

SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No.12855-2025.

BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

SYED SUHAIL ABBAS SIBTAIN

Respondent

Before:

Mrs L Murphy (in the Chair)

Ms O. Davies

Ms E Keen

Date of Hearing: 25 June 2026

Appearances

There were no appearance and the Application was dealt with on the papers.

JUDGMENT ON AN AGREED OUTCOME

Allegations

1. The allegations made by the SRA against the Respondent are that whilst working as a solicitor at Thursfields Solicitors ("the Firm"), he:
 - 1.1 On or about 3 October 2023, he created a letter addressed to his opponent in litigation, which he backdated to 24 July 2023. In doing so he breached any or all of paragraph 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("the Code") and/or Principle 2, 4 and/or 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 ("the SRA Principles").
 - 1.2 On or about 6 October 2023, he created a second letter to provide to his employer, which he backdated to 24 July 2023. In doing so he breached any or all of paragraph 1.4 of the Code and/or Principle 2, 4 and/or 5 of the Principles.

Documents

2. The Tribunal considered all the documents in the case which were contained in the case electronic bundle which included the following:
 - (a) The Applicant's Rule 12 Statement dated 16 October 2025.
 - (b) The written confirmation by the Respondent dated 14 January 2026 that the Allegations would be admitted in full; and
 - (c) The Statement of Agreed Facts and Outcome.

Background

3. The Respondent was admitted to the Roll on 15 April 2016.
4. At the time of the alleged misconduct the Respondent was employed as a solicitor at the Firm. He is currently practising as a Solicitor Consultant at Setfords Law Limited.
5. The Respondent is not subject to any conditions on his practising certificate.

Application for the matter to be resolved by way of Agreed Outcome

6. The parties invited the Tribunal to deal with the Allegations against the Respondent in accordance with the Statement of Agreed Facts and Outcome annexed to this Judgment. The parties submitted that the outcome proposed was consistent with the Tribunal's Guidance Note on Sanction.

Findings of Fact and Law

7. The Applicant was required to prove the allegations on the balance of probabilities. The Tribunal had due regard to its statutory duty, under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998.
8. The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made.

Sanction

9. The Tribunal considered the Guidance Note on Sanction (11th Edition – February 2025). In doing so the Tribunal assessed the culpability and harm identified together with the aggravating and mitigating factors that existed.
10. The Respondent had admitted serious dishonesty involving the deliberate and repeated creation and backdating of documents in order to mislead others. The Tribunal determined that, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, the appropriate and proportionate sanction was to strike the Respondent off the Roll of Solicitors.
11. Accordingly, the Tribunal approved the sanction proposed by the parties.

Costs

12. The Applicant and the Respondent agreed costs in the sum of £5,000. The Tribunal found the agreed sum to be reasonable and proportionate. Accordingly, the Tribunal ordered the Respondent to pay costs in the agreed sum.

Statement of Full Order

13. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, SYED SUHAIL ABBAS SIBTAIN, 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 £5,000.00.

Dated this 14th day of August 2026
On behalf of the Tribunal

L Murphy

L Murphy
Chair

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY

Applicant

and

SYED SUHAIL ABBAS SIBTAIN

Respondent

STATEMENT OF AGREED FACTS AND OUTCOME

1. By its application dated 14 October 2025, and the statement made pursuant to Rule 12 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 which accompanied that application, the Solicitors Regulation Authority ("the SRA") brought proceedings before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal ("SDT" or "the Tribunal") making a total of 2 allegations of misconduct against Mr Syed Suhail Abbas Sibtain ("the Respondent").

Allegations

2. The allegations made by the SRA against the Respondent are that between, whilst working as a solicitor at Thursfields Solicitors ("**the Firm**"), he:

- 2.1 On or about 3 October 2023, he created a letter addressed to his opponent in litigation, which he backdated to 24 July 2023. In doing so he breached any or all of paragraph 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("**the Code**") and/or Principle 2, 4 and/or 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 ("**the SRA Principles**").

2.2 On or about 6 October 2023, he created a second letter to provide to his employer, which he backdated to 24 July 2023. In doing so he breached any or all of paragraph 1.4 of the Code and/or Principle 2, 4 and/or 5 of the Principles.

