



The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court

Report of Finding and Sanction

Case reference: PC 2018/0371/D5, PC 2020/1590/D5, PC 2021/5166/D5

Miss Shazia Anjum

The Director-General of the Bar Standards Board

The Chair of the Bar Standards Board

The Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn

Disciplinary Tribunal

Miss Shazia Anjum

1. In accordance with an appointment made by the President of the Council of the Inns of Court contained in a Convening Order dated 26th October 2023, I sat as Chairman of a Disciplinary Tribunal on 23rd November 2023 to hear and determine 11 charges of professional misconduct contrary to the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales against Miss Shazia Anjum, barrister of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.

Panel Members

2. The other members of the Tribunal were:

Vince Cullen (Lay Member)

John Vaughan (Lay Member)

Gilda Kiai (Barrister Member)

Kane Simons (Barrister Member)

Charges

3. The following charges were found proven in relation to **PC 2018/0371/D5**:

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Charge 1

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to Core Duty 3 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

Particulars of Offence

Shazia Anjum acted in a way which could reasonably be seen by the public to undermine her honesty and/or integrity in that while she was in practice as a sole director solicitor, Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and the Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration at Premium Law Solicitors Limited ('the Firm') she:

(a) caused or allowed one or more improper transfers of money from the Firm's client account and in so doing breached provisions of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Accounts Rules 2011 and principles of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011; and

(b) between 26 September 2017 and 28 September 2017, knowing that the Firm's account had been frozen attempted to arrange for client funds to be paid into an account other than the firm's office or client account and in so doing breached principles of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011

and in respect of such charges of professional misconduct which were found proved against Shazia Anjum, including findings of dishonesty, by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in its written decision dated 10 February 2021, Shazia Anjum was struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Charge 2

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

Particulars of Offence

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Shazia Anjum acted in a way which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in her or in the profession in that while she was in practice as a sole director solicitor, Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and the Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration at Premium Law Solicitors Limited ('the Firm') she:

(a) caused or allowed one or more improper transfers of money from the Firm's client account and in so doing breached provisions of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Accounts Rules 2011 and principles of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011; and

(b) between 26 September 2017 and 28 September 2017, knowing that the Firm's account had been frozen attempted to arrange for client funds to be paid into an account other than the Firm's office or client account and in so doing breached principles of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011

and in respect of such charges of professional misconduct which were found proved against Shazia Anjum, including findings of dishonesty, by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in its written decision dated 10 February 2021, Shazia Anjum was struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Charge 3

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to rC65.7 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

Particulars of Offence

Shazia Anjum failed to comply with the obligations under rC65.7 in that she failed to inform the Bar Standards Board promptly or at all that she had committed serious misconduct in that while she was in practice as a sole director solicitor, Compliance Officer for Legal Practice and the Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration at Premium Law Solicitors Limited ('the Firm') she had:

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(a) caused or allowed one or more improper transfers of money from the Firm's client account and in so doing breached Rules 1.2, 14.1 and 20.1 of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Accounts Rules 2011 and principles 2, 4, 6 of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011; and

(b) between 26 September 2017 and 28 September 2017 knowing that the Firm's account had been frozen attempted to arrange for client funds to be paid into an account other than the Firm's office or client account and in so doing breached principles of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Principles 2011;

and that in respect of such charges of professional misconduct which were found proved against Shazia Anjum (including findings of dishonesty) by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in its written decision dated 10 February 2021, Shazia Anjum had been struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

Charge 4

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to rule rC65.3 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

Particulars of Offence

Shazia Anjum, failed to comply with the obligations under rC65.3 in that she failed to inform the Bar Standards Board promptly or at all that she was the subject of disciplinary proceedings or other regulatory or enforcement action by another Approved Regulator, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, as set out in the written decision of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal dated 10 February 2021.

Charge 5

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

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Particulars of Offence

Shazia Anjum, acted in a manner which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in her or in the profession in that she failed to inform the Bar Standards Board promptly or at all that she was the subject of disciplinary proceedings or other regulatory or enforcement action by another Approved Regulator, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, in relation to the charges against her which formed the subject of the written decision of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal dated 10 February 2021.

Charge 6

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Bar Standards Board's Handbook (9th Edition).

Particulars of Offence

Shazia Anjum acted in a manner which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in her or in the profession in that she failed to inform the Bar Standards Board promptly or at all that she was subject to enforcement action of another Approved Regulator, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, in respect of the disciplinary proceedings before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and/or the consequent order to strike her off the Roll of Solicitors from 20 November 2020.

