

# SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12847-2025

## BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

GRENVILLE ROYSTON YOUNG

Respondent

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Before:

Ms H Hasan (in the chair)

Mrs L Murphy

Mr A Pygram

Date of Hearing: 30 April 2026

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## Appearances

Joshua Hitchens of Outer Temple Chambers, The Outer Temple, 222 Strand, London WC2R 1BA.

The Respondent did not attend and was not represented.

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## JUDGMENT

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## **Allegations**

1. The allegations against the Respondent, Grenville Royston Young, made by the SRA are that whilst in practice as a Sole Practitioner at Grenville Young Solicitor (a recognised sole practice) (“the Firm”) and/or whilst practising as a Freelance Solicitor:
  - 1.1 He failed to co-operate with the SRA’s investigations between November 2019 and April 2023.

### Proved

- 1.2 He failed to co-operate with the SRA and its agents during and/or after the SRA’s intervention into his practice.

And by doing so he breached any or all of:

- (i) Principles 2, 5 and 7 of the SRA Principles (“the Principles”); and,
- (ii) Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, REL’s and RFLs (“the Code for Solicitors”).

### Proved

## **Executive Summary**

2. Mr Young was admitted to the Roll in June 1981. The alleged misconduct occurred between November 2019 and April 2023. Mr Young practised and was authorised as a recognised Sole Practitioner until 31 March 2020. From 1 April 2020 he was registered as a Freelance Solicitor. He traded as Grenville Young Solicitor (“the Firm”) from 4 November 1996 until 31 March 2020. The Firm undertook landlord and tenant, wills, trust, and tax planning work; family/matrimonial; commercial; and residential property. Mr Young last held a practising certificate for the practice year 2021 to 2022.
3. The Rule 12 Statement was dated 30 September 2025. Standard Directions were issued by the Tribunal dated 6 October 2025 requiring Mr Young to file and serve the Respondent’s Answer by 1 December 2025. On 13 October 2025, the SRA served relevant documents on Mr Young on behalf of the Tribunal by first class post and recorded delivery. The documents were returned to the SRA because delivery was refused by Mr Young. Mr Young did not file and serve the Respondent’s Answer.
4. On 3 December 2025, the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young by first class post and recorded delivery attaching further copies of the Standard Directions. The letter informed him that a CMH was listed to be heard remotely on 8 January 2026. The letter was returned to the SRA because delivery was refused by Mr Young. Mr Young did not appear at the CMH and did not apply for an adjournment. He did not engage with the disciplinary proceedings but was served with the required documents.
5. In the absence of Mr Young engaging with the proceedings or attending the Substantive Hearing, the Tribunal proceeded to hear the case in his absence. The Tribunal found on the balance of probabilities that the SRA proved the allegations against Mr Young.

## Sanction

6. The Tribunal determined that the proportionate sanction was to immediately suspend Mr Young from practice as a solicitor for the period of 24 months commencing on 30 April 2026 subject to payment of a fine of £20,000.00. The Tribunal's reasons can be found [\[here\]](#).

## Documents

7. The Tribunal considered all of the documents in the case which included:
- The Rule 12 Statement dated 30 September 2025. [\[here\]](#)
  - Applicant's Statement of Costs as at Substantive Hearing.
  - Relevant correspondence between the parties.

## Preliminary Matters

### 8. Application by the Applicant to Proceed in Absence

- 8.1 Mr Hitchens confirmed to the Tribunal that Mr Young was neither present nor represented. He submitted that, provided the Tribunal was satisfied that notice of the hearing had been properly served on Mr Young, it was open to the Tribunal to proceed in his absence pursuant to Rule 36 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 ("the SDPR").
- 8.2 In accordance with Rule 44 of the SDPR, which addressed the requirements as they related to service of documents on Mr Young, the Tribunal was informed that the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young dated 13 October 2025 by first class post and recorded delivery, serving relevant documents including a copy of the Standard Directions. This letter was returned to the SRA with a notice that Mr Young had refused delivery of the letter and documents. The Tribunal was also informed that Mr Young had refused delivery of a letter and documents from the SRA sent by first class post and recorded delivery dated 3 December 2025. This letter informed Mr Young that a CMH was listed to be heard remotely on 8 January 2026.
- 8.3 Mr Young did not file and serve an Answer to the Rule 12 Statement and refused delivery of correspondence relating to the proceedings. Additionally, he provided no medical evidence to explain his non-attendance at the Substantive Hearing in compliance with the Tribunal's Guidance Note on Health Issues (11 January 2024) and did not apply for or seek an adjournment of the Substantive Hearing. Further, Mr Young had not provided the Tribunal with any information about his instruction of a legal representative.
- 8.4 Mr Hitchens referred the Tribunal to the numerous letters on which the SRA relied which informed and reminded Mr Young about the date of the Substantive Hearing. He confirmed that Mr Young was served with all relevant documents. In the CMH on 8 January 2026 the Tribunal directed that Mr Young should file the Respondent's Answer by 5 February 2026 and listed the Substantive Hearing. The SRA wrote to Mr Young on 12 January 2026 informing him of the directions of the Tribunal. However, Mr Young did not file the Respondent's Answer and had not appeared before

the Tribunal at the Substantive Hearing. Mr Hitchens referred to Mr Young's letter dated 9 March 2022 in which he communicated that he was no longer willing to accept correspondence by email and preferred to receive communications by post. In this letter he also referred to significant health difficulties he had faced.

