



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

Annual Report 2023



Independence

Innovation

Consumer Protection

*Transparency &
Accountability*



Our VISION is:

To develop the LSRA into an efficient, effective and accountable regulatory body with the capacity to protect and promote the public interest and the interests of consumers of legal services whilst encouraging an independent, strong, competitive legal profession with high standards of professionalism and integrity.



LSRA



Our MISSION is:

To regulate the provision of legal services by legal practitioners and ensure the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of legal services in the State.



Contents

1. Introduction

Who We Are, What We Do, Our Objectives	5
Foreword from the Chairperson	8
Introduction by the Chief Executive Officer	12
Strategic Plan 2022-2025	16
2023 at a Glance	18

2. How We Regulate

Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions	20
Legal Services, Levy and Registration	32

3. How We Engage And Innovate

Research Reports and Recommendations	38
Communications and Engagement	42

4. Governance And Management

Authority Members and Nominating Bodies	44
Authority's Activities	50
Governance Arrangements	54
Organisational Developments	61
Senior Management Team	67

Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Activities in 2023	70
------------------------------------	----

Our Values

The work of the LSRA as a public service body is guided by core values:



Annual Report for year ended 31 December 2023

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority was established by the Minister for Justice and Equality on 1 October 2016, under Part 2 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

This Annual Report on the performance of the Authority's functions in 2023 is made to the Minister for Justice and to the Oireachtas Joint Committee

on Justice in accordance with section 21(1) of the Act. This report covers the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Under section 21(1) of the Act, this Annual Report must be made no later than 30 April each year. This is the LSRA's eighth Annual Report.

1. Introduction

Who We Are

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) was established by the Minister for Justice and Equality on 1 October 2016 under Part 2 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act).

The Authority is comprised of 11 members appointed in accordance with section 9 of the Act. Authority members are appointed by the Government following nomination by the following ten organisations:

- Citizens Information Board
- Higher Education Authority (An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas)
- Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- Institute of Legal Costs Accountants
- Consumers' Association of Ireland
- Bar Council (now the Bar of Ireland)
- Legal Aid Board
- Honorable Society of the King's Inns
- Law Society of Ireland

The nominating bodies nominate one person each to the Authority, apart from the Law Society which nominates two members. The nomination process is designed to ensure the independence of the Authority while also achieving a gender balance and a balance of interests between legal practitioners and consumers. The Authority has a lay majority and chair. The Authority is required under the Act to be independent in the performance of its functions.

When appointing a person to be a member of the Authority, the Government must be satisfied that he or she has knowledge of, and expertise in relation to, at least one of the following:

- the provision of legal services;
- legal education and legal training;
- competition law and policy;
- the maintenance of standards in professions regulated by a statutory body;
- dealing with complaints against members of professions regulated by a statutory body;
- business and commercial matters;
- the needs of consumers of legal services.

The executive function of the LSRA is provided by a Chief Executive Officer, the Secretary to the Authority and the staff of the LSRA. The Chief Executive Officer is Dr Brian Doherty and the Secretary is Ultan Ryan.

What We Do

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority is tasked with regulating the provision of legal services by legal practitioners and ensuring the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of those services in the State.

The Authority has eleven functions under section 13 of the Act. These are to:

1. Regulate the provision of legal services by legal practitioners and ensure the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of such services in the State.
2. Keep under review and make recommendations to the Minister in respect of:
 - i) admission requirements of the Law Society, Bar Council, and Honorable Society of King’s Inns;
 - ii) availability and quality of education and training including ongoing training for the solicitors’ and barristers’ professions;
 - iii) policies in relation to admission and, or, entitlement to practise of the Law Society, Bar Council and the Honorable Society of the King’s Inns;
 - iv) professional codes;
 - v) the organisation of the provision of legal services in the State.

3. Disseminate information in respect of the education and accreditation requirements and any other matters referred to above as the Authority thinks fit.
4. Specify the nature and minimum levels of professional indemnity insurance in accordance with the Act.
5. Establish and administer a system of inspection of legal practitioners for the purposes of the Act.
6. Receive and investigate complaints against legal practitioners.
7. Maintain the Roll of Practising Barristers.
8. Promote public awareness and disseminate information to the public in respect of legal services, including the cost of such services.
9. Keep the Minister informed of developments in respect of the provision of legal services and make recommendations to assist the Minister in coordinating and developing policy.
10. Undertake, commission or assist in research and other activities in respect of the provision of legal services which may promote an improvement in standards in services provision and promote public awareness of such services, and make recommendations to the Minister.
11. Perform any other functions conferred by the Act or by regulations made under it.

Our Objectives

The Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 sets out six statutory objectives of the Authority, which in effect are our operating principles. These are to:

1. Protect and promote the public interest.
2. Support the proper and effective administration of justice.
3. Protect and promote the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services.
4. Promote competition in the provision of legal services in the State.
5. Encourage an independent, strong and effective legal profession.
6. Promote and maintain adherence to the professional principles of legal practitioners specified in the Act.

This Report

This Annual Report documents how the LSRA performed in 2023 against the priorities in its Strategic Plan 2019-2025.

Abbreviations and Terms used in this Report

Legal Practitioner: A practising solicitor or barrister (including a former solicitor or barrister and a firm of solicitors).

LPs: Legal Partnerships

LPDT: Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal

LSRA: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

LLPs: Limited Liability Partnerships

The Act: The Legal Services Regulation Act 2015

Attachment or Committal: Attachment or committal are orders designed to compel compliance with a court order. Attachment is an order to have a person brought before the court to explain their failure to comply with an earlier order. Committal is an order to arrest a person and commit them to prison.

Probate: The process of applying to the court for a grant that entitles a person or persons to administer a deceased’s estate.

Undertaking: A legally binding promise to do or not do something. In the context of complaints, these are specific agreements confirmed in writing by solicitors.

Failure to hand over: A failure to hand over files, title deeds etc. when required.

Failure to account: An omission by a legal practitioner to provide proper or complete accounts of monies held and received.

Failure to pay counsel’s fees: A solicitor either not paying a barrister (counsel) their fees (where the client has paid the solicitor) or not using their best endeavours to recover fees owed to a barrister by their client.

Foreword from the Chairperson

The year 2023 has been another significant one for the LSRA, with further progress to report towards achieving our statutory and strategic priorities in several important areas.

In June 2023, we welcomed another milestone in the independent complaints handling apparatus established in the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). In that month, the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal began hearing its first inquiries in misconduct complaints referred to it by both the LSRA and the Law Society. The Disciplinary Tribunal is an independent statutory body with its own chairperson and separate premises and is funded by the levy on legal practitioners. The LSRA provides the Disciplinary Tribunal with administrative and technical support.

In September 2023, the Authority approved a proposal from the LSRA executive to arrange for the publication of Disciplinary Tribunal determinations and High Court orders and decisions in misconduct matters, as is mandated under section 88 of the Act. Starting in 2024, Disciplinary Tribunal determinations will be made available to the public and media. Certain notices will also be placed in the official Irish State gazette, *Iris Oifigiúil*, as well as in the monthly Gazette of the Law Society of Ireland, which previously published Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal determinations in relation to solicitors.

Dr Don Thornhill



New business model for legal practitioners

The LSRA Act 2015 provides for legal partnerships between solicitors and barristers or between barristers and other barristers. The coming into force in July 2023 of the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 paved the way for the LSRA to commence the relevant provisions to introduce legal partnerships in 2024.

This new business model will be a key development in the modernisation of how legal services can be delivered to consumers in ways that may enhance efficiencies and increase competition. Barristers and solicitors practising in partnerships will benefit from the efficiencies that flow from a group practice, such as being able to share backroom costs and client work, as well as risks. Consumers in turn will be offered expanded choices when availing of legal services. Furthermore, the ability for two or more barristers to operate in partnerships will promote wider employment opportunities and career development in that profession, in addition to the existing models of either being self-employed sole-traders or in employment.

The LSRA will engage closely with the professional bodies and other important stakeholders during 2024 as it prepares the enabling legal regulations to facilitate the introduction of legal partnerships. The Authority is committed to creating a regulatory framework that allows legal practitioners to work together and provide efficient and competitively priced legal services to consumers, as well as diversifying employment opportunities for early career barristers.