4. The following charges were found proven in relation to **PC 2020/1590/D5**:

Charge 1

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to rS8 of the Bar Standards Handbook (9th Edition, Versions 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

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In or around May and June 2020 and thereafter, Shazia Anjum, an unregistered barrister, practised as a barrister when she offered to supply legal services, and held herself out as a barrister on one or more of the following social media platforms;

- (i) Facebook,
- (ii) Twitter,
- (iii) LinkedIn,
- (iv) and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com,

as set out in the attached Schedule, when she was not authorised to do so.

Charge 2

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Handbook (Versions 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

In or around May and June 2020 and thereafter, Shazia Anjum, an unregistered barrister, behaved in a way that would diminish the trust and confidence which the public placed in her or in the profession, when she practised as a barrister by offering to supply legal services, and holding herself out as a barrister on one or more of the following social media platforms;

- (i) Facebook,
- (ii) Twitter,
- (iii) LinkedIn,
- (iv) and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com,

as set out in the attached Schedule, when she was not authorised to do so.

Schedule to Charges

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Shazia Anjum, practised as a barrister by offering to supply legal services and holding herself out as a barrister, on one or more of the following social media platforms;

- (i) Facebook,
- (ii) Twitter,
- (iii) LinkedIn,
- (iv) and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com,

in particular by;

- (i) referring to herself as a “barrister” and
- (ii) inviting members of the public to contact her for guidance and help in relation to their immigration matter, and/or;
- (iii) inviting members of the public to book a consultation in relation to their immigration matter, and/or;
- (iv) referring to herself as a barrister alongside the provision of videos on immigration matters.

5. The following charges were found proven in relation to **PC 2021/5166/D5**:

Charge 1

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to rS8 of the Bar Standards Handbook (9th Edition, Versions 4.5 and 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

On or around 5 October 2020 and thereafter, Shazia Anjum, an unregistered barrister, practised as a barrister when she offered to supply legal services, and held herself out as a barrister on the social media platform, YouTube, and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com, as set out in the attached Schedule, when she was not authorised to do so.

Charge 2

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Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Handbook (Versions 4.5 and 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

On or around 5 October 2020 and thereafter, Shazia Anjum, an unregistered barrister, behaved in a way that would diminish the trust and confidence which the public placed in her or in the profession, when she practised as a barrister by offering to supply legal services, and holding herself out as a barrister on the social media platform, YouTube, and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com, as set out in the attached Schedule, when she was not authorised to do so.

Charge 3

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Handbook (Versions 4.5 and 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

For conduct between October 2016 to December 2017, Shazia Anjum was struck off the Roll of Solicitors by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in its written decision dated 10 February 2021. Thereafter, Shazia Anjum, an unregistered barrister, behaved in a way that would diminish the trust and confidence which the public placed in her or in the profession;

(a) when she practised as a barrister by offering to supply immigration advice and services, and holding herself out as a barrister on the social media platform, YouTube, and/or on the website shaziaanjum.com, as set out in the attached Schedule, when she was not authorised to do so, and/or

(b) by offering to supply immigration advice and services, when she was not authorised to do so by the Bar Standards Board (BSB), and/or the Office of the

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Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), and/or the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).

Schedule to Charges

Shazia Anjum, practised as a barrister by offering to supply legal services (immigration advice and services), and holding herself out as a barrister,

(a) on the social media platform, YouTube, in particular by one or more of the following:

- (i) giving general advice about immigration law and explicitly inviting members of the public to contact her for advice and assistance in relation to their immigration matters;
- (ii) inviting members of the public to book a consultation with her to receive “further support” and where she would “tell you what you need to do” and would “guide you further”.
- (iii) referring to herself as a “barrister” in on-screen text;
- (iv) referring to herself as a “barrister” orally;
- (v) referring to herself as a “barrister” in the description text for videos;
- (vi) referring to herself as a “barrister” in the title of videos
- (vii) through on-screen text, explicitly referring to legal services offered, including drafting grounds, legal arguments, and submissions.

(b) on the website shaziaanjum.com, in particular by one or more of the

- (i) referring to herself as a “barrister”;
- (ii) referring to herself as a “barrister” within her contact e-mail address;
- (iii) inviting members of the public to send relevant documents “to get her legal opinion”;
- (iv) inviting members of the public to book a consultation or appointment in relation to their immigration matters;
- (v) referring to her expertise in “Human Rights Applications, Spouse Visa, Parents of British Child Visa, and Discretionary Leave to Remain”;

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- (vi) referring to herself as “an expert immigration Barrister in dealing with the most complicated immigration cases in the UK”;
- (vii) inviting members of the public to contact her and to send relevant documents “to benefit from her exclusive and comprehensive advice”.