- 8.5 Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young was repeatedly reminded of the date of the Substantive Hearing and that he chose to absent himself voluntarily from the proceedings. His non-engagement with the disciplinary proceedings was a repeated pattern of behaviour since 2020 and formed the basis of the allegations against him. Mr Young did not engage with the regulator, and he was behaving in the same way towards the Tribunal. It was in the public interest for the Substantive Hearing to proceed. An adjournment might allow Mr Young to engage at a later date, but this was unlikely. The Tribunal had given him an opportunity to engage, by extending the time for service of the Answer following the CMH on 8 January 2026, but he had failed to comply. There were no factors in favour of the Tribunal granting an adjournment in the case.
- 8.6 Mr Hitchens submitted that, based on the correspondence served on and refused by Mr Young, and his failure to provide any medical evidence in support of an application to adjourn the Substantive Hearing, it would be appropriate for the Tribunal to proceed in Mr Young's absence. He could be deemed voluntarily absent, having regards to the authority of Adeogba v General Medical Council [2016] EWCA Civ 162.

#### Decision of the Tribunal

- 8.7 The Tribunal listened with care to the submissions of Mr Hitchens and reminded itself that it must proceed with caution when reaching a decision whether to proceed in Mr Young's absence. In considering whether to exercise its discretion on this occasion it considered the following:
- a) The nature of Mr Young's behaviour during the proceedings; and
  - b) Whether Mr Young had deliberately exercised his right not to engage, not to attend or instruct legal representation.
- 8.8 The correspondence provided a clear indication that Mr Young had knowledge of the Substantive Hearing and was served with relevant documents. The Tribunal noted that Mr Young had not engaged in the proceedings or contacted the SRA or the Tribunal to inform them of reasons why the Substantive Hearing should be stayed. The Tribunal noted the serious medical conditions Mr Young referred to in his letter of 9 March 2022. However, Mr Young had not provided the Tribunal with medical evidence to support an application for adjournment in accordance with the Guidance Note on Health Issues.
- 8.9 Mr Young had failed to engage with the proceedings. He had not attended any of the listed hearings or engaged a legal representative. The Tribunal found that, notwithstanding Mr Young's refusal to accept delivery of the SRA's correspondence, he had received due notice of the hearing date. The Tribunal determined that Mr Young had voluntarily absented himself from the Substantive Hearing.

- 8.10 The Tribunal balanced fairness to Mr Young with fairness to the SRA and the public interest in the efficient and expeditious resolution of the proceedings, in accordance with the overriding objective set out in Rule 4(2) of the SDPR. The Tribunal exercised the discretion it was accorded under Rule 36 of the SDPR and granted permission for the Substantive Hearing to proceed in Mr Young's absence.

### **Factual Background**

9. On 26 October 2019 Mr Young informed the SRA that he was closing the Firm on 31 March 2020. He notified the SRA that he would be practising on his own and in his own name under regulation 10.2 of the SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations from 1 April 2020 and completed a Freelancer Notification Form. On 24 April 2020, the SRA confirmed to the Respondent by email that it had updated its records so that Mr Young would appear as an SRA regulated Freelancer. He did not initially complete a Firm Closure Notification Form ("the FCN") or provide any information as to his plans for clients, money or files relating to clients of the Firm.
10. On 15 November 2019, the SRA emailed Mr Young, reminding him of the requirement to complete the FCN. He was asked to confirm if the Firm was continuing to trade and provide legal services. He did not respond and the SRA emailed him on 24 March 2020 asking for a response by 1 April 2020. Further emails were sent by the SRA to Mr Young chasing him for a response on 16 April 2020 and 23 June 2020. On 3 March 2021 Mr Young responded to an email from the SRA relating to the Firm's bulk renewal application for practising certificates. He did not provide any information relating to the FCN.
11. On 16 March 2021, the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young explaining that as the SRA had not received the FCN the Firm remained open on their records and this was why he received an email relating to the Firm's bulk renewal application for practising certificates. The letter attached the FCN and explained that the SRA needed information as to whether the Firm had transferred any live files, whether it held client money and where any closed wills, deeds and files had been stored. The SRA sent further letters to Mr Young about the requirement to complete the FCN on 29 November 2021 and 20 December 2021 attaching further copies of the FCN. On 17 January 2022, the SRA emailed Mr Young asking him to return the FCN with supporting documentation by 24 January 2022. The SRA explained that if Mr Young did not respond the matter would be referred to the SRA's Investigation and Supervision Team for further action.
12. On 18 January 2022, the SRA received a letter by post from Mr Young dated 17 January 2022. He confirmed that he had received letters from the SRA dated 29 November 2021 and 20 December 2021. He stated that he did not receive the letter dated 16 March 2021. He explained that he underwent a serious operation on 2 November 2021 with an anticipated recovery time of three months. He further stated that he would complete the FCN when he was well enough to do so.
13. The SRA emailed Mr Young on 15 February 2022 about completion of the FCN. On 22 February 2022, the Investigation Officer ("IO") sent an email referring to a telephone message that was left for Mr Young asking for the return of the FCN and for the call to be returned. Mr Young did not return the call.

