

Connor Johnson

Employee

7156304

[Employee-related decision Date: 21 November 2024](#)

Decision - Employee-related decision

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

Outcome date: 21 November 2024

Published date: 19 December 2024

Firm details

Firm or organisation at time of matters giving rise to outcome

Name: NewLaw Legal Limited

Address(es): Helmont House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2HE, Wales

Firm ID: 567578

Outcome details

This outcome was reached by SRA decision.

Reasons/basis

1. Agreed outcome

1.1 Connor Johnson, a former employee of NewLaw Legal Limited ('the Firm'), agrees to the following outcome to the investigation of his conduct by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA):

- a. From the date of this agreement, he is disqualified under section 99 of the Legal Service 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 a licensed body
 - iv. being employed by any licensed body
- b. to the publication of this agreement
- c. to pay the costs of the investigation of £300.

2. Summary of facts



2.1 Connor Johnson (Mr Johnson') was employed as a Case Manager (paralegal) at the Firm, from 14 May 2018 until 19 October 2022. In his role as Case Manager, Mr Johnson was responsible for managing a caseload of claimant personal injury files.

2.2 During an audit undertaken by the Firm, it was identified that calls recorded by Mr Johnson on the Firm's case management system did not match that of the Firm's call logs. Mr Johnson's workload monitor recorded that he made 111 outbound calls between 1 and 31 August 2022. This figure was drawn from the attendance notes that Mr Johnson generated across his client files. However, following an internal audit carried out by the Firm, it was identified from its call recording software that Mr Johnson made only 9 outbound calls during this period.

2.3 In respect of one of the cases where this pattern of behaviour was observed, referred to as the 'SJ file', a witness statement prepared by an employee of the Firm (not Mr Johnson) was filed at Court in support of an application to come off the record due to lack of instructions from the client. A total of 76 actions of contact with the client were listed within the witness statement, including 36 purported outgoing calls made by Mr Johnson to the client between 2 April 2020 and 8 September 2022. The Firm's search of its call recording software of all outgoing calls made by Mr Johnson to the client between 1 April 2020 to 14 September 2022, recorded that only one outgoing call was made by Mr Johnson to the client during this period. On 22 September 2022, the Firm filed a corrective witness statement to the Court stating, "we now believe that the 36 telephone calls recorded on the claimant's file made by Connor Johnson to the Claimant and which were recorded as "unanswered" telephone calls, were not made".

2.4 Mr Johnson would have known at the time, that creating attendance notes of calls that had not been made would create misleading records for the Firm regarding the attempts of contact made with clients. Nevertheless, Mr Johnson made the conscious and deliberate decision to generate false attendance notes, across a number of files, over a prolonged period of time.

2.5 Furthermore, it was identified that between 12 July 2022 and 12 September 2022, Mr Johnson re-allocated 16 case files to other Case Managers in his team without their knowledge. 10 of these files were transferred between 1 and 7 September 2022. The Firm's internal review, documented the pattern of Mr Johnson's conduct in re-allocating cases to his colleagues promptly after receiving the files in his name. In one example, Mr Johnson re-allocated a case to a colleague within 4 minutes of it being allocated to him. Notably, on 12 September 2022, Mr Johnson transferred a case file that had been allocated to him to a colleague and manually postponed the task which informs file handlers of their new allocation, so that it would appear in the task list the following morning. The evidence indicates that Mr Johnson may have taken steps to try and



conceal his conduct by postponing allocation tasks, to make it appear that he had not re-allocated the file.

3. Admissions

3.1 Connor Johnson makes the following admissions which the SRA accepts:

- a. between approximately 28 September 2021 and 31 August 2022, he created, or caused to be created, false attendance notes that were uploaded on client files, which purportedly indicated that he attempted to contact clients by way of telephone and that the calls were unanswered, in circumstances where he knew that no such calls had been made. In doing so he breached principles 2, 4 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.
- b. between approximately 12 July 2022 and 12 September 2022, he wrongly transferred files that were allocated to other colleagues, without the colleagues' and/or the Firm's knowledge and authority, in an attempt to reduce his own workload, and in doing so breached principles 2, 4 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019.

3.2 Mr Johnson agrees, and the SRA accepts, that his conduct means that it is undesirable for him to be engaged in activities mentioned in section 1.1 (a) (i-iv).

4. Why a section 99 disqualification 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 99 disqualification orders.

4.2 Mr Johnson and the SRA agree that a disqualification order is appropriate because:

- a. the Firm is a Licensed Body
- b. Mr Johnson has breached rules as described in paragraph 3 above which, by virtue of section 176 of the Legal Services Act 2007, applied to him
- c. The conditions in rule 5 of the SRA Disciplinary Procedure Rules 2018 (DPR) are met, in that:
 - i. it is undesirable for Mr Johnson to engage in the activities listed in paragraph 1.1(a) of this agreement, and
 - ii. disqualification is a proportionate outcome in the public interest because it will prevent Mr Johnson from undertaking a similar role at another firm and helps maintain public trust in the profession.

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



- a. The dishonest nature of his conduct means that it would be undesirable for Mr Johnson to work at a licensed body or an authorised body.
- b. Mr Johnson's conduct demonstrated that he acted with a lack of integrity and a reckless disregard for the risk of harm and his regulatory obligations as an employee of an authorised body.
- c. Furthermore, the nature of the conduct undermines the public trust and confidence in Mr Johnson and the profession. The public is entitled to expect that robust action is taken to uphold the standards of the legal profession.

4.4 In deciding that disqualification is proportionate, the SRA has taken into account the disqualification criteria in rule 3.1(c) of the DPR and the following mitigation which Mr Johnson has put forward:

- a. Mr Johnson has shown remorse for his conduct.
- b. He has fully co-operated with the SRA investigation and has made early admissions.
- c. Mr Johnson has provided personal mitigation regarding his health at the material time.

5. Publication

5.1 The SRA will publish this decision. This is a requirement of the Legal Services Board's rules. We must publish information on enforcement action or sanctions imposed against a licensed body or manager or employee of a licensed body. There is no discretion in the rules for us not to do this.

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

6.1 Connor Johnson agrees that he will not deny the admissions made in this agreement or act in any way which is inconsistent with it.

7. Costs

7.1 Connor Johnson 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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