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## Compli | May update

Regulatory scrutiny across the profession continues to intensify, and there's no sign of it getting any easier in the near (or not so near) future. Supervision obligations following the Mazur appeal are now clearer (hopefully), AML expectations remain exacting, continuing competence reforms are on the way and disciplinary decisions continue to underline persistent risks around client money, billing and complaint handling. Alongside this, developments from the FCA and the Legal Ombudsman point to increasing individual accountability and prolonged exposure to consumer complaints.

### Mazur Appeal

Following the Court of Appeal's decision in Mazur, attention has shifted from permission to accountability. While the Court confirmed that unauthorised individuals may carry out litigation work without express instructions for every task, it reaffirmed that ultimate responsibility sits with an authorised person.

The Law Society issued updated guidance on 13 April 2026, emphasising that responsibility extends beyond formal delegation. Supervising solicitors must ensure compliance with professional standards, act in the client's best interests, and be sufficiently experienced themselves to judge the appropriate level of oversight. The guidance stresses that supervision will always be fact-specific, but that clear records of delegation and oversight will be critical.

While the Court of Appeal judgment was handed down on 31 March, we've not quite reached the end of the road as it was a further three weeks before the Law Society confirmed that it had decided not to appeal the decision (had it done so the position could have changed), and it sought a declaration from the Court of Appeal regarding its interpretation of part of the judgment. This resulted in the Court of Appeal making small changes to the judgment to remove any ambiguity in relation to the consequences of breach, and it's now likely the Law Society will need to amend its practice note. That practice note referred to it being the Law Society's understanding of how the judgment should be interpreted, pending further guidance from the SRA – which has not yet, at the date of writing, been published.

### Continuing competence

On 22 April the SRA published its consultation on strengthening continuing competence requirements. Central to the proposals is a shift away from informal self-reflection towards documented evidence of learning and ethical engagement. Key proposals include mandatory annual ethics discussions (minimum three hours), formal recording of learning needs and outcomes (to be retained for a minimum of three years), and the

ability for the SRA to direct specific training where competence concerns arise. The consultation closes on 15 July.

The SRA has been explicit that, while competence across the profession is generally sound, current arrangements do not consistently drive the behaviours expected. Firms should expect a more active role in evidencing and overseeing competence, particularly for senior lawyers and supervisors.

## Motor finance commission claims

Following the FCA finalising details of its motor finance redress scheme, the SRA has published guidance on what it expects from law firms dealing with motor finance commission claims and are contacting firms with enquiries regarding processes, information provided to clients etc., and has confirmed that if it finds evidence of non-compliance it will take action, either alone or via the joint motor finance taskforce with the FCA, ICO and ASA.

## Solicitors Act consultation

The Civil Justice Council has issued a consultation on reform of Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. The CJC is proposing that costs disputes worth up to £50,000 between solicitors and clients should be dealt with by LeO (Legal Ombudsman) and not the courts and larger claims should go to compulsory ADR before they can go to a judge, together with a number of other proposals to remove technicalities around costs, e.g. the contentious/non-contentious distinction, statute bills and the content and format of bills. The consultation closes on 16 July 2026.

## Disciplinary decisions

### Fines for breaches of AML requirements

Over the last month a further six firms have been fined a total of over £70,000 for failing to comply with AML obligations following SRA desk based reviews and inspections, and a number of firms have been ordered to pay a fixed financial penalty of £750 and costs of £150 for failing to submit data in respect of anti-money laundering and sanctions requirements.

### Struck off for false time recording

A junior solicitor was struck off after deliberately recording over 100 hours of work not undertaken. The solicitor said that she was under pressure to meet targets and had recorded time for work she would complete later, which included 55 units on a blank attendance note and 16 hours of work on three separate documents which were untouched. While billing pressure was accepted as context, the tribunal reiterated that solicitors must seek support before conduct escalates into dishonesty. The solicitor was also ordered to pay £25,000 costs.

## Repeated dishonesty, even when unconnected, proves fatal

A solicitor was struck off after backdating a probate document and, in a separate matter, misleading a client. The SDT found the proximity in timing demonstrated a pattern of dishonest behaviour. The solicitor was also ordered to pay £15,000 costs.


## Suspension for threatening proceedings

In an agreed outcome, a solicitor received a one-year suspension and ordered to pay £25,000 costs after telling a client that unless she withdrew her complaint, an application for an injunction would be issued to prevent her making or continuing with any complaint to the Legal Ombudsman or the SRA. The tribunal described the conduct as oppressive and designed to stifle legitimate complaints.

## How Compli can help...

The Compli Solicitor Regulatory and Professional Discipline Team can provide expertise and advice on risk and compliance, AML, disciplinary assistance etc. If we can help in any way, please get in touch at [complimentary@weightmans.com](mailto:complimentary@weightmans.com)

## Key contact



**Andrea Cohen**  
Legal Director

+44 (0)161 214 0651

[Email Andrea](mailto:andrea.cohen@weightmans.com)

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