Funding certainty and stability achieved

The LSRA is largely funded through a levy on the legal professions. Since the establishment of the Authority in 2016, it has been apparent that the levy model contained in its founding legislation is unduly complex and challenging to administer and does not provide a sustainable funding stream.

Important amendments to the levy provisions of the Act were introduced in the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023. The key changes relate to how the LSRA calculates the annual levy. Originally, the levy calculation was based on recouping the previous year's expenditure. This limited the amount of money the LSRA could generate with the levy and did not take account of additional funding needs as our statutory functions expanded.

Under the new model, prospective budgeted net expenditure for both the LSRA and the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal can now be included as part of the levy calculations, thereby providing much more funding certainty and stability.

Progress on education and training reform

Since it was established, the Authority has spent considerable time and energy in examining and reporting to the Minister for Justice on the important area of legal practitioner education and training.

Following extensive engagement with Department of Justice officials, the Authority in September 2023 commenced the establishment of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act. The committee will lay the foundations and build the framework for the introduction of an independent statutory Legal Practitioners Education and Training (LPET) Committee as recommended in the Authority’s 2020 report, Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training. The LPET Committee when established will be responsible for setting, defining and maintaining the standards of legal practitioner education and training. Existing and future providers of professional legal education and training would be required to demonstrate to the LPET committee how they would meet these standards.

Looking forward

Looking forward, 2024 will be another important year for progress towards the LSRA’s vision to protect and promote the public interest and the interests of consumers of legal services, whilst encouraging an independent, strong, competitive legal profession with high standards of professionalism and integrity. The Authority will publish research with recommendations, as requested by the Minister for Justice, in two separate areas. The first relates to barriers facing trainee and early career legal professionals. The second is a consideration of the possible creation of a new profession of conveyancer. The reports come with a range of recommendations for reforms and the Authority looks forward to ongoing engagement with stakeholders in raising standards within the legal profession while at the same time lowering barriers to entry.

A retrospective view

In 2024, I will be joining a number of my colleagues in the LSRA in stepping down from the Authority as we complete a total of eight years membership. Departing with me will be Authority members Eileen Barrington SC, Angela Black, Geraldine Clarke SC, Joan Crawford and Dermott Jewell.

This is the final Annual Report I will submit to the Minister for Justice and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice. On looking back to 2016 when I took up the position, we can see just how far the organisation has come in such a short period of time. As I noted in our first Annual Report, the Authority began its work without any staff or premises and with interim administrative support from the then Department of Justice and Equality. In January 2017, Renée Dempsey was appointed as an interim Chief Executive and her work paved the way for the appointment in 2018 of our current Chief Executive, Dr Brian Doherty.

It gives me great pleasure to reflect upon how far the organisation has come in these past eight years, from being a skeletal staffed embryonic body in 2016 to the fully fledged regulator that it is today. This period has not been without its growing pains and challenges. And there will be more challenges ahead. But the commitment and dedication I have had the fortune to witness among staff and Authority members alike gives me great confidence that the LSRA will continue to go from strength to strength.

My sincere gratitude goes to the LSRA executive under the fine leadership of Dr Doherty and his colleagues in the Senior Management Team, as well as to all our staff. I would also like to extend special thanks to the Authority’s secretary, Ultan Ryan, whose support and counsel I have valued down the years. Finally, I would like to thank all my fellow Authority members, several of whom have been on this journey with me from the start, and those who joined subsequently.

To all the LSRA’s stakeholders including the Minister for Justice, Department officials and the professional bodies, I thank you for your enthusiasm and support for the Authority’s vision for both itself as a new regulator, for those we regulate, and for the public service values that we strive to uphold. On behalf of the Authority, I am pleased to submit this Annual Report of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority to the Minister for Justice and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice in accordance with section 21(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

Dr Don Thornhill
Chairperson

Introduction by the Chief Executive Officer

The first full year of the LSRA's third Statement of Strategy 2022-2025 was a critical one. A key strategic objective for the organisation was to enhance operational efficiency to deliver our core regulatory operations and services. In order for any organisation to plan for and deliver such efficiencies, a secure financial footing is necessary. This is something the LSRA has not enjoyed since it was established in 2016. The viability of the LSRA's statutory levy funding model has been a concern for several years, so the introduction of the legislative changes in 2023 is a watershed moment for the LSRA.

A new levy model introduced in the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 for the first time puts the LSRA's funding on solid ground. The main shortcoming of the old model was that it was backward-looking, with the levy calculation based on expenditure made in the previous year. Under the new model, the levy now includes an amount for budgeted expenditure. This means the LSRA can now budget and plan in a forward-looking way for the growth and activities needed to fulfil its extensive mandate, enhance operational efficiency and improve service delivery.

It took several years of diligent work to get the new levy model in place, and I would very much like to acknowledge my colleagues both within the LSRA and the Department of Justice for the painstaking efforts that culminated in the legislative amendments in 2023. I would also like to thank the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar of Ireland, who pay the levy on a collective basis, as well as individual legal practitioners, for their cooperation with the changes.

Dr Brian J. Doherty



The Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 also introduced amendments in relation to the Roll of Practising Barristers which are relevant for the operation of the levy. There are new obligations for barristers to update the LSRA with changes to their details on the Roll. A failure to update the LSRA could constitute misconduct under the 2015 Act. Barristers on the Roll must now also apply to the LSRA to have their names removed from the Roll where they longer wish to provide legal services. These operational improvements will provide more assurances for legal practitioners and consumers that they are dealing with a regulated legal profession.

Complaints handling

The year under review was the LSRA's fourth full year as the independent complaints handling body for complaints about solicitors and barristers. The number of complaints received was 5% down on the previous year, at 1,290 compared to 1,352 in 2022. The breakdown in the types of complaint received once more shows a consistent trend, with the majority of complaints relating to alleged misconduct, followed by inadequate legal services and excessive costs (overcharging).

This annual report for the first time provides more detailed statistical information about the complaints we have received, which reflects a new recording method introduced at the start of 2023. In presenting this data, our aim is to reflect both the complexity of the issues and disputes that consumers of legal services bring to us and also to give a more realistic sense of the work involved in considering and investigating each complaint.

By enriching the data we collect on individual complaints, we will also gain a better understanding

of complaints-generating behaviours and practices that lead to complaints. This in turn will assist us in monitoring, researching and engaging with our stakeholders in pursuit of our statutory objectives of protecting the interests of consumers and promoting adherence to professional principles among legal practitioners.

I am pleased to report that for the second year since the LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints about legal practitioners, more complaints were closed than were received in 2023, at 1,432. Underlying this high complaints closure rate is the sustained effort of LSRA staff and members of its regulatory Committees to improve efficiencies and refine complaints handling processes.

It is also encouraging to note that the number of complainants and legal practitioners willing to engage with each other to informally resolve their complaints continues to grow. In the year under review, efforts at informal resolution with the assistance of the LSRA's mediators took place in 93 complaints, up from 61 in 2022 and 38 in 2021. A total of 31 complaints were brought to successful informal resolution during the year, up from 22 in 2022. Informal resolution is not an appropriate way to handle every type of complaint, and the LSRA can only offer its mediator services for consumer complaints about legal services or costs. However, in the right circumstances, this approach can be a very effective and efficient way for both parties to work through their issues or disputes on an entirely voluntarily basis and in a safe and confidential manner with the help of our specialist staff.

The year also saw an increase in activity for the Complaints Committee which was established under the Act in 2020 to handle complaints of alleged misconduct. The Complaints Committee closed a total of 233 complaints during the year, up from 157 in 2022.

International Conference of Legal Regulators

A personal highlight of the year came in October when the LSRA hosted the 12th annual International Conference of Legal Regulators. More than 100 attendees from five continents attended the three-day event in the Royal Marine Hotel in Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin. The conference has previously been hosted in Singapore, Edinburgh, The Hague, and Chicago.

