

SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12928-2026

BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

TIMOTHY JOHN LUCKHURST-MATTHEWS

Respondent

Before:

Ms T Cullen (in the chair)
Mrs L Boyce
Mr P Hurley

Date of Hearing: 14 July 2026

Appearances

Tom Orpin-Massey of QEB Hollis Whiteman, 1 – 2 Laurence Pountney Hill, London EC4R 0EU for the Applicant.

Timothy John Luckhurst-Matthews of 4-6 Howard Street, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 3QD represented himself.

JUDGMENT

Reporting restrictions apply

Reporting restrictions apply by virtue of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992, whereby the provisions of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 apply to the allegations referenced in the Rule 12 Statement. Under those provisions, where a sexual offence has been committed against a person, no matter relating to that person shall, during their lifetime, be included in any publication if it is likely to lead members of the public to identify that person as the victim of that offence. This prohibition applies unless waived or lifted in accordance with s3 of the Act.

Allegation

1. The allegation against the Respondent, Timothy Luckhurst-Matthews, made by the SRA is that while in practice as a solicitor at the Thompson Group (the Firm):
 - 1.1 On 9 December 2022 he committed sexual assault contrary to section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and in doing so, breached any or all of Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles (the Principles).

PROVED

Executive Summary

2. The Applicant, in alleging breach of the duty to uphold public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and breach of the duty to act with integrity, relied upon the Respondent's conviction at Newcastle Crown Court on 26 March 2025 for the offence of sexual assault contrary to section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The certificate of conviction dated 4 March 2026 stood as conclusive proof of the underlying facts upon which the conviction was based pursuant to Rule 32 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 (SDPR 2019).
3. The Court of Appeal Criminal Division dismissed the Respondent's appeal against conviction on 16 January 2026. On 18 March 2026, the Court of Appeal refused the Certificate of General Public Importance which was necessary for the appeal to proceed to the Supreme Court.
4. The Respondent did not accept the facts underlying the conviction and stated that he had lodged a further appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). He acknowledged in communications with the Applicant and in his Answer, however, that, notwithstanding his express denial of the criminal allegations of which he had been convicted, he was not able to rebut the Applicant's case until such time as the conviction was overturned. On that basis he accepted the breaches of the Principles as alleged.
5. The Tribunal considered Rule 32 SDPR, determined that the case was properly made out, and ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Sanction

6. The Tribunal ordered that Mr Luckhurst-Matthews be struck off the Roll of Solicitors and it further ordered that he pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £4,000.00. The Tribunal's reason on sanction can be found [[here](#)].

Professional Details

7. The Respondent, SRA ID 132817, born in May 1953, was a solicitor having been admitted to the Roll on 15 January 1986. At the material time, he was an in-house solicitor at The Thompson Group whose head office was at 5 Wincomblee Road, Walker Riverside, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE6 3PF. The Respondent left the Thompson Group on 9 May 2025. The Respondent remained on the Roll of Solicitors at the date of the hearing but did not have a current practising certificate. His last practising certificate, which was free from conditions, was for the period 2024 to 2025.

Factual Background

8. The conduct leading to the Respondent's conviction occurred on 9 December 2022.
9. The Applicant became aware of that conduct on or around 27 March 2025, following a third-party report that the Respondent had been found guilty of sexual assault at Newcastle upon Tyne Crown Court. The Respondent self-reported by email on 1 April 2025, confirming that he had been convicted on indictment of sexual assault on a female after a contested trial on 26 March 2025, that sentence had been deferred to 6 June 2025, and that he intended to appeal.
10. Section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides:

Sexual Assault

- (1) *A person (A) commits an offence if—*
 - (a) *he intentionally touches another person (B),*
 - (b) *the touching is sexual,*
 - (c) *B does not consent to the touching, and*
 - (d) *A does not reasonably believe that B consents.*
- (2) *Whether a belief is reasonable is to be determined having regard to all the circumstances, including any steps A has taken to ascertain whether B consents.*
- (4) *A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—*
 - (a) *on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.*

(b) *on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.*

- 10.1 On 9 June 2025, the Respondent received a 10-month custodial sentence, suspended for 24 months, with 40 rehabilitation activity days. He was required to register with the police for 10 years and to keep them informed of his personal details, address, and any name change. A restraining order, lasting until 8 June 2030, prohibited direct or indirect contact with the victim. He was also ordered to pay £1,200 prosecution costs at £100 per month.
- 10.2 The Court of Appeal Criminal Division dismissed the Respondent's appeal against conviction on 16 January 2026.
- 10.3 The Respondent was denied permission to appeal to the Supreme Court on 18 March 2026 on the basis that the case was not of sufficient General Public Importance.
- 10.4 The Respondent had applied to appeal the conviction to the European Court of Human Rights but was awaiting allocation of a case number.

Documents

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

Applicant

- Rule 12 Statement and Exhibit dated 27 March 2026 [\[here\]](#)
- The Applicant's Short Note dated 10 July 2026
- Schedule of Costs dated 7 July 2026

Respondent

- The Respondent's Answer dated 27 May 2026 [\[here\]](#)
- The Respondent's Skeleton Argument dated 10 July 2026
- The Respondent's Statement of Means dated 30 June 2026

Preliminary Applications

12. Additional Evidence

- 12.1 The SRA had requested, in correspondence and in its Short Note dated 10 July 2026, to adduce in evidence the Respondent's police case summary or "MG5" on the basis that it was a neat and concise summary of the facts, was probative to the issues that were before the Tribunal and was therefore of assistance.
- 12.2 The Respondent opposed this request, in correspondence and in his Skeleton Argument dated 10 July, and argued the MG5 was irrelevant and inadmissible. He submitted that it was a pre-trial document which was inaccurate as it included matters that were discredited at trial. He relied upon the case of R v X and Ors [2026] EWCA Crim 845 in support of his position. The Respondent accepted that if the MG5 were

not admitted he would not need to pursue his counter application for parts of the transcript of the underlying Crown Court proceedings to be put in evidence before the Tribunal.

- 12.3 The SRA did not accept that the MG5 was irrelevant but nonetheless agreed not to pursue the application for it to be adduced as evidence. On that basis, the Respondent also agreed not to pursue his application in respect of the transcript.

Witnesses

13. The written and oral evidence of witnesses is quoted or summarised in the Findings of Fact and Law below. The evidence referred to will be that which was relevant to the findings of the Tribunal, and to facts or issues in dispute between the parties. For the avoidance of doubt, the Tribunal read all of the documents in the case and made notes of the oral evidence of all witnesses. The absence of any reference to particular evidence should not be taken as an indication that the Tribunal did not read, hear or consider that evidence. No witnesses gave oral evidence.

Findings of Fact and Law

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

Integrity

The matters set at paragraphs 97 to 107 of [Wingate v SRA \[2018\] EWCA Civ 366](#),

Seriousness

The matters set out in paragraph 120 of [Dentons UK and Middle East LLP V SRA Ltd \[2026\] EWCA Civ 508](#)

15. **Allegation 1 - The allegation against the Respondent, Timothy Luckhurst-Matthews, made by the SRA, is that: (1.1) on 9 December 2022 the Respondent, while in practice as a solicitor at the Firm, committed sexual assault contrary to section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (the Offence) and in doing so, breached any or all of Principles 2 and 5 of the SRA Principles (the Principles).**

The Applicant's Case

- 15.1 The Applicant relied on the Respondent's conviction on 26 March 2025 for the offence under s3 Sexual Offences Act 2003, together with the certificate of conviction dated 4 March 2026, as evidence that the Respondent was guilty of those offences. The Applicant also relied on the sentencing remarks of Her Honour Judge Scott made on 9 June 2025. The findings of fact upon which those convictions were based were

relied upon as conclusive proof of those facts, pursuant to Rule 32(1) SDPR which states:

“A conviction for a criminal offence in the United Kingdom may be proved by the production of a certified copy of the certificate of conviction relating to the offence and proof of a conviction will constitute evidence that the person in question was guilty of the offence. The findings of fact upon which that conviction was based will be admissible as conclusive proof of those facts save in exceptional circumstances.”

15.2 By committing the offence contrary to section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Respondent was in breach of Principles 2 and 5 of the Principles:

Principle 2

- The Respondent’s actions amounted to a failure to act in a way that maintained the public’s trust and confidence in the solicitors’ profession and in the provision of legal services. The effective operation of legal services depended on the public being able to place its trust in legal services and the people who worked in the legal sector. The public would expect a solicitor, as an officer of the court, to abstain from criminality.
- The public would not expect a solicitor to act as the Respondent did and to be convicted of a committing sexual assault on a female. The Respondent’s conviction also attracted adverse publicity in the national press undermining not just the public’s trust in the Respondent but in all solicitors and in the provision of legal services, impacting the ability of the legal profession to serve society.

