SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974 Case No. 12866-2025

BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD Applicant

and

ADRIAN ROBERT BERKELEY Respondent

Before:

Mr M N Millin (in the chair)
Mrs L Nabou
Ms J Rowe

Date of Hearing: 17–18 June 2026

Appearances

Susannah Stevens, barrister, QEB Hollis Whiteman, 1-2 Laurence Pountney Hill, London EC4R OEU (instructed by the Applicant).

The Respondent did not attend and was not represented.

JUDGMENT

Allegations

1. The allegations against the Respondent, Adrian Berkeley, made by the SRA are that:

1.1 On 27 December 2023, the Respondent sent an email to Mr G and Mr N that contained misleading information and/or attempted to take unfair advantage of Mr G and Mr N, in that the Respondent stated in an email all or any of the following information which the Respondent knew to be untrue:

(a) He had been instructed by Mr G and Mr N's mother, Ms G.
(b) He was instructed to act as Ms G's Next of Kin.
(c) He had instructions to bring a claim for false imprisonment and assault, in the event that Mr G and Mr N had any involvement in a decision to have Ms G sectioned.
(d) Mr G and Mr N had been removed as Ms G's Next of Kin.
(e) His charging rate was £500 per hour.
(f) Ms G intended to transfer her property to the Respondent as she understood that his fee notes would be substantial.

And in doing so, acted in breach of any or all of Principles 2, 4 and/or 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 ("the Principles") and/or Paragraphs 1.2 and/or 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("the Code").

Proved

1.2 Between 7 June 2023 and 3 November 2023, the Respondent pursued a course of conduct that amounted to stalking, causing Ms A serious alarm or distress, resulting in his conviction for an offence contrary to section4A(1)(a)(b)(ii) and (5) of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 before the Magistrates' Court at Manchester City on 28 June 2024.

And in doing so acted in breach of any or all of Principles 2 and/or 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.

Proved

Executive Summary

2. This matter arose from a report made to the Solicitors Regulation Authority on 29 January 2024 by Mr G concerning the conduct of the Respondent in relation to Mr G's mother, Ms G. At the material time, Ms G was a vulnerable individual suffering from significant mental health issues and had been detained pursuant to the Mental Health Act 1983.

3. The Applicant's investigation revealed that the Respondent had formed a personal connection with Ms G and had thereafter involved himself in her affairs. On 27 December 2023, the Respondent sent an unsolicited email to Mr G and his half-brother, Mr N, in which he asserted that he was instructed by Ms G, that he was acting as her "Next of Kin", that they had been removed from that position, and that they should have no further involvement in her care. The Respondent also indicated that he

might pursue civil claims against them, set out a charging rate of £500 per hour, and claimed that Ms G intended to transfer her property to him in lieu of anticipated legal costs.

4. During the course of the investigation, the Respondent provided the Solicitors Regulation Authority with material including WhatsApp communications between himself and Ms G. These communications suggested the existence of a personal and emotionally involved relationship. The content of the messages sent to Mr G and to Mr N formed the subject of the first allegation for which the Respondent was referred to the Tribunal.

5. The material provided by the Respondent also revealed that the Respondent had been the subject of criminal proceedings arising from separate conduct involving another individual. It was further established that the Respondent had been convicted, following trial in the Magistrates' Court, of an offence of stalking a Ms A, causing serious alarm and distress harassment contrary to the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 for which he received a suspended sentence of imprisonment. A separate allegation in these proceedings arose from that conviction.

6. Following the commencement of proceedings, the Respondent did not file a Response to the Rule 12 Statement or comply with the relevant Standard Directions. The Respondent also failed to attend the Case Management Hearing on 19 February 2026, at which the matter was listed for a substantive hearing notwithstanding his absence.

7. The Respondent had indicated to the Applicant in writing prior to the hearing that he was unable to participate because of ill-health, relying upon medical evidence from his GP dated 2 June 2026. The Tribunal granted the Applicant's application to proceed in the Respondent's absence, finding that the medical evidence did not establish that he was unable to participate in the proceedings and that he had voluntarily absented himself.

8. Evidence was heard from one witness, and both allegations were found proved against the Respondent to the requisite standard.