The conference saw legal regulators from around the world gather to share their experiences and good practices, explore trends and themes, and network. It was an honour for the LSRA, as a relatively new regulator, to be selected to host this unique gathering. Staff members highly appreciated the chance to share learning and experiences with their counterparts in other jurisdictions and to learn from best-practice examples provided in workshops and plenary discussions. I would like to thank all those who made the event such a success, in particular Alison Hook from Hook Tangaza consultants and the Solicitors Regulatory Authority in England and Wales, for their support in planning and organising the conference. I'd like to also thank all of the staff of the LSRA for going above and beyond the call of duty in delivering such a wonderful event.

Research and reform

Research is another important aspect of our work, providing valuable insights and deepening our understanding of the legal services sector. Work was finalised during the year on a report by Indecon Research Economists, which we commissioned to consider the potential creation of a new profession of conveyancer. We also engaged with stakeholders on a set of recommendations to tackle the economic and other barriers facing early career barristers and solicitors as identified in a report we submitted to the Minister for Justice in 2022. We look forward to publishing reports in these two areas in 2024.

Outreach and acknowledgements

While 2023 was a challenging year, much was achieved which collectively has provided a stronger basis on which to deliver on our strategic objectives during 2024 and 2025. Strong stakeholder engagement is central to our success, and myself and my senior colleagues were delighted to speak directly to legal practitioners at a range of events and fora around the country during the year. These included a new 'Meet the Regulator' event which we plan to further roll out in 2024.

My gratitude once again goes to the staff and management of the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns for their ongoing engagement in our endeavours, and indeed for their own efforts to drive improvements in legal practitioner training and legal services delivery. Whilst the LSRA's independence is at the forefront of all that we do, successful and effective regulation cannot be achieved without ongoing engagement with the professional bodies and other key stakeholders.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Authority's Chairperson Dr Don Thornhill for his support, leadership and dedication to the vision of the LSRA during his tenure. His efforts have enabled us to place the organisation on a strong and stable footing with the continuing support of the Department of Justice, Authority members, senior managers, our dedicated staff and our many stakeholders.

Due to the sound bedrock established under Dr Thornhill's tenure as Chairperson of the Authority, I am confident that the LSRA can continue to deliver on its mission to regulate the provision of legal services by legal practitioners and ensure the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of legal services in the State.

Finally, I would also like once more to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the LSRA team. Our work can be demanding and on occasions even relentless. It requires patience, sensitivity and compassion to deal with the complex complaints that we receive that impact upon both the complainant and the legal practitioner against whom a complaint has been made. The LSRA staff continue to deliver all that is required with commitment and enthusiasm. For all the hard work that they do, they have, as always, my heartfelt gratitude.

Dr Brian J. Doherty
Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 sets out three strategic priorities for the LSRA. This Annual Report documents how the LSRA performed against these priorities during 2023.

These strategic priorities form the basis of our work in the following areas:

- Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions
- Legal Services, Levy and Registration
- Research and Reporting
- Communications and Engagement
- Governance and Management



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Enhance Operational Efficiency and Service Delivery

We will enhance operational efficiency to deliver our core regulatory operations and services effectively and independently and to identified and benchmarked standards.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Promote Professional Standards and Encourage Innovation

We will promote professional standards and encourage innovation and advancement in education and training, legal practice business models, admission to the legal professions, access to justice and consumer protection.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Increase Awareness through Communication and Engagement

We will improve awareness of the LSRA's regulatory activities and services as well as other issues relevant to the legal services sector through enhanced communications and engagement with the public, legal practitioners and other stakeholders.

2023 AT A GLANCE

ALL COMPLAINTS

3,070

PHONE CALLS AND EMAILS REQUESTING INFORMATION AND/OR COMPLAINT FORMS



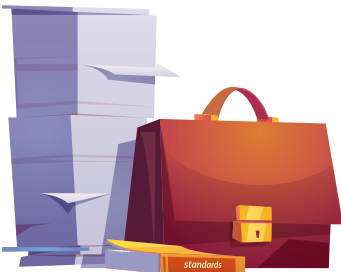
1,290
COMPLAINTS RECEIVED



1,233
RELATING TO SOLICITORS

57
RELATING TO BARRISTERS

1,432
COMPLAINTS CLOSED



256
RESOLVED
(18%)

111
UPHELD
(8%)

699
INADMISSIBLE
(49%)



PRACTISING BARRISTERS ROLL

3,051 BARRISTERS ON ROLL
UP 94 FROM 2022



OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

708 TWITTER/X FOLLOWERS
UP 13% ON 2022

993 LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS
UP 90% ON 2022

LLPS

2,139 LAW LIBRARY BARRISTERS
912 NON-LAW LIBRARY BARRISTERS

36 LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIPS AUTHORISED
20 IN DUBLIN 4 IN CORK

COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMITTEES

48 MEETINGS



2. How We Regulate

Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions

This is the fifth year that the LSRA has reported in its Annual Report on its complaints handling activities. The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints about solicitors and barristers on 7 October 2019, following the commencement of Part 6 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act).

The number of complaints received in 2023 was 1,290, while the number of complaints closed in the year was 1,432. Multiple complaints can be made about an individual legal practitioner or firm.

The number of complaints received in 2023 represented a 5% decrease on 2022, when the total number of complaints received was 1,352. The number of closed complaints in 2023 was just 51 fewer than in 2022 when a total of 1,483 complaints were closed.

Complaints Staff Recruitment

Recruitment took place in 2023 for staff in the Complaints, Resolutions and Investigations Department. One additional mediator was recruited to assist with an increase in demand for the informal resolution of complaints. Four additional Complaints and Resolutions Officers were recruited and, as two left during the course of the year, that was a net increase of two. The total number of staff in the department stood at 38 at the end of 2023 (11 of whom are part-time). Further recruitment campaigns are scheduled for 2024 for additional Clerical Officers, Executive Officers and Case Officers, the latter to provide additional support to the Complaints Committee.

Types of Complaint the LSRA investigates

Under Part 6 of the Act, the LSRA can receive and investigate three types or grounds of complaint:

- that the legal services provided were of an inadequate standard;
- that an amount of costs sought by the legal practitioner for legal services was excessive;
- that an act or omission of a legal practitioner constitutes misconduct under the Act.

Misconduct is broadly defined in the Act and includes an act or omission which involves fraud or dishonesty, or which is likely to bring the profession into disrepute. It also includes the provision of legal services which were of an inadequate standard to a substantial degree, or the seeking of grossly excessive costs. Only a client – or a person acting on behalf of a client – can bring a complaint to the LSRA where the client considers that the legal services provided were of an inadequate standard or that the amount of costs sought were excessive (overcharging). When it comes to alleged misconduct by a legal practitioner, any person can make a complaint to the LSRA.

New Complaints Recording Method

As stated above, the LSRA can receive and investigate three types or grounds of complaints; of inadequate legal services, excessive costs (overcharging) and misconduct. In reality, a single complaint often contains a number of different grounds. For example, in a complaint that is primarily about inadequate legal services the complainant may also consider that they have been overcharged. Similarly, in a complaint of alleged misconduct, the complainant may also consider that the legal services they received were inadequate. These are called mixed complaints.

