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Legal Services Regulatory Authority Publishes Annual Report 2021

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) today publishes its Annual Report for 2021, 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 2021 was the second full year that the LSRA operated as the independent complaints handling body for complaints about solicitors and barristers. The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints on 7th October 2019.

Highlights in the LSRA Annual Report 2021 Include:

- The LSRA's Complaints, Resolutions and Investigations Department received a total of 3,356 phone calls and e-mails in the year requesting information and/or complaint forms.
- A total of 1,599 complaints were received during the year, 12% more than in 2020. Of these, 1,560 related to solicitors while 39 related to barristers (multiple complaints may be made about an individual legal practitioner).
- A total of 1,343 complaints were closed during 2021. Of these, 398 were resolved and 172 were withdrawn. Just under half (615 complaints, 45%) were closed because they were deemed as inadmissible following a statutory assessment.
- The largest category of complaints, at 1,090 (68%), related to alleged misconduct. A total of 431 (27%) were from clients relating to alleged inadequate standards of legal services, and a further 78 (5%) were from clients who alleged they had been charged excessive costs.
- Although the number of complaints received continues to rise, the breakdown in the types of complaint received shows a consistent trend. Complaints relating to alleged misconduct continue to increase (up by 33% on the previous year), those relating to alleged inadequate standards of legal services and excessive costs continue to fall (down by 13% and 27% respectively).
- The Annual Report provides a breakdown of complaints received during the year based on the office locations of the legal practitioners against whom complaints were brought.
- Out of the total of 1,599 complaints received during 2021, 592 were made against legal practitioners based in Dublin city and county, while 205 were in Cork city and county, 83 were in Kildare and 82 were in Limerick.



Steady Growth of Limited Liability Partnerships in 2021

- The number of partnerships of solicitors seeking authorisation from the LSRA to operate as Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) grew at a steady pace in 2021, with a total of 106 LLPs authorised during the year. This brought the total number of LLPs authorised since November 2019 to 364 at the end of 2021.
- A total of 54 LLPs were authorised in county Dublin, with 10 in Cork, six in Tipperary and four each in counties Kerry, Limerick, Offaly and Wicklow.
- The majority of partnerships of solicitors (91) authorised as LLPs had between two and five partners. A total of five solicitors' partnerships authorised as LLPs had more than 20 partners.
- Authorisation to operate with limited liability permits existing partnerships of solicitors to limit their personal liability. For example, their personal assets are protected from the negligence of other partners in the LLP.

Increase in Numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers in 2021

- The LSRA maintains the Roll of Practising Barristers, a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State which was established on 28 December 2018. The Roll of Practising Barristers is an important tool which allows members of the public to be assured that the barrister providing legal services on their behalf is lawfully entitled to do so.
- A total of 2,933 barristers were on the Roll of Practising Barristers on 31 December 2021. This is an increase of 110 on the previous year. Of these, 2,180 were members of the Law Library and 753 were practising outside of the Law Library.

LSRA Chief Executive, Dr Brian Doherty, commented:

"The year under review was the LSRA's second full year operating as the independent complaints handling body for complaints about solicitors and barristers. As this report shows, our complaints staff dealt with an increased number of both queries and complaints during this time.

"Complaints are closed for several reasons; when they have been successfully resolved between the parties with the assistance of the LSRA, determined by the LSRA, or by either of the two committees established under the Act. Complaints are also closed early in the complaints handling process if they are found to be inadmissible.

"Our complaints handling during the year is based on the sustained efforts of staff to improve efficiencies and refine processes while also maintaining the highest standards of services to consumers of legal services and legal practitioners. The fact that these outcomes were achieved within just two years of the LSRA becoming responsible for complaints handling, and against the challenging backdrop of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, is a testament to the resilience and dedication of the complaints team."



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí

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Dr Doherty added:

“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 2022 as a new business practice model for solicitors and barristers.”

The LSRA’s Annual Report is available here: [LSRA Annual Report 2021 \(pdf\)](#)