Sanction

9. The Respondent was struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Documents

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

    (a) The Applicant's Rule 12 Statement dated 23 October 2025.
    (b) Anonymisation Schedule dated 27 October 2025.
    (c) Memorandum of the Case Management Hearing held on 19 February 2026.
    (d) The Applicant's opening note dated 15 June 2026.
    (e) The Applicant's skeleton argument dated 16 June 2026; and
    (f) The Applicant's statement of costs dated 12 June 2026.

Preliminary Matters

11. Application to Proceed in Absence

11.1 Ms Stevens confirmed that the Respondent had indicated to the Applicant in writing on 15 June 2026, through a third party who had purported to assist him, that he would not be attending the hearing or participating in the proceedings. Ms Stevens further explained that the Applicant's submissions with regards to the Application to proceed had been reduced to writing because the Respondent was unrepresented. The Respondent was provided with those written submissions, thereby ensuring that he had notice of the application and an opportunity to respond.

11.2 She further informed the Tribunal that the Respondent had neither submitted an application to adjourn the proceedings nor instructed any representative to do so on his behalf, and that remained the position as at the commencement of the hearing at 13:00hrs. The Respondent had been notified on a number of occasions of the requirements of Rules 22 and 23 Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 and despite his non-attendance, measures had been taken to provide the Respondent with the Applicant's skeleton argument and other supporting material relied upon in support of the application to proceed in his absence.

11.3 Ms Stevens submitted that the Respondent had not demonstrated that his absence was involuntary. Despite the Respondent providing medical evidence in the form of a GP's letter dated 2 June 2026, the medical evidence did not meet the required standard. Further, despite indicating that he had authorised a third party to assist him, he had not instructed that person to attend, to oppose the application, or to seek an adjournment. In those circumstances, it was submitted that his absence should be regarded as voluntary in the regulatory sense.

11.4 Turning to the issue of adjournment, Ms Stevens submitted that there was no evidence to justify an adjournment of the proceedings. The medical evidence in the form of a GP's letter dated 2 June 2026 which recommended the of postponement of the present hearing did not indicate the likely length of any adjournment, or what an adjournment would achieve. In particular the evidence did not identify any timeframe, prognosis, or treatment plan, nor did it provide any material from which the Tribunal could be satisfied that the Respondent would attend at a future hearing. In light of the Respondent's prolonged non-engagement with the proceedings since they commenced, Ms Stevens submitted that the Tribunal could have no confidence that granting further time would secure his attendance.

11.5 Ms Stevens submitted that the GP's letter was inconsistent with earlier expert evidence submitted by the Respondent and was not supported by any objective assessment, and that the conclusions expressed did not demonstrate independence from the Respondent's account.

11.6 In all the circumstances, Ms Stevens submitted that the Respondent had failed to demonstrate any proper basis for an adjournment and had voluntarily chosen not to participate in the proceedings. She therefore invited the Tribunal to exercise its discretion under Rule 36 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 and proceed to hear and determine the case in the Respondent's absence.

Decision of the Tribunal

11.7 The Tribunal first considered whether it was appropriate to proceed in the absence of the Respondent. The Tribunal had regard to its powers under Rule 36 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 and exercised the utmost care and caution in determining this issue.

11.8 The Tribunal considered the relevant authorities, including *General Medical Council v Adeogba and Visvardis* [2016] EWCA Civ 162 and *R v Jones* [2003] 1 AC 1. The Tribunal reminded itself that attendance is of prime importance, but that the discretion to proceed in absence must be exercised having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including fairness to both parties and the wider public interest in the expeditious disposal of regulatory proceedings.

11.9 The Tribunal was satisfied that the Respondent had been properly served with notice of the proceedings and of the substantive hearing and further noted that on 16 June 2026, the Respondent confirmed through a third party that he would not be attending or participating in the hearing. The Tribunal was therefore satisfied that the Respondent was aware of the hearing and had made a conscious decision not to attend.

11.10 The Tribunal considered the medical material relied upon by the Respondent, namely the letter from his general practitioner dated 2 June 2026. The Tribunal accepted that this constituted medical evidence which required consideration. However, the Tribunal noted that no formal application had been made to either adjourn the proceedings or to rely on that material as expert evidence, notwithstanding that the Respondent had been alerted at various different stages to the applicable procedural requirements.