14. The SRA received a letter from Mr Young dated 9 March 2022 in which he stated that he was no longer prepared to communicate by email. He stated that he was only prepared to communicate by post and enclosed the FCN. Mr Young further stated that any further correspondence would be dependent on the progress of his recovery following his operation in November 2021.
15. The information in the FCN highlighted the following outstanding issues. The Firm:
  - (i) Held £17,864.77 in the client account which included £3,000.00 of residual balances.
  - (ii) Held two live files. Mr Young intended to return one file to the client. He intended to act for the other client as a freelance solicitor.
  - (iii) Held 50 wills and deeds which would be returned or stored.
  - (iv) Had not paid for run-off cover.
16. Mr Young stated in his letter of 9 March 2022 that the Firm's closed files and any files generated from working as a freelance solicitor were being stored in a self-storage unit in Portsmouth until they could be properly shredded.
17. The SRA wrote to Mr Young on 3 May 2022 asking why the Firm continued to hold live client files and client monies two years after the Firm closed. The SRA wrote to Mr Young on 23 May 2022 and 3 August 2022 chasing for a response to the letter of 3 May 2022. Mr Young did not respond to these letters. On 18 August 2022, the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young enclosing a Production Notice requesting details relating to client files, the Firm's renewal of professional indemnity insurance, confirmation of whether the run-off cover was paid and client monies being held. He was asked to provide details of his freelance activities. On 22 August 2022, the SRA received a letter from Mr Young acknowledging the letters. He stated that because of serious ill-health, an operation and Covid, he would not be renewing his practising certificate. He stated that he closed the Firm because he was unable to obtain professional indemnity insurance. He further stated that he would respond to the SRA's information requests when his poor health allowed him to do so. He stated that he could not function at the speed of the SRA's timetable. He did not provide a substantive response to the SRA's letters.
18. On 31 October 2022, the IO sent a letter to Mr Young by recorded delivery which was delivered on 2 November 2022. The IO repeated the SRA's requests in previous correspondence for information relating to the closure of the Firm. The SRA informed Mr Young that it would consider reasonable adjustments on account of his health conditions but that a substantive response was required from Mr Young by 14 November 2022. Mr Young did not respond to this letter. The SRA emailed Mr Young on 12 December 2022 and telephoned him on 12 December 2022. His message service was full when the telephone call was made. The SRA sent a letter by recorded delivery on 3 January 2023. The letter asked for a response by 13 January 2023, or the SRA would need to consider intervening into the Firm. Mr Young did not engage with the SRA following these communications. On 23 March 2023, the IO sent Mr Young a letter by recorded delivery enclosing the

Intervention Notice. The letter was also sent by email. Mr Young did not respond to this letter.

19. On 17 April 2023, the SRA's Adjudication Panel decided to intervene into the Firm for the following reasons:

- (i) Although Mr Young was not in good health, he had been given over a year to meaningfully engage with the SRA in order to ensure the orderly closure of the Firm.
- (ii) There were two live files relating to the Firm. Mr Young had failed to say what had happened to those files.
- (iii) There was a significant amount of money in the client account. Mr Young had not cooperated with requests for information about this money. It did not belong to him and should have been returned to clients.
- (iv) It was not clear what arrangements were in place to ensure the ongoing security of closed files.

20. The Adjudication Panel made the following comments in its Decision dated 17 April 2023 about Mr Young's engagement with the SRA:

*"5.12 It is not known whether Mr Young continues to hold any live files or client money. He did not pay his insurance premium and has not said whether he can continue to pay any ongoing storage fees. The storage company holds files in relation to both of Mr Young's practices.*

*5.13 Mr Young conducted work including wills and probate, conveyancing and landlord and tenant matters. It is probable that he holds original documents for clients, and he said he stored 50 wills and deeds. It is not clear how clients will contact Mr Young should they want their documents. He is no longer communicating by email, and his message service was full when the investigating officer called him on 12 December 2022.*

*5.14 In the absence of any meaningful engagement with the SRA, we conclude that it is necessary to intervene to protect the interest of [sic] former clients of the firm and Mr Young's freelance practice".*

21. The IO telephoned and emailed Mr Young on 18 April 2023. The email attached a copy of the Intervention Notice dated 18 April 2023 informing him that he must not use any money held by the Firm and stated that the SRA would attend his home address the following day to take possession of any practice papers held by the Firm. The Intervention Notice expressly stated the following:

*"5. You must not pay out any money held by Grenville Young Solicitor or you. This also applies to any trust of which you or Grenville Young Solicitor are or were trustees".*

22. On 19 April 2023, the SRA attended Mr Young's home address. He answered the door and stated that he had not seen the emails and that he was not expecting a visit from the SRA. He further stated that he did not wish to engage with the SRA because he was unwell. The SRA hand delivered copies of the letters enclosing the Intervention Notice to Mrs Young. Before the intervention, the SRA had been unable to freeze the Firm's bank accounts.
23. On 19 April 2023 Mr Young withdrew £500.00 from the Firm's office account for "*GR Young LL Drawings*" and £350.00 for "*Mrs Joy Young Salary*". On 21 April 2023 there was a debit card transaction at Morrisons in the sum of £55.11. On 25 April 2023 there was a direct debit withdrawal from the Firm's office account to *HM Land Registry* in the sum of £12.00. These were evidenced in the Firm's office account statement from Lloyds Bank Account.
24. On 12 December 2023 Mr Young wrote to the SRA's Intervention Agents stating that "*I told you there was nothing for you to collect*". He explained that since 1996 he had not worked for the Firm and had worked as a locum for other firms. He stated that he had undertaken most of his work for the solicitors' firm Waugh & Co and their client files were stored by Waugh & Co. Mr Young proposed an in-person meeting with the Intervention Agent during the same week.
25. On 21 December 2023, the Intervention Agents wrote to Mr Young asking him to confirm whether since the closure of the Firm in March 2020 any other files had been:
- (i) Transferred to Waugh & Co or another firm of solicitors,
  - (ii) Sent to clients directly,
  - (iii) Sent to an offsite storage facility; and/or
  - (iv) Destroyed.
- Mr Young did not respond to this letter.
26. On 22 August 2024, the SRA's Statutory Trust Report for the Firm reported that the funds attributed to the Firm and held in Statutory Trust were as follows:
- (i) Client Account: £17,838.77
  - (ii) Office Account: £190.08
  - (iii) Money owed to the Firm from Waugh & Co post intervention: £745.50
  - (iv) Post intervention receipt from the Firm's client account: £5.02
- Total received: £18,779.37**
27. By 22 August 2024, the Compensation Fund and the Statutory Trust had not received any claims for funds attributable to the Firm. On 20 September 2024, the SRA approved the funds received from client account to be residual and paid this sum into the SRA's Compensation Fund. No claims were ever made to the Statutory Trust or the SRA's Compensation Fund.

