



# Solicitors Act 1974

## 1974 CHAPTER 47

### PART II

#### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE OF SOLICITORS AND CLERKS

#### *[<sup>F1</sup> Examination of files*

#### Textual Amendments

**F1** S. 44B added by [Administration of Justice Act 1985 \(c. 61, SIF 34\)](#), ss. 2, 69(5), [Sch. 9 para. 2](#)

#### **<sup>F2</sup>44B** Provision of information and documents by solicitors etc

- (1) The Society may by notice require a person to whom this section applies—
  - (a) to provide information, or information of a description, specified in the notice, or
  - (b) produce documents, or documents of a description, specified in the notice.
- (2) This section applies to—
  - (a) a solicitor;
  - (b) an employee of a solicitor;
  - (c) a recognised body;
  - (d) an employee or manager of, or a person with an interest in, a recognised body.
- (3) The Society may give a notice under this section only if it is satisfied that it is necessary to do so for the purpose of investigating—
  - (a) whether there has been professional misconduct by a solicitor;
  - (b) whether a solicitor, or an employee of a solicitor, has failed to comply with any requirements imposed by or by virtue of this Act or any rules made by the Society;
  - (c) whether a recognised body, or any of its managers or employees has failed to comply with any requirement imposed by or by virtue of the Administration

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- of Justice Act 1985 or any rules made by the Society and applicable to the body, manager or employee by virtue of section 9 of that Act;
- (d) whether there are grounds for making, or making an application to the Tribunal for it to make, an order under section 43(2) with respect to a person who is or was involved in a legal practice (within the meaning of section 43(1A)).
- (4) A notice under this section—
- (a) may specify the time and place at which, and manner and form in which, the information is to be provided or document is to be produced;
- (b) must specify the period within which the information is to be provided or the document produced;
- (c) may require the information to be provided or document to be produced to the Society or to a person specified in the notice.
- (5) The Society may pay to any person such reasonable costs as may be incurred by that person in connection with the provision of any information, or production of any document, by that person pursuant to a notice under this section.
- (6) Paragraphs 9(3) and (4) and 13, 15 and 16 of Schedule 1 apply in relation to the powers to obtain information conferred by this section, but for this purpose—
- (a) paragraph 9 of that Schedule has effect as if—
- (i) in sub-paragraph (3) for “such documents” there were substituted “information to which a notice given to him under section 44B applies”,
- (ii) in that sub-paragraph for “sub-paragraph (1)” there were substituted “the notice”, and
- (iii) in sub-paragraph (4) for “produce” (in the first place) to the end there were substituted “provide information pursuant to a notice under section 44B to provide the information to any person appointed by the Society at such time and place as may be specified in the order.”, and
- (b) the reference to the solicitor or his personal representative in paragraph 13 of that Schedule is to be construed as a reference to the person to whom the notice was given under this section.
- (7) Paragraphs 9 (other than sub-paragraphs (1) and (3)), 12, 13, 15 and 16 of Schedule 1 apply in relation to the powers to obtain documents conferred by this section as they apply in relation to the powers conferred by paragraph 9(1) of that Schedule, except that for this purpose—
- (a) any reference in paragraph 9 of that Schedule to a person appointed, or to a requirement, under sub-paragraph (1) of that paragraph is to be construed as a reference to a person appointed, or to a requirement to produce documents, under this section,
- (b) any reference in that paragraph to any such documents as are mentioned in paragraph 9(1) of that Schedule is to be construed as a reference to any documents to which a notice under this section applies,
- (c) the references to the solicitor or his firm in paragraph 9(5) and (6) of that Schedule, and the reference to the solicitor or personal representative in paragraph 9(7) of that Schedule, are to be construed as references to the person to whom the notice was given under this section, and

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- (d) the reference in paragraph 9(12) of that Schedule to the Society is to be construed as including a reference to a person specified under subsection (4) (c).
- (8) Where powers conferred by Part 2 of Schedule 1 to the 1974 Act are exercisable in relation to a person within paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) of subsection (2), they continue to be so exercisable after the person has ceased to be a person within the paragraph in question.
- (9) In this section—  
“manager” has the same meaning as in the Legal Services Act 2007 (see section 207 of that Act);  
“recognised body” means a body recognised under section 9 of the Administration of Justice Act 1985;  
and the reference to a person who has an interest in a recognised body is to be construed in accordance with sections 72 and 109 of the Legal Services Act 2007.]]