11.11 The Tribunal further observed that the medical material did not comply with the requirements identified in *Levy v Ellis-Carr* [2012] EWHC 63 (QB) at [36] and endorsed by the Court of Appeal in *Hayat v General Medical Council* [2018] EWCA Civ 2796, or with the Tribunal's Guidance Note: Health Issues (February 2025).

11.12 In particular, the GP's letter did not set out with sufficient particularity the Respondent's diagnosis, the basis for the medical opinion, any reasoned prognosis, or an explanation of why the Respondent was unable to participate in the hearing, whether with reasonable adjustments. The letter further failed to identify the likely duration of any incapacity or the period for which any adjournment would be required.

11.13 The Tribunal concluded that the GP's letter stood in contrast to the earlier reports of appropriately qualified specialists, most recently those of Dr Jones and Dr Larbey dated October 2025, which did not support a conclusion that the Respondent was unable to participate in proceedings. The GP's opinion did not identify any supporting clinical assessment, testing, or reasoned methodology, and did not engage with the existing specialist material. The Tribunal considered that the conclusions expressed were based primarily on the Respondent's own account, rather than independent specialist evaluation. In those circumstances, the Tribunal attached limited weight to the GP's opinion.

11.14 The Tribunal considered the history of the proceedings. The Respondent had failed to file a Response to the Rule 12 Statement, had failed to comply with any of the relevant Standard Directions, had not attended the Case Management Hearing on 19 February 2026, and had otherwise not engaged substantively with the proceedings despite repeated opportunities and clear notification of the consequences of non-attendance.

11.15 Balancing fairness to the Respondent with the public interest in the efficient and expeditious disposal of regulatory proceedings, the Tribunal concluded that it was both fair and appropriate to proceed despite the Respondent's absence. The Tribunal therefore exercised its discretion under Rule 36 to hear and determine the case in the absence of the Respondent.

12. Anonymisation

12.1 At the outset of the hearing, the Tribunal granted the Applicant's application for an anonymisation direction in respect of Ms G, Mr G, Mr N and Ms A, whose identities were known to the parties and to the Tribunal. In all the circumstances, the Tribunal concluded that anonymisation of those individuals was justified and proportionate.

12.2 In granting the application pursuant to Rule 35(9) Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019, the Tribunal was satisfied that anonymisation was a necessary and proportionate derogation from the principle of open justice. The evidence in the case included sensitive information concerning Ms G's mental health, medical treatment, and personal affairs. The Tribunal was satisfied that identification of Ms G would unjustifiably interfere with her privacy and that anonymisation was necessary to protect that information from entering the public domain. The Tribunal further considered that identification of Mr G and Mr N would be likely to lead to the identification of Ms G, thereby undermining the purpose of the anonymity order through jigsaw identification.

12.3 The Tribunal further considered the position of Ms A separately. Ms A was the victim of the conduct giving rise to the Respondent's criminal conviction and the subject matter of Allegation 2.1. The Tribunal determined that her identification would add nothing material to the public understanding of the proceedings.

12.4 Those individuals are referred to in this Judgment by anonymised initials. The direction applies to the publication of this Judgment and any published record of these proceedings.

Factual Background

13. The Respondent was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 15 October 1993.

14. He is a non-practising solicitor, having not held a practising certificate since 2015.

15. Background Facts

15.1 The factual background to this matter is summarised in paragraphs 2 to 8 above. In reaching its findings, the Tribunal had regard to that background, together with the documentary and oral evidence before it, and assessed the evidence in accordance with the approach set out below.

Witnesses

16. 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.

17. One witness, Mr G, called by the Applicant, gave oral evidence during the hearing.

18. <u>The Oral Evidence of Mr G</u>

18.1 The Tribunal heard evidence from Mr G. A summary of which is set out below:

(a) On 27 December 2023 he received an email from the Respondent, which was also sent to his brother, Mr N. The email was sent from an address associated with LawFriend and the email signature was from the Respondent referred to as a "Solicitor (non-practising)" together with his SRA number. Mr G had not been expecting the email and was unaware at that time of any connection between the Respondent and his mother.

(b) The contents of the email caused him significant concern. As a result, on 5 January 2024 he sought legal advice and provided the email to solicitors for consideration. He was advised, amongst other things, to contact the hospital where his mother had been admitted and the police.

(c) Mr G subsequently contacted the hospital and obtained documentation recording the concerns which had been raised there regarding the Respondent's involvement with his mother. He subsequently learnt that the hospital had been sufficiently concerned to make a report to Action Fraud.