Admissions

3. The Respondent admits the allegations.

Agreed facts

4. The following fact and matters, which are relied upon by the SRA in support of the allegations set out within paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of this statement, are agreed between the SRA and the Respondent.

Professional Details

5. The Respondent, who was born on August 1985, is a solicitor having been admitted to the Roll on 15 April 2016. At the time the allegations against him arose he was employed as a solicitor at the Firm.
6. The Respondent holds a practising certificate for the practice year 2024 to 2025 and is not subject to any conditions.

Background

7. On 4 October 2023, it was brought to the Firm's attention by MFG Solicitors that the Respondent may have falsely claimed to have sent an acknowledgment of service in court proceedings. It was alleged by MFG Solicitors, that the Respondent sent them an email on 3 October 2023 which purported to contain a copy of an original acknowledgment of service letter dated 24 July 2023. MFG Solicitors noted that the document properties showed it had in fact been created on 3 October 2023.
8. This Firm's HR Director ("the Investigator") commenced an investigation into the allegation. She spoke with the Respondent initially on 5 October 2023. During this

meeting, the Respondent made no admission to the backdating or amending of any letters and referred to having a number of issues with his laptop which he said could have led to the discrepancy.

9. On the instruction of the Investigator, an IT investigation was conducted by the Firm's IT Director. This review concluded that the metadata showed the document was in fact created on 3rd October and not in July 2023.
10. On 6 October 2023, the Respondent sent the Investigator a copy of the 24 July 2023 letter which he claims to have deleted and restored. The Respondent was interviewed for a second time by the Investigator on 6 October 2023. During this discussion, the Respondent was informed that he would be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.
11. The Firm held a disciplinary meeting with the Respondent on 16 October 2023. The Disciplinary Chair concluded that there were reasonable grounds to suspect that the Respondent "*behaved dishonestly*" and that his actions amounted to gross misconduct.
12. The Respondent was dismissed without notice by the Firm for gross misconduct on 20 October 2023.
13. The Firm reported these matters to the SRA on 26 October 2023.

Allegation 1 - On or about 3 October 2023, he created a letter addressed to his opponent in litigation, which he backdated to 24 July 2023.

14. The Respondent acted for the First Defendant to a claim. As part of these proceedings, MFG Solicitors, who acted for the claimant, did not receive an Acknowledgement of Service by DX or otherwise and queried this with the Respondent by telephone at 14:57 on 3 October 2023. During this conversation, the Respondent claimed that he had prepared the acknowledgement of service on 24 July 2023.
15. In response, the Respondent emailed MFG Solicitors a letter which was dated 24 July 2023 ("the First Letter"). The cover email which was sent to MFG Solicitors by

the Respondent at 15:12 states *"please find attached our letter dated 24 July 2023, as requested"*.

16. MFG Solicitors checked the document properties of the First Letter and discovered that the properties showed it had been created at 15:03 on 3 October 2023, immediately following their telephone call from the Respondent. It was saved at 15:07 the same day.
17. MFG Solicitors raised its concern about the First Letter with the Respondent and a partner at the Firm. After investigating the matter, the IT director at the Firm explained to the firm's HR Director on 4 October 2023, that the letter dated 24 July 2024 had been created on 3 October 2023 and that its author was the Respondent. He could not find any trace of the letter purportedly created on 24 July 2023 and sent to MFG Solicitors.
18. In the course of the Firm's internal investigation, the Respondent initially stated that he created the document on 24 July 2023 and saved it on his desktop only, and not the firm database due to issues with his laptop. He opened it on 3 October, shortly before it was sent, to check the document which is how he believed the metadata could have shown a creating date of 3 October 2023.
19. The Respondent later changed his account, and stated that he could not locate an electronic copy of the letter he sent MFG Solicitors on 24 July with the acknowledgment of service, so he sent them a recreated version of what he believed he had sent them, which was purely for their records. The Respondent did not tell MFG Solicitors that he had not been able to locate the electronic copy of the original letter. Nor did he tell them that he was sending a 'recreation' of what he had previously sent.
20. The Firm's IT director was asked to review to see if the First Letter was on the Firm's system and to compare the metadata. He reviewed the Firm's case management system, SOS, and also SharePoint (which is used for document management) and *"could not locate the document which was purportedly sent to the other side on 24 July 2023 on Thursfields systems"*.

