complied with the order for inspection. In an email sent at 16.48pm, he said, "*I think it was ordinary first class but as there were radiology*

discs it all went on discs. I must have left the "sent by email" on the letter by mistake and forgot to delete it".

- 27.8 Ms Campbell, in her witness statement and in her testimony, described how she tested Mr Dawson's assertions against objective records.
- 27.9 On checking the case management system, she saw the Letter dated 26 May marked "*Sent by email only*", but entirely blank and a second, blank 'update' letter dated 9 June. There was no completed letter, no email sent to the defendant and no system-saved record consistent with Mr Dawson's account.
- 27.10 Ms Campbell also checked Mr Dawson's time recording but did not find any time recorded on 25 May for sending inspection documents. The last file activity was recorded on 22 May. This conflicted with Mr Dawson's account that the work had been completed and sent by 26 May.
- 27.11 The Letter was developed during the course of 20 June. Ms Campbell gave evidence that each time she accessed the file that day, the letter looked different. Mr Dawson acknowledged that he was copying content into the letter from a file note. Mr Griffiths submitted that the letter was being created or populated in response to the enquiry, while Mr Dawson was simultaneously telling his employer that it had already been sent weeks earlier.
- 27.12 Disclosure ultimately took place electronically on 21 June via the sending of a ShareFile link which gave access to an L-Drive folder created that same day. Mr Dawson was unable to identify a similar folder where the documents for inspection that were purportedly copied onto the discs on 25 May would have been saved, in order to facilitate the purported earlier disclosure in May.
- 27.13 In summary, Mr Griffiths asserted that the misleading nature of Mr Dawson's communications rested on the following cumulative points:
- He positively asserted that disclosure had already been completed and documents sent before 20 June
 - He repeated that assertion when questioned at the time and subsequently.
 - Objective evidence - file contents, time recording, IT records - contradicted his assertion; and
 - Mr Dawson's explanations over time have adapted to meet emerging difficulties in maintaining a consistent or coherent explanation of events – for example, he provided implausible explanations as to why the blank letter dated 26 May was said to have been sent by email but was in fact, on his story, sent by post and that there had been an error in the printing records etc.

The Respondent's Case

- 27.14 Ms Pitters submitted that the allegation was denied on the basis that Mr Dawson had disclosed documents for inspection in May 2023, by post, in accordance with the court's directions.
- 27.15 Mr Dawson's statements to his employer on and after 20 June 2023 reflected that genuine belief, which was based on the contemporaneous work done on Client A's file in May, his recollection of copying and posting discs on the evening of 25 May and the existence of supporting documentation, in the form of the file note dated 19 May and the blank version of the Letter which was found on the Firm's systems.
- 27.16 Under oath whilst giving oral evidence, Mr Dawson denied dishonesty or an intent to mislead. He relied upon his contemporaneous file note dated 19 May 2023, on the basis that it evidenced preparation for inspection.
- 27.17 Ms Pitters submitted that the later electronic transmission of the inspection documents in June was a re-sending, not the first disclosure of the documents. Information was not 'misleading' merely because it later turned out to be wrong if it was honestly and reasonably believed to be true at the time. Allegation 1.2 required proof of misleading conduct, not simply inaccuracy.
- 27.18 Mr Dawson did not attempt to conceal uncertainty or difficulty once the issue arose. He was open with Ms Campbell on 20 June about the Letter appearing blank on the system, his intention to recreate a copy from an existing file note, and the steps he was taking to resolve the issue urgently.
- 27.19 In support of his contention, Mr Dawson relied upon the email correspondence of 20 June 2023, in which he told Ms Campbell that inspection had been complied with, that he accepted that the system copy appeared blank, and that he was copying content from the file note to recreate the letter: *"I've started to copy back in the content, taken from the file note"*.
- 27.20 Ms Campbell's evidence supported this contention when she confirmed that she could see Mr Dawson working on the file during the day.
- 27.21 It was submitted that a person acting with misleading intent to mislead would hide system issues, misrepresent the document's status, or fabricate explanations, whereas Mr Dawson did none of these. His conduct was open and traceable.
- 27.22 Mr Dawson's account to his employer, of inspection being completed in May and that the June transmission was simply due to non-receipt, never changed and has remained consistent. He gave this account on 20 June, during the Firm's internal investigation, throughout the disciplinary process and before the Tribunal. It was submitted that his consistency weighed strongly against an inference of misleading conduct and supported Mr Dawson's credibility and honest belief.
- 27.23 Ms Pitters submitted that the allegation assumed that Mr Dawson knew that disclosure had not been effected in May, but that knowledge was not established for the following reasons:

- Mr Dawson had considered the matter by mid-May, as evidenced by the file note of 19 May.
- The central PC was used to copy discs,
- Time recording on 19 and 22 May was consistent with his preparatory work on Client A's file to effect disclosure.
- It was accepted that the radiology material requiring physical copying.
- Mr Dawson recalled that he had placed the letter and disks in the out tray in the post room of 25 May.
- The screenshots and L-Drive evidence before the Tribunal showing electronic folders being created on 21 June were consistent with re-sending, not proof of a failure to make the disclosure in May.
- The IT witnesses, Mr Bailey and Mr Patel, accepted:
 - they could not say discs were not created.
 - central PC usage could not be conclusively tracked; and
 - systems were not perfect or infallible.

27.24 Ms Pitters submitted to the Tribunal that without proof that Mr Dawson knew inspection had not occurred, the allegation of providing misleading information to his employer could not succeed.

27.25 Mr Dawson's behaviour once the issue arose was inconsistent with misleading conduct on the basis that he acted promptly, involved his supervisor, permitted scrutiny of his files and IT records, and labelled the Letter clearly as a 'copy'. Mr Dawson accepted that the matter needed urgent resolution, and undertook the task himself, without any attempt to involve colleagues or IT staff. Mr Dawson's conduct fell on the side of error, which he attempted to rectify with good-faith problem-solving, not deception.

27.26 Character references from Natalie Rodgers, Mr Dawson's current line manager, and from Matthew Cordall, Mr Dawson's head of legal practice in his current firm, were agreed and put before the Tribunal, attesting to Mr Dawson's honesty, integrity, and professional trustworthiness. Mr Dawson had no history of misleading his employer. Ms Pitters submitted that whilst character evidence did not prove facts, it was relevant to assessing whether misleading conduct has been genuinely proved where the case depends on inference. At its highest, the evidence supported the possibility of mistake, but not misleading conduct.

The Tribunal's Findings – Allegation 1.2

27.27 The Tribunal accepted Mr Griffiths' submission that Allegation 1.2 was dependent upon Allegation 1.1 in factual terms, and that if no disclosure took place on 26 May, then statements to Ms Campbell saying that it did were necessarily misleading.

27.28 The Tribunal found Ms Campbell to be a credible witness.

- 27.29 The Tribunal took particular account of the email dated 20 June in which Mr Dawson told Ms Campbell that he had sent the Letter dated 26 May, together with discs, by post. The Tribunal found, however, that no letter effecting disclosure had been prepared or posted in May. Mr Dawson did not have an explanation for why the Letter held on the Firm's systems was blank. Accordingly, the Tribunal found that Mr Dawson had lied to his employer on 20 and 21 June, and throughout the Firm's investigation and disciplinary proceedings.
- 27.30 The Tribunal acknowledged that a respondent accused of dishonesty can introduce evidence of good character by written character witness statements, as Mr Dawson had done. It noted that in Bryant and Bench v Law Society [2007] EWHC 3043 (Admin) character references were admissible when considering dishonesty under the test set out in Twinsectra, which was now superseded by the test in Ivey. The decision remained relevant as both tests for dishonesty included a subjective element which took account of the respondent's state of mind. The evidence provided in Ms Rodgers' and Mr Cordall's statements, however, was insufficient to weigh against the Tribunal's determination that Mr Dawson was not a credible witness or to prove that he had no propensity to dishonesty at the time of the events in question, particularly in the context of his performance issues in the preceding months including that he had been provided with a final written warning.