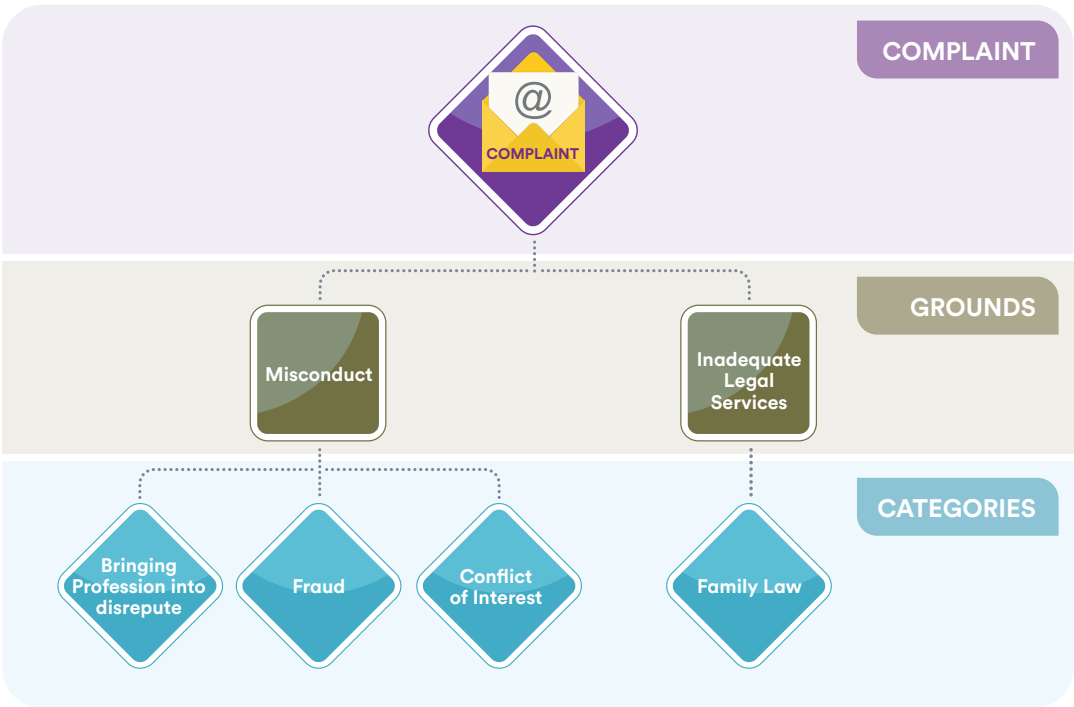
This report reflects two important changes in the way that individual complaints are now recorded and classified. Firstly, since the beginning of 2023, the LSRA has recorded each individual complaint as relating to either one, two or all three of the statutory complaints grounds where appropriate.

This replaces the previous system whereby an individual complaint was recorded under only the primary ground presented in the complaint. The aim of the new more sophisticated recording method is to better reflect the complexity of complaints that the LSRA receives, which often do not fit neatly into a single statutory ground.

A second change introduced in 2023 and also captured in this report relates to how complaints under the Act's three grounds are classified by the LSRA into a range of categories as part of an administrative process to aid our reporting.

There are a total of 37 available categories. Services and costs complaints are recorded by areas of law, such as litigation, conveyancing, probate and family law. Complaints alleging misconduct are recorded under categories that relate to the nature of the act or omission that gives rise to the complaint such as for example fraud or dishonesty or failure to communicate.

How a mixed complaint can be recorded and classified



Until now, an individual complaint was recorded as relating to one category only. For example, a complaint of inadequate legal services was classified only under family law, even if it also involved a component of probate. Likewise a single complaint alleging misconduct was classified only under dishonesty even if it also included a failure to communicate component. In both cases, only the primary component was categorised and recorded. Under the new recording system, a single complaint is now classified into one or more categories as appropriate. This reflects the reality that a single complaint frequently contains one or more issues or areas of law.

This change also better shows the complexity of the complaints received by the LSRA.

The number of complaints we report on remains the same, but we are now able to report on the different components contained within those complaints and provide better data and analysis of the issues and the areas of law to which they relate.

Combined, these two changes give a more accurate sense of the work involved in considering and investigating complaints by both the LSRA's Complaints and Resolutions Officers and its two regulatory committees. The LSRA will continue to improve and refine the data that it collects and reports in fulfilment of its statutory objectives.



Complaints Reporting

The LSRA is required under section 73 of the Act to report on the performance of its complaints function every six months. In 2023, two complaints reports were published:

- **Report 1-2023, published on 6th April, covering the period 3 September 2022 to 3 March 2023.**
- **Report 2-2023, published on 27th September, covering the period 4 March to 1 September 2023.**

As those reports deal exclusively with complaints, they provide a more detailed analysis of the statistics than are provided here. All complaints reports are available on the LSRA website.

Receiving and Investigating Complaints

The Act and associated Regulations set out detailed statutory processes for the handling of complaints about legal practitioners, including a series of statutory deadlines which must be observed.

Complaints handling begins with files opened initially as queries. Complaints staff then scrutinise these files to decide whether a query meets the criteria for a complaint. This process is an important stage in the complaints handling process; in some cases it can generate a considerable amount of correspondence between complaints staff and complainants to clarify details of issues raised.

Preliminary Review for Admissibility of Complaints

Once a query is classified as a complaint, the LSRA is required under the Act to conduct a preliminary review to determine whether or not the complaint is admissible. As part of this process, the LSRA must notify the legal practitioner of the complaint in writing, provide the legal practitioner with a copy of the complaint, and request a written response with observations. Complaints staff may also at this preliminary review stage request additional information in writing from either the complainant or the legal practitioner. In complex complaints this process may require several rounds of communication between the parties.



Informally Resolving Complaints

The LSRA encourages early resolution of complaints where appropriate. The Act requires the LSRA to invite the parties to make efforts to resolve matters in relation to admissible complaints that relate to:

- **legal services of an inadequate standard;**
- **excessive costs; or**
- **misconduct which, if substantiated, would constitute legal services of an inadequate standard to a substantial degree.**

Staff who work to help the parties to resolve complaints informally through the LSRA's informal resolution process are qualified mediators accredited by the Mediators' Institute of Ireland.

Depending on the type of complaint, where the parties decline an LSRA invitation for informal resolution, or where a complaint cannot be informally resolved, the complaint will proceed to be determined and investigated by the LSRA or, in the case of a misconduct complaint, be referred to the Complaints Committee. A complaint which straddles more than one of the three statutory grounds, even if one part of it can be resolved, will also be referred to the Complaints Committee if it includes alleged misconduct.

It is encouraging that each year more complainants and legal practitioners engage with the informal resolution process. In 2023, 93 complainants and legal practitioners engaged in the process, compared to 2022 when 61 did so and 2021 when 38 did so.

Complaints Committee and Review Committee

Both the Complaints Committee and the Review Committee were established in 2020. Both committees have a majority of lay members. The Complaints Committee has 27 members appointed by the Authority. These are comprised of not fewer than eight members nominated by the Law Society; not fewer than four members nominated by the Bar of Ireland (formerly the Bar Council); and the balance made up of lay members appointed following a competitive selection process.

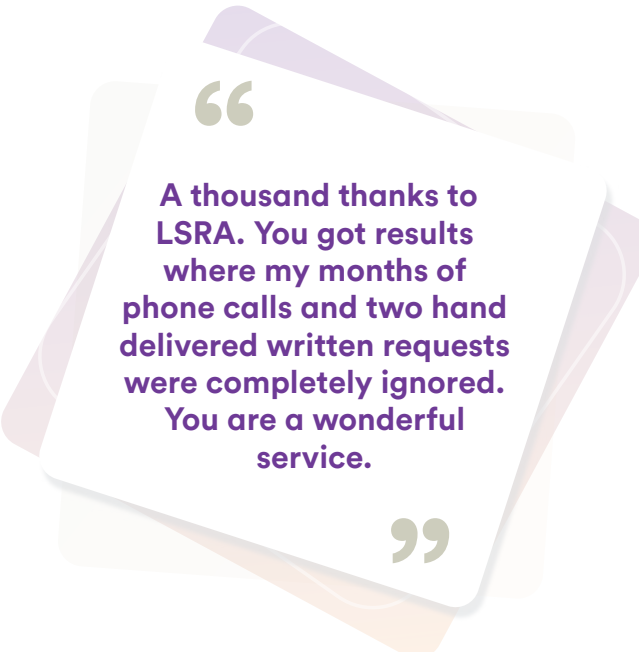
The Complaints Committee may sit in Divisional Committees of three or five members. Complaints of alleged misconduct that have been found to be admissible by the LSRA's Complaints and Resolutions Officers are referred to the Complaints Committee for investigation. The Complaints Committee has the power to impose sanctions on legal practitioners itself or refer complaints to the separate Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. The Complaints Committee cannot make findings of misconduct.

Due to the continuing high volume of complaints relating to alleged misconduct, there was some restructuring of the workload of the Complaints Committee in 2023. This was to increase the number of complaints proceeding to the committee, whilst also reducing the number of adjournments. Although the committee sat on fewer occasions in 2023 compared to 2022 (38, down from 54), the number of complaints closed by the committee was significantly higher (233 in 2023, up from 157).