Allegation 2 - On or about 6 October 2023, he created a second letter to provide to his employer, which he backdated to 24 July 2023.

21. Following the report made to the firm by MFG Solicitors on 4 October 2023 alleging the conduct set out in allegation 1, the Firm commenced an investigation into the allegation. In a discussion with the Investigator on 5 October 2023, the Respondent explained that because he was experiencing laptop issues, *"the dates of some other documents don't match up, perhaps I can send these to you but in a lot of my documents the modification (sic) date predates the creation date"*.
22. On 6 October 2023, the Respondent sent the Investigator screenshots of examples of the anomalies in other document properties.
23. On 6 October 2023 at 09:52, following a request from the Investigator to know the location of the original letter, the Respondent emailed her an attachment titled 'letter to MFG'. In this email, he explains that he had initially deleted the document, had tried to restore it and attaches it to the email. He explains that he *"should have just sent [MFG Solicitors] the original document rather than trying to be efficient and saving to SOS first then taking it from there"*.
24. On 6 October 2023 at 11:06, the Investigator was contacted by the Firm's IT Director notifying her that the Respondent had accessed a document on the Firm's system created in July 2023 and had overwritten the document purporting to be the document sent to MFG Solicitors. This unrelated document had been created on 25 July 2023 at 11:53am had been amended to match the letter that the Respondent said had been sent to MFG Solicitors. The version history showed that the original letter (a detailed pre-action protocol letter) had been amended on 6 October 2023 (initially at 06:59am, then at 9:47am and finally at 09:49am) to contain the wording in the First Letter. This was the letter he sent to the Investigator / HR Director at 09:52 titled 'letter to MFG'.
25. A further investigation meeting took place on 6 October 2023 starting at 14:20. The Respondent informed the Investigator that the original letter may have been created earlier than 24 July and that he may have sent it out on 25 July. He could not be certain that what he sent to the Investigator / HR Director was the original letter. The Respondent maintained that the letter had been created in July 2023 even though the evidence showed it had been overwritten that same morning.

26. The Respondent subsequently confirmed to the SRA in a letter written by his representative dated 20 February 2024 that he did create the second letter on 6 October 2023 and that in doing so he was misleading his employer, but this was because he was afraid he would lose his job.

27. The Respondent accepts that he edited the electronic file of another unrelated letter from July 2023. He did this in an attempt to recreate his 24 July 2023 letter for his employer. He accepts that he should have admitted to his employer that he could not locate the original electronic file of his 24 July letter.

Non-Agreed Mitigation

28. The following mitigation, which is not agreed by the SRA, is put forward by the Respondent:

28.1 The Respondent worked for over seven years as a diligent and entirely compliant solicitor.

28.2 At the time of the misconduct, there were multiple factors which contributed to the Respondent's mental health deteriorating. These include but are not limited to:

28.2.1 The Respondent was struggling to reach his billing targets.

28.2.2 The Respondent's place of work changed from being hybrid to full time in a location which was 80 miles from his home address.

28.2.3 A continuous increase in case load which included many files which were outside his normal area of law.

28.2.4 The Respondent's father-in-law passed away in March 2023 and his grandmother in August 2023.

28.2.5 The Respondent's own health deteriorated in 2023 resulting in him receiving treatment in hospital.

28.3 It is with regret that when the Respondent realised his error, due to the factors set out above, he was afraid to inform his employer about what had happened through fear of losing his job just two months before his wife gave birth.

28.4 The Respondent is extremely remorseful for his actions and is ashamed of his actions.

28.5 All of the above factors led to the Respondent's mental health deteriorating and him seeking medical treatment.

28.6 At the time of the misconduct, the Respondent was a father to three young children with his wife heavily pregnant.

28.7 At the time of the misconduct, the Respondent was battling with financial pressures, family losses and his own health deteriorating.

