



Blind Justice

INVESTIGATION REPORT

LAW FIRMS CURATING ONLINE REVIEWS WHILE THE REGULATOR TAKES NO ACTION

New research reveals evidence of systematic online review curation across the legal profession, while the SRA has issued zero enforcement actions

Blind Justice UK

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Overview

Law firms across the UK appear to be systematically curating or selectively presenting online reviews, building large, uniformly positive review profiles on platforms they control while avoiding those they cannot. This is not merely a transparency failure; it risks constituting a breach of professional conduct obligations, consumer protection law, and the public trust that underpins the solicitor-client relationship.

Online reviews now play a central role in how consumers choose a solicitor, particularly for those with no prior experience of the legal system. That makes the accuracy of those representations, and the way they are presented, a matter of direct public interest.

The regulator responsible for policing solicitors' conduct, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), has issued 439 enforcement actions relating to transparency and pricing compliance. The number of enforcement actions it has taken specifically targeting misleading online reviews is zero.

Meanwhile, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has already launched five investigations into fake reviews in other sectors, including car sales, food delivery, and funeral services. The legal profession, whose clients include some of the most vulnerable members of society, has so far escaped equivalent scrutiny.

This report presents original research covering 50 law firms, 22 forensically analysed websites, and 486 individual testimonials. The findings suggest the problem is profession-wide, consistent, and ongoing.

Key Findings

22/22

firms forensically tested display 100% five-star reviews on their own websites. Not 95%. Not 98%. Every single firm, every single review, five stars. The statistical probability of this occurring naturally is approximately 1 in 10^{222} .

62%

of firms (31 out of 50) have accumulated 50 or more reviews on managed platforms while maintaining zero reviews on Yell, the one mainstream platform where firms cannot moderate or remove content.

100%

of the 50 firms in the sample publish curated testimonials on their own websites. Only 24% have any presence at all on Yell.

Zero

enforcement actions have been taken by the SRA specifically targeting misleading online reviews, despite the regulator having issued 439 actions on related transparency matters.

Duplicates

were found within multiple firms' testimonial pages, including identical text attributed to different reviewers and templated marketing copy presented as client testimonials.

The Data: 50-Firm Survey

Sample and Method

50 law firms were selected across seven practice areas (family, immigration, criminal defence, conveyancing, personal injury, employment, and commercial law) and 15 cities across England, Wales, and Scotland. For each firm, review profiles were checked on six platforms: their own website, Google Reviews, Trustpilot, ReviewSolicitors, Yell, and Reviews.io. Review counts and average ratings were recorded. Data was collected between 10 and 16 April 2026, with a full independent verification exercise completed on 18 April 2026.

Platform Presence: Where Firms Want to Be Found

The pattern is stark. Firms concentrate their review presence on solicited platforms where they can control or influence content, and are largely absent from those where they cannot.

Platform	Type	Firms Present	% of Sample	Avg Rating
Own Website	Firm-controlled	50	100%	5.00*
ReviewSolicitors	Solicited	44	88%	4.45
Trustpilot	Semi-managed	28	56%	4.32
Google Reviews	Semi-managed	14	28%	4.67
Yell	Independent	12	24%	4.30
Reviews.io	Independent	3	6%	3.80

* Every single firm website review examined was five stars. See Forensic Analysis section below.

The data reveals a clear hierarchy. Every firm in the sample maintains a testimonials page on its own website, and 88% have a presence on ReviewSolicitors, a platform that allows firms to solicit reviews from clients. By contrast, only 28% appear on Google Reviews, 24% on Yell, and 6% on Reviews.io. The pattern is consistent: the less control a firm has over a platform, the less likely it is to have a presence there.

Ratings follow the same gradient. On firm-controlled websites, the average is a perfect 5.00 stars. On ReviewSolicitors, where firms can invite satisfied clients, it drops to 4.45. On Yell, the most independent platform, it drops further to 4.30. The correlation between platform control and rating is consistent across every practice area and region in the sample.

