

Nathan Blake

Employee

7159235

Agreement Date: 18 March 2024

Decision - Agreement

Outcome: Regulatory settlement agreement

Outcome date: 18 March 2024

Published date: 3 April 2024

Firm details

Firm or organisation at time of matters giving rise to outcome

Name: Patterson Law Limited

Address(es): Wharf Road, NEWTON ABBOT, TQ12 2DA

Firm ID: 537662

Outcome details

This outcome was reached by agreement.

Decision details

1. Agreed Outcome

1.1 Nathan Blake a former employee of Patterson Law Limited (the Firm), a licensed body, agrees to the following outcome to the investigation of his conduct by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA):

- a. From the date of this agreement, Mr Blake is disqualified under section 99 of the Legal Services Act 2007 from:
 - i. Acting as Head of Legal Practice of any licensed body
 - ii. Acting as Head of Finance and Administration of any licensed body
 - iii. Being a manager of any licensed body, or
 - iv. Being employed by any licensed body
- b. To pay the investigation costs of £300.

1.2 In this agreement the term 'licensed body' means a body which holds a licence in force under Part 5 of the Legal Services Act 2007



2. Summary of facts

2.1 Mr Blake worked for the firm defending road traffic offence matters. He had instructed a barrister to represent Client A at a hearing on 21 August 2023.

2.2 On 17 August 2023 Mr Blake contacted Client A to remind him of the hearing. Client A responded that he thought an adjournment request had been made. Mr Blake emailed the client to say he will send a barrister to make the application to adjourn at Court or try and deal with the case.

2.3 On 21 August 2023 the barrister spoke to Client A who informed him that Mr Blake had made an adjournment request to the Court a few weeks before. The barrister emailed Mr Blake for a copy of the request.

2.4 Five minutes after the email was received, Mr Blake drafted an adjournment request dating it 26 July 2023. He then forwarded it to the barrister who submitted it to the Court.

2.5 As a result of the above a review of Mr Blake's caseload was carried out by the Firm who found three other documents that caused concern:

- a. Representations were drafted and sent to the Police on 5 September 2023 dated 25 August 2023. Mr Blake explained to his supervisor that he had done the representations but saved them to the wrong file.
- b. Mr Blake also drafted a response to a Single Justice Procedure Notice on 25 July 2023 but dated it 17 July 2023. The response was still in time so there is no obvious reason for the backdating. Mr Blake has no recollection of this.
- c. Mr Blake drafted and sent representations to the Police on 11 September 2023 dated 7 August 2023. He had told the client representations would be made when contacted on 31 July 2023, but it was not until the client chased him at the end of August that the representations were prepared. Mr Blake had no explanation but has said that this was not intentional.

3. Admissions

3.1 Nathan Blake makes the following admissions which the SRA accepts that by agreeing to the conduct summarised above he breached the following SRA Principles and Rules:

- a. Principle 4 which states you act – with honesty, and;
- b. SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs Rule 1.4 : You do not mislead or attempt to mislead your clients, the court or others, either by your own acts or omissions or allowing or being complicit in the acts or omissions of others (including your client).

4. Why the agreed outcome is appropriate



Section 99 disqualification

4.1 The SRA and Mr Blake agree that disqualification is appropriate because:

- a. The firm is a licensed body.
- b. Mr Blake has breached rules as described in Paragraph 3 above which, by virtue of section 176 Legal Services Act 2007 (LSA), applied to him as he was an 'employee' of the firm.
- c. The conditions in rule 5 of the SRA's Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedure Rules (RDPRs) are met, in that:
 - i. It is undesirable for Mr Blake to engage in the activities listed in 1.1(a) of this agreement, and
 - ii. Disqualification is a proportionate outcome in the public interest because it will prevent Mr Blake from undertaking a similar role at another firm and helps maintain trust in the profession as a whole.

4.2 It is undesirable for Mr Blake to engage in the activities listed in paragraph 1.1(a) of this agreement, for the following reasons:

- a. In the matter of Client A, Mr Blake forwarded a backdated application to present to the Court. His conduct was dishonest and lacking integrity because at the time of drafting the application he knew it had not previously been submitted and that the application did not accurately reflect the position of his client's matter.
- b. In the three further matters Mr Blake has shown a propensity to mislead clients and others. He has been unable to explain why documents found to have been created on the Firm's computer system have been labelled with an earlier date. His conduct was dishonest and lacking integrity.

4.3 In deciding that disqualification is proportionate, the SRA has taken into account of the disqualification criteria in rule 5 of the RDPRs and the following mitigation which Mr Blake has put forward:

- a. Mr Blake has fully admitted the misconduct to the SRA and cooperated with its investigation. He admitted he panicked and that there is no excuse.
- b. Mr Blake received no financial benefit from his conduct.

5. Publication

5.1 The SRA considers it is appropriate that this agreement is published both in the interests of transparency in the regulatory process and due to the regulatory legal guidance which demands publication when dealing with a licensed body.

5.2 The Legal Services Board rules (Registers of licensed bodies: section 87(4) rules (version 2)' dated April 2018) state that the SRA, as a

licensing authority, must publish a register of licensed bodies. This register must include details of any enforcement action or sanction on the licensed body, its owner or any employee not including administrative fines.

6. Acting in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement

6.1 Mr Blake agrees that he will not deny the admitted acts and will not act in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement.

7. Costs

7.1 Mr Blake agrees to pay the costs of the SRA's investigation in the sum of £300. Such costs are due within 28 days of a statement of costs due being issued by the SRA.

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