### Witnesses

28. No witnesses gave oral evidence at the hearing.

## Findings of Fact and Law

29. The Applicant was required by Rule 5 of The Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 to prove the allegations to the standard applicable in civil proceedings (on the 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 rights 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.

30. The Tribunal had due regard to the following and applied the following test in its fact-finding exercise:

**Integrity:** The matters set out at paragraphs 97 to 107 of Wingate v SRA [2018] EWCA Civ 366

31. **Allegation 1.1 – Whilst in practice as a Sole Practitioner at Grenville Young Solicitor and/or whilst practising as Freelance Solicitor he failed to cooperate with the SRA's investigations between November 2019 and April 2023.**

**Allegation 1.2 - Whilst in practice as a Sole Practitioner at Grenville Young Solicitor and/or whilst practising as a Freelance Solicitor he failed to cooperate with the SRA and its agents during and/or after the SRA's intervention into his practice.**

### Allegation 1.1 - The Applicant's Case

31.1 Mr Hitchens referred the Tribunal to the emails from the SRA to Mr Young dated 16 November 2019 and 24 March 2020. The emails acknowledged receipt of his letter dated 26 October 2019 informing the SRA that he intended to close the Firm on 31 March 2020 and reminded him of the requirement to complete and return the FCN. Mr Hitchens submitted there was a complete failure by Mr Young to engage in the process of properly closing the Firm and providing the SRA with the information that it needed to ensure that this was done. On 23 June 2020, the SRA emailed Mr Young seeking confirmation about closure of the Firm on 31 March 2020 and return of the FCN. The SRA had previously emailed him on 15 November 2019, 24 March 2020 and 16 April 2020 seeking a substantive response about closure of the Firm. However, Mr Young only wrote to the SRA on 3 March 2021 in response to a query about the Firm's bulk renewal application for practising certificates. In this letter he confirmed that the Firm closed on 31 March 2020, but he did not refer to the FCN or provide an explanation why he had not yet filed it with the SRA.

31.2 On 29 November 2021 the SRA wrote to Mr Young stating that he needed to return the FCN. This reminder was sent to Mr Young nearly two years after he was first informed by the SRA that he would need to return the FCN to properly close the Firm. A further reminder followed on 20 December 2021 stating that the SRA would consider intervention if a substantive response was not received from Mr Young. On 17 January 2021 Mr Young wrote to the SRA and confirmed that he had received the November 2021 and December 2021 letters. He stated that he underwent surgery on 2 November 2021. Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young's reference to surgery

explained why he did not respond to communications he received about the closure of the Firm around the time of the surgery and recuperation period, but it did not explain why Mr Young did not engage with the SRA on all the other occasions.

- 31.3 On 15 February 2022 the SRA emailed Mr Young and acknowledged his health status and requested that he return the FCN by 22 February 2022. This letter was written over three months after his operation and after the estimated recovery period. However, Mr Young did not respond to the letter or provide any reasons why he was unable to complete and return the FCN. In the letter from the IO dated 22 February 2022 Mr Young was strongly reminded of his regulatory obligations in the context of the closure of the Firm and the return of the completed FCN in a timely manner. Mr Young was asked to return the FCN by 1 March 2022. The IO also emailed and telephoned Mr Young on 22 February 2022. As in the letter of the same date, the IO clearly set out Mr Young's regulatory obligations.
- 31.4 Mr Young sent a letter to the SRA dated 9 March 2022 enclosing the FCN and stating that he was no longer prepared to use email as a means of communication. However, he was prepared to receive postal communication. On 17 March 2022, the SRA revoked the Firm's authorisation under the SRA's Authorisation of Firms Rules. Mr Hitchens submitted that the information provided by Mr Young on the FCN was significant. Mr Young declared that £17,864.77 was held in the client account. The Firm held two live files and 50 wills and deeds that would have to be returned to clients or appropriately stored.
- 31.5 On 3 May 2022 the SRA wrote to Mr Young after consideration of the FCN and required him to answer nine questions concerning matters that were insufficiently addressed. He was asked why he continued to hold live client files and client monies two years after the Firm closed. He was informed that these should have been returned to clients or transferred to another firm of solicitors. Mr Young was asked what the client monies related to, how much was being held and to provide details of his insurance policy to practise as a freelance solicitor. The letter informed Mr Young that he needed to provide a substantive response by 17 May 2022 and that the SRA might exercise its powers of intervention if a response was not received. Mr Hitchens highlighted that Mr Young did not respond to the letter and the IO wrote to Mr Young on 23 May 2022 stating that the SRA had decided to investigate the issues raised by his non-compliance. The SRA intended to respond to Mr Young with the result of their investigation by 11 July 2022.
- 31.6 On 3 August 2022 the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young by recorded delivery stating that because he had failed to respond to its enquiries the matter was under further investigation. Mr Hitchens submitted that in the previous letter of 23 May 2022 Mr Young had been informed that most investigations were closed without formal regulatory action. However, Mr Young had by this time demonstrated repeated non-compliance with requests for information by the SRA and there were regulatory implications of his failure to engage with his regulator.
- 31.7 On 18 August 2022 the SRA served a Production Notice on Mr Young. It required him to provide details of the Firm's professional indemnity insurance, client files, and details of his freelance solicitor activities. Mr Young wrote a letter to the SRA dated 22 August 2022 in which he stated that he would not renew his practising certificate

and highlighted various medical problems. Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young did not engage with the substance of the numerous letters he had received over several months from the SRA which explicitly set out the information that it required from him relating to the proper closure of the Firm. He further submitted that in the circumstances of serious medical conditions Mr Young could have indicated to the SRA when he would be well enough to engage with the investigatory process. Instead, he commented heavily on the SRA's insurance requirements and the extent to which he believed the SRA's contact with him would aggravate his medical conditions.

