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Dear Mr Slaughter

Re: SRA update on work relating to in-house solicitors

Recent correspondence between the Justice Select Committee and Minister Sackman noted that the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) would provide an update on our approach to in-house lawyers, i.e. solicitors employed by companies and organisations other than law firms.

As the Executive Director with responsibility for this area I would like to provide the Committee with this update following the retirement of our former Chief Executive Paul Philip in October. We have recently welcomed Sarah Rapson as our new Chief Executive; I know her office will be in touch in the New Year to arrange an introductory meeting with you.

I also take this opportunity to set out further detail on our wider work on professional ethics, which is significant given the growing focus on ethical risks, as highlighted by the ongoing Post Office case.

Our work supporting the in-house sector

More than 34,500 solicitors now work in-house across 6,000 organisations in England and Wales, spanning the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. They make up around a fifth of all practising solicitors and form a key sector within the profession. In-house solicitor numbers have increased significantly over recent years and continue to rise. While subject to the same regulatory standards as those in private practice, the SRA recognises that in-house solicitors face distinct challenges.

We previously advised the Committee in 2023 of our thematic review of in-house practice, which sought to build a clear picture of the environment and identify any risks to compliance. The review highlighted that while most in-house solicitors were confident in meeting their obligations, a minority said they experienced pressures linked to organisational culture, unclear reporting lines and competing priorities.

We have continued to strengthen our support for in-house solicitors. In November 2024, we published a suite of [tailored guidance](#) to help address key risks and clarify expectations where in-house solicitors may face specific challenges. Topics covered included: identifying your client in complex settings; reporting concerns of wrongdoing; legal professional privilege; balancing ethical obligations; and managing legal risk.

We are the regulator of solicitors and law firms in England and Wales.

Solicitors Regulation Authority Limited is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales.
Our registered offices are: The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN.
Our company registration number is: 12608059.

We also created guidance aimed at organisations employing in-house solicitors, to help them understand the regulatory duties and standards with which their employed solicitor(s) must comply.

This guidance package was informed by a Virtual Reference Group comprising in-house solicitors from the private, public and third sectors at various levels of seniority. We consulted on a draft of this guidance and received 50 formal responses. The guidance received positive feedback, coverage across major legal publications and was widely shared through professional social media networks.

We have organised a series of conferences specifically for in-house solicitors to promote discussion and share good practice. The most recent, in March 2025, brought together over 200 in-house solicitors from across the public, private and not-for-profit-sectors. This event focused on how employers can support ethical workplace cultures and how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, can shape in-house practice. Previous conferences have explored the role of the employer in supporting in-house teams, workplace culture, and ethical behaviour. Feedback from our 2025 conference has been positive, with participants emphasising the value of peer learning and direct engagement with the SRA.

In March 2025 we created a dedicated '[page on our website for in-house solicitors and their employers](#)' bringing together guidance and other materials.

Our Regulatory Management team engages with 92 of the largest firms and organisations regulated by the SRA, a group that has been expanded to include eight of the largest employers of in-house lawyers. This includes four major private sector companies and four national and local public sector bodies. Such relationships provide us with valuable insight into operational challenges and support good practice.

In addition, we have updated our continuing competence resources to further support solicitors and in-house solicitors in meeting their competence requirements. This includes practical tips and new tools to help solicitors reflect on their practice, prioritise, and record their learning and development needs.

Professional ethics

Demonstrating high ethical standards is fundamental to public trust in the solicitors' profession. Unethical decisions can undermine the legal system and cause consumer detriment. We set standards to encourage solicitors to understand their professional ethical obligations and act accordingly, and we take action when we have evidence of unethical behaviour.

We have established a dedicated project to explore how we can improve our approach to professional ethics. In October 2025 we published a new resource on our website which '[highlights existing standards, guidance and resources](#)' to support solicitors in upholding their professional ethical duties.

We are reviewing the educational requirements we place on both aspiring solicitors and those in practice, with a view to achieving greater assurance they understand and will fulfil their ethical obligations. We plan to share our initial thoughts with stakeholders in the spring.

In March 2025, the Legal Services Board (LSB) published a consultation, 'Upholding Professional Ethical Duties' as part of its [Professional ethics, rule of law and regulation](#) programme of work. This consultation set out proposals for new obligations for legal services regulators in promoting ethical practice across the legal professions. The SRA responded to this consultation, agreeing with the aims of the LSB's definition and its emphasis it placed on the professional ethical duties of the regulated professions. The LSB's final policy statement, setting out its expectations for legal regulators in relation to ethical practice, is expected to be published in the new year.

The LSB's work in this area has informed our approach to ethical practice and we will consider carefully how best to implement any new requirements, ensuring that we are acting appropriately, in line with the principles of good regulation, to avoid poor practice and support ethical behaviours within the legal sector. We intend to engage widely with other regulators and external stakeholders as this work develops.

Professional ethics helpline

Our professional ethics helpline offers support to in-house solicitors with ethical queries and technical questions about the SRA's rules.

Ethical queries from the in-house community typically relate to conflicts of interest, confidentiality, whistleblowing, conduct reporting, the scope of reserved activities, and insurance requirements. Our ethics teams provided more than 26,000 pieces of guidance to the profession in 2024/25 via our helpline, webchat, and email services. The team is formed of qualified solicitors with both in-house and private practice experience. Feedback from the profession is exceptional with 88 per cent of respondents rating the service as excellent and ten per cent good.

We hope that this information provides a helpful update on the SRA's work as it relates to our work listening to and supporting in-house solicitors. We would be happy to provide any further information should the Committee have any additional questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aileen Armstrong', with a stylized, flowing script.

Aileen Armstrong
Executive Director, Strategy, Innovation and External Affairs
Solicitors Regulation Authority