Principle 4 and Paragraph 1.4 of the Code

- 27.31 The Tribunal applied the test for dishonesty stated by the Supreme Court in Ivey v Genting Casinos [2017] UKSC 67. When Mr Dawson was in correspondence with Ms Campbell on 20 June 2023, he was aware:
- He had not drafted the Letter to Mr Thomas dated 26 May 2023.
 - As a result of not having drafted it, he had not sent the Letter with the requested inspection documents to Mr Thomas before 21 June 2023.
 - He had consequently not complied with the court order of 17 April 2023.
 - He had not printed off the Letter dated 26 May 2023 (there being no letter to be printed).
 - He had not sent the correspondence dated 26 May 2023 by post.
 - The suggestion that he had undertaken any of the above acts may lead to Ms Campbell, and others, being misled as to the true position in respect of compliance with the court order.
- 27.32 Given this state of knowledge and belief, Mr Dawson acted dishonestly by the standards of ordinary decent people, who would consider it dishonest for a solicitor, during a course of litigation, to put forward an account of a situation to a colleague when they know that account is not accurate, and the colleague may be misled by their reliance on the account.

27.33 By doing so, Mr Dawson, on the balance of probabilities, failed to act with honesty and therefore breached Principle 4 of the SRA Principles, and Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

Principle 5

27.34 The Tribunal relied on Wingate v SRA. The public and profession would expect a solicitor to act in a manner that was clear and transparent, even if acting in such a manner may demonstrate a mistake by the solicitor.

27.35 Mr Dawson, by not being open to his senior colleague as to the true position of compliance with the court order and correspondence to Kennedys, was not a solicitor acting with integrity. Mr Dawson, on the balance of probabilities, therefore breached Principle 5.

Principle 2

27.36 The trust that the public places in solicitors, and in the provision of legal services, depends upon the reputation of the solicitors' profession as one in which every member, of whatever standing, may be trusted to the ends of the earth. Solicitors were required to discharge their professional duties with integrity, probity, and trustworthiness.

27.37 Mr Dawson gave false information to his colleague, whom he knew was in contact with another party in litigation. He therefore knew that information may be disseminated further. Members of the profession should be able to rely on what other members of the profession tell them to be accurate, or as accurate as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances. In Mr Dawson's communications with Ms Campbell, he did not act with probity and therefore, on the balance of probabilities, breached Principle 2.

Previous Disciplinary Matters

28. None

Mitigation

29. Ms Pitters referred the Tribunal to the principle enshrined in its Guidance Note on Sanctions that the Tribunal should impose the least severe sanction available to reflect the seriousness of the breach and protect the profession. She accepted that a finding of dishonesty was serious misconduct that would lead to a strike off unless there were exceptional circumstances.

30. Ms Pitters urged the Tribunal to impose a suspension in place of a strike off for the following reasons:

- The nature of the misconduct – whilst accepting that the allegations relate to separate acts of dishonesty, the proper categorisation of what had occurred in Mr Dawson's case was a single episode of dishonesty, albeit one that escalated. The single act of recreating the Letter was escalated by Mr Dawson's ongoing denial, but misconduct was not comprised of independently conceived acts.

- Context of the misconduct – Mr Dawson was subject to performance management and a final written warning, which amounted to significant pressure on him on 20 June. As a result of this he fabricated the Letter which was a spontaneous and immediate error of judgement. This context played a part in reducing his culpability.
- Harm – neither Client A, Mr Thomas’ client, nor the Firm suffered any prejudice because of Mr Dawson’s actions, and this was a relevant consideration when finding a proportionate sanction.
- Mr Dawson did not have any previous regulatory findings against him and had presented character witness statements to the Tribunal which spoke highly of him. His misconduct was out of character, confined to a discrete period and was highly unlikely to be repeated.
- Whilst the seriousness of the misconduct was recognised, it lay within the category of cases in which a suspension was an appropriate sanction because there was no systemic dishonesty, no financial loss or harm to a client and Mr Dawson had an unblemished regulatory history.

