

# SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12873-2025

## BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

LOUISA FRANCES CLAPTON

Respondent

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Before:

Mrs L Boyce (in the chair)

Mr P Lewis

Mrs L McMahon-Hathway

Date of Hearing: 29 April 2026

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## Appearances

There were no appearances as the matter was dealt with on the papers.

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## JUDGMENT ON AN AGREED OUTCOME

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## **Allegations**

1. The allegations against Ms Clapton made by the Solicitors Regulation Authority Ltd were that, while in practice as a solicitor at Pemberton Capital Advisors LLP (“Pemberton”):
  - 1.1 On 8 July 2023 she:
    - 1.1.1 drove a motor vehicle when her alcohol level was over the prescribed limit contrary to section 5(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.
    - 1.1.2 Used a motor vehicle on a road/public place without third party insurance contrary to section 143 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

And in doing so breached any or all of Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 (“the Principles”). The Applicant relied on Ms Clapton’s conviction for the offences of driving a motor vehicle when alcohol level above limit and using a motor vehicle on a road/public place without third party insurance, as evidence that the Respondent was guilty of those offences and relies upon the findings of fact upon which the convictions were based as proof of those facts.
  - 1.2 On 7 April 2024 she provided information to the SRA about the reason for the delay in responding to requests for information about her conviction which she knew, or ought to have known was inaccurate and/or misleading and in doing so breached any or all of Principles 2, 4, and 5 of the Principles, and paragraph 7.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, and RFLs (“the Code for Solicitors”).
  - 1.3 On or before 21 May 2024 she forwarded emails to her employer, which she knew or ought to have known were misleading, as she had amended the content of the emails to misrepresent information that she had previously given to the SRA about the reasons why she had delayed in responding to requests for information about her conviction, and in doing so breached any or all of Principles 2, 4 and 5 of the Principles and paragraph 1.4 of the Code for Solicitors.
2. Ms Clapton admitted all the allegations, including that her conduct had been dishonest in breach of Principle 4.

## **Documents**

3. The Tribunal had before it the following documents: -
  - Rule 12 Statement and Exhibit MH1 dated 27 November 2025.
  - Statement of Agreed Facts and Outcome dated 21 April 2026.
  - Applicant’s Statement of Costs (as at date of issue of the proceedings) dated 27 November 2025.

## **Background**

4. Ms Clapton was born in 1986 and was a solicitor having been admitted to the Roll in September 2012. At the material time, Ms Clapton was working at Pemberton as an in-house solicitor. Ms Clapton did not hold a Practising Certificate.

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

5. The parties invited the Tribunal to deal with the Allegations against Ms Clapton 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 Sanctions.

## **Findings of Fact and Law**

6. 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, to act in a manner which was compatible with Ms Clapton'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.
7. The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Clapton's admissions were properly made.
8. The Tribunal considered the Guidance Note on Sanction (11<sup>th</sup> edition – February 2025). In doing so the Tribunal assessed the culpability and harm identified together with the aggravating and mitigating factors that existed. During queries relating to the renewal of her Practising Certificate, Ms Clapton provided information to the Applicant about the delay in responding to its requests for information which she knew was inaccurate and misleading. Further, she forwarded emails to her employer which she had amended so as to misrepresent information she had given to the Applicant.
9. Ms Clapton knew that the information she had provided to the Applicant regarding her delay in responding to requests for information, was untrue. She also knew that the emails provided to Pemberton were misleading as she had altered those emails in order to conceal the account given to the Applicant. The Tribunal determined that ordinary and decent people would find such conduct to be dishonest. It followed that Ms Clapton had breached the Principles and the Code for Solicitors as alleged.
10. The Tribunal determined that given its dishonesty findings, the only appropriate and proportionate sanction was to strike Ms Clapton off the Roll. The parties had proposed a strike off as the appropriate sanction. Accordingly, the Tribunal approved the proposed sanction.

## **Costs**

11. The parties had agreed costs in the sum of £7,548.00. The Tribunal was satisfied that the costs agreed were reasonable and proportionate. Accordingly, the Tribunal ordered Ms Clapton to pay costs in the agreed sum.

**Statement of Full Order**

12. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, LOUISA FRANCES CLAPTON solicitor, be STRUCK OFF the Roll of Solicitors and it further Ordered that she do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £7,548.00.

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026

On behalf of the Tribunal

*L. Boyce*

L. Boyce

Chair



**BEFORE THE SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974 (as amended)**

**BETWEEN:**

**SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY**

**Applicant**

**-v-**

**LOUISA FRANCES CLAPTON**

**Respondent**

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**STATEMENT OF AGREED FACTS AND OUTCOME**

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1. By its application dated 26 November 2025, and the statement made pursuant to Rule 12(2) of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 ("the Rule 12 statement") which accompanied that application, the Solicitors Regulation Authority Ltd ("the SRA") brought proceedings before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal making allegations of misconduct against the Respondent.