- 31.8 Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young did not act in accordance with his regulatory duties. The SRA sent a recorded delivery letter to Mr Young dated 31 October 2022 in which it clearly set out its outstanding concerns about the closure of the Firm. Mr Young was reminded of his ongoing duty to cooperate with the SRA and "*provide full and accurate explanations, information and documentation*" in response to any information requests. Mr Hitchens stated that the letter repeated the SRA's requests for information and documents which had been ignored by Mr Young. The Production Notice had been served on Mr Young on 18 August 2022, and he did not provide the SRA with a substantive response in his letter of 22 August 2022.
- 31.9 The IO emailed Mr Young on 12 December 2022 reminding him of his duty to respond and informing him that his telephone message service was full. He was asked for a short reply to the email to indicate engagement. The IO did not receive a reply. On 3 January 2023, the IO sent a letter by recorded delivery to Mr Young asking if he had any ongoing health concerns that impacted on his ability to cooperate with the SRA in its investigation so the SRA could consider how best to provide support. Mr Young did not respond to this letter. On 23 March 2023, the IO sent a letter by recorded delivery to Mr Young enclosing the Intervention Notice. The SRA did not receive a response to this letter.
- 31.10 On 17 August 2023 the SRA intervened into the Firm. Several months had passed since service of the Production Notice on Mr Young yet he had not produced any information or documents to the SRA. The SRA had not been informed about what arrangements Mr Young had put in place at the Firm relating to client monies or ongoing security of client files. Client monies were held in the client account of a firm which had been closed. Mr Hitchens submitted that in these circumstances Mr Young breached the Principles and Paragraphs of the Code as set out in the Rule 12 Statement. Mr Young showed a total disregard for his professional obligations by failing to engage with the SRA between 2019 and 2023 relating to the closure of the Firm. Mr Hitchens submitted that his conduct clearly amounted to a failure to act with integrity in breach of Principle 5 of the Principles. Mr Young demonstrated a lack of steady adherence to an ethical code that underpinned the solicitors' profession as set out in the authority of Wingate.
- 31.11 Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young failed to act the best interests of his clients in breach of Principle 7 of the Principles. His failure was not of a technical nature. The Firm's clients suffered significant prejudice due to the failure to wind it down in an orderly manner. It was in the clients' best interests for him to inform the SRA why the Firm still held client monies, why there were two live files and provide details about how closed files were being held. Mr Young did not inform the SRA whether the closed files were accessible if they were required. His behaviour and management of the closing of the Firm breached Principle 2 of the Principles. He did not act in a way that

upheld public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services. Mr Hitchens argued that the evidence clearly demonstrated that Mr Young's conduct breached Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code. Paragraph 7.3 required him to cooperate with the SRA in the process of closing the Firm. He received several communications asking him for the return of the FCN and the Production Notice which he ignored. Paragraph 7.4 required Mr Young to respond promptly to SRA communications and to provide full explanations, information, and documents. He filed the FCN two years after the Firm had closed. Further information was required by the SRA. Despite receiving several letters from the SRA requesting the further information Mr Young failed to respond to the requests in a timely manner or at all.

- 31.12 The Tribunal asked Mr Hitchens if Mr Young's failure to cooperate with the SRA thereby breaching Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code automatically led to a breach of Principle 5 of the Principles. Mr Hitchens argued that a solicitor failing to cooperate with their regulator was not automatically a solicitor who lacked integrity in breach of Principle 5. Reference should be made to the definition of integrity as set out in *Wingate*. He stated that integrity was an ill-defined concept in the context of regulatory work but that a minimum standard was required to establish a breach of Principle 5. The sustained and flagrant nature of Mr Young's failure to respond to the SRA and provide the information that was required to protect the interests of clients led to a breach of integrity. Mr Hitchens accepted that every breach of Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code would not automatically lead to a breach of integrity. However, in this case Mr Young's conduct was of such a serious nature he breached Principle 5 of the Principles.
- 31.13 The Tribunal asked Mr Hitchens to extend his argument on the extent to which Mr Young failed to act in the best interests of each client in breach of Principle 7 of the Principles. He stated that for a significant time after closure of the Firm there were monies in the client account and live files. Mr Young should have managed the closed files appropriately. They should have been destroyed or sent to Waugh & Co. Client monies should have been dealt with and open files should have been transferred to the relevant firms in accordance with proper practice. The Firm's clients did not receive adequate protection from the Firm. The Principle 7 framework existed to protect clients. When Mr Young did not follow the framework, he caused severe prejudice to his former clients.

### **Allegation 1.2 - The Applicant's Case**

- 31.14 On 18 April 2023 the SRA emailed Mr Young informing him of the decision of the Adjudication Panel to intervene into his practice. The letter attached the Intervention Notice clearly setting out the terms of the intervention including that he must not pay out any money held by the Firm. The covering email stated that the SRA would attend his office at his home address at 10.00am on 19 April 2023 to take possession of practice papers.
- 31.15 On 19 April 2023 at 10.00am the SRA and the Intervention Agents attended Mr Young's property to intervene in his practice. When Mr Young answered the door, he was dressed in his dressing gown. He was referred to the emails giving notice of the intervention and the numerous attempts by the SRA to contact him by telephone. Mr Young stated that he had not read the emails and gestured for the four attendees to

leave his property explaining that he was unwell, and he did not wish to speak to them. He said on numerous occasions “*go away*” and closed the door. One of the attendees attempted to call Mr Young’s landline number and because the message service was full there was no option to leave a voicemail message.