Sanction

31. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th edition February 2025) when considering sanction and the proper approach to sanctions, as set out in [Fuglers and Others v SRA](#) [2014] EWHC 179. The Tribunal’s overriding objective, when considering sanction, was the need to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the profession. In determining sanction, it was the Tribunal’s role to assess the seriousness of the proven misconduct and to impose a sanction that was fair and proportionate in all the circumstances.
32. The Tribunal assessed the seriousness of the misconduct by considering the level of Mr Dawson’s culpability and the harm caused, together with any aggravating or mitigating factors.
33. In assessing culpability, the Tribunal determined that Mr Dawson was motivated to claim that he had complied with a court deadline because he was subject to a performance improvement plan and a final written warning and was likely to lose his job if his failure to carry out disclosure came to light. Whilst his actions were spontaneous in the first instance, he then sustained them by continuing to insist that he had validly conducted disclosure on or around 26 May 2023 and in so doing misled his supervisor and subsequently the regulator. He had direct control of the situation and was an experienced lawyer employed as a senior associate.
34. Whilst in the event there was minimal impact, other than delay, on the parties to the underlying litigation, that was not inevitable. Mr Dawson’s conduct represented a significant departure from the standards of integrity, probity and trustworthiness demanded by the reputation of the legal profession as it was never acceptable for a solicitor to fabricate correspondence and label it as a ‘copy’.

35. Dishonesty had been proved, reflecting deliberate and calculated misconduct, which was an aggravating feature. Mr Dawson had attempted to conceal his wrongdoing and entrenched his position through his own actions. His behaviour was only mitigated to the extent that this was an episode of brief duration in a career otherwise unblemished by disciplinary offences.
36. In considering Mr Dawson's culpability and the level of harm caused, the Tribunal concluded that the seriousness of Mr Dawson's misconduct was high. He knowingly misled the other party to the litigation he was conducting, and his line manager.
37. The damage to the reputation of the profession by such misconduct was significant as the public would expect a solicitor to always act honestly and truthfully, which Mr Dawson failed to do.
38. Having determined that Mr Dawson's conduct was dishonest, the Tribunal observed that a finding of dishonesty would, absent exceptional circumstances, require an order striking the solicitor from the roll.
39. Having considered the authorities, in particular SRA v Sharma [2010] EWHC 2022 (Admin) and SRA v James [2018] EWHC 2058 (Admin), the Tribunal could not find any exceptional circumstances justifying any lesser sanction than a striking off, which was appropriate and proportionate in all the circumstances.

Costs

40. Mr Griffiths applied for the Applicant's costs in full on the basis that costs follow the event, and both allegations had been proved. He accepted that the Firm had undertaken substantial investigatory work but submitted that this was not a matter that the Applicant could rubber-stamp. Having reviewed the case, the Applicant had to take witness statements from six individuals, and in that context the costs set out in Part A of the Statement of Costs dated 3 June 2025 were modest. The costs of the Applicant's solicitors in Part B were incurred on a fixed fee basis under which the nominal hourly fee of £184 was reasonable and proportionate.
41. This was a complex case which was fully contested and took three days before the Tribunal.
42. Mr Griffiths also submitted that costs were affordable for Mr Dawson and this was not a case where an order for costs should not be made, on the basis that it was unlikely ever to be satisfied, as determined in Barnes v SRA Ltd [2022] EWHC 677 (Admin). He had sold his property and held significant proceeds of sale in his bank account.
43. Ms Pitters suggested, by contrast, that this had been a straightforward case, with limited allegations arising from one episode of misconduct. She submitted that because of the Firm having conducted the bulk of the investigative work, the Applicant's solicitors' fees were excessive. She further stated that Mr Dawson would be unemployed following the strike off and would therefore not have the means to satisfy a costs order. His bank account balance was temporarily inflated by containing the proceeds of sale, which would need to be reinvested in a new home.

44. It was clarified that the costs of Mr Dawson's representation before the Tribunal were met by insurance, which was accepted by Mr Griffiths.

The Tribunal's Decision

45. The Tribunal assessed the Applicant's Statement of Costs, and Mr Dawson's Statement of Means, guided by Rule 43 Solicitors Disciplinary Proceedings Rules 2019. It had regard to the conduct of the parties, whether the time spent on the matter was proportionate and reasonable and whether the allegations were pursued or defended reasonably.
46. The Applicant's case had succeeded in its entirety and the Tribunal considered that the costs claimed by the Applicant were reasonable and proportionate.
47. The Tribunal ordered that Mr Dawson pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry in full, fixed in the sum of £36,255.00.

Statement of Full Order

48. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, JOSEPH ELLIOTT DAWSON, Solicitor, be STRUCK OFF the Roll of Solicitors and it further ORDERED that he do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £36,255.00.

Dated this 29th day of April 2026
On behalf of the Tribunal

F Kyriacou

F Kyriacou
Chair