

## Guidance

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### Transparency in price and service

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### Status

This guidance is to help you understand your obligations and how to comply with them. We will have regard to it when exercising our regulatory functions.

### Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for firms and individual freelance solicitors we regulate, who are required to publish information on prices and services they offer under [Rule 1 of the SRA Transparency Rules](#) [<https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/transparency-rules/>]. It may also be helpful to all firms who want to be transparent about their price and service information.

### Purpose of this guidance

This guidance is to help you understand your obligations under our Transparency Rules, and to understand ways in which you might comply with those obligations. It also provides wider good practice advice and [example templates](#) [<https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/transparency-in-price-and-service/#templates>] that can help you to comply with the Transparency Rules. These are designed to help you consider how to display the required information to make it as accessible as possible to your customers. You are not required to use the specific templates; they are for you to use and adapt if you wish.

### The SRA Transparency Rules

Our Transparency Rules aim to help consumers access the information they need to make an informed choice of legal services provider, including understanding what the costs may be. This includes being able to more easily compare information about prices and services that are available from different providers.



The rules require all regulated law firms, and individual freelance solicitors who publish as part of their usual business that they offer certain services, to publish information on the prices they charge. These services are:

### **For members of the public**

- residential conveyancing (Freehold sale or purchase, leasehold sale or purchase, mortgages and remortgages)
- Probate (uncontested cases with all assets in the UK)
- Motoring offences (summary only offences)
- Employment tribunals (claims for unfair or wrongful dismissal)
- Immigration (excluding asylum applications).

### **For businesses**

- Debt recovery (up to £100,000)
- Employment tribunals (defending claims for unfair or wrongful dismissal)
- Licensing applications for business premises (new applications or varying existing licenses).

As well as prices, the rules also require you to publish information on:

- what services are included within the displayed price
- any services not included in the price that might reasonably be expected to be included
- details of the experience and qualifications of teams/individuals who will carry out the work
- typical timescales and key stages of the matter.

This information must be published in a prominent location on your website, which is accessible, clearly signposted and easy for visitors to find.

For firms or freelance solicitors that do not have a website, this information must instead be readily available upon request in another format. People should not be required to provide detailed information before they can obtain it.

Where you do have a website, you may also wish to consider offering this information in another format on request, for clients who are less comfortable online or digitally excluded.

Our rules set out the minimum price and service information you must provide. We encourage you to provide additional information where that would help consumers understand the services you offer and the costs of your services.



Being clear about this will help to avoid misunderstandings and cost related complaints later in the transaction.

## **Publishing your price information**

One of the most common types of complaints dealt with by the Legal Ombudsman is where costs were unclear or different from the original estimate. Being clear at the outset can help avoid confusion and complaints later down the line.

This guidance does not seek to specify what pricing models you use, or the prices you charge. Its purpose is to make sure that information on costs and services is as readily available to the public as possible, in a format that is accurate, easy for them to understand, and helps them to make choices about legal services.

### **Mandatory requirements**

- You must provide price information prominently, in as clear and understandable format as possible – if you have a website then your price information must be published on it in a place that is easy for members of the public to locate and in a way which is easy to understand.
- You must specify whether stated prices, including any fees or disbursements, include VAT - if they do, you must also confirm the amount of VAT as a percentage or the financial amount of VAT payable, and you must state on your website if you are not VAT-registered
- You must specify exactly what is included within the price displayed -this is important even if you quote a fixed fee to avoid confusion about what someone might need to pay extra for, including disbursements
- If you publish a range of costs, you need to set out the basis for your charges -this includes any hourly rates and the factors that will determine what the final price will be
- If you offer your services in different ways and the delivery model impacts on the price, you must make this clear - for example, if you charge a higher fee for face-to-face services than for strictly online services.
- If you offer an online quote generator, this must produce a quote without requiring any additional contact at that stage - for example, providing a quote through a generator should not be contingent on someone from your firm calling the enquirer to discuss the quote before it is confirmed.

When using an online price generator you should also make sure that you are compliant with data protection legislation when handling data from consumers or clients.

The rules do not require you to publish a binding quote for every scenario you may deal with.

However our rules do allow firms to publish the average cost of the service. Firms will need to use their judgement on what is the best approach for them. For example, a firm can publish the typical cost of the service, rather than the mathematical 'mean' average. Both approaches would be acceptable. However, it may be simpler to base your approach on a typical case rather than on the mathematical average of all cases your firm has worked on.

Remember that the rules require you to inform clients if anything that could reasonably be expected to be included in the price, is not. You will need to take a view, based on your experience of what your clients tend to expect, on whether there is anything about the service you are offering that would need this type of clarification.