(d) Mr G further obtained correspondence from the hospital confirming that safeguarding concerns had been referred to the relevant safeguarding team. He understood those concerns to relate to the continuation of communications from the Respondent when she remained an inpatient, despite concerns having been raised and to his mother's vulnerability at the relevant time.

(e) Mr G also reported the matter to the SRA and completed a formal complaint. He stated that his complaint set out the conduct which had caused him concern, including the fact that the Respondent had presented himself as a solicitor when communicating with him and his brother.

(f) In response to questions from the Tribunal, Mr G clarified the extent of his personal knowledge of evidence he had given. He confirmed that certain matters referred to in his witness statement concerning contacts between his mother and the Community Mental Health Team had not been witnessed by him directly. Rather, that information had been relayed to him by members of the Community Mental Health Team.

Findings of Fact and Law

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. The Tribunal reminded itself that each allegation required separate consideration on the evidence relevant to it. The Tribunal therefore assessed the factual matrix relating to each allegation independently and did not treat findings made in respect of one allegation as determinative of any other allegation.

22. Where dishonesty fell to be determined, the Tribunal applied the test set out by the Supreme Court in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords* [2017] UKSC 67. The Tribunal noted the close conceptual relationship between dishonesty and integrity, while applying each test separately.

23. Where the Tribunal was required to consider whether conduct amounted to a breach of the applicable Principles or Rules, it had regard to the guidance of the Court of Appeal in *Wingate v Solicitors Regulation Authority* [2018] EWCA Civ 366 in respect of integrity.

24. In determining each allegation separately, the Tribunal first considered whether the underlying facts were proved. Where the Tribunal found the factual matrix established, it identified the nature and scope of the conduct and then considered, in accordance with the approach described by the Court of Appeal in *Dentons UK and Middle East LLP v SRA Ltd* [2026] EWCA Civ 508, whether that conduct, viewed in the round, was sufficiently serious to amount to professional misconduct. Only where that threshold was met did the Tribunal go on to consider whether there had been a breach of the Principles and, if so, the question of sanction.

The Applicant's Case

25. The Applicant's case in respect of the Allegations 1.1 and 1.2 was set out in the Applicant's Rule 12 Statement dated 23 October 2025. The Applicant's Rule 12 Statement is available [here].

The Respondent's Case

26. The Respondent did not attend the hearing, did not participate in the proceedings, and provided no evidence for consideration by the Tribunal.

27. Although the Respondent did not attend the hearing or give evidence, the Tribunal was taken to a number of communications provided by the Respondent during the course of the SRA's investigation. The Tribunal considered that material as part of the evidence

before it. However, the Respondent did not attend to adopt or expand upon those explanations, nor was the material tested through cross-examination. The Tribunal assessed that little weight, if any, should be attached to that material accordingly.

The Tribunal's Findings

28. **Allegation 1.1 – Email communications to Mr G and Mr N containing misleading information**

28.1 The Tribunal found Allegation 1.1 proved in its entirety. Having considered the documentary evidence, the oral evidence of Mr G, and the Respondent's communications with the SRA during the investigation, the Tribunal was satisfied that the email sent by the Respondent to Mr G and Mr N on 27 December 2023 contained a number of statements which were misleading and which the Respondent either knew to be untrue or had no proper basis for asserting**.** In particular the Tribunal found the following:

(a) The Respondent sent the email of 27 December 2023 to Mr G and Mr N. The email was sent from an address associated with LawFriend and was signed by the Respondent as a "Solicitor (non-practising)", together with his SRA number.

(b) There was no satisfactory evidence that the Respondent had been instructed by Ms G in the manner represented in the email. The Tribunal was not satisfied that the Respondent had any proper basis for asserting that he had been instructed to act on her behalf in the way described.

(c) The Tribunal was not satisfied that Ms G had instructed the Respondent to act as her next of kin and no basis upon which the Respondent could properly represent himself as such.

(d) There was no satisfactory evidence that the Respondent had instructions to pursue claims for false imprisonment and assault against Mr G and Mr N, and no evidential basis for the assertions contained in the email concerning such claims.

(e) The statement that the Respondent charged £500 per hour for mental health law services was misleading. The Respondent was not a practising solicitor, did not and never had practised mental health law, and subsequently informed the SRA that he had selected that figure by reference to rates charged by other practitioners.