- 31.16 One of the attendees called the doorbell again and it was answered by Mrs Young. She stated that Mr Young was unable to engage with the intervention on account of his poor health. It was explained to her that because Mr Young had not responded to the communications from the SRA seeking further information about the closure of the Firm a decision had been taken to intervene in the practice. She was informed that notice of attendance had been provided to Mr Young and although he was not practising there were outstanding administrative steps that needed to be taken to enable its orderly closure. Mrs Young was informed that the intervention was a positive step to divest Mr Young of the Firm. The SRA needed information about the Firm’s professional indemnity insurance, client monies, and client files. Mrs Young was asked if Mr Young would answer a few limited questions which could be undertaken outside the property. Mrs Young asked Mr Young if he would engage with the attendees at the property, but he refused. She suggested that the SRA should write to Mr Young suggesting a further date on which to attend for the intervention. Copies of the Intervention Notice and covering letter were handed to Mrs Young ensuring effective service of the intervention.
- 31.17 Despite effective service of the of Intervention Notice on Mr Young on 19 April 2023 £500.00 and £350.00 were withdrawn from the Firm’s office account in respect of Mrs Joy Young’s salary. On 21 April 2023, a payment of £55.11 was withdrawn from the office account using the Firm’s debit card for a payment at Morrisons. On 25 April 2023, a direct debit payment of £12.00 was made to HM Land Registry from the office account. All these payments were made in contravention of the Intervention Notice served on Mr Young on 19 April 2023.
- 31.18 On 12 December 2023 Mr Young wrote to the Intervention Agents explaining that since 1996 he had not worked for the Firm and had worked as a locum for other firms. He stated that he had undertaken most of his work for Waugh & Co. He complained about the conduct of the SRA and its treatment of him during the intervention, but he did not provide critical client information. This was the last letter from Mr Young in respect of the intervention.
- 31.19 On 21 December 2023 the Intervention Agents wrote to Mr Young asking him to provide documents to enable them to understand which clients the sum of £17,864.77 belonged to and to provide details of storage of the closed and live files. Mr Young did not respond to this letter.
- 31.20 Mr Young did not provide the SRA or the Intervention Agents with any information about the whereabouts of the two live files, 50 wills and deeds and the client monies. He did not identify the beneficiaries of the client monies. The Firm’s bank statements did not enable the identification of any beneficial entitlements. The SRA approved the treatment of funds received from client account as residual and paid this sum into the SRA’s Compensation Fund because the client monies could not be identified.
- 31.21 Mr Hitchens submitted that that Mr Young failed to act the best interests of his former clients in breach of Principle 7 of the Principles. He refused to engage in the

intervention and client monies were treated as residual and paid to the Compensation Fund. These funds could not be returned to clients because of his lack of cooperation which was not in the clients' best interests. Despite receiving the Intervention Notice which explicitly stated that he should not withdraw any money from the Firm Mr Young failed to cooperate with the SRA and four withdrawals were made from the Firm between 19 April 2023 and 25 April 2023. He flagrantly prioritised his own interests over those of his clients. Mr Young breached Principle 2 of the Principles because his conduct undermined the trust placed by the public in the profession and in the provision of legal services. Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young's failure to cooperate with the SRA and its agents in the intervention to enable the Firm to be properly closed damaged public trust. The public would expect a solicitor to cooperate with their regulator. The withdrawals from the Firm in contravention of the Intervention Notice stating that Mr Young should not use any money from the Firm seriously diminished public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession. A solicitor was obliged to comply with a notice from its regulator.

- 31.22 Mr Hitchens submitted that Mr Young breached Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code. His failure to engage with the SRA and its agents in the intervention when they visited his house was a clear breach of Paragraph 7.3. Mr Young did not make any attempt to enable the intervention. He refused to accede to the reasonable request from the SRA and the Intervention Agents to answer a few questions outside his house. Mr Young breached Paragraph 7.4 by failing to hand over any files, client monies or confirm details about storage of files following service of the Intervention Notice. Mr Young did not respond to various communications from the SRA and the Intervention Agents. When he did respond he failed to provide full and accurate explanations, information and documents which were requested of him.

### **The Tribunal's Findings**

- 31.23 The Tribunal considered all the evidence before it including submissions during the hearing and the documentary evidence.
- 31.24 The central question before the Tribunal concerned whether Mr Young failed to cooperate with the SRA's investigations between November 2019 and April 2023 and its agents during and/or after the SRA's intervention into his practice. The Tribunal considered the extent and content of Mr Young's engagement with the SRA and the Intervention Agents.

### **Allegation 1.1**

- 31.25 The Tribunal accepted the evidence that on 26 October 2019 Mr Young informed the SRA that he intended to close the Firm on 31 March 2020 and practise as a Freelancer. He did not complete the FCN or provide any information as to his plans for clients, money or files relating to clients of the Firm. Between 15 November 2019 and 23 June 2020, the SRA contacted Mr Young by email and post asking for information and completion of the FCN so that the Firm could be properly closed. On 3 March 2021 Mr Young responded to an email from the SRA regarding a bulk renewal application for practising certificates, but he did not provide the SRA with a completed FCN.