Parties Present and Representation

- 6. The Respondent was not present and was not represented. The Bar Standards Board (“BSB”) was represented by Mr Nicholas Bard, Counsel.

Preliminary Matters

- 7. At an early stage in the hearing, the Tribunal considered and allowed an application by the BSB for the hearing to proceed in the absence of the Respondent. The only communication from the Respondent to the BSB was in November 2021, which did not address the substance of the complaints against her.

Pleas

- 8. The Respondent, being absent, did not enter any plea to the charges.

Evidence

- 9. Mr Bard presented the case on behalf of the BSB. The Tribunal was provided with separate bundles for each of the three Charge Sheets. The bundles included, among other documents, a copy of the decision of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal dated 10th February 2021 and screenshots of the Respondent’s activity on various social media platforms.
- 10. Mr Bard also referred to video footage (for which links had been provided) and he provided the Tribunal with the time markers relevant to his submissions.

Findings

- 11. The Tribunal found all of the charges proved. I gave an *ex tempore* ruling which set out the Tribunal’s reasons for the findings. The relevant part of the transcript is appended to this report at Appendix A.

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Sanction and Reasons

12. Following retirement to consider the matter, the Tribunal unanimously agreed that the appropriate sanctions were:

- a. On **PC 2018/0371/D5**, that Shazia Anjum be ordered to be disbarred;
- b. On **PC 2020/1590/D5**, that Shazia Anjum be suspended for 12 months;
- c. On **PC 2021/5166/D5**, that Shazia Anjum be suspended for 12 months, such suspension to be consecutive to the suspension imposed in relation to **PC 2020/1590/D5**;
- d. The Respondent shall pay the Bar Standards Board's costs in the sum of £3,480.00 (including VAT) to be paid within 28 days or such other period as may be agreed with the Bar Standards Board;
- e. In accordance with rE227 of the Disciplinary Tribunal Regulations 2017, the Bar Standards Board are required by the Tribunal not to issue any practising certificate to the Respondent, Shazia Anjum; and
- f. Pursuant to rE234, it is recorded that the findings and sanctions were made in the absence of the Respondent in accordance with rE183 of the Disciplinary Tribunal Regulations 2017.

13. The Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn is requested to take action on this report in accordance with rE239 of the Disciplinary Tribunal Regulations 2017.

14. I also gave an *ex tempore* ruling which set out the Tribunal's reasons for the imposition of these sanctions. The relevant part of the transcript, edited only to remove discussions of procedure and costs, is appended to this report at Appendix B.

HH James Meston KC
Chairman of the Tribunal

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Appendix A

The panel of the Disciplinary Tribunal have heard and considered the charges of professional misconduct brought against Shazia Anjum, who at all material times has been an unregistered barrister.

The Respondent, Miss Anjum, has not appeared or been represented and has not communicated with the Bar Standards Board or the Tribunal to respond to the charges or explain her absence. In those circumstances, at an earlier stage of this hearing, the panel allowed the application made by the Bar Standards Board for the hearing to proceed in the absence of the Respondent. The only communication from her to the Bar Standards Board was in November 2021. That did not address the substance of the complaints against her. Accordingly, the Tribunal has had no evidence from the Respondent by way of explanation or mitigation.

There are three sets of charges on three different Charge Sheets which, by direction at an earlier stage, have been listed to be heard together with the evidence on any one set of charges being admissible in respect of the other charges.

The first Charge Sheet deals with the fact that the Respondent was the subject of findings against her in a solicitors' disciplinary tribunal with the result that in February 2021 she was struck off the Roll of Solicitors. From that decision, there appears to have been no appeal. The most serious of charges then established in that tribunal were findings of improper transfers of money and attempting to arrange transfers into an account other than the firm's office or client account. It is clear from the very detail of the decision of that tribunal that the tribunal held her to have acted dishonestly.

Following on from that, in the same Charge Sheet, it is alleged that she failed – as she was required to do – to report those proceedings or findings against her either promptly or at all. Again, there is no explanation for that, but it is clearly established that she did indeed fail to do what was required of her.

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The second and third Charge Sheets all relate to the activities of the Respondent in holding herself out as, in effect, a practising barrister and offering to give specialist legal advice as such and inviting instructions, which she clearly was not allowed to do given her status as an unregistered barrister.

