

## The Legal Quality Standard of Ireland



### JANUARY 2025 - ARTICLES & ITEMS OF INTEREST

#### **SOLICITOR STRUCK OFF FOR FAILING TO VERIFY KNOWN CLIENT'S ID IN PERSON**

On the 22 January 2026, the Law Society of England and Wales published an article setting out the circumstances how a senior solicitor who failed to check in person the identity documents of a client whom he had known for years had been struck off the roll.

Nicholas Andrew Jackson, admitted in August 2002, certified copies of the client's passport and driving licence without seeing the originals.

Jackson, representing himself before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal last October, had argued he was justified to certify as originals the high-quality images of the documents he had been sent. He submitted that the originality of the document lay in the information it contains and not in its status as a physical object, and he relied on a 'chain of trust' with the client, whom he had represented for six years.

But the tribunal said the requirement to meet a client in person and inspect original documents before certification was 'fundamental' to the integrity of the process.

Its ruling, published this week, states: 'When the respondent certified the documents as true copies of the originals, he had been fully aware that he had not inspected the originals and

had not met [the client] for that purpose. He was an experienced commercial property lawyer and must have been aware of the requirements of legal certification.'

Jackson was struck off and ordered to pay £30,480 costs.

To view this article in full see ['I've known him for years': Chester solicitor struck off after relying on 'chain of trust' instead of verifying client ID | Law Gazette](#)

## **FURTHER REPORTS OF SOLICITORS BEING STRUCK OFF IN THE UK**

The Irish Legal News this month published two further articles relating to Solicitors being struck off by the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal in the UK.

A London lawyer who falsely claimed he needed cancer treatment and submitted a forged medical letter to his employer has been struck off.

To view see [England: Lawyer struck off after lying about cancer treatment and forging doctor's letter | Irish Legal News](#)

A solicitor who claimed she was working an average of 28 hours per day has been struck off the roll in England and Wales. The misleading time entries were used to bill the Legal Aid Agency (LAA), which ultimately overpaid more than £98,000 to the firm where Ahmed worked, which it subsequently had to repay.

To view article in full see [England: Solicitor who said she worked 28 hours a day struck off | Irish Legal News](#)

## **AI AND THE EVOLVING ROLE OF SOLICITORS**

On the 30 January 2026, the Law Society of England and Wales published an article titled 'AI and the evolving role of solicitors'.

The authors John McElroy and Kurt Shead discuss recent cases (namely Ayinde v London Borough of Haringey and Al-Haroun v Qatar National Bank) which have exposed the dangers of unverified AI outputs and the need for legal professionals to adapt. For solicitors, this means carefully checking documents that include AI-generated content, staying alert to ethical considerations and actively managing potential risks.

The Ayinde and Al-Haroun judgment marks one of the first times the Divisional Court has been required to directly address AI misuse by legal professionals. In her judgment, the president of the King's Bench Division, Dame Victoria Sharp, spoke of the absolute necessity of ensuring that AI-generated content is properly verified. The court criticised the submission of pleadings containing fabricated citations produced by generative AI, holding that such conduct could amount to professional misconduct and result in wasted costs orders or regulatory referrals. The court reiterated that legal representatives are personally responsible for all material submitted, regardless of its source, and warned that failure to verify AI-generated research could constitute negligence.

The authors state the following points are worth keeping in mind:

- **Verification:** All AI-assisted research, drafting and evidence must be checked for accuracy. Failure to do so risks wasted costs and reputational harm.
- **Ethical duties:** The SRA Principles require solicitors to act in a client’s best interests and to act in a way which upholds public trust and confidence in their profession, which now extends to understanding the limitations and risks of AI tools.
- **Internal governance:** Law firms should implement protocols for AI use, including training, oversight and policies on consumer AI platforms, to protect confidentiality and privilege.
- **Regulatory engagement:** Active participation in consultations with the Law Society, ICO and FCA will help shape emerging standards and anticipate compliance expectations.

To view this article in full see [Civil litigation: AI and the evolving role of solicitors | Law Gazette](#)

### **EMPLOYMENT (CONTRACTUAL RETIREMENT AGES) ACT 2025**

On the 16 December 2025, the Employment (Contractual Retirement Ages) Act 2025 was signed into law but is not effective until a ministerial order is made commencing the Act.

The Act provides that an employee may notify his or her employer that he or she does not consent to retire at the contractual retirement age; to provide that an employer who receives such notification may not enforce the contractual retirement age where the employee is less than the pensionable age unless the retirement of the employee concerned is objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary; to further provide for the prohibition of penalisation resulting from such notification; for those and other purposes to amend the Workplace Relations Act 2015; and to provide for related matters.