The Review Committee also has 27 members who are nominated and appointed in the same way as the Complaints Committee, and it sits in groups of three. The Review Committee reviews determinations made by the LSRA's Complaints and Resolutions Officers on complaints that relate to inadequate legal services and/or excessive costs. The Review Committee reviewed 73 complaints at ten sittings in 2023 (up from seven sittings in 2022). During the course of the year, 70 requests for reviews were made (up from 40 in 2022).

Enforcement of LSRA Directions or Determinations

In all complaints where legal practitioners do not comply with directions or determinations of the LSRA, the LSRA brings enforcement proceedings under section 90 of the Act. When such applications to the High Court are considered necessary, the LSRA will also seek to obtain the payment by the legal practitioner of the costs it incurs.



Complaints Received in 2023

Overview

In 2023, the Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department received a total of 3,070 phone calls and e-mails requesting information and/or complaint forms.

A total of 1,710 query files were opened by complaints staff. Following an assessment of these files, 1,290 were subsequently classified as complaints and were then subject to the statutory pre-admissibility assessment process. The remaining 420 query files were dealt with as queries with staff providing information or assistance. Even though they are not classified as complaints, addressing these queries can involve substantial work by LSRA staff.

As in previous years, far more complaints were received about solicitors than barristers in 2023, reflecting their higher numbers and greater level of contact with consumers. Of the 1,290 complaints received, 1,233 related to solicitors while 57 related to barristers.

Figure 1 on page 28 shows the breakdown of complaints received by county, based on the office locations of the legal practitioners. Taken together, legal practitioners in Dublin and Cork account for just over half (51%) of the total number of complaints received.

Complaints Received

As outlined above, the LSRA has enhanced the recording of individual complaints as relating to one, two or all three of the Act's grounds where appropriate. The report now includes a full breakdown of grounds across all of the 1,290 complaints received in 2023. This breakdown show that a total of 1,109 complaints contained only one statutory ground, while a further 181 were mixed complaints combining more than one of the three grounds.

In 2023, 835 complaints received (65%) were about alleged misconduct only. However misconduct was also a ground for complaint in a further 133 complaints, bringing the total to exactly three quarters of all complaints received (75%).

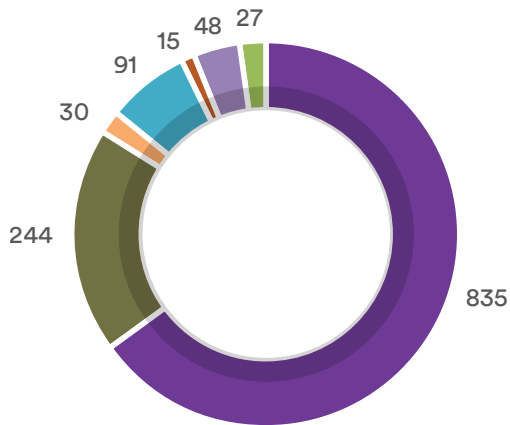
A total of 244 complaints (19%) were about inadequate standards of legal services only. However inadequate services were also a ground for complaint in a further 166 complaints. Likewise, 30 complaints (2%) were about excessive costs only, with excessive costs grounds also raised in 90 other complaints.

Complaints Received in 2023

All Grounds for Complaints

Complaints under the Act’s three grounds are classified by the LSRA into a range of categories as part of an administrative process to aid our reporting. As stated above, the recording of complaints has been enhanced to reflect the reality that a single complaint may include several different components across a total of 37 available categories.

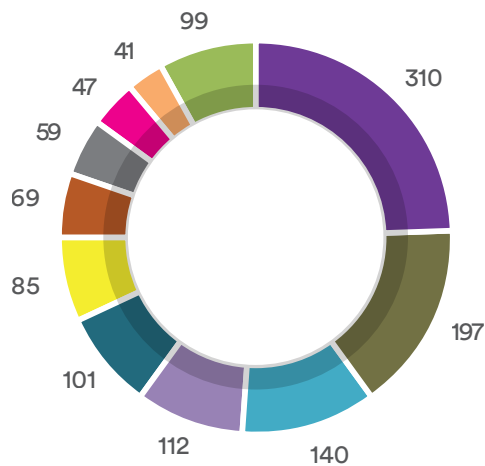
The 1,290 individual complaints received in 2023 contained a total of 1,796 components across the available categories.



Misconduct only	835	(65%)
Inadequate services only	244	(19%)
Excessive costs only	30	(2%)
Misconduct and inadequate legal services	91	(7%)
Misconduct and excessive costs	15	(1%)
Inadequate legal services and excessive costs	48	(4%)
Misconduct, inadequate legal services and excessive costs	27	(2%)
TOTAL	1,290	

Misconduct

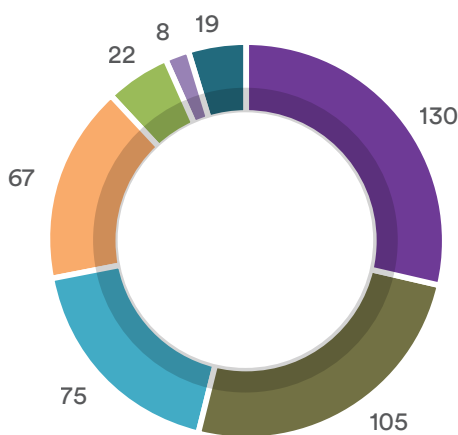
A total of 1,260 components of misconduct were recorded across all complaints received in 2023. These were classified under a range of categories based on the alleged acts or omissions of the legal practitioners. Of these, 310 (25%) related to conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, and 197 (16%) involved a failure to communicate. A further 140 (11%) related to a failure to handover a file or other deeds and documents, 112 (9%) related to a delay, 101 (8%) involved fraud or dishonesty and 85 (7%) related to a failure to account for clients’ money.



Bringing profession into disrepute	310	(24.6%)
Failure to communicate	197	(15.6%)
Failure to hand over	140	(11.1%)
Delay	112	(8.9%)
Fraud or dishonesty	101	(8.0%)
Failure to account	85	(6.7%)
Undertaking	69	(5.5%)
Substantial inadequate services	59	(4.7%)
Failure to pay counsel’s fees	47	(3.7%)
Conflict of interest	41	(3.3%)
Other misconduct	99	(7.9%)
TOTAL	1,260	

Inadequate Legal Services

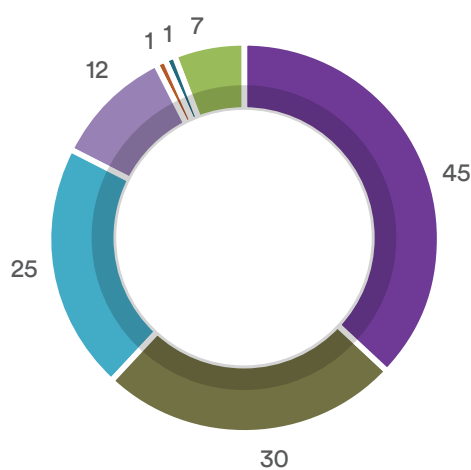
A total of 415 components of inadequate legal services were recorded across all complaints received in 2023. These were classified under a range of categories based on the area of law that the complaint related to. Of these, 119 (29%) related to litigation, 105 (25%) related to conveyancing, with 75 (18%) related to family law, and 67 (16%) related to probate and the administration of estates.



