

HOW SOLICITORS' FIRMS ARE REGULATED – PROTECTION FOR THE PUBLIC

Compulsory Regulation

Most suppliers of goods and services have a regulatory regime for the protection of their consumers or clients.

For solicitors the main regulatory body is the **SRA (Solicitors Regulation Authority)**. Solicitors must quote their **SRA** number on letters and web sites.

The **SRA** produces codes of conduct for solicitors and has enforcement powers entitling them to supervise or even close practices down for the protection of the public.

The body in overall charge of legal professional services, including solicitors, barristers and others as from 6th October 2010 is the **Legal Ombudsman**. The Ombudsman can deal with complaints and instances of poor service.

Solicitors are obliged to maintain **professional indemnity insurance** normally for at least two million pounds through recognized indemnity insurers. Any terms of business provided by a solicitor have to confirm the insurance they have in place.

Voluntary Quality Standards

Besides the mandatory protection mentioned above, many solicitors will aspire to one or more quality standards showing that they have achieved a level of excellence in specific areas.

The **Lexcel** standard set up by the Law Society is awarded for excellence in client care and management.

The **Law Society** also has various “panel awards” for those firms achieving excellence in certain practice areas. These include children law, commercial and civil mediation, clinical negligence, criminal litigation, family law, immigration, mental health, personal injury, planning and a new conveyancing quality scheme just being developed.

Independent organizations sometimes provide equivalent awards e.g. Resolution for family matters.

The **Legal Services Commission** (formerly the Legal Aid Board) has a quality scheme which has been in place for over a decade. Solicitors' firms have to achieve the requisite level of competence before being allowed to carry out legal aid/publicly funded work.

More information can be obtained from the following, the Law Society web site, :
www.lawsociety.org.uk , the LSC website; www.legalservices.gov.uk and the Resolution
web site; www.resolution.org.uk or from our offices:-

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Alison Fielden & Co have the following quality marks;

Lexcel
LSC
Law Society Family Panel Membership
Resolution Panel Membership