Thornbury & Wells Solicitors

Internal Policy & Procedures Handbook — Revised Jan 2026

1. New Client Onboarding

All new client instructions must go through the standard onboarding sequence before any billable work begins. First, complete the Client Care Letter and send within 2 working days of first contact. Second, run the conflict of interest check (see Section 3). Third, open a case file using the numbering system described below. Do not begin substantive work until the conflict check has cleared and the client care letter has been countersigned.

Note: for existing clients returning with a new matter, a fresh conflict check is still required — do not assume a prior clearance still applies.

2. Case File Numbering System

Every matter is assigned a case reference in the format YY-DEPT-#### where YY is the year opened, DEPT is a three-letter department code (CON for conveyancing, LIT for litigation, FAM for family, WPT for wills & probate, COM for commercial), and #### is a sequential four-digit number reset each January. Example: 26-LIT-0142 refers to the 142nd litigation matter opened in 2026.

3. Conflict of Interest Checking Procedure

Before accepting any new instruction, search the full client name, any known trading names, and opposing party names against the firm-wide conflicts database. Checks must be logged by the supervising partner, not delegated to a paralegal without sign-off. A conflict check is considered valid for 30 days — if onboarding stalls beyond that window, re-run the check before proceeding.

4. Billing & Invoicing Policy

Standard hourly rates (exclusive of VAT) are set out below. Rates are reviewed annually every April and may vary for fixed-fee conveyancing work quoted separately.

Fee Earner Grade	Hourly Rate (excl. VAT)
Partner	£295
Senior Associate	£220
Associate	£180
Paralegal	£110

Invoices are raised monthly on the last working day of the month. Disbursements are billed at cost with no markup, except courier and search fees which carry a flat £8 handling charge. Payment terms are 14 days from invoice date; accounts overdue by more than 30 days are referred to the Office Manager for a formal reminder.

5. Data Retention Policy

Closed case files must be retained for a minimum of 7 years from the date of file closure, in line with SRA guidance and our professional indemnity insurer's requirements. Wills & probate files, and any matter involving a minor, are retained for 7 years after the client's 18th birthday or 7 years from closure, whichever is longer. After the retention period expires, files are confidentially destroyed via the approved shredding contractor — never placed in general waste.

6. Complaints Handling Procedure

All complaints, whether verbal or written, must be logged with the Complaints Officer within 24 hours of receipt. A written acknowledgment must be sent to the complainant within 3 working days. The firm aims to provide a full response within 8 weeks, in line with SRA Transparency Rules. If a complaint cannot be resolved internally, the client must be informed of their right to refer the matter to the Legal Ombudsman.

7. Office Hours & Emergency Contact

Standard office hours are Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:30pm. The office is closed on all public holidays. For urgent matters outside office hours (e.g. injunction applications, urgent completions), the duty partner can be reached via the emergency mobile line — the number is issued to active clients on request and rotates monthly between partners.

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