The Yell Gap

31 out of 50 firms (62%) have accumulated 50 or more reviews across managed platforms while having zero reviews on Yell. This is the single most telling statistic in the dataset. Yell is the UK's largest independent business directory. It is free for consumers to leave reviews. Firms cannot remove or moderate them. The near-total absence of the legal profession from this platform, while simultaneously building large profiles elsewhere, is consistent with a deliberate strategy rather than an accident of consumer behaviour.

If firms were genuinely delivering the standard of service their managed profiles suggest, some proportion of satisfied clients would naturally post on Yell without being asked. The data shows this is not happening at a rate consistent with the five-star profiles these firms maintain.

Forensic Analysis: The 100% Five-Star Problem

To test whether website testimonials reflect genuine client feedback, Blind Justice UK scraped and forensically analysed the testimonial pages of 22 law firms drawn from the 50-firm sample. A total of 486 individual reviews were extracted, cleaned, and analysed for patterns including star ratings, anonymity, duplication, and templated content.

Finding 1: Universal Five-Star Ratings

Every single firm in the forensic sample displays 100% five-star ratings on its own website testimonials page. No four-star reviews. No three-star reviews. Across 22 firms, 486 reviews, and seven practice areas, not one firm publishes a single testimonial below five stars.

This is not plausible as an organic outcome. The UK average for solicitor reviews on independent platforms is approximately 3.5 to 4.0 stars. Research by the Legal Services Consumer Panel found that consumer satisfaction with legal services varies significantly, with notable rates of dissatisfaction even among clients of regulated firms. A result of 100% five stars across 22 firms is consistent with selective publication, not genuine universal satisfaction.

The Mathematics of Improbability

Assuming a genuine five-star rate of 35% (consistent with independent platform data), the probability of a single firm receiving 40 consecutive five-star reviews purely by chance is approximately 1 in 2 quintillion.

Burton Copeland displays 114 five-star testimonials. Berkeley Square Solicitors displays 111. The combined probability of all 22 firms achieving 100% five-star results across 486 reviews by chance is approximately 1 in 10^{22} . For context, the number of atoms in the observable universe is estimated at 10^{80} . The five-star pattern observed in this research is not a statistical outlier; it is a statistical impossibility without selection.

The most plausible explanation is that these firms are selecting which reviews to display: publishing positive feedback and either suppressing or not soliciting negative feedback. This practice risks presenting a misleading representation of client experience to the public.

Forensic Results: Firm-by-Firm Breakdown

Firm	Practice Area	Website Reviews	Five-Star %
Burton Copeland	Criminal	114	100%
Berkeley Square Solicitors	Criminal	111	100%
VHS Fletchers	Criminal	44	100%
J Benson Solicitors	Family	44	100%
Latitude Law	Immigration	35	100%
Grant Stephens Family Law	Family	24	100%
Hudson McKenzie	Immigration	24	100%

Slater Heelis	Conveyancing	20	100%
Brigstow Family Law	Family	19	100%
Stowe Family Law	Family	7	100%
Paul Crowley & Co	PI / Housing	7	100%
Barcan+Kirby	General	6	100%
Patch Law	Employment	6	100%
Pearcelegal	Immigration	6	100%
OTS Solicitors	Immigration	5	100%
Bird & Co Solicitors	Family	4	100%
Taylor Emmet	General	4	100%
Gilson Gray	General	2	100%
Kelcey & Hall	Criminal	1	100%
Kingsley Napley	General	1	100%
Stuart Miller Solicitors	Criminal	1	100%
Digby Brown	PI	1	100%

Source: Blind Justice UK forensic analysis, April 2026. Reviews extracted directly from firm websites.

Duplicate and Templated Reviews

Within-Firm Duplicates

Forensic text analysis identified identical or near-identical review text appearing multiple times within individual firms' testimonial pages. These fall into two categories.