**The allegations**

2. The allegations against the Respondent made by the SRA within the Rule 12 statement are that: -
  - 2.1. "On 8 July 2023 she:
    - 2.1.1. Drove a motor vehicle when her alcohol level was over the prescribed limit contrary to section 5(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, and

2.1.2. Used a motor vehicle on a road/public place without third party insurance contrary to Section 143 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

And in doing so breached any or all of the Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles (“the Principles”).

2.2. On 7 April 2024 she provided information to the SRA about the reason for the delay in responding to requests for information about her conviction which she knew, or ought to have known was inaccurate and/or misleading and in doing so breached any or all of Principles 2, 4 and 5 of the Principles, and paragraph 7.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, and RFLs (“the Code for Solicitors”).

2.3. On or before 21 May 2024 she forwarded emails to her employer, which she knew or ought to have known were misleading, as she had amended the content of the emails to misrepresent information that she had previously given to the SRA about the reasons why she had delayed in responding to requests for information about her conviction, and in doing so breached any or all of Principles 2, 4 and 5 of the SRA Principles, and paragraph 1.4 of the 2019 Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.”

### **Admissions**

3. The Respondent admits to the allegations in paragraph 2 above.

### **Professional Details**

4. The Respondent, born on April 1986, is a solicitor who was admitted to the Roll on 3 September 2012. At the time of these Allegations the Respondent was working at

Pemberton Capital Advisors LLP (“Pemberton”) as an in-house solicitor. Her line manager was Bethany Walker (“Ms Walker”).

5. The Respondent no longer works at Pemberton, having resigned on 30 July 2024. She does not hold a current Practising Certificate.

### **Agreed Facts**

6. The following facts and matters, which are relied upon by the SRA in support of the allegations set out within paragraph 2 of this statement, are agreed between the SRA and the Respondent:

#### **Allegation 1.1**

- 6.1. The Respondent was arrested on 8 July 2023 and subsequently charged with driving with excess alcohol and using a motor vehicle on a road without insurance. She had been stopped by the police following a collision and her intoximeter reading was 50mcg in breath. The legal limit is 35mcg. Her insurance policy had been invalidated by her failure to install ‘black box’ recording equipment.
- 6.2. On 24 July 2023 at Westminster Magistrates’ Court the Respondent pleaded guilty to driving with excess alcohol and using a motor vehicle with no insurance on 8 July 2023. She was disqualified from driving for a period of 14 months and ordered to pay a financial penalty.
- 6.3. She reported the fact of her conviction that day to the SRA who started an investigation and suspended automatic renewal of her Practising Certificate.

Allegations 1.2 and 1.3

6.4. Between October 2023 and May 2024, the renewal of the Respondent's Practising Certificate was overseen by Eleanor Humpage ("Ms Humpage"), the investigator appointed by the SRA.

6.5. On 5 March 2024, Ms Humpage emailed the Respondent as follows:

*"Thank you for your practising certificate application.*

*I have been assigned your application to review and need more information.*

*Please can you provide the following:*

- *Statement of events*
- *Charge sheet or court documents related to the incident.*
- *If the fine has been paid, proof of payment, or proof of payment plan*

*Once I have received the above documents, I will try to get my decision to you as soon as possible."*

6.6. Ms Humpage did not receive a response from the Respondent and so on 12 March 2024, she emailed the Respondent with a second request as follows:

*"I am unable to progress your application until I receive a response...Please can you respond by 19 March 2024."*

6.7. Ms Humpage did not receive a response from the Respondent to the email on 12 March 2024 and so at 16.04 on 25 March 2024, she emailed the Respondent with a third and final request as follows:

*"I have still not received a response to the emails dated 5 March 2024 and 12 March 2024.*

*If I do not receive a response by 8 April, your application will be withdrawn and your current practising certificate will be revoked."*

6.8. At 19.09 on 25 March 2024, the Respondent responded to Ms Humpage as follows:

*"I'm very sorry for the delay, I have been very unwell with an infection and only just recovered. I'm very sorry for the inconvenience caused.*

*I have all the materials ready as requested and will send them through tomorrow."*

6.9. The Respondent did not send the information to Ms Humpage the next day. On 7 April 2024, she emailed Ms Humpage to say:

*"After I had emailed you, my father suffered a serious heart attack and I have had to take time away to be with him while he has recovered.*

*I am returning to work to the office tomorrow, and will send through all the materials requested in the morning.*

*I really am so sorry and embarrassed I haven't been able to get these to you sooner.*

*The materials are at my office and I haven't been able to return from staying with my father until this weekend returning to work tomorrow."*

6.10. In her statement, Ms Walker provides the following chronology of events:

6.10.1. On 6 February 2024 she was notified by the Respondent of her father's heart attack

6.10.2. On 11 February 2024 she was informed by the Respondent of her father's discharge from hospital

6.10.3. Between 25 March 2024 and 28 March 2024 inclusive, the Respondent was present in the workplace with Ms Walker at Pemberton's offices