Litigation	119	(28.7%)
Conveyancing	105	(25.3%)
Family	75	(18.1%)
Probate	67	(16.1%)
Employment	22	(5.3%)
Crime	8	(1.9%)
Other	19	(4.6%)
TOTAL	415	

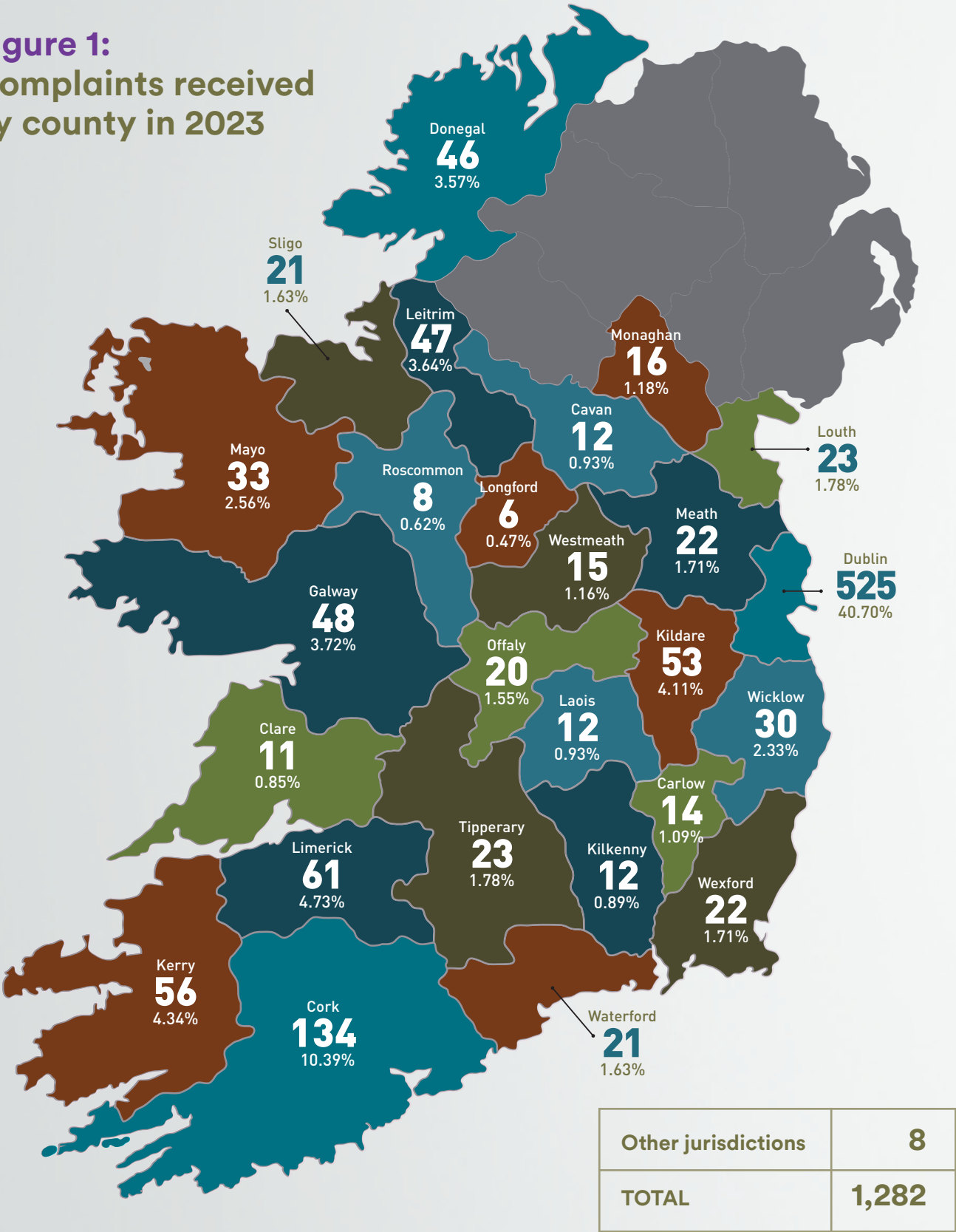
Excessive Costs

A total of 121 components of excessive costs were recorded across all complaints received in 2023. These were classified under a range of categories based on the area of law that the complaint related to. Of these, 45 (37%) related to litigation, with 30 (25%) related to family law, 25 (21%) related to conveyancing, and 12 (10%) related to probate and the administration of estates.



Litigation	45	(37.2%)
Family	30	(24.8%)
Conveyancing	25	(20.7%)
Probate	12	(9.9%)
Employment	1	(0.8%)
Crime	1	(0.8%)
Other	7	(5.8%)
TOTAL	121	

Figure 1:
Complaints received
by county in 2023



Complaints Closed in 2023

Overview

A total of 1,432 complaints were closed during 2023. Just under half of these (699 complaints, 49%) were closed because they were deemed to be inadmissible following a statutory assessment.

A total of 256 complaints (18%) were resolved between the parties, including 32 complaints which were successfully resolved with the assistance of the LSRA's trained mediators. A total of 111 complaints (8%) were upheld while 138 complaints (10%) were not upheld.

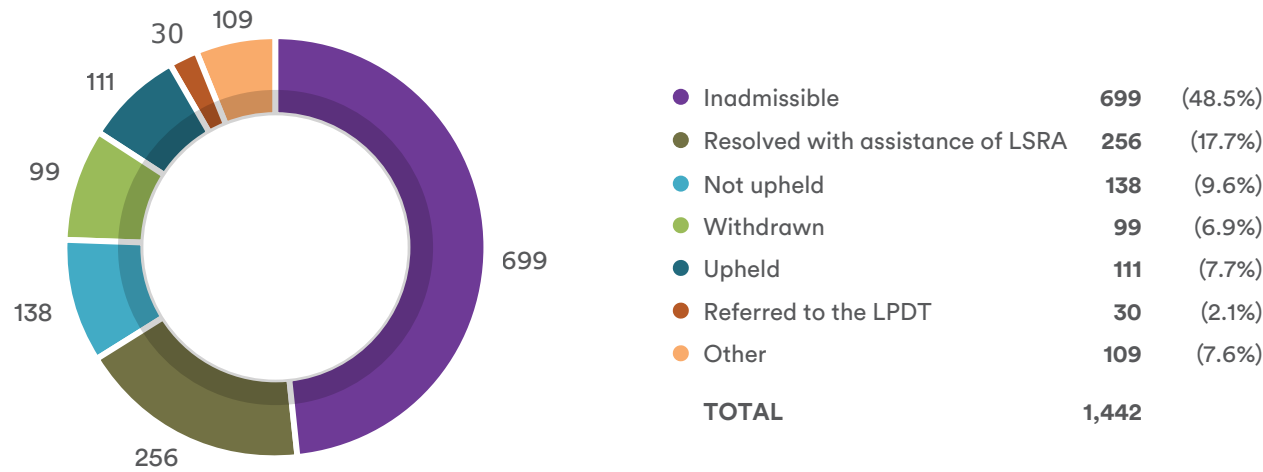
A total of 99 complaints (7%) were withdrawn. A further 109 complaints (8%) either could not proceed, or were closed for other reasons. Complaints may be unable to proceed because a legal practitioner has ceased practice or has been suspended or struck off. An investigation might also be deferred because there are court proceedings ongoing.

It should also be noted that where complaints are either withdrawn or resolved between the parties themselves, the LSRA may determine that it is in the public interest for an investigation to continue. The LSRA continued with five complaints on this basis in 2023.

LSRA Complaints and Resolutions Officers closed 153 services and costs complaints, with 80 of these upheld and 53 not upheld. A further 20 were either resolved, withdrawn, or closed for other reasons at that stage.

The Complaints Committee closed 233 complaints of alleged misconduct. Of these, 31 were upheld, 85 were not upheld and 30 complaints were referred on to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. A further 87 complaints were either resolved, withdrawn or closed for other reasons at that stage.

Complaints Closed *



* It should be noted that there are 1,442 outcomes in the above Complaints Closed statistics, and that is ten more than the total number of closed complaints, which is 1,432. That is because ten complaints were on mixed grounds (they contained more than one of the three statutory grounds) which can have multiple outcomes.

Enforcement in the High Court

During the course of 2023, the LSRA made 12 applications to the High Court under section 90 of the Act for orders to enforce its directions in complaints against legal practitioners. A total of 11 High Court orders were obtained, although three of those related to applications made in the previous year. In six complaints, the legal practitioner complied with the LSRA's directions after the High Court order was made. In three other complaints, as the legal practitioner did not comply with the High Court order, it was necessary for the LSRA to make a further application to the court for leave to issue an order of attachment or committal.



Complaints to the Ombudsman in 2023

Complainants who feel they were unfairly treated by the LSRA can bring a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's staff examine complaints about the administrative actions of public bodies including the LSRA. The role of the Ombudsman in LSRA cases is to consider whether a complaint has been dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. The Ombudsman cannot investigate the actions of the legal practitioner but can simply review the administrative actions of the LSRA in dealing with a complaint. The Ombudsman process is not an appeal of the LSRA decision, but an investigation of the procedures followed by the LSRA.