The Bar Standards Board have provided extensive evidence establishing each of the charges in those two further Charge Sheets, showing that she held herself out and invited instructions from the public on a variety of websites and other platforms. That conduct was aggravated, in particular, by the disregard of a warning letter sent to the Respondent on 21st May 2020. That clearly was the time for her to stop what she was doing but she did not do so.

It is the view of the panel that this is part of a wider picture of disregard on the part of this Respondent of relevant professional obligations and standards. Therefore, it is the finding of the panel that, in respect of all these charges, that the Bar Standards Board have discharged the burden of proof and that each of those charges is established to the required standard.

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Appendix B

Following the decision of the panel earlier today finding the charges of misconduct against Miss Anjum to have been established, it has been necessary to consider the appropriate sanctions to be imposed.

The first matter arising is whether or not now to proceed to decide the appropriate sanctions in the continuing absence of the Respondent at this hearing. The panel have considered whether to adjourn the question of sanctions to give her a further opportunity to appear or at least to provide some information and submissions to explain her conduct and her present circumstances, and anything else she might wish to provide by way of mitigation.

The Respondent has long been aware of this hearing and the seriousness of the allegations against her and she appears to have chosen not to attend or communicate in any way. There is really nothing to indicate that she might decide to appear or respond if an adjournment was granted. A lack of engagement to date suggests that she would not in fact respond in any way. Accordingly, the panel do not propose to adjourn and will now impose the sanctions arising from the findings of misconduct.

In doing so, the Tribunal should have regard to the Sanctions Guidance in the version published in January 2022. Sanctions are not to be imposed to punish, though it is to be recognised that they may have a punitive effect. The purposes of applying sanctions for professional misconduct are to:

1. Protect the public and consumers of legal services;
2. Maintain public confidence and trust in the profession and the enforcement system;
3. Maintain and promote high standards of behaviour and performance at the Bar; and

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4. Act as a deterrent to the individual barrister, as well as the wider profession, from engaging in the misconduct subject to the sanction.

Put shortly, the concern of the panel is with the reputation of the profession rather than punishment.

The panel consider that all four of those stated purposes arise in this case and are of particular relevance to the decisions which we have made. The fundamental principle behind the imposition of a sanction is that any sanction should be proportionate, and weighing the interests of the public with those of the practitioner, and must be no more than necessary to achieve the purposes stated.

The Guidance proposes a six-step staged approach to sanctions and, in that regard, the first step is to determine the appropriate misconduct group for the proved misconduct. On the first Charge Sheet, the first two charges of misconduct found by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal to be dishonest in the Respondent's dealing with client funds over a period of time have not been displaced either by an appeal or by any indication of insight on the part of the Respondent.

The Solicitors Tribunal found there to be no exceptional circumstances and the Respondent was struck off the Roll of Solicitors. That decision is not binding on this Tribunal but the panel have heard and seen nothing to lead us to take a different view from the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and have heard nothing to indicate insight or remorse in the intervening period.

The unanimous decision of this Tribunal in respect of the first two charges on the first Charge Sheet is that the Respondent should be disbarred.

The remaining four charges on the first Charge Sheet relate to her continued failure to inform the BSB of what had happened to her. That was in breach of the obligation referred to in the charges and again it is conduct for which this Tribunal have received no explanation at all. If the decision had not already been made to disbar the Respondent, those four charges on the first Charge Sheet would have justified at least a substantial fine but, having now disbarred the Respondent, a separate fine will not be imposed.

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Turning to the two other Charges Sheets, they concern the findings now made that the Respondent has repeatedly offered specialist legal services and has held herself out as a barrister when she was not authorised to do so. The panel found this to have been a deliberate and persistent public misrepresentation by the Respondent of her status. Moreover, it is aggravated in that it was at least potentially a misrepresentation made to vulnerable people who she sought as potential clients. It was over a prolonged period and the evidence provides multiple examples aggravated by her disregard of the express warning given by the Bar Standards Board in May 2020.

It is of particular significance that she completely failed to respond to that warning. At best, her conduct was reckless and, at worst, dishonest – as to which it is not possible to make any particular findings in the absence of evidence from the Respondent herself which might have exposed her state of mind. In any event, it was conduct which put the public at risk. It was clearly conduct also harmful to the reputation of the profession.

In determining the misconduct group, it appears that Category F and L apply in this case and – in respect of the charges on the (what we will call) the second Charge Sheet – the Tribunal will impose a suspension of 12 months, which is to be consecutive with a further suspension of 12 months on the third and final Charge Sheet.

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