CHECKLIST

The 10-Step Launch Checklist

Every milestone from first decision to your first client — for launching your own SRA-regulated law firm in England & Wales.

Tick each item as you complete it. This checklist mirrors the full 10-step journey on startalawfirm.co.uk/how-to-get-started, where each step links to a detailed guide.

1. Decide if running your own firm is right for you

- [ ] Honestly assess your appetite for risk, business development and admin
- [ ] Confirm you meet SRA requirements to be a manager/owner of a firm
- [ ] Speak to others who have done it; map out your support network

2. Choose your area(s) of law

- [ ] Pick areas where you have genuine expertise and supervision in place
- [ ] Check demand, competition and whether work is publicly funded or private
- [ ] Decide whether you will hold client money (affects accounts + fees)

3. Write your business plan

- [ ] Define your services, target clients and market position
- [ ] Set out startup costs, a 12-month forecast and funding sources
- [ ] Use the Business plan template + Cashflow forecast model

4. Choose your billing / pricing model

- [ ] Decide fixed-fee, hourly, retainer or hybrid pricing per service
- [ ] Plan how you will give clients clear costs information up front
- [ ] Check SRA Transparency Rules for any price-publishing duties

5. Choose your structure and location

- [ ] Choose sole practice, partnership, LLP or limited company
- [ ] Decide recognised body / recognised sole practice / licensed body
- [ ] Decide premises: home, serviced office or leased space

6. Name your firm

- [ ] Check the name against SRA rules and is not misleading
- [ ] Check availability at Companies House and as a domain
- [ ] Consider a trade mark search before you commit

7. Sort your finances and accounts

- [ ] Open a business account and (if needed) a separate client account
- [ ] Set up bookkeeping and choose an accountant familiar with law firms
- [ ] Read the SRA Accounts Rules if you will hold client money

8. Arrange professional indemnity insurance

- [ ] Get quotes from participating insurers offering qualifying (MTC) cover
- [ ] Confirm the minimum limit: £2m (sole practice/partnership) or £3m (LLP/company)
- [ ] Understand run-off cover obligations before you start

9. Apply to the SRA for authorisation

- [ ] Nominate your COLP and COFA and prepare them for approval
- [ ] Prepare policies: AML, complaints, conflicts, data protection, risk
- [ ] Apply via mySRA; budget the £200 fee + pro-rata regulatory fee (+ compensation fund if holding client money)

10. Set up technology and launch

- [ ] Choose practice management / case management software
- [ ] Prepare client care letter, website and initial marketing
- [ ] Plan your first 90 days of business development and go live

Sources

- Solicitors Regulation Authority — Authorisation of firms: www.sra.org.uk
- SRA Standards and Regulations: www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations
- The Law Society — running a law firm: www.lawsociety.org.uk
- GOV.UK — set up a business: www.gov.uk

Important

This resource is general information, not legal, financial or regulatory advice. It reflects our understanding of the rules at the time of writing (June 2026). Fees, thresholds, timescales and requirements change — always confirm the current position with the relevant body (the SRA, GOV.UK, HMRC, the Law Society and the Legal Ombudsman) before acting.