- 31.26 On 16 March 2021 the SRA wrote to Mr Young explaining that the Firm remained open on their records because he had not returned the FCN. The SRA reminded him that he needed to provide them with information as to whether the Firm had transferred any live files, whether it held client money and where any closed wills, deeds and files had been stored. Between March 2021 and January 2022, the SRA sent further letters and emails to Mr Young reminding him of the need to return the FCN immediately. The IO telephoned Mr Young because he had failed to respond to communications. On 17 January 2022, the SRA emailed Mr Young stating that if he failed to provide the FCN the matter would be referred to the SRA's Investigation and Supervision Team. The SRA received a letter from Mr Young dated 17 January 2022 stating that he underwent a triple heart by-pass operation on 2 November 2021 and he would complete the FCN when he was well enough to do so.
- 31.27 The SRA received a letter from Mr Young dated 9 March 2022. He stated that he was no longer prepared to communicate by email and was only prepared to communicate by post. He enclosed the FCN. The FCN highlighted several outstanding issues including the existence of two live files. The Firm held £17,864.77 in the client account and 50 wills and deeds which would be returned or stored. Mr Young had not paid for run-off cover. The SRA wrote to Mr Young requesting further information between May 2022 and August 2022.
- 31.28 On 18 August 2022 the SRA sent a letter to Mr Young enclosing a Production Notice requiring him to provide the outstanding information. On 22 August 2022, the SRA received a letter from Mr Young explaining that he could not respond to the enquiries until his health had improved. Between October 2022 and April 2023, the SRA continued to contact Mr Young for a substantive response to their enquiries so that the Firm could be properly closed. Mr Young did not engage with the SRA during this time to assist with this administrative process.
- 31.29 The Tribunal found that Mr Young breached all the allegations pleaded in the Rule 12 Statement. He was informed on 15 November 2019 to file the FCN. However, he filed the FCN two years after the Firm closed following repeated reminders from the SRA by emails, letters, and telephone calls. Between November 2019 and April 2023, he rarely responded to communications and when he responded he did not provide the SRA with substantive answers. Mr Young had informed the SRA that he could not engage until he was well enough to do so. The SRA explained that it would consider reasonable adjustments on account of his health conditions, but he did not respond to the letter in which this offer of assistance was made.
- 31.30 Mr Young refused to accept emails, post and telephone calls from the SRA and made no effort to engage with the SRA so that the Firm was properly closed. The consequence of his conduct was that the SRA could not establish the beneficiaries of client monies and monies in the client account were paid into the Compensation Fund. By applying Wingate, the Tribunal determined that Mr Young's failure to engage with the SRA to properly close the Firm was sufficiently serious so as to demonstrate a lack of integrity which breached Principle 5 of the Principles. Further, such conduct undermined public trust and confidence in solicitors and legal services and breached Principle 2 of the Principles. Any reasonable person would expect a solicitor to cooperate with their regulator, in the process of closing a firm, to ensure the best interests of the firm's

clients as a result of Mr Young's failure to engage, it was necessary for the SRA to intervene into the Firm to protect former clients.

- 31.31 The Tribunal noted that several issues that directly affected Mr Young's former clients remained outstanding. Mr Young did not respond to the SRA's enquiries following the filing of the FCN. It did not receive information confirming what happened to the two live client files and whether client monies were being managed by the Firm in accordance with the SRA Account Rules. Mr Young did not facilitate a hand over of the closed client files or the 50 wills and deeds he referred to in the FCN. He did not provide the SRA with details of the beneficiaries of the monies held in the client account. The Tribunal determined that Mr Young's conduct breached Principle 7 of the Principles. Mr Young's failure to return client files, client monies or explain why he was holding client monies was evidence of not acting in the best interests of his former clients.
- 31.32 The Tribunal determined that Mr Young breached Paragraph 7.3 of the Code by failing to cooperate with the SRA with the administrative process of closing the Firm. Further, he breached Paragraph 7.4 of the Code because he failed to provide the SRA with information to deal with the outstanding issues that were highlighted after he filed the FCN.
- 31.33 The Tribunal found on the balance of probabilities that Allegation 1.1 was proved.

### **Allegation 1.2**

- 31.34 The Tribunal accepted the evidence that Mr Young was properly served in person with the Intervention Notice on 19 April 2023. The Intervention Notice clearly stated that he was prohibited from removing money from the Firm following intervention by the SRA. On 19 April 2023 Mr Young enabled two withdrawals from the Firm in respect of wages for Mrs Young. On 21 April 2023, a debit card payment was made from the Firm at Morrisons. On 25 April 2023, a direct debit payment was made from the Firm. Mr Young allowed four payments to be made from the Firm in contravention of the Intervention Notice.
- 31.35 The Tribunal determined that Mr Young failed to cooperate with the SRA and its agents during and/or after the intervention. He withdrew money from the Firm account when he had been made aware on service of the Intervention Notice that he was prohibited from withdrawing any money from the Firm. By withdrawing money from the Firm after the intervention he failed to act in the best interests of his former clients and breached Principle 7 of the Principles. Further, such conduct undermined public trust and confidence in solicitors and legal services. Any reasonable person would expect their solicitor when closing a firm to engage with their regulator to ensure that procedures were followed to enable the Firm to be closed properly. Objectively, there was no doubt that Mr Young's actions were below the standards expected of a solicitor. He therefore breached Principle 2 of the Principles.
- 31.36 Mr Young failed to cooperate with the SRA and the Intervention Agents when they attended his house on 19 April 2023. Mrs Young spoke with the four attendees and confirmed that Mr Young would not allow entry to the property for the purpose of the intervention. The Tribunal noted that Mr Young refused to answer a few questions

outside the property to progress matters. Therefore, Mr Young's conduct breached Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code.

31.37 The Tribunal found on the balance of probabilities that Allegation 1.2 was proved.

### **Previous Disciplinary Matters**

32. Mr Young had no previous disciplinary findings recorded against him.

### **Submissions on Sanction**

33. Mr Hitchens applied for the Applicant to be heard on sanction.

34. The Tribunal refused the application. The Tribunal was an expert panel capable of reaching its own decision on sanction with reference to its view of the facts, the sanctions guidance, and its own experience.

### **Sanction**

35. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11<sup>th</sup> edition – February 2025) when considering sanction.