The Ombudsman only requests a copy of the LSRA file in complaints which it considers require further investigation. In 2023, the LSRA received requests for a copy of a file on 46 occasions, which is down from the 63 reported in 2022.

Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal

The Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (LPDT) is an independent statutory body under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. Its role is to consider complaints of misconduct against solicitors and barristers referred to it from the LSRA's Complaints Committee or the Law Society of Ireland.

The LPDT began receiving applications from both the Law Society and the LSRA in 2022. In 2023 it received a total of 22 applications, all relating to allegations of misconduct regarding solicitors. Of these, 16 applications were received from the Law Society and six from the LSRA.

In 2023, the LPDT began holding both case management hearings and inquiry hearings. Case management hearings commenced in April 2023 and inquiry hearings started in June 2023. The LPDT made determinations (a finding of whether or not there has been misconduct on the part of the legal practitioner) in more than 20 complaints.



The work of the LPDT is governed by its regulations, the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal Regulations 2021, and relevant legislation including the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

The LPDT has a total of 33 members appointed by the President of the High Court on the nomination of the Minister for Justice. It has 21 lay members nominated by the Minister. It also has six nominees of the Bar of Ireland (formerly the Bar Council) and six nominees of the Law Society. The LPDT's lay chairperson is Mr Tom Coughlan. One of the LPDT's solicitor members resigned at the end of 2023, which put its membership at 32 at the end of the year.

While the LPDT is a separate entity to the LSRA with its own premises, the LSRA provides it with administrative and technical support. The LPDT's seven support staff are LSRA employees and its Registrar is a member of the LSRA's Senior Management Team.

Legal Services, Levy and Registration

Steady Growth of Limited Liability Partnerships

The number of partnerships of solicitors authorised by the LSRA to operate as Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) in 2023 was 36. This brought the total number of LLPs authorised since November 2019 to 482.

A total of nine LLPs notified the LSRA in 2023 that they intended to cease operating as an LLP (31 ceased since November 2019). This brought the figure on the Register of LLPs to 451 at the end of the year. The LSRA maintains and regularly updates the Register of LLPs, which lists partnerships of solicitors authorised to operate as LLPs. The Register is available on the LSRA website.

The LSRA received 122 membership alteration forms from LLPs in 2023 resulting in the addition of 175 partners to LLPs on the register and the removal of 75. The alterations were processed in a timely fashion. The LLP authorisation framework, the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (Limited Liability Partnerships) (Section 130) Regulations 2019 were issued on 23 October 2019.

An authorisation to operate with limited liability under the Act 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. A partner may still be liable for a debt, obligation or liability arising from, for example, an act or omission of the partner which involves fraud or dishonesty and which was the subject of either a misconduct finding or a criminal conviction.

The limiting of personal liability by legal practitioners comes with responsibilities, including maintaining appropriate professional indemnity insurance and communication effectively with clients and creditors as to the impact of the LLP operating model.

Throughout 2023, LSRA staff addressed queries from firms related to LLPs and various processes under the Regulations. These included applications to operate as LLPs, to cease operating and where there was a change in the partners of an LLP. LSRA staff responded to 43 queries relating to LLPs in 2023.

Section 125(9) of the Act requires the LSRA to make a decision on whether to authorise a relevant business to operate as an LLP no later than 60 days following receipt of a valid application form and fee. The average processing time for LLP applications during 2023 was 23 days, down from 25 days in 2022.

Insights on New LLPs in 2023

LSRA data on the 36 partnerships of solicitors that were authorised to operate as LLPs during 2023 provides useful insights. A total of 20 LLPs were

authorised in county Dublin, with four in Cork and two each in Meath and Monaghan. A total of 32 of the 36 partnerships authorised as LLPs had between two and five partners.

TABLE 1: LLPs Authorised in 2023 by County

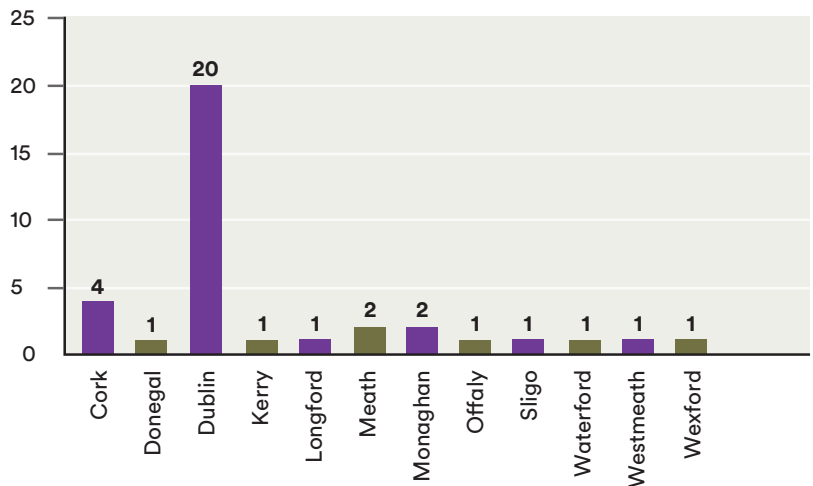
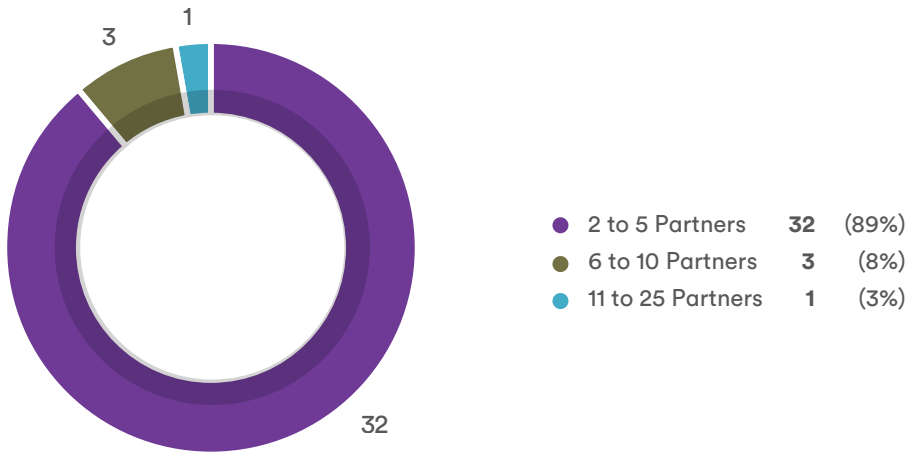


TABLE 2: LLPs Authorised in 2023 by Number of Partners



Levy on the Professions

The LSRA issued its fifth annual levy assessment notices in 2023. The Law Society of Ireland, the Bar Council (now the Bar of Ireland) and barristers who are not members of the Law Library are subject to the levy. The levy is the LSRA’s principal funding mechanism.

The levy amount is determined each year by the LSRA with the consent of the Minister for Justice. The amount is calculated in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 Act, as amended. The levy provisions of the Act were amended by the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023.

The LSRA, with the consent of the Minister, determined the levy amount owed for the 2022 levy year. The LSRA then calculated the proportion of the levy payable by the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland, and barristers who were not members of the Law Library. Legal practitioners in the full-time service of

the State are exempt from the levy under section 97 of the Act. The number of complaints made about solicitors and barristers is a factor used in the calculation of the levy. The LSRA began accepting complaints about legal practitioners on 7 October 2019, following commencement of Part 6 of the Act.

The levy for the 2022 levy year was €286.07 per barrister who was not a member of the Law Library, €301.85 per Law Library member and €413.77 per solicitor. The LSRA received and responded to 69 queries regarding the levy in 2023.

On 2 November 2023, the LSRA, as required under section 95D(1) of the Act, issued Levy Assessment Notices to the two professional bodies as well as 559 individual barristers who are not members of the Law Library.

In total, 87% of the levy for the 2022 levy year had been paid to the LSRA by 31 December 2023.

Maintaining the 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.