This Act shall apply to an employee who — (a) is subject to a contract of employment that specifies a contractual retirement age that is less than the pensionable age, and (b) has completed his or her probationary period, if any. The Act shall not apply to (a) an employee whose employment is subject to a maximum retirement age required by law at which the employee is obliged to retire or be retired from an employer, or (b) an employee whose employment is subject to a maximum service limit (however expressed) required by law at which a person or class of persons could be, or is, obliged to retire or be retired or discharged from an employer and which could differ from the pensionable age.

To view the act in full see [a1625.pdf](#)

### **CODE OF PRACTICE ON ACCESS TO PART-TIME WORKING**

On the 22 January 2026, the Minister of State for Small Businesses, Retail and Employment at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Alan Dillon, signed into law a revised Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Working. Prepared by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), the updated Code provides practical guidance to help employers and employees agree part-time arrangements that support flexible, inclusive and modern workplaces.

To view this press release and a link to the revised code see [Minister Dillon approves updated Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Working](#)

## **WRC ORDERS SOLICITOR TO PAY €21,000 TO A FORMER LEGAL SECRETARY FOR UNFAIR DISMISSAL**

On the 27 January 2026, Law Society of Ireland top stories published an article with a link to the WRC findings whereby a north county Dublin-based solicitor was ordered by the WRC to pay €21,000 to a former legal secretary who was summarily dismissed just weeks after disclosing her pregnancy.

On 16 August 2024, the complainant submitted a complaint of unfair dismissal under section 8 of the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977.

WRC adjudication officer Patricia Owens ruled that Ashimedua Okonkwo, practicing as Cyril & Co Solicitors, breached the Employment Equality Act 1998 (EEA) by discriminating against Michele Merrigan on the grounds of gender.

Merrigan, who had worked at the firm for 13 months, told the WRC that the atmosphere changed after she shared her pregnancy news in January 2024. She testified to feeling "guilty" and stressed by what the WRC described as a "persistent" and "intrusive" focus on her due date and future maternity leave.

On 14 March 2024, Merrigan received a termination letter via email. She was given no prior warning, no investigation, and no opportunity to defend herself or appeal the decision.

Okonkwo denied the dismissal was pregnancy-related, instead citing "gross misconduct" due to administrative errors and had lost all "trust and confidence" in her employee.

Despite the solicitor's arguments, the WRC found the defence to be "unsustainable". Adjudication officer Owens noted that there was no history of performance issues prior to the pregnancy and that the "basic mistakes" made in the dismissal process were "inexcusable" for a legal professional.

The lack of a formal disciplinary process was deemed fatal to the firm's defence.

The WRC concluded that the administrative errors were used as a "contrived" excuse to remove Merrigan because her pregnancy had become an "inconvenience" to the legal practice.

Owens decided that the respondent failed to rebut the prima facie case of discrimination on the ground of gender and that the complaint was well founded.

To view this article in full and for the link to the WRC case see [WRC tells solicitor to pay €21,000 to sacked worker](#)

## **LAW SOCIETY URGES SOLICITORS TO UPDATE CONTACT DETAILS**

On the 5 January 2026, the Law Society of Ireland, Top Stories asked that solicitors who have moved firm to change their contact details to inform the Law Society of any updates.

To view this and for the Law Society links to update details see [Solicitors urged to update contact details](#)

## **DATA BREACH - UK COMPANY FINED £1.2 MILLION**

In a recently published article on the Information Commissioners Office website, it stated how it had fined password manager provider LastPass UK Ltd £1.2 million following a 2022 data breach that compromised the personal information of up to 1.6 million of its UK users.

They found that LastPass failed to implement sufficiently robust technical and security measures, which ultimately enabled a hacker to gain unauthorised access to its backup database. There is no evidence that hackers were able to unencrypt customer passwords as these are stored locally on customer devices and not by LastPass.

The incidents occurred in August 2022 when a hacker gained access first to a corporate laptop of an employee based in Europe and then to a US-based employee's personal laptop on which the hacker implanted malware and then was able to capture the employee's master password. The combined detail from both incidents enabled the hacker to access LastPass' backup database and take personal information which included customer names, emails, phone numbers, and stored website URLs.

John Edwards, UK Information Commissioner, said: "Password managers are a safe and effective tool for businesses and the public to manage their numerous login details, and we continue to encourage their use. However, as is clear from this incident, businesses offering these services should ensure that system access and use is restricted to ensure risks of attack are significantly reduced."

The article offers the following **Advice and guidance**.

We urge organisations to ensure internal security policies explicitly consider and address data breach risks. Where risks are identified access should be restricted to specific user groups.

Businesses wishing to review their procedures should turn to our and the National Cyber Security Centre websites which provide a rich source of information detailing ways to improve practices including [Working from home – security checklist for employers](#), [Data security guidance](#) and [Device security guidance](#).

To view this article in full see [Password manager provider fined £1.2m by ICO for data breach | ICO](#)