Sanction proposed & Costs

29. The admitted misconduct is serious and of the highest level. The SRA contends and the Respondent accepts, that the proper penalty in this case is for the Respondent to be struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

30. With respect to costs, it is further agreed that the Respondent should pay the SRA's costs of this matter agreed in the sum of £5,000.00.

Explanation as to why such an order would be in accordance with Tribunal's sanction guidance (11th edition)

31. The Respondent had admitted dishonesty. The Tribunal's Guidance Note on Sanction 11th Edition dated February 2025 ("the Guidance Not on Sanction") states, at paragraph 28:

*"Some of the most serious misconduct involves dishonesty, whether or not leading to criminal proceedings and criminal penalties. A finding that an allegation of dishonesty has been proved will almost invariably lead to striking off, save in exceptional circumstances (see **Solicitors Regulation Authority v Sharma [2010] EWHC 2022 (Admin)**)."*

32. In **Solicitors Regulation Authority v Sharma [2010] EWHC 2022 (Admin)** at paragraph 13, Coulson J summarised the consequences of a finding of dishonesty by the Tribunal against a solicitor as follows:

"(a) Save in exceptional circumstances, a finding of dishonesty will lead to the solicitor being struck off the Roll ... That is the normal and necessary penalty in cases of dishonesty..."

(b) There will be a small residual category where striking off will be a disproportionate sentence in all the circumstances ...

(c) In deciding whether or not a particular case falls into that category, relevant factors will include the nature, scope and extent of the dishonesty itself, whether it was momentary ... or over a lengthy period of time ... whether it was a benefit to the solicitor ... and whether it had an adverse effect on others..."

33. For the reasons described below, there are no exceptional circumstances here.

34. The seriousness of the misconduct is such that neither a Restriction Order, Reprimand, Fine or Suspension would be a sufficient sanction or in all the circumstances appropriate. There is a need to protect both the public and the reputation of the legal profession from future harm from the Respondent by removing their ability to practise. The protection of the public and the protection of the reputation of the legal profession justifies striking off the Roll.

35. This assessment takes into account that the level of the Respondent's culpability in respect of the allegation above is high as these were serious acts of dishonesty. He acted in a way to provide a benefit to himself by creating and backdating the letters so that that his opponent and employer were misled into believing that the letters were created at an earlier date, when in fact the letters were created later. The misconduct cannot be described as spontaneous, it was deliberate and was repeated. He acted in breach of a position of trust. He had direct control for the circumstances giving rise to the misconduct. He was an experienced solicitor and was aware of the relevant Principles.

36. In terms of harm, the Respondent's conduct departed from the integrity, probity and trustworthiness expected of a solicitor, thus harming the reputation of the legal profession. In the words of Sir Thomas Bingham MR in *Bolton v Law Society* [1993] EWCA Civ 32 a solicitor must be capable of being "*trusted to the ends of the earth.*" The public would not expect a solicitor, who is an officer of the court, to create and backdate documents which would give the misleading impression that it had been created at an earlier date to an opposing solicitor and employer. The Respondent's conduct has served to undermine the trust that the public places in the profession. The extent of the harm caused by the Respondent's misconduct could reasonably have been foreseen.

37. The following factors aggravate the seriousness of the Respondent's misconduct:

- the respondent was an experienced solicitor;
- the misconduct involves dishonesty;
- the misconduct was deliberate;

- the misconduct involved the concealment of wrongdoing which could have impacted upon ongoing litigation; and
- the Respondent knew or ought reasonably to have known that the conduct complained of was in material breach of obligations to protect the public and the reputation of the legal profession.

38. The following factors mitigate the seriousness of the Respondent's misconduct:

- the Respondent made open and frank admissions at an early stage and has cooperated with the SRA; and
- save for the misconduct highlighted the Respondent has no regulatory disciplinary history.

39. Accordingly, the fair and proportionate penalty in this case is for the Respondent to be struck off the Roll of Solicitors. The seriousness of his conduct is such that a lesser sanction would be inappropriate, and a strike off is required for the protection of the public and the reputation of the legal profession.

Signed:

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 Tamara Krupski-David
 Head of Legal and Enforcement, on behalf of the SRA
 Date: 24 June 2026

S.Sibtain

 Mr Syed Sibtain, Respondent
 Date: 22 June 2026