

News release

Ensuring continuing competence in the solicitor profession

31 January 2023

Staying up to date and competent throughout a solicitor's career is an important part of providing high quality legal services to those who need them. We have [published the actions \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/ongoing-competence-lsb/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/ongoing-competence-lsb/) we will be taking to ensure that solicitors comply with their responsibilities.

Our plan is in response to the Legal Services Board's (LSB) [statement of policy on ongoing competence \[https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/news/lwb-sets-new-expectations-to-ensure-lawyers-remain-competent-throughout-their-careers\]](https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/news/lwb-sets-new-expectations-to-ensure-lawyers-remain-competent-throughout-their-careers) and sets out the extensive work we have already undertaken in this area, such as setting the standards of competence that those we regulate should meet at authorisation and beyond in our [Statement of Solicitor Competence \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/).

We have also collected evidence and identified areas where competence might need to be improved, and responding in a targeted way through our proactive regulatory work.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: 'We expect the profession to deliver a high standard of service to those who need their help. That means we must make sure that solicitors and the employees of firms we regulate have up-to-date skills, knowledge and behaviours.

'During 2023 we will further improve how we identify solicitors and firms who are not meeting our expectations and work with individual solicitors and firms where we have concerns about competence. We will take enforcement action where necessary to protect consumers where standards fall short.'

As we enhance and broaden our approach we will measure the impact of our [Statement of Solicitor Competence \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/) through our 10 year evaluation programme for the SQE and publish an annual determination of competence identifying the most significant risks around competence. This will inform our regulatory approach.

Our plan includes:

- Taking forward our programme of thematic reviews to both target areas where competence is an identified risk and identify other



- competence-related risks which we need to address.
- Continuing to review training records, focusing on high-risk areas that we have already identified (for example, immigration advice and services) and looking at where we need to respond to any areas of risk or concern that our annual assessment identifies.
 - Responding to individual cases of incompetence on a case-by-case basis and taking remedial and enforcement action, such as to require training or enhanced supervision, where it is appropriate to do so.
 - Enhancing our approach to following up on competence reports which do not meet our threshold for enforcement.
 - Piloting a proactive, risk-based approach to identifying and following up with firms where our data and information indicates they may not be meeting our standards for competence.

[A range of resources \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/continuing-competence/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/continuing-competence/) are available to help the profession check on their skills and knowledge so that these can be kept up-to-date.