

How fast do solicitors reply to new enquiries?

A test of 27 firms in Hull & York · Spring 2026

16 firms in Hull, 11 firms in York
Enquiry via website contact form or email
Wait times shown in working hours

More than a third of the 27 firms we tested never replied at all. Of those that did, the typical reply arrived inside two working hours, with Hull and York performing similarly during the working day. A useful benchmark for any firm wondering where it sits.

REPLIED WITHIN 1 BUSINESS HOUR

6 of 27

Roughly one in three responders moved fast.

TYPICAL WAIT FOR A REPLY

1 h 54 min

Median, working hours only.

AVERAGE WAIT FOR A REPLY

4 h 3 min

Mean, working hours only.

SENT AN AUTO-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

2 of 27

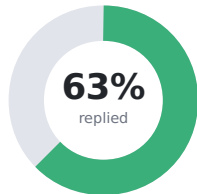
The simplest possible reassurance. Almost no firm has it set up.

NEVER REPLIED

10 of 27

37% of enquiries went unanswered for weeks.

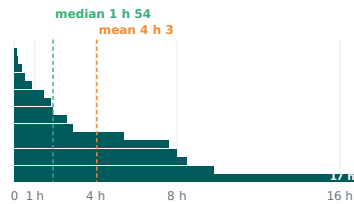
Did the firm reply at all?



■ Replied · 17 firms · ■ No reply · 10 fi

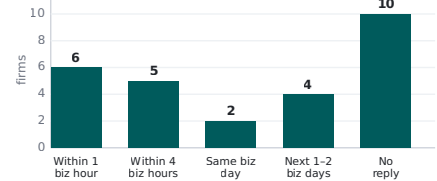
One in three firms didn't respond.

How long did each responder take?



Each bar is one of the 17 responding firms.

When did the reply actually arrive?



Most responders reply within 4 hours.

THE TWO TOWNS SIDE BY SIDE, IN WORKING HOURS

	HULL	YORK	BOTH
Enquiries sent	16	11	27
Firms that replied	10	7	17
Reply rate	63%	64%	63%
Typical wait (median)	4 h 0 min	1 h 47 min	1 h 54 min
Fastest human reply	20 min	21 min	20 min
Slowest reply	17 h 2 min	8 h 30 min	17 h 2 min
Firms that never replied	6	4	10

How to read this.

Hull and York lose roughly the same share of enquiries to silence: about four in ten in each town. On reply speed they're similar too, with most responding firms replying inside the first couple of working hours. Several Hull firms had effectively replied by the time their office opened on Monday morning, which suggests some check email out of hours or get to their desks early. Two firms (one in each town) sent an automated acknowledgement. We've excluded those from the reply-speed figures, since two data points aren't enough to analyse meaningfully.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR PARTNERS AND OPERATIONS DIRECTORS AT LAW FIRMS

Of the 27 firms approached, ten never replied at all. For a prospective client, those firms simply didn't exist. Two observations stand out.

The first is the scale of that silence. Well over a third of legitimate enquiries hit a wall.

The second is speed. Among the firms that did reply, the typical wait was under two working hours and the average around four, often slow enough for a quicker competitor to have already won the work. And because so few firms acknowledge enquiries automatically, even prospects who eventually got a reply spent the entire wait wondering whether their message had landed.

The two most useful starting questions for any firm reading this are simple. Would we have been one of the silent ten? And if not, would our reply have arrived quickly enough to matter?

HOW WE MEASURED WAIT TIME

The Hull cohort was deliberately sent outside working hours on a Friday evening to see how many firms have an automated response system in place, while the York cohort was sent on a Friday at lunchtime. All wait times in this report are measured in working hours only (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm BST) so the two batches can be compared on a like-for-like basis.

FOR CONTEXT: THE 5-MINUTE RULE

Harvard Business Review research found that replying within five minutes makes a business 21 times more likely to qualify a new prospect than waiting ten minutes, and 60 times more likely than waiting 24 hours.

By that standard, no firm in this cohort sent a detailed reply inside the window. The only two replies inside five minutes were the automated acknowledgements above, which makes that gap so striking. In the age of AI, a system can interpret an enquiry and draft a reply instantly, leaving the person only to check it and hit send.