(f) There was no evidence that Ms G intended to transfer her property to the Respondent in order to meet substantial fee notes or for any other reason. The Tribunal further noted that the Respondent informed the SRA during the investigation that he had not charged, and did not intend to charge, Ms G for any work carried out on her behalf.

28.2 The Tribunal considered that the email was designed to influence and alarm Mr G and Mr N. In reaching that conclusion, the Tribunal took into account the Respondent's own descriptions of the email during the investigation as a *"shot across the bow"* and an attempt to "*shake the tree*," and that it had "*had the desired effect*". The Tribunal concluded that the email was intended to provoke a reaction from the recipients and influence their conduct by means of misleading assertions, thereby amounting to an attempt to take unfair advantage of Mr G and Mr N.

28.3 In light of those findings, the Tribunal considered whether the conduct, viewed in the round, was sufficiently serious to amount to professional misconduct. The Tribunal concluded that it was. The Respondent deliberately sent an email containing a series of misleading representations whilst presenting himself as a solicitor and quoting his SRA number. The conduct was intended to influence the recipients and constituted an attempt to take unfair advantage of them. Applying the approach described in *Dentons UK and Middle East LLP v SRA Ltd* [2026] EWCA Civ 508, the Tribunal was satisfied that the conduct crossed the threshold required to amount to professional misconduct.

Breaches

28.4 Accordingly, the Tribunal found that the Respondent had breached the following:

(a) Paragraph 1.2 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors which require a solicitor not abuse his position by taking unfair advantage of Mr G and Mr N; and

(b) Paragraph 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors by misleading, or attempting to mislead, Mr G and Mr N through the contents of the email sent on 27 December 2023.

28.5 The Tribunal further found that the Respondent's conduct breached Principles 2, and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019. In particular, the Tribunal found that the Respondent failed to act in a way that upholds public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons and failed to act with integrity.

28.6 Applying the test in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords* [2017] UKSC 67, the Tribunal was satisfied that the Respondent knew, or could not genuinely have believed, that the statements identified above were true. The Tribunal further concluded that ordinary decent people would regard the Respondent's conduct in sending an email containing those statements as dishonest. Accordingly, the Tribunal found that the Respondent had acted dishonestly and thereby breached Principle 4 of the SRA Principles.

29. Allegation 1.2 – Harassment of Ms A

29.1 The Tribunal found Allegation 1.2 proved. The Tribunal was provided with a certified Certificate of Conviction which recorded that on 28 June 2024 the Respondent was convicted of stalking involving serious alarm or distress, contrary to section 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, following a trial at which he pleaded not guilty. The Tribunal saw no basis for going behind the conviction and accepted it as conclusive proof of the underlying criminal conduct.

29.2 The Tribunal found the following facts:

(a) Between 7 June 2023 and 3 November 2023, the Respondent pursued a course of conduct towards Ms A.

(b) That conduct amounted to stalking and caused Ms A serious alarm or distress.

(c) The Respondent was convicted of that offence on 28 June 2024 following a contested trial.

(d) On 21 August 2024, the Respondent was sentenced to 26 weeks' imprisonment, suspended for 18 months.

(e) The sentencing court also imposed a restraining order prohibiting the Respondent from contacting Ms A directly or indirectly.

29.3 In light of those findings, the Tribunal considered whether the conduct, viewed in the round, was sufficiently serious to amount to professional misconduct. Applying the approach described in *Dentons UK and Middle East LLP v SRA Ltd* [2026] EWCA Civ 508, the Tribunal concluded that it was. The conduct resulted in a criminal conviction for a serious offence involving harm and distress to another individual and plainly crossed the threshold required to amount to professional misconduct.

Breaches

29.4 Accordingly, the Tribunal found that the Respondent's conduct breached Principle 2 of the SRA Principles 2019 by failing to act in a way that upholds public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons.

29.5 The Tribunal further found that the Respondent's conduct demonstrated a lack of integrity and therefore breached Principle 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.

Previous Disciplinary Matters

30. The Tribunal noted the Respondent had one previous regulatory finding dating from 2011 involving a number of breaches of the Accounts Rules which resulted in a financial penalty only. In those circumstances, the Tribunal treated the Respondent as being of effectively good regulatory character.