Exact duplicates: At J Benson Solicitors and Berkeley Square Solicitors, identical review text appears more than once on the testimonials page. In some cases, the same text is attributed to different reviewer identifiers. At J Benson, one review praising "excellent service" appears verbatim twice with different anonymous attributions. This pattern is consistent with content management errors or, less charitably, review fabrication.

Templated marketing copy: At Paul Crowley & Co, the testimonials page includes blocks of text that are not client reviews at all but templated marketing paragraphs. Two entries share 93% identical text, differing only in the practice area named ("Child arrangements" vs "Financial remedy"). This is not client feedback; it is advertising copy presented as testimonials.

The Anonymity Problem

78% of all website testimonials analysed (378 out of 486) are attributed to 'Anonymous' or carry no reviewer name at all. Only Burton Copeland and Patch Law consistently attribute reviews to named individuals. The remainder present unverifiable, unattributed praise.

Anonymous, unverifiable testimonials represent the lowest standard of evidence a firm could present. They cannot be checked by consumers, by regulators, or by journalists. The SRA's guidance states that publicity

must be 'accurate and not misleading' (paragraph 8.8); a testimonial page composed primarily of anonymous, curated praise raises obvious questions about compliance.

The Regulator: 439 Actions, Zero on Reviews

What the SRA Has Done

The SRA has been active on transparency. Between 2022 and 2025, it issued 439 enforcement actions relating to pricing and transparency failures: firms failing to publish price information or failing to comply with the Transparency Rules introduced in December 2018. This shows a regulator willing and able to take action on consumer information standards.

What the SRA Has Not Done

The SRA has issued zero enforcement actions specifically targeting misleading online reviews. Zero investigations. Zero warnings. Zero fines. This is despite paragraph 8.8 of the Code of Conduct requiring that publicity be accurate and not misleading, and despite the DMCCA 2024 introducing statutory prohibitions on precisely the conduct this report documents.

The SRA's position appears to be that website testimonials are a matter for individual firm discretion, not a regulatory concern. This position is difficult to sustain. The regulator cannot simultaneously encourage consumers to use online reviews when choosing a solicitor (as it does in its public guidance) and refuse to investigate whether those reviews are accurate.

The CMA Contrast

The Competition and Markets Authority, by contrast, has already acted. On 27 March 2026, the CMA announced five investigations into businesses suspected of using fake or misleading reviews, under the new powers granted by Schedule 20 of the DMCCA 2024. These investigations cover automotive, food delivery, and funeral services.

The message is clear: other sectors are being investigated for exactly the conduct this report documents in the legal profession. The difference is that no one has looked at solicitors yet.

The Law: What Has Changed

Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024

Schedule 20 of the DMCCA 2024, in force since 6 April 2025, introduced a statutory prohibition on fake and misleading consumer reviews. The Act makes it an offence to commission, incentivise, or publish fake reviews; to suppress or selectively publish reviews to give a misleading impression; or to fail to take reasonable steps to prevent fake reviews on a platform.

The CMA's published guidance (CMA208, 17 March 2026) explicitly addresses the practice of selectively displaying positive reviews while suppressing negative ones. This guidance describes such conduct as giving consumers a 'misleading impression' of the quality of goods or services, in contravention of the Act.

SRA Code of Conduct

Paragraph 8.8 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, and RFLs states:

“You ensure that any publicity in relation to your practice is accurate and not misleading, including that relating to your charges and the circumstances in which interest is payable by or to clients.”

A website testimonials page displaying 100% five-star reviews, where the firm selects which reviews to publish, is, on its face, difficult to reconcile with this requirement. It presents a curated, unrepresentative picture of client experience as though it were organic feedback.

Case Study: J Benson Solicitors

J Benson Solicitors Ltd is a family law firm in Stratford, East London, on the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) referral panel for domestic abuse cases. It illustrates the pattern documented in this report in concentrated form.