36. In determining culpability, the Tribunal found that there was no motivation capable of aggravating the allegation of misconduct. It appeared that Mr Young's actions were planned. Two years passed between the closure of the Firm and the filing of the FCN. The Tribunal found that he made a conscious decision not to engage with the SRA regarding the proper closure of the Firm. Despite some significant health issues, he had for much of the time period been in direct control of his actions. Although he did not seek to mislead his regulator, a solicitor with his 40 years of experience would have been aware of his regulatory obligation to engage with his regulator.

37. The Tribunal acknowledged the harm to Mr Young's former clients. His conduct had been a complete departure from the "*complete integrity, probity and trustworthiness*" expected of solicitors and harmed the profession's reputation. The Tribunal considered that Mr Young should have foreseen the potential for harm to former clients that would result from his failure to engage with the SRA. This was a matter to which he should have given much more thought, particularly as he was registered as a Freelance Solicitor.

38. When examining aggravating factors, the Tribunal noted that Mr Young's conduct was deliberate, calculated and repeated as two years passed before he filed the FCN. He failed to deal with outstanding issues which resulted in the intervention. The conduct involved no abuse of power for personal gain and included no concealment of wrongdoing. Mr Young did not seek to place the blame for his conduct on others. The Tribunal noted that he referred to his medical conditions but provided no medical evidence to support his failure to provide a substantive response to the SRA in either investigation. The Tribunal found that Mr Young knew or ought reasonably to have known that his conduct was in breach of his obligations as a solicitor to protect the public and the reputation of the legal profession. The Tribunal noted the absence of any

previous disciplinary matters and limited aggravating factors, and the absence of mitigating factors in the documentary evidence.

39. In determining the most appropriate sanction the Tribunal considered the least serious sanctions first, adopting a ‘bottom up’ approach. The Tribunal found a breach of integrity under Principle 5 and conduct which could undermine the trust the public placed in solicitors under Principle 2 to be so serious that no order, a reprimand or fine would have been inadequate to reflect the gravity of the breaches or provide adequate deterrent effect. The absence of dishonesty meant that the most severe sanction of striking off would have been disproportionate.
40. Therefore, the Tribunal decided that in all the circumstances an immediate suspension for the period of 24 months and a fine in the sum of £20,000.00 represented the most appropriate and proportionate sanction it could impose to mark the undoubted seriousness of the misconduct, protect the public and maintain the reputation of the profession. The immediate suspension reflected a conclusion that Mr Young’s conduct was objectively wrong, professionally inadequate, and deserving of one of the most severe sanctions available to the Tribunal.
41. The Tribunal considered that this case presented a warning that experienced professionals could make serious errors in judgment. Solicitors have a duty of care to their clients even after deciding to cease operating a firm, and solicitors cannot afford to forget or simply not meet this obligation. As legal professionals, they should ensure they have retained professional objectivity and seek help from the regulator where there was a danger of such objectivity being compromised.

## **Costs**

42. Mr Hitchens made an application for costs as set out in the Applicant’s Statement of Costs at Substantive Hearing. The total costs claimed amounted to £11,940.00, comprising of Part A costs in the sum of £300.00 for the SRA’s investigation and administration, Part B costs in the sum of £6,240.00 for legal work and Part C costs in the sum of £450.00 plus VAT for Counsel’s fees bringing the total costs to £11,940.00. Mr Hitchens argued that the costs were inevitable given the nature of the allegations involved and represented the true economic cost to the regulator. He explained that the Part B costs included the drafting of the detailed Rule 12 Statement and preparing the case for the Substantive Hearing. Preparation for the case was lengthy, and costs should account for the time taken by the SRA sending chasing correspondence to Mr Young as many of the communications were ignored. He explained that the conduct being investigated began in 2019. On this basis, he submitted that the effective hourly rate of £130.00 per hour for 48 hours of work by the SRA’s solicitor was not disproportionate in response to no engagement by Mr Young. Mr Hitchens further submitted that his costs were reasonable and it would be appropriate for the Tribunal to make a full costs order in the sum sought by the SRA.

## The Tribunal’s Decision on Costs

43. The Tribunal noted that under Rule 43(1) of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 it had discretion to make such order as to costs as it thought fit, including the payment by any party of costs or a contribution towards costs of such amount (if

any) as the Tribunal considered reasonable. Under Rule 43(4), when deciding whether to make an order for costs, against whom and in what amount, the Tribunal should take into account all relevant factors, including the parties' conduct, compliance with directions, the reasonableness and proportionality of time spent and rates claimed, and the means of the paying party.

44. The Tribunal reminded itself of the principles established in *R v Northallerton Magistrates' Court, ex parte Dove* [1999] 163 JP 894, that an order for costs was compensatory, not punitive, and must not exceed costs reasonably incurred.
45. The Tribunal was satisfied that the proceedings had been properly brought by the SRA and that, in principle, the costs claimed were reasonable. The preparation undertaken by the SRA was appropriate given the nature of the case and the need to present the matter before the Tribunal. The Tribunal accepted that the SRA had incurred genuine economic costs and that the entirety of these costs in the sum of £11,940.00 were properly recoverable.

### **Statement of Full Order**

46. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, GRENVILLE ROYSTON YOUNG, Solicitor:
  - 46.1 be SUSPENDED from practice as a solicitor for the period of 24 months, to commence on the day of 30th April 2026; and
  - 46.2 do pay a fine of £20,000.00, such penalty to be forfeit to His Majesty the King.
  - 46.3 The Tribunal further Ordered that the Respondent do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £11,940.00.

Dated this 11<sup>th</sup> day of June 2026  
On behalf of the Tribunal

*H. Hasan*

H Hasan  
Chair