#### Textual Amendments

- F2** Ss. 44B-44BC substituted (31.3.2009) for s. 44B by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 177, 211, [Sch. 16 para. 44](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(b\)\(i\)](#) (subject to [art. 4](#))

#### Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 44B extended in part (with modifications) (1.7.2009) by [The Registered Foreign Lawyers Order 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1589\)](#), [art. 3\(2\)\(i\)](#), [Sch.](#)
- C2** S. 44B extended (22.5.2000) by S.I. 2000/1119, regs. 1, 37(3), [Sch. 4 para. 7\(2\)](#) (as amended (1.7.2009) by [The Legal Services Act 2007 \(Registered European Lawyers\) Order 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1587\)](#), [art. 3\(7\)\(c\)](#))
- C3** S. 44B modified (temp.) (31.3.2009) by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 209, 211, [Sch. 22 para. 13](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(e\)](#)
- C4** Ss. 44B(4)-(7) applied (with modifications) by [Administration of Justice Act 1985 \(c. 61, SIF 34\)](#), [Sch. 2 para. 14ZA\(4\)](#) (as inserted (1.11.2015) by [The Legal Services Act 2007 \(The Law Society\) \(Modification of Functions\) Order 2015 \(S.I. 2015/401\)](#), [art. 1\(3\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 20\(4\)](#))

### [<sup>F3</sup> 44BA Power to require explanation of document or information

- (1) The Society may, by notice, require a person to whom a notice is given under section 44B (or a representative of the person) to attend at a time and place specified in the notice to provide an explanation of any information provided or document produced pursuant to the notice.
- (2) The Society may pay to any person such reasonable costs as may be incurred by that person in connection with that person's compliance with a requirement imposed under subsection (1).
- (3) Paragraphs 9(3) and (4) and 13, 15 and 16 of Schedule 1 apply in relation to a notice under this section, except that for this purpose—  
(a) paragraph 9 of that Schedule has effect as if—  
(i) in sub-paragraph (3) for “having” to “sub-paragraph (1)” there were substituted “refuses, neglects or otherwise fails to comply with a requirement under section 44BA(1)”, and

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- (ii) in sub-paragraph (4) for “produce” (in the first place) to the end there were substituted “ provide an explanation of any information provided or document produced pursuant to a notice under section 44B (or a representative of such a person) to attend at a time and place specified in the order to provide an explanation of any information so provided or document so produced. ”, and
- (b) the reference to the solicitor or his personal representative in paragraph 13 of that Schedule is to be construed as a reference to the person to whom the notice was given under this section.

#### **Textual Amendments**

**F3** Ss. 44B-44BC substituted (31.3.2009) for s. 44B by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 177, 211, [Sch. 16 para. 44](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(b\)\(i\)](#) (subject to art. 4)

#### **Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

**C5** S. 44BA applied by 1985 c. 61, Sch. 2 para. 14ZA(6) (as inserted (1.11.2015) by [The Legal Services Act 2007 \(The Law Society\) \(Modification of Functions\) Order 2015 \(S.I. 2015/401\)](#), art. 1(3), [Sch. 1 para. 20\(4\)](#))

**C6** S. 44BA extended (with modifications) (1.7.2009) by [The Registered Foreign Lawyers Order 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1589\)](#), [art. 5\(d\)](#)

**C7** S. 44BA applied by [Administration of Justice Act 1985 \(c. 61\)](#), Sch. 2 para. 14(6) (as substituted (31.3.2009) by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 177, 211, [Sch. 16 para. 101](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(b\)\(iii\)](#) (subject to art. 4))

### **44BB Provision of information and documents by other persons**

- (1) The High Court, on the application of the Society, may order a person to whom section 44B does not apply—
- (a) to provide information, or information of a description, specified in the notice, or
  - (b) to produce documents, or documents of a description, specified in the notice.
- (2) The High Court may make an order under this section only if it is satisfied—
- (a) that it is likely that the information or document is in the possession or custody of, or under the control of, the person, and
  - (b) that there is reasonable cause to believe that the information or document is likely to be of material significance to an investigation into any of the matters mentioned in section 44B(3)(a) to (d).
- (3) An order under this section may direct the Society to pay to a person specified in the order such reasonable costs as may be incurred by that person in connection with the provision of any information, or production of any document, by that person pursuant to the order.
- (4) Section 44B(4) applies in relation to an order under this section as it applies in relation to a notice under section 44B.
- (5) Paragraphs 9(5A) and (7) to (12), 12, 13, 15 and 16 of Schedule 1 apply in relation to an order under this section as they apply in relation to an order under paragraph 9(4) of that Schedule, except that for this purpose—

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- (a) the reference to the solicitor or personal representative in paragraph 9(7) of that Schedule is to be construed as a reference to the person in respect of whom the order under this section is made,
- (b) the reference in paragraph 9(12) of that Schedule to the Society is to be read as including a reference to a person specified under section 44B(4)(c) (as applied by subsection (4) of this section), and
- (c) the reference to the solicitor or his personal representative in paragraph 13 of that Schedule is to be construed as a reference to the person to whom the notice was given under this section.