The Review Profile

Platform	Reviews	Rating	Firm can moderate?
Own Website	44	5.00	Yes
Google Reviews	112	4.4	No
Trustpilot	0	N/A	No
ReviewSolicitors	0	N/A	Solicited
Yell	3	2.3	No

The contrast is telling. On its own website, J Benson displays 44 testimonials, every one of them five stars. On Google, where it cannot remove reviews, it has 112 reviews at 4.4 stars. On Yell, the most independent platform, it has 3 reviews at 2.3 stars. A consumer checking the firm's own website would see a uniformly excellent record. A consumer checking Yell would see a very different picture.

Even the Google profile, at 4.4 stars, suggests a significant number of clients whose experience falls short of the perfection presented on the firm's own testimonials page. Yet not one of those less-than-perfect experiences appears in the 44 reviews the firm has chosen to display on its website.

Forensic Findings

Forensic analysis of J Benson's testimonials page identified 44 testimonials, all rated five stars. All testimonials are anonymous, with no verifiable reviewer names. Duplicate text was found: at least two pairs of identical or near-identical reviews appear on the page.

J Benson Solicitors is not named as the subject of this report. It is named as an illustration. The data shows that its pattern (100% five-star curated website, lower ratings on independent platforms, anonymous unverifiable testimonials) is the norm across the profession, not an outlier. The question is not why J Benson does this; the question is why the regulator has not asked any firm to explain why they all do it.

What Needs to Happen

The SRA Must Act on Review Curation. The SRA cannot continue to treat misleading online reviews as outside its regulatory scope. Paragraph 8.8 of the Code of Conduct already provides the legal basis. The SRA should issue thematic guidance specifically addressing website testimonials and online review practices and should open supervisory enquiries into firms displaying 100% five-star curated reviews.

The CMA Should Include Legal Services in Its Fake Reviews Programme. The CMA's current investigations focus on automotive, food delivery, and funeral services. The evidence in this report suggests that law firms, whose clients include victims of domestic abuse, those facing criminal charges, and families in crisis, deserve equal scrutiny.

Legal Sector Review Platforms Must Be Held to Account. Platforms such as ReviewSolicitors, which allow firms to solicit reviews from satisfied clients, should be required to disclose their solicitation model. Consumers should be told whether reviews were submitted organically or in response to a firm's invitation, and whether the platform offers firms any mechanism to influence which reviews are displayed.

Firms Must Publish Transparent Review Data. Any firm publishing testimonials on its website should be required to state how many reviews were received in total, how many were published, what the selection criteria were, and whether any reviews were solicited. This is the minimum standard that would allow consumers to assess the reliability of the information presented.

Methodology

50-Firm Survey

50 law firms were selected across seven practice areas and 15 UK cities. For each firm, review profiles were manually checked on six platforms between 10 and 16 April 2026. Review counts and average ratings were recorded. A firm was classified as 'present' on a platform if it had at least one review with a visible rating. A full independent verification exercise was completed on 18 April 2026, re-pulling data for all 50 firms from live sources.

Forensic Website Analysis

Testimonial pages were scraped from 22 firm websites using standard HTTP requests. Review text, reviewer names (where available), and ratings were extracted using HTML parsing. Extraction methods were tailored to each site's structure (WordPress, Elementor, bespoke CMS). All data was collected between 10 and 15 April 2026.

Statistical Model

The five-star probability model uses a base rate of 35%, derived from the average proportion of five-star reviews on independent platforms (Yell, Trustpilot organic reviews) for legal services. This is conservative; the actual five-star rate on independent platforms for many firms in the sample is lower. The probability calculation uses the binomial distribution.

Limitations

This research is based on publicly available data. It does not make findings of fact about any individual firm's intent or conduct. The statistical analysis demonstrates improbability, not proof of deliberate manipulation. Firms may have legitimate explanations for their review patterns. However, the consistency of the pattern across 50 firms, seven practice areas, and 15 cities suggests a systemic issue rather than individual coincidences.

About Blind Justice UK

Blind Justice UK (Charity No. 1217562) is a registered charity that works to improve access to justice and accountability within the legal profession. This report was produced as part of the charity's ongoing research programme into consumer protection in legal services.

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