



Press Release: 20 July 2021

Legal Services Regulatory Authority Publishes Annual Report 2020

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) today publishes its Annual Report for 2020, providing an overview of its performance and outputs for the year.

The LSRA is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of legal services provision. The year 2020 was the first full year that the LSRA has operated the legal framework for the authorisation of partnerships of solicitors to operate as Limited Liability Partnerships.

It was also the LSRA's first full year of operations as the independent complaints handling body for complaints about solicitors and barristers. The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints on 7th October 2019. It reports in detail on its complaints handling activities twice a year, with the most recent [complaints report](#) published in April 2021.

Highlights in the Annual Report 2020 Include:

- Two new independent committees were established under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 to investigate complaints. The Complaints Committee considers and investigates misconduct complaints referred to it by the LSRA. The Review Committee reviews determinations made by the LSRA on complaints about inadequate legal services and excessive costs. Both committees have a majority of lay members.
- The LSRA's Complaints, Resolutions and Investigations Department received a total of 3,605 phone calls and e-mails in the year requesting information and/or complaint forms.
- A total of 1,422 complaints were received of which 1,389 related to solicitors while 33 related to barristers (multiple complaints may be brought against an individual legal practitioner).
- The largest category of complaints, at 819 (58%), related to alleged misconduct. A total of 496 complaints (35%) were from clients in relation to alleged inadequate standards of legal services, and a further 107 (7%) were from clients who alleged they had been charged excessive costs.



- Out of the total of 1,422 complaints received during 2020, 559 were made against legal practitioners based in Dublin city and county, while 149 were in Cork, 64 in Donegal and 61 each in counties Galway and Mayo.
- All complaints begin as queries, and during 2020 the LSRA's complaints staff opened a total of 1,869 files and closed 812 files. Of the files closed, 447 were queries and 365 were complaints.
- The main areas of legal services that attracted complaints were wills and probate, litigation and conveyancing.

Continued Growth of Limited Liability Partnerships

- The LSRA authorised a total of 230 partnerships of solicitors to operate as Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) in 2020. A total of 74 LLPs were authorised in Dublin, with 38 in Cork, 12 in Galway and eight each in counties Donegal, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick and Louth. A total of 208 solicitors firms authorised as LLPs had between two and five partners. A total of four solicitors' partnerships authorised as LLPs had more than 20 partners. This follows the introduction in November 2019 of a new legal framework that allows existing partnerships of solicitors to operate with limited liability under the Act.

Increase in Numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers

- The LSRA maintains the Roll of Practising Barristers, a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. At the end of 2020, a total of 2,823 barristers were on the Roll, 88 more than the previous year. The Roll of Practising Barristers is an important tool which allow members of the public to be assured that the barrister providing legal services on their behalf is lawfully entitled to do so

LSRA Began Regulating Legal Services Advertising

- The LSRA assumed responsibility for regulating advertising by legal practitioners under the *Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (Advertising) Regulations 2020* (S.I. No. 644 of 2020) which commenced on 18 December 2020. With these, advertising in relation to the provision of legal services by all legal practitioners is regulated under the same rules by the LSRA.
- The Advertising Regulations currently apply to legal practitioners, limited liability partnerships and groups of legal practitioners who share a facility, premises or cost of practice. Advertising by solicitors was previously regulated by the Law Society of Ireland under the Solicitors Advertising Regulations 2019. This is the first time that statutory rules for advertising have been set out for barristers.



LSRA Chief Executive, Dr Brian Doherty, commented:

“The LSRA made significant progress in 2020 in fully establishing its complaints handling systems as well as the architecture for two new independent statutory complaints handling committees. The LSRA also assumed responsibility for the regulation of advertising of legal services, with the signing into law of new Advertising Regulations. This is a very solid platform on which to build our work on complaints, resolutions and investigations.

“We are pleased to see continued interest among solicitor partnerships in applying for authorisation to operate as LLPs and look forward to the introduction of Legal Partnerships in 2021 as a new business practice model for solicitors and barristers.”

The Annual Report in English is available here: [LSRA Annual Report 2020](#)

The Annual Report in Irish is available here: [Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2020 ÚRSD](#)

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