6.10.4. Between 29 March 2024 and 3 April 2024 the Respondent was not in the office

6.10.5. On 4 April 2024 the Respondent worked in the office

6.10.6. On 5 April 2024 the Respondent worked from home.

- 6.11. On 8 April 2024, the Respondent emailed Ms Humpage with the information that had been asked for on 5 March 2024, as per paragraph 6.5 above. On 10 April 2024, Ms Humpage was able to refer the matter of the Respondent's convictions for further investigation. Thereafter, Ms Humpage processed the renewal application.
- 6.12. On 17 April 2024, Ms Humpage emailed the Respondent to inform her that her application had been granted free of conditions.
- 6.13. On 18 April 2024, the Respondent informed Ms Walker of the renewal of her Practising Certificate.
- 6.14. On 20 May 2024, the investigation officer at the SRA wrote to the Respondent to inform her that the SRA would be investigating her conduct in relation to the convictions. The same day, the Respondent informed Ms Walker of that decision. Ms Walker asked the Respondent to send her the correspondence from the SRA about its conduct investigation.
- 6.15. At 10.36 on 21 May 2024, the Respondent sent Ms Walker a covering email which said: "*As discussed, here is the correspondence and email below I received on 18th April.*" To that covering email, the Respondent added copies of correspondence which she purported to be the originals of her exchanges with Ms Humpage ("the 21 May Email"). The Respondent did not send Ms Walker a copy of the letter that she had been sent by the investigation officer on 20 May 2024.
- 6.16. Ms Walker had questions for the Respondent about the content of the 21 May Email. Specifically, she had questions about the reason given by the Respondent in her email to the SRA of 7 April 2024 for her delay to provide information.

- 6.17. The Respondent attended a disciplinary investigation meeting with Ms Walker on 22 May 2024. During the meeting, the Respondent was unable to provide an explanation for the inaccurate account she had provided to Ms Humpage, having accepted that it was inaccurate.
- 6.18. After the disciplinary investigation meeting between the Respondent and Ms Walker ended on 22 May 2024, the Respondent sent Ms Walker another email. The covering email had no content other than the Respondent's signature block. To the covering email, the Respondent appended the original and unaltered copies of her email exchanges with Ms Humpage ("the 22 May Email").
- 6.19. When Ms Walker compared the 21 May Email and the 22 May Email she noted that the reasons provided by the Respondent to Ms Humpage for her failure to respond to the SRA's emails of 5 March 2024, 12 March 2024 and following her undertaking to respond substantively on 26 March 2024, were inaccurate and/or misleading. For ease of reference, the following table highlights the differences:

<b><u>21 May Email (the amended correspondence)</u></b>	<b><u>22 May Email (the genuine correspondence)</u></b>
<i>"After I had emailed you, my father suffered a heart attack and it has been a difficult time".</i>	<i>"After I had emailed you, my father suffered a serious heart attack and I have had to take time away to be with him while he has recovered".</i>
<i>"I'm very sorry for my delay and I'm very sorry for the inconvenience caused."</i>	<i>"I'm very sorry for my delay, I have been very unwell with an infection and only just recovered. I'm very sorry for the inconvenience caused."</i>

6.20. On 30 May 2024, the SRA received a report from Ms Walker raising concerns about the Respondent's conduct.

6.21. The Respondent was suspended from her employment pending a disciplinary investigation but later resigned on 30 July 2024.

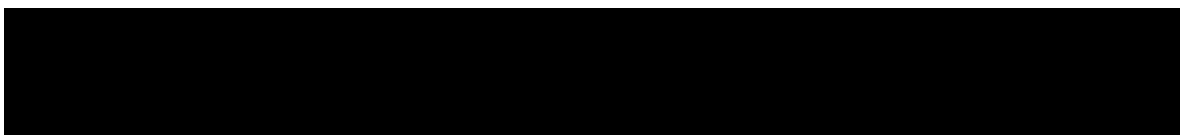
### **Non-Agreed Mitigation**

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

7.1. After being charged with the offences, the Respondent did not dispute the allegations and made an early guilty plea. She has complied with all the requirements of her sentence.

7.2. The Respondent notified the SRA on the day of her conviction.

7.3. The Respondent was admitted to the Roll in 2012 and has a hitherto unblemished record practising as a solicitor. She is now 39 years of age.



### **Penalty proposed**

7.5. Having considered the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal's Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th Edition), the SRA contends, and the Respondent accepts, that in light of the seriousness of the allegation against her, including two allegations of dishonesty, the proper penalty in this case is that the Respondent is struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

7.6. With respect to costs, it is further agreed that Louisa Frances Clapton should pay the SRA's costs of this matter agreed in the sum of £7,548.

Sensitivity: General

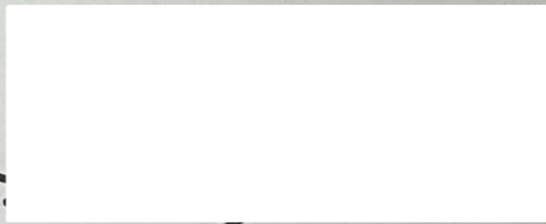
Dated this 21st day of April 2026



Shubhaa Krishnan

Head – Investigation, Enforcement and Litigation

On behalf of the SRA



LOUISA CLAPTON