You should bear in mind your obligations under [paragraph 8.7 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-solicitors/) [<https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-solicitors/>], which requires you to provide clients with the best possible information about how their matter will be priced and about the likely overall cost of the matter. This requirement extends to firms we regulate under [paragraph 7.1 of the Code of Conduct for Firms](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/) [<https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/>].

It can be helpful to potential clients to provide a clear indication of where you draw the line on what services are included in the price quoted, and when you would start charging extra. For example, if your debt recovery prices do not include additional work such as applications for wind-down orders or enforcement. Similarly, if the services are included, make this clear as well.

### **Good practice tips**

In addition to the mandatory requirements, you may also want to consider the following in specific circumstances:

- list factors that could increase or decrease overall costs
- where the range of costs is quite wide, consider providing an average cost
- consider how consumers like to interact with price information, for example research shows that when using an online price generator people do not like being forced to provide personal information such as email addresses or phone numbers. (See our conveyancing template for an example of information you could request when using a price generator)
- you do not need to specify any preferential rates which you may offer. You may, however, wish to advise that these are available

upon request to specific groups, for example, returning clients or via employee benefits schemes.

### **Conditional Fee arrangements**

If you are using a conditional fee agreement (CFA) / damages-based agreement (DBA) and want to assess the viability of a case before agreeing to accept it, to meet the likely timescales requirement, you should state how long you will spend doing that assessment. You should also set out what (if any) cost this will lead to for the consumer.

We do not expect you to set out all the legal detail of the CFA on your website. However, if you use this type of agreement you are required to set out the circumstances in which clients have to make any payments themselves, including from any damages.

### **Publishing service information**

As well as prices, the Transparency Rules also require you to provide information on the service which will be provided.

### **Mandatory requirements**

You must provide details of:

- what services are included within the displayed price
- any services not included in the price that might reasonably be expected to be included
- typical timescales and key stages for the given legal service (you are not required to provide cost information for each individual stage, just a total cost)
- the experience and qualifications of all individuals who carry out work within the areas specified under the rules. This may include:
  - number of years post-qualification experience
  - estimated numbers or examples of cases they have dealt with in given areas
  - percentage of their time spent on given areas
  - complexity or type of issues they typically deal with
- the experience and qualifications of those who supervise the individuals who will be carrying out the work, although you do not need to necessarily specify who supervises who.

### **Good practice tips**

In addition to the mandatory requirements, we would also recommend you:

- explain any technical terms (such as disbursements) in plain English



- avoid using over complicated terms or legal jargon
- when providing information about the key stages of a matter, you may wish to link to information on other websites as long as you have taken reasonable steps to ensure its accuracy. We recommend using trusted sources such as [gov.uk \[https://www.gov.uk/\]](https://www.gov.uk/) or [Legal Choices \[https://www.legalchoices.org.uk/\]](https://www.legalchoices.org.uk/)
- provide examples of the typical clients or types of transactions your firm has experience of dealing with (be careful not to disclose anything confidential or that would identify the client)
- provide information about any particular expertise or specialism you have within a given area
- consider having information available in easier to read formats, or languages other than English (including Welsh where this might be beneficial to clients).

Information on individuals or teams does not need to be on the same page as the price information. For instance, you may already have this within wider biographies or 'who's who' or 'about us' sections within your site.

### **Example of how to display individual details**

Our team has over X years of collective experience in delivering high quality work in all matters relating to wills and estate administration. They have particular expertise in high value estates and inheritance tax matters.

We have four members of the team who may work on your matter. Regardless of who works on your matter, they will be supervised by Tamara Singh, Partner and Head of probate and estate administration.

#### **Tamara Singh - Partner**

Tamara is the head of our team and has more than 20 years' experience in private client work, specialising in wills and probate. Tamara has been working in this area since she qualified and has helped thousands of families and individuals.

Tamara qualified as a solicitor in 1996 after gaining a First in Law from the University of Exeter. She completed her training contract at Legal & Co and worked at different firms before moving on to join our firm in 1998. She became a partner in 2006.

Tamara has also completed several professional development courses in probate and estate administration.

#### **Linda O'Connor - Senior Associate**



Linda qualified as a solicitor in 2007. She attended the University of Birmingham and completed the Graduate Diploma in Law and Legal Practice Course with distinction.

She has been working in our probate team since she qualified and is particularly skilled at dealing with complex estate matters, having dealt with over one thousand complex estates since starting at our firm. Linda speaks fluent Russian and German.

#### **John Rotherham - Associate**

John qualified as a solicitor in 2017 and has been working in our probate team ever since. John has a degree in History from the University of Sheffield and completed the Graduate Diploma in Law and the Legal Practice Course at the University of Nottingham.

John worked in the probate, immigration and commercial property departments of the law firm that trained him, and has a strong interest in developing his skillset in probate. He has quickly gained experience in this area, successfully advising on more than 100 probate and estate matters since qualifying.

#### **Ismail Lakhani - Trainee Solicitor**

Ismail has a degree in Economics from Newcastle University and has completed the Graduate Diploma in Law and the Legal Practice Course at the BBP law school in Manchester. Ismail began his training contract with us in September 2017 and will work in our probate, tax and litigation and dispute teams.

### **Example of how to display team details**

#### **Employment Law (this area is being used for illustrative purposes only)**

Our team of specialist employment law solicitors has significant experience in dealing with employment disputes. Our senior employment law partner heads up a team of 6 solicitors and has been working in this area for more than 20 years, leading some of our most high-profile cases to a successful conclusion.

Our solicitors have experience in all aspects of employment law and we dedicate ourselves to ensuring our knowledge stays up to date, in order to give you the best service possible. They have between 1 and 10 years of experience in this area. We always make sure that junior solicitors and members of



staff are supported and supervised appropriately so that the quality of advice is not affected, regardless of who is working on your case.

We also employ a team of around 20 paralegals who do much of the day to day work on cases. Although they are not legally qualified, they have between 2 and 15 years' experience, have received extensive training within our firm and work under the direct supervision of a solicitor with at least 5 years post qualification experience.

We have a proven track record in achieving successful outcomes for our clients. You can find out more information about our prices on our website.

## **Promoting your firm**

When complying with our rules, you should consider your potential market, and what peoples' information needs are in this area.

We remind you of your duty to comply with statutory obligations to not provide misleading information to consumers, false advertising, bait advertising etc. Doing so is likely to be a breach of paragraph 8.8 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs, which requires your publicity to be accurate and not misleading. This requirement extends to firms we regulate under paragraph 7.1 of the Code of Conduct for Firms.

Using an online review service can showcase the quality of your work. In recent years, new and independent services have emerged that collect and publish client feedback in an objective but sensibly moderated way. As more members of the public shop around online for legal services, they are more likely to see online feedback about you and your firm and use that feedback to decide whether or not to contact you.

This can showcase the standard of the service you provide and that you are proactive in dealing with negative feedback or comments. Also by using a review service, you can often challenge vexatious reviews and have them independently moderated.

[Read more information on engaging with online reviews](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/transparency/customer-reviews/engaging-online-reviews/)  
[\[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/transparency/customer-reviews/engaging-online-reviews/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/transparency/customer-reviews/engaging-online-reviews/).

## **Templates and format examples**

### **Templates**

To help you consider how you may publish the required information there are templates, including practical tips, provided below.





Across the templates we also provide examples of how prices may be displayed using different pricing models.

We recommend that you look at the templates relating to both the services and pricing models you offer. The combinations of service/pricing models are illustrative only and are not designed to suggest which model you should use for any given service. If the template for a given service you provide is not in the pricing model you use, we suggest you also consider the other template/principles outlined below to see if they may help you.

You will need to tailor the information you publish to offer a true reflection of the services you offer.

### Format examples

We have also provided format examples that can help you to meet the Transparency Rule requirements. They include examples of formats for displaying your pricing information accessibly, and in ways that are comparable with other law firms. They are available for residential conveyancing and probate services. There is also a format example that you can adapt to meet your needs, and publish for other areas covered by our Transparency Rules, or any other areas that you wish to provide pricing information for. View the [format examples \[https://examples.sra.org.uk\]](https://examples.sra.org.uk)

### Templates: service/pricing model(s)

[Open all \[#\]](#)

### [Conveyancing: Fixed fee/online quote generator](#)

You are required to provide price information regarding the conveyance

#### [Probate: Range of costs \(with fixed fee for additional work\) and fixed fee](#)

- Freehold sale or purchase
- Leasehold sale or purchase

You are required to publish prices for probate work in relation to

#### [Mortgages or re-mortgages](#)

• [Immigration: Hourly rate](#)

#### [Immigration: Hourly rate](#)

• [Debt recovery: Range of fixed fees](#)

#### [Debt recovery: Range of fixed fees](#)

• [Good practice tips](#)

• [Good practice tips](#)

• [Good practice tips](#)







Our fee estimate is based on the information you have provided. It is not a guarantee of the final cost of the application. We will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

Disbursements are costs that are payable to third parties, such as court fees. We handle the payment of these disbursements on your behalf. Disbursements include court fees, probate fees, and other fees. We will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

The above is a general indication of the stages of the process. However, some stages may be more complex than others. We will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

How long will my application take? This depends on the complexity of the case. We will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

Disbursements are costs that are payable to third parties, such as court fees. We handle the payment of these disbursements on your behalf. Disbursements include court fees, probate fees, and other fees. We will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

On a typical case, we will provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred. We will also provide a final invoice for the actual costs incurred.

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\*The Attorneys are from Home Office property ward the Home Office ask you significantly more than the law, we will give you a clear indication (and discuss accurately the possibility of us liaising with you at a specific appropriate time.

This could be between X and X hours of work.

You should also be aware that ground rent and the service charge are likely to apply for the rest of your ownership of the property. We will confirm the ground rent and the anticipated service charge as soon as this we receive this information.

The receipt of this information depends on the number of documents, whether they need to be translated, whether anything is missing and how long it will take to obtain the missing documents Disbursements (not included in Stamp Duty Land Tax or Land Transaction Tax costs set out above):

This depends on the purchase price of your property. You can calculate Disbursements are costs related to your matter that are payable to third parties, such as visa fees. We handle the payment of the disbursements on your behalf to ensure a smoother process. [\[https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/calculate-stamp-duty-land-tax/#/intro\]](https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/calculate-stamp-duty-land-tax/#/intro) or if the property is located in Wales by using the [Welsh Revenue Authority's website \[https://www.gov.wales/land-transaction-tax-calculator\]](https://www.gov.wales/land-transaction-tax-calculator)

• Interpreters fees at £X per hour. This kind of application will normally require between X-X hours with an interpreter, depending on the complexity of your case. **Grand total £X** (This will give clients a clear understanding of the total cost of the transaction and so the full funds the client will need to complete it.)

• Independent expert reports e.g. medical experts. These are not required in many cases: we will let you know as soon as possible if we consider an expert report is necessary.

The precise stages involved in the purchase of a residential leasehold property vary according to the circumstances. However, below we have suggested some key stages that you may wish to include.

The costs quoted here do not include:

- Take your instructions and give you initial advice
- Check finances are in place to fund purchase and contact lender's solicitors if needed
- Any **Home Office fees** [\[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table) for making the application. You will pay this to the Home Office directly as part of the application process.
- Receive and advise on contract documents.
- Carry out searches
- Where the Home Office refuse your application, advice and assistance in relation to any appeal
- Obtain further planning documentation if required
- Make any necessary enquiries of seller's solicitor
- Give you advice on all documents and information received

**How long will my application take?**

- Go through conditions of mortgage offer
- Send final contract to you for signature

We can't guarantee how long the Home Office will take to process your application. **Read the current processing times** [\[https://www.gov.uk/visa-process-times\]](https://www.gov.uk/visa-process-times)

Advise you on joint ownership

- Obtain pre-completion searches

- Agree completion date (date from which you own the property)

We will normally be able to submit this type of application within X weeks of you instructing us, but we will let you know at the earliest opportunity if it is likely to take longer than this.

- Exchange contracts and notify you that this has happened
- Arrange for all monies needed to be received from lender and you
- Complete purchase

Please note the anticipated number of hours and fees are an estimate based on the facts above. All applications are likely to vary and of course, we can give you a more accurate estimate once we have more information about your specific case.

**How long will my house purchase take?**

How long it will take from your offer being accepted until you can move into your house will depend on a number of factors. The average process

takes between X-X weeks. It can be quicker or slower, depending on the parties in the chain. For example, if you are a first time buyer, purchasing a new build property with a mortgage in principle, it could take X weeks. However, if you are buying a leasehold property that requires an extension of the lease, this can take significantly longer, between X and X months. In such, a situation additional charges would apply.

\* Our fee assumes that:

- a. this is a standard transaction and that no unforeseen matters arise including for example (but not limited to) a defect in title which requires remedying prior to completion or the preparation of additional documents ancillary to the main transaction
- b. this is the assignment of an existing lease and is not the grant of a new lease
- c. the transaction is concluded in a timely manner and no unforeseen complication arise
- d. all parties to the transaction are co-operative and there is no unreasonable delay from third parties providing documentation
- e. no indemnity policies are required. Additional disbursements may apply if indemnity policies are required.

If you wish to use an online quote calculator for residential conveyancing

Below is list of things you may wish to consider if you use an online quote calculator for conveyancing matters. You could, if you wish, build questions to find out the following information:

- value of the property
- first-time buyer
- re-mortgage
- freehold or leasehold
- new build
- first registration of title
- whether a mortgage or not, or Islamic mortgage
- in purchase cases, whether primary residence, buy to let or second/holiday home
- multiple owners
- shared ownership scheme
- using a help to buy scheme, and whether it is an equity loan or ISA
- purchase under right to buy
- purchase at auction
- property has been repossessed

NB: This list is not intended to be exhaustive. The important point is that the information you request should generate the total cost. Please note that any disbursements (save for Stamp Duty/Land Transaction Tax) should be included in the total cost quoted to consumers.