

# **Katherine Broadbent**

## **Employee**

### **817695**

[Employee-related decision Date: 16 September 2021](#)

## **Decision - Employee-related decision**

Outcome: Control of non-qualified staff (Section 43 / Section 99 order)

Outcome date: 16 September 2021

Published date: 20 September 2021

## **Firm details**

### **Firm or organisation at time of matters giving rise to outcome**

Name: Sills & Betteridge LLP

Address(es): Aquis House, Clasketgate, Lincoln, LN2 1JN

Firm ID: 499219

## **Outcome details**

This outcome was reached by SRA decision.

### **Decision details**

#### **1. Agreed outcome**

1.1 Katherine Broadbent, a former employee of Sills & Betteridge LLP (the Firm), agrees to the following outcome to the investigation of her conduct by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA):

- a. to the SRA making an order under section 43 of the Solicitors Act 1974 (a section 43 order) in relation to her that, from the date of this agreement:
  - i. no solicitor shall employ or remunerate her in connection with his practice as a solicitor
  - ii. no employee of a solicitor shall employ or remunerate her in connection with the solicitor's practice
  - iii. no recognised body shall employ or remunerate her
  - iv. no manager or employee of a recognised body shall employ or remunerate her in connection with the business of that body



- v. no recognised body or manager or employee of such a body shall permit her to be a manager of the body
- vi. no recognised body or manager or employee of such body shall permit her to have an interest in the body

- except in accordance with the SRA's prior permission
- b. to the publication of this agreement
- c. she will pay the costs of the investigation of £300.

## **Reasons/basis**

### **2. Summary of facts**

2.1 Ms Broadbent is a fellow (chartered legal executive) of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx).

2.2 Between 20 January 2020 and 20 October 2020, Ms Broadbent was employed by the Firm within its residential conveyancing department.

2.3 Ms Broadbent acted for joint clients in a property purchase that was due to complete on 29 September 2020.

2.4 On the day of completion, the Developer's solicitors informed Ms Broadbent that the transaction could not be completed until they had received a title plan which had been signed by her clients.

2.5 Due to the differing locations of her Clients on the day of completion, Ms Broadbent knew that she would not be able to arrange for her clients to sign the title plan so that completion could take place on 29 September 2020.

2.6 Ms Broadbent therefore signed the title plan herself using one of her clients' signatures and sent it to the sellers' solicitors. This led them to believe that her clients had signed the title plan.

2.7 The Firm became aware of what Ms Broadbent had done and carried out an investigation. A disciplinary hearing was held on 19 October 2020 and Ms Broadbent was dismissed on 20 October 2020.

2.8 The Firm made a report to the SRA on 8 January 2021.

### **3. Admissions**

3.1 Ms Broadbent makes the following admissions which the SRA accepts:

- a. she fabricated one of her clients' signatures on the title plan that she sent to the seller's solicitors
- b. her conduct was dishonest, and



- c. her conduct was such that it is undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice.

#### **4. Why a section 43 order is appropriate**

4.1 The SRA's Enforcement Strategy and its guidance on how it regulates non-authorised persons, sets out its approach to using section 43 orders to control where a non-authorised person can work.

4.2 When considering whether a section 43 order is appropriate in this matter, the SRA has taken into account the admissions made by Ms Broadbent and the following mitigation:

- a. Ms Broadbent fully admitted her conduct to both the Firm and the SRA, and
- b. Ms Broadbent has fully cooperated with the SRA's investigation.

4.3 The SRA and Ms Broadbent agree that a section 43 order is appropriate because:

- a. Ms Broadbent is not a solicitor
- b. her employment at the Firm means that she was involved in a legal practice
- c. by signing herself using one of her clients' signatures on the title plan, Ms Broadbent has occasioned or been party to an act or default in relation to a legal practice. Ms Broadbent's conduct in relation to that act or default makes it undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice.

4.4 By signing herself using one of her clients' signatures, she misled the seller's solicitors as to who had signed the title plan. This conduct makes it undesirable for her to be involved in a legal practice because it was dishonest.

#### **5. Publication**

5.1 The SRA considers it appropriate that this agreement is published in the interests of transparency in the regulatory process. Ms Broadbent agrees to the publication of this agreement.

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

6.1 Ms Broadbent agrees that she will not deny the admissions made in this agreement or act in any way which is inconsistent with it.

#### **7. Costs**

7.1 Ms Broadbent 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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