



## **LSRA report shows 822 complaints received and 811 complaints closed in six month period**

*Legal practitioners reminded of LSRA rules on advertising of legal services*

**Press release: Thursday 7 April 2022**

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) today publishes its first complaints report for 2022 which shows it received 822 complaints about legal practitioners in a six month period, with 811 complaints closed.

The report provides details of the number and nature of complaints about legal practitioners (solicitors and barristers) received and investigated during the reporting period of 4 September 2021 to 4 March 2022. This includes a total of 46 complaints closed by the Complaints Committee set up in 2020 to investigate complaints of alleged misconduct referred to it by the LSRA.

### **Total complaints received**

The LSRA's Complaints and Resolutions Unit received a total of 822 complaints in the reporting period.

- A total of 799 complaints related to solicitors and 23 to barristers, reflecting the higher number of solicitors and their greater level of contact with consumers. Multiple complaints may be brought against an individual legal practitioner.
- A total of 577 complaints (70%) alleged misconduct, with 213 complaints (26%) about alleged inadequate standard of legal services. A further 32 (4%) came under the category of alleged excessive costs (overcharging).
- The main areas of legal services that attracted complaints were litigation, family law, probate and conveyancing.
- This breakdown of complaints grounds and areas is largely consistent with the pattern seen in the LSRA's four previous complaints reports since it began receiving and investigating complaints about legal practitioners in October 2019.
- The LSRA's Complaints and Resolutions staff received a total of 1,802 phone calls and e-mails requesting information and/or complaints forms.



### **Total complaints closed**

A total of 811 complaints were closed during the reporting period. These comprised:

- A total of 342 complaints (42%) which were closed pre-admissibility – that is before a decision was made as to whether the complaint was admissible. Of these, 225 were resolved with the assistance of the LSRA, 90 were withdrawn, 14 deferred and a further 13 complaints could not proceed to admissibility for a variety of other reasons.
- A total of 469 complaints (58%) which were closed at or post-admissibility. Of these, 376 complaints were deemed inadmissible by the LSRA. A further 12 complaints were resolved in the Informal Resolution process with the help of the LSRA's trained mediators; 36 were determined by the LSRA; and 46 were closed by the Complaints Committee.

### **LSRA complaints determinations**

The LSRA's complaints staff made determinations in a total of 39 complaints of inadequate standard of legal services and excessive costs. Of these, 33 complaints were upheld and six were not upheld. In upheld complaints, the LSRA made directions for payments by legal practitioners of compensation to their clients of between €500 and €2,500.

### **Review Committee: reviews of LSRA determinations**

Twelve LSRA determinations were reviewed by the Review Committee during the reporting period following requests from either the legal practitioner or the complainant. The Review Committee confirmed the LSRA's determinations in nine of these complaints and remitted three complaints back to the LSRA for reconsideration.

### **Complaints Committee: closed misconduct complaints**

A total of 46 complaints were closed by the Complaints Committee during the reporting period. The Committee was set up in November 2020 to hear misconduct complaints. Of these:

- Twelve complaints were resolved by the parties and the Complaints Committee did not continue with its investigation.
- A total of 29 complaints were not upheld by the Complaints Committee.
- One complaint was referred by the Complaints Committee to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (LPDT) for further investigation.
- Three complaints were withdrawn by the complainant and the Complaints Committee therefore did not continue with its investigation.
- The investigation of one complaint was deferred as court proceedings had been issued.



On publishing today's report, **the LSRA's Chief Executive Dr Brian Doherty said:**

*"I am pleased to see an ongoing trend of a high number of complaints being resolved by legal practitioners and complainants through positive engagement early in the complaints process. This once again demonstrates that legal practitioners who are able to take a positive and proactive approach to resolving complaints can assist in having the matters dealt with in a timely and pragmatic manner. We are obliged to both legal practitioners and complainants who engage with the process in this way."*

Today's report includes a reminder to legal practitioners of the rules around the advertising of legal services. It also provides some useful information for consumers of legal services who need to access legal services, and advises consumers to be aware of "claims harvesting" websites.

Dr Doherty continued:

*"Consumers should be aware of 'claims harvesting' websites. These websites often target people looking online for information about potential personal injury claims. These sites are often set up by non-legal practitioners and operated from outside of Ireland. We remind consumers that the LSRA only regulates legal practitioners – that is solicitor or barristers. There are ways for consumers who are seeking legal services to check that they are indeed dealing with a legal practitioner who is regulated by the LSRA. The Law Society of Ireland has details of solicitors on its website and the LSRA has a Roll of Practising Barristers on its website."*

Today's report is available to download here: [\*\*Independent Complaints Handling: Complaints about solicitors and barristers, Report 1-2022\*\*](#)

#### **Note to Editors:**

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority is an independent statutory body set up under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 with a range of functions. These include regulating the provision of legal services by legal practitioners (barristers and solicitors) and ensuring the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of legal services.

The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints about legal services by legal practitioners on 7 October 2019. It is required by law to report on its complaints function at intervals no greater than six months. This is the LSRA's fifth complaints report.

**For further information please contact the LSRA's Head of Communications Nuala Haughey on Tel: 087-2867510 or [nmhaughey@lsra.ie](mailto:nmhaughey@lsra.ie)**

**ENDS**