



**LEGAL SERVICES
BOARD**

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www.legalservicesboard.org.uk

Freedom of Information request

Date request received: 14 January 2015

Date of response: 30 January 2015

LSB reference: 20150114-01

Request:

I would request provision of the correspondence or link to the correspondence between the SRA and the LSB on the review and variation of the SRA's complaint's response policy.

Response:

I write in response to your email of 14 January 2015 in which you requested sight of correspondence between the LSB and SRA on the review and variation of the SRA's approach to complaint handling.

I enclose for your information correspondence from February and October/November 2014 between Chris Kenny of the LSB, and Paul Philip of the SRA, on this subject.

I hope that this has been of assistance, but if you are dissatisfied with this response to your request for information, you have the right to ask for an internal review or to submit a complaint (see LSB's Freedom of information – Complaints procedure:

http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/can_we_help/lbs_policies_procedures/freedom_of_information/index.htm).

Mr Paul Philip
Chief Executive Officer
Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
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14 February 2014

Dear Paul,

I am writing to draw your attention to an item of correspondence which we have received from a solicitor, [REDACTED], concerning an investigation into an allegation of misconduct.

In the letter, the correspondent claims that the SRA has failed to respond to serious allegations of misconduct by a solicitor, including allegations of criminal offences, which he and other solicitors had made against the individual concerned. The correspondent also alleges that the SRA failed to respond to his repeated request for information on this matter, and declined to discuss the allegations or evidence which he claims to have provided.

As the oversight regulator, we record all correspondence which we receive as part of our ongoing remit to challenge approved regulators where there is evidence of a systemic issue. We have reviewed the content of the letter from [REDACTED] together with a number of other items of recent correspondence on this matter. While the precise nature of the individual cases varies, there appears to be evidence that the way in which the SRA communicates with people who have made, or are the subject of, complaints about misconduct - and, indeed, the SRA's communications more generally - form the basis of repeated grievances.

While you may of course wish to revisit the specific substance of the allegations against the SRA made in the attached letter, it might also be appropriate for the SRA to consider the broader implications of its current communications policy relative to these complainants, given the potential reputational damage which could accumulate if the issue is not addressed.

I have written to [REDACTED] to inform him that we have invited the SRA to comment on this issue, and look forward to your response on the matter. We might perhaps discuss the general issue when we meet on 28 February 2014.?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chris Kenny". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal stroke that extends to the right and then curves downwards.

Chris Kenny
Chief Executive

From the Chief Executive

Our ref: LSB/51

Chris Kenny
Chief Executive
Legal Services Board
7th Floor, Victoria House
Southampton Row
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By email: Chris.Kenny@legalservicesboard.org.uk



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25 February 2014

Dear Chris

Complaint by [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 14 February 2014 enclosing the complaint from [REDACTED]

I have looked into the matter and the issues involved are more complex than they may appear. I am satisfied that the investigation is being progressed appropriately; however, I am happy to discuss the matter and the wider issues you raise when we meet.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Philip', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Paul Philip
Chief Executive, Solicitors Regulation Authority

BY EMAIL ONLY

Paul Philip
Chief Executive
Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN



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28 October 2014

Dear Paul,

SRA review of its communications policy

Following my letter to you in February of this year, you advised that the SRA intend to review its communications policy relative to whether and how it keeps complainants and informants up-to-date with the progress of investigations. In July 2014 you indicated that a review of the SRA's current approach was underway which included the establishment of a working group to consider the changes that need to be made to how the SRA currently communicate in order to improve transparency. At that stage, you anticipated that a new communications approach would be implemented by the SRA towards the end of this year, which is likely to include a more active feedback approach to those who have complained about solicitors conduct than is presently the case.

I am writing to ask for an update now, as we have received intelligence from both the OLC and SDT that both bodies are continuing to receive a number of enquiries which seem to turn on members of the public looking for another avenue to make a complaint having received no communication from the SRA other than an initial acknowledgement. Although impressionistically the issue seems to be raised rather less frequently in correspondence with the LSB than in the past, it clearly remains a matter of concern to some other organisations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Kenny'.

Chris Kenny
Chief Executive

E Chris.Kenny@legalservicesboard.org.uk

From the Chief Executive

Our ref: LSB/89

Chris Kenny
Chief Executive
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10 November 2014

Dear Chris

SRA review of its communications policy

Thank you for your letter of 28 October. I am pleased to advise you that the review of our approach to communications with individuals that contact us to report information is progressing well with the new process in place for any new reports made to us from 3 November.

We will now be issuing update letters to better support those who report information to us at each stage in the investigation process, supported by new material to be sent out to explain in more detail the process and the possible outcomes. We will be monitoring closely how the revised process is working, both in terms of feedback from consumers and the impact on our own service levels.

I very much hope that our new approach will reduce the number of enquiries into the LSB on the matter and I would appreciate it if you would continue to keep me informed of any concerns raised with you in relation to it.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Philip
Chief Executive, Solicitors Regulation Authority