Mitigation

31. The Respondent did not attend the hearing and did not make any submissions in mitigation. The Tribunal nevertheless considered the information contained within the documents before it, including material relating to the Respondent's personal circumstances, health, and financial position, insofar as it was relevant to sanction.

Sanction

32. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th Edition, February 2025) and adopted the approach to sanction described in *Fuglers and others v SRA* [2014] EWHC 179. The Tribunal assessed the seriousness of the Respondent's misconduct by

considering his culpability, the harm caused or risked, and the relevant aggravating and mitigating factors before determining the sanction necessary to protect the public and maintain confidence in the profession.

33. In assessing culpability, the Tribunal considered the Respondent's conduct to be at the higher end of seriousness. The misconduct in both allegations was deliberate and planned. In relation to Allegation 1.2 the conduct was sustained. The email of 27 December 2023 that formed the basis of Allegation 1.1 was not sent spontaneously but was a carefully constructed communication containing a number of misleading assertions. In relation to Allegation 2.1, the conduct which resulted in the Respondent's conviction formed part of a course of conduct which continued over a period of several months despite earlier police intervention.

34. The Tribunal also considered there to have been significant misuse of the Respondent's position and standing as a solicitor. In relation to Allegation 1.1, the Respondent relied upon his status as a solicitor, identifying himself as such and providing his SRA number in communications with Mr G and Mr N. The Tribunal further considered it an aggravating feature that the conduct concerned a vulnerable individual who had been detained under the Mental Health Act.

35. The Respondent's conduct was aggravated by the fact that he knew, or ought to have known, that his conduct in respect of both allegations represented a serious departure from the standards expected of a solicitor. In addition, the Tribunal found that he had acted dishonestly.

36. The Tribunal next considered the purpose for which sanctions are imposed, noting that an important purpose of a sanction is to maintain the reputation of the solicitors' profession (*Bolton v The Law Society* [1994] 1 WLR 512). The Tribunal considered that the reputation of the profession is undermined where a solicitor seeks to mislead others or take unfair advantage of them, and particularly where a solicitor has been convicted of a serious criminal offence.

37. Having determined that the Respondent had acted dishonestly, the Tribunal noted that a finding of dishonesty will ordinarily lead to a striking-off order unless exceptional circumstances are established, see *Solicitors Regulation Authority v Sharma* [2010] EWHC 2022 (Admin) and *SRA v James* [2018] EWHC 3058 (Admin).

38. The Tribunal took account of the Respondent's dishonesty, the deliberate and planned nature of the misconduct, the misuse of his status as a solicitor, the criminal conviction proved under Allegation 1.2, the distress and alarm caused to those affected by his conduct, and the absence of any evidence of insight, remorse or remediation, the Tribunal concluded that no sanction short of strike off would adequately protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession, and uphold the reputation of the profession.

39. Accordingly, the Tribunal determined that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction was to direct that the Respondent be struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Costs

40. Ms Stevens, on behalf of the Applicant, referred the Tribunal to the schedule of costs dated 12 June 2026 and invited the Tribunal to grant costs in the amended sum of £22, 608.00. She relied on the Schedule as representing the costs reasonably incurred in bringing the proceedings. She further submitted that the costs sought were proportionate and reasonable and had been reduced from the original sum of £25,608.00 to reflect the fact of the reduced level of advocacy required, given the Respondent's non-attendance.

41. The Tribunal considered the application. It noted that the Applicant had been successful in proving all allegations. The Tribunal further noted that the costs sought had been reduced to reflect the lower level of advocacy required following the Respondent's decision not to attend the hearing. The Tribunal was satisfied that the costs claimed had been reasonably and proportionately incurred in the pursuit of the proceedings.

42. The Tribunal further acknowledged that, notwithstanding service of the schedule of costs, the Respondent had not made any submissions in relation to costs and had provided no evidence of means or other material upon which the Tribunal could properly reduce the costs sought. In those circumstances, the Tribunal saw no basis for departing from the general principle that costs should follow the event.

43 Accordingly, the Tribunal ordered that the Respondent pay the Applicant's costs in the sum of £22,608.00.

Statement of Full Order

44. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, solicitor, be STRUCK OFF the Roll of Solicitors and it further Orders that he do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £22,608.00.

Dated this 10th day of July 2026
On behalf of the Tribunal

M.N. Millin

M.N. Millin
Chair