



QUALITY & COMPLIANCE LEGAL

File Review Service

Why should you be concerned?

Under Rule 8.5 of the SRA Authorisation Rules 2011, every solicitors practice in England & Wales must have a Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP) and a Compliance Officer for Finance & Administration (COFA), who will be responsible for reporting material breaches to the SRA and for disclosing any and all non-material breaches in the annual Information Report to the SRA. Your practice must therefore have systems to identify and record both material and non-material breaches.

The most (and, possibly, the only) effective way to identify and record breaches on client matters, which will enable you to fulfil your reporting duties, is to carry out formal, recorded file reviews and to have a system in place to analyse and record the outcomes of file reviews ready for the annual return. The SRA clearly takes the view that file reviews will be necessary under OFR, as guidance notes to Rule 8 of the Authorisation Rules state that common areas for consideration by the COLP and COFA 'will include...file reviews'.

How will a thorough and regular file review process benefit your practice?

- ✓ It will allow you to effectively identify any trends or patterns which can then be addressed at the root, thereby

improving the service to clients and reducing the risk of complaints and claims.

- ✓ It will help to demonstrate to your Professional Indemnity Insurer that you have proper management procedures in place to reduce risk.
- ✓ It will provide evidence for the SRA of compliance with Chapter 7 of the Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2011, which requires you to have 'effective systems and controls in place to achieve and comply with all the Principles, rules and outcomes ... of the Handbook'.

Why outsource to Quality & Compliance Legal?

- ✓ Your file reviews will be safe in the hands of our high-calibre, professional auditors.
- ✓ Our highly trained team are either legal or accountancy professionals or experienced auditors in the legal sector.
- ✓ Our file audit system is subject to a rigorous quality assurance process and we provide regular in-house training to our auditors, to ensure that our high standards are maintained.
- ✓ We can provide a cost-effective and competitive service, which allows your senior managers and fee earners to spend their valuable time fee

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earning rather than conducting file reviews. Our management reports will ensure that senior managers still retain supervisory control of their team members.

- ✓ We can ensure that your file reviews are not pushed down the 'to do' list, leaving compliance gaps that would be evident on 3rd party audit.
- ✓ Our service offers a practical and cost effective alternative to employing in-house auditors, particularly with the salaries and associated on-costs of employing an audit team.
- ✓ External auditing alleviates the potential problems experienced with in-house file auditing where the outcomes can be influenced by the status or personality of the person being audited. Ask yourself whether your firm's Partners are subject to the same degree of rigour in relation to file auditing as one of your more junior fee earners?

What can we offer?

- We will meet with you initially to discuss and assess your requirements. We can tailor our file reviews to meet any specific needs, such as compliance with the terms of a service level agreement with your client(s), in addition to standard regulatory compliance issues.
- We can offer you monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly audit days or multiple audit days each month, depending on the size of your practice and how many fee earners and offices you have.

- We will provide a report after each audit period that analyses the issues or trends identified in the file reviews, in order to allow you to demonstrate compliance, report breaches and take preventative action.
- File reviews will be carried out at your offices, negating the risk of lost files or breaches of confidentiality.
- We provide our File Review Service across England and Wales and travel within a 50 mile radius of our auditor's home is included.
- Typical rates for our file auditing service vary subject to your requirements and the number of days needed. Please telephone us so that we can give you a quote without obligation.

Who are we?

Rebecca Curran and Elaine Robinson are both experienced solicitors (non-practising) and former SRA auditors, we are also Lexcel Consultants and SQM Auditors. We both have extensive experience of conducting monitoring visits to law firms of all sizes and areas of practice. We have a unique insight into the challenges faced by law firms to keep up to speed with the ever increasing burden of their regulatory obligations and we are well placed to give practical and meaningful advice and support.

We are happy to discuss your File Review requirements with you, without obligation, so please feel free to contact either Rebecca or Elaine.

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Practice Management Standard
Law Society Consultant

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