The Roll is available on the LSRA’s website. It is an important tool by which members of the public can be assured that the barrister providing legal services on their behalf is lawfully entitled to do so. It is also necessary for the calculation and proper administration of the levy on barristers. A barrister’s practising status on the Roll (as a Law Library member or not, or as being in the full-time service of the State) is relevant for the levy calculation process. It also impacts on a barrister’s liability to pay the annual levy. For these reasons, it is important that the details of all barristers listed on the Roll are accurate and up-to-date. Qualified barristers are prohibited under section 136 of the Act from providing legal services if their names are not entered on the Roll.

Since 31 July 2023, under the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023, barristers on the Roll are required to:

- **Update the LSRA with a change of details, including name, postal/email address, and practising status (whether they are in the full-time service of the State and whether or not they are members of the Law Library).**
- **Apply to the LSRA to have their names removed from the Roll where they no longer wish to provide legal services.**

Section 135(5l) of the Act provides that a practising barrister’s failure to comply with the new obligations may constitute misconduct under section 50(1)(m) of the Act which provides that an act or omission may be considered as misconduct where it ‘consists of a breach of this Act or regulations made under it’.

Over the course of the year, the details of 171 practising barristers were added to the Roll. The average turnaround time for applications to be processed and a barrister’s details entered on the Roll was two working days. A total of 141 queries related to the Roll were dealt with in 2023.

The Roll numbers grew from 2,957 on 1 January 2023 to 3,051 on 31 December 2023. Of these, 2,139 were members of the Law Library and 912 were not members of the Law Library. Over the course the year, the LSRA received 214 requests from barristers on the Roll for amendments to their details. *“A total of 77 barristers were removed from the Roll in 2023.”*

The LSRA and Senior Counsel Applications

In April 2020, the Authority established the Advisory Committee on the grant of Patents of Precedence under section 172(1) of the Act. The role of the Advisory Committee is to make recommendations to the Government to grant Patents of Precedence to solicitor and barrister applicants. A solicitor or barrister who is granted a Patent of Precedence is entitled to use the title of senior counsel. In addition, a barrister who is granted a Patent of Precedence is entitled to be called to the Inner Bar. Prior to the applications system created in the Act, only barristers were entitled to seek the title senior counsel.

The seven-member Advisory Committee is chaired by the Chief Justice. The Chairperson of the

Authority, Dr Don Thornhill, was nominated by the Minister for Justice to the Advisory Committee in 2020 and reappointed in April 2023. The LSRA provided clerical and administrative assistance to the Advisory Committee during 2023. The Secretary to the Authority has acted as Secretary to the Advisory Committee since its establishment.

The Advisory Committee issued its fourth call for applications for recommendations in December 2022. The Advisory Committee’s call for applications were made via the LSRA website, which posted detailed information for applicants, including guidance and application forms in both Irish and English. It received a total of 49 applications; 16 from solicitors and 33 from barristers. At its meeting of 30 May 2023, the Government approved the granting of the title of senior counsel to 19 barristers and three solicitors, based on the Advisory Committee’s recommendations.

Table 3: Advisory Committee’s Patents of Precedence Recommendations 2023

Patents of Precedence 2023 Recommendations			
TOTAL 22			
Barrister		Solicitor	
19		3	
Female	Male	Female	Male
5	14	2	1

LSRA All Staff Day

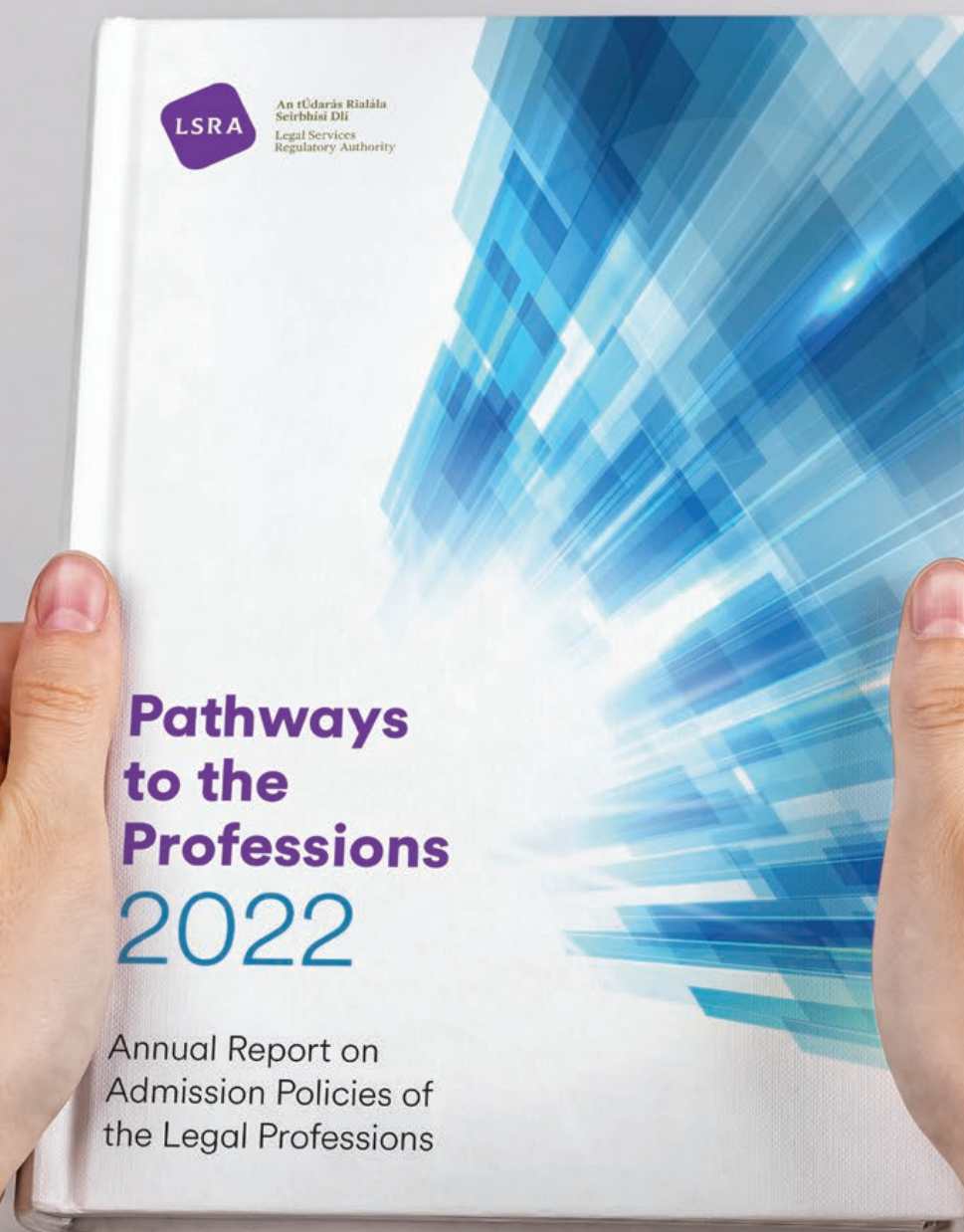
The LSRA's first All Staff Day took place in November 2023. Staff were encouraged to consider how their roles contribute to the goals of the organisation as a whole.



3. How We Engage & Innovate

Research Reports and Recommendations

The year in review saw the publication of three statutory reports which reflect the range of the Authority's functions and its research and reporting responsibilities under the Act.



Complaints Reports 2023

Highlighting themes in complaints to raise awareness and improve standards

The LSRA is required under section 73 of the Act to publish a report on the operation of its independent complaints handling function every six months. The LSRA began receiving complaints about solicitors and barristers on 7 October 2019 under Part 6 of the Act.

The first complaints report of 2023 was published on 6 April. It reported receiving 655 complaints from 3 September 2022 to 3 March 2023 and closing 671 complaints in the same period. The second complaints report, published on 17 September, covered the reporting period from 4 March 2023 to 1 September 2023. It showed that the LSRA received 778 complaints and closed 754 complaints in the reporting period.

These bi-annual reports highlight emerging themes in complaints and identify areas where it may be possible to learn lessons and to raise standards. The reports include anonymised case studies which are aimed at helping both consumers and legal services providers learn from the LSRA's examination of individual complaints.

Pathways to the Professions Annual Report 2022