#### Textual Amendments

**F3** Ss. 44B-44BC substituted (31.3.2009) for s. 44B by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 177, 211, [Sch. 16 para. 44](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(b\)\(i\)](#) (subject to art. 4)

#### 44BC Information offences

- (1) It is an offence for a person who knows or suspects an investigation into any of the matters mentioned in section 44B(3)(a) to (d) is being or is likely to be conducted—
  - (a) to falsify, conceal, destroy or otherwise dispose of a document which the person knows or suspects is or would be relevant to the investigation, or
  - (b) to cause or permit the falsification, concealment, destruction or disposal of such a document.
- (2) In proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) it is a defence for the accused to show that the accused had no intention of concealing facts disclosed by the documents from the person conducting the investigation.
- (3) It is an offence for a person, in purported compliance with a requirement imposed on the person under section 44B, 44BA or 44BB—
  - (a) to provide information which the person knows to be false or misleading in a material particular, or
  - (b) recklessly to provide information which is false or misleading in a material particular.
- (4) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (1) or (3) is liable—
  - (a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both;
  - (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine, or both.
- (5) In relation to an offence under subsection (1) or (3) committed before the commencement of section 154(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 the reference in subsection (4)(a) to 12 months is to be read as a reference to 6 months.]

#### Textual Amendments

**F3** Ss. 44B-44BC substituted (31.3.2009) for s. 44B by [Legal Services Act 2007 \(c. 29\)](#), ss. 177, 211, [Sch. 16 para. 44](#) (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, [art. 2\(b\)\(i\)](#) (subject to art. 4)

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**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C8** S. 44BC extended (with modifications) (1.7.2009) by S.I. 2000/1119, Sch. 4 para. 7(2)Table (as amended by The Legal Services Act 2007 (Registered European Lawyers) Order 2009 (S.I. 2009/1587), **art. 3(7)(c)**)  
 S. 44BC extended (with modifications) (1.7.2009) by The Registered Foreign Lawyers Order 2009 (S.I. 2009/1589), **art. 5(e)**
- C9** S. 44BC(1)(2) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), **Sch. 2 para. 14ZA(7)** (as inserted (1.11.2015) by The Legal Services Act 2007 (The Law Society) (Modification of Functions) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/401), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 20(4)**)
- C10** S. 44BC(1) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), Sch. 2 para. 14(7) (as substituted (31.3.2009) by Legal Services Act 2007 (c. 29), ss. 177, 211, **Sch. 16 para. 101** (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, **art. 2(b)(i)** (subject to art. 4))
- C11** S. 44BC(2)(4)(5) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), Sch. 2 para. 14(7) (as substituted (31.3.2009) by Legal Services Act 2007 (c. 29), ss. 177, 211, **Sch. 16 para. 101** (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, **art. 2(b)(ii)** (subject to art. 4))
- C12** S. 44BC(3)(4) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), **Sch. 2 para. 14ZA(8)** (as inserted (1.11.2015) by The Legal Services Act 2007 (The Law Society) (Modification of Functions) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/401), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 20(4)**)
- C13** S. 44BC(3) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), Sch. 2 para. 14(8) (as substituted (31.3.2009) by Legal Services Act 2007 (c. 29), ss. 177, 211, **Sch. 16 para. 101** (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, **art. 2(b)(ii)** (subject to art. 4))
- C14** S. 44BC(4)(5) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), **Sch. 2 para. 14ZA(7)** (as inserted (1.11.2015) by The Legal Services Act 2007 (The Law Society) (Modification of Functions) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/401), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 20(4)**)
- C15** S. 44BC(4)(5) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), Sch. 2 para. 14(8) (as substituted (31.3.2009) by Legal Services Act 2007 (c. 29), ss. 177, 211, **Sch. 16 para. 101** (with ss. 29, 192, 193); S.I. 2009/503, **art. 2(b)(ii)** (subject to art. 4))
- C16** S. 44BC(5) applied by Administration of Justice Act 1985 (c. 61), **Sch. 2 para. 14ZA(8)** (as inserted (1.11.2015) by The Legal Services Act 2007 (The Law Society) (Modification of Functions) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/401), art. 1(3), **Sch. 1 para. 20(4)**)

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