Principle 5

- The Respondent’s actions amounted to a failure to act with integrity in breach of Principle 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 as set out in Wingate.
- Adherence to the ethical standards of the solicitors’ profession included adherence to the wider law of the land, especially the criminal law, because solicitors were officers of the court.
- The conduct in this case involved an offence of sexual assault, specifically, by touching a female without their consent. A solicitor acting with integrity would not act in the way that the Respondent did, especially when that conduct constituted a serious criminal offence which resulted in a suspended term of imprisonment.

The Respondent’s Case

15.3 The Respondent confirmed that the Applicant had presented a fair summary of the issues to the Tribunal and accepted that he was not able to dispute the conviction and its impact pursuant to Rule 32 unless or until it was overturned by the ECHR. The Respondent therefore accepted the breaches of the Principles as alleged.

The Tribunal's Findings

- 15.4 The Tribunal had read the papers carefully, listened to the submissions of the parties and considered the meaning of Rule 32 SDPR. It was satisfied that the certificate of conviction was proof of the findings of fact upon which the conviction was based and the allegation was properly made out. This was also accepted by the Respondent. It followed that the Respondent was in breach of his duties to uphold the profession and to act with integrity.

Previous Disciplinary Matters

16. None

Mitigation

17. The Respondent referred to his self-report to the Applicant on 1 April 2025 following his conviction on 26 March 2025.
18. He also referred to his Representations on Notice to the Applicant, made on 27 October 2025, in which he repeated the assurance he had given the Applicant's investigating officer that he would not hold himself out as a solicitor until such time as the guilty verdict against him may be quashed. He had accepted that it was not appropriate for him to hold a practising certificate until such time as the appeals were concluded and had resolved not seek to renew his practising certificate after its expiry on 31 October 2025. Further, he stated that he had and had had no objection to his name being voluntarily removed from the Roll of Solicitors pending a successful appeal.

Sanction

19. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th edition February 2025) when considering sanction and the proper approach to sanctions, as set out in [Fuglers and Others v SRA](#) [2014] EWHC 1710. The Tribunal's overriding objective, when considering sanction, was the need to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the profession. In determining sanction, it was the Tribunal's role to assess the seriousness of the proven misconduct and to impose a sanction that was fair and proportionate in all the circumstances.
20. The Tribunal noted that the Respondent had no previous disciplinary findings against him.

Seriousness

21. In approaching the allegation, the Tribunal had regard to [Dentons UK and Middle East LLP v SRA](#) [2026] EWCA Civ 508, in which the Court of Appeal held that there was an inherent requirement of seriousness in determining whether a solicitor's conduct amounted to breaches of the SRA Principles or the mandatory provisions of the SRA Code. The question for the Tribunal was whether the conduct would be regarded by competent and reputable solicitors as sufficiently serious to be categorised as professional misconduct.

22. The Tribunal was satisfied that the seriousness threshold was met because the Respondent was convicted of convicted on indictment of sexual assault on a female. The seriousness of the misconduct was self-evident and no sanction less than a strike off would be sufficient to protect the public and the reputation of the profession (Bolton v The Law Society [1994] 1 WLR 512).

Costs

23. Mr Orpin-Massey submitted that the Applicant's costs, as set out in the Schedule dated 7 July 2026, were reasonable and fair on the basis that proceedings had been contested throughout and the amount claimed had been pared to the minimum. Given the gravity of the Respondent's offence, it was appropriate that counsel had been instructed. The Tribunal indicated that the refresher fee for the second day of the hearing should be omitted from the claim on the basis that the two-day hearing had been concluded in one day, with which Mr Orpin-Massey agreed. The SRA therefore claimed costs in the sum of £10,922.50.
24. The Respondent indicated that he had no objection in principle to the Applicant seeking costs but drew the Tribunal's attention to the fact that he had self-reported and his stated willingness not to apply for a practising certificate and to remove himself from the Roll pending a successful appeal. He submitted that he did not have sufficient income to settle any costs order but had a small pension pot which could be utilised to meet any order made by the Tribunal.
25. The Tribunal was guided by reference to its jurisdiction pursuant to Rule 43 Solicitors SDPR and had regard to the conduct of both parties and the Respondent's financial circumstances. It determined that matters could have been concluded more quickly, considering the representations made by the Respondent to the SRA in 2025. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent pay the fixed sum of £4,000.00 by way of costs of and incidental to this application, which represented a proportionate and reasonable sum.

Statement of Full Order

26. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, TIMOTHY JOHN LUCKHURST-MATTHEWS, Solicitor, be STRUCK OFF the Roll of Solicitors and it further ORDERED that he pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £4,000.00.

Dated this 22nd day of July 2026
On behalf of the Tribunal

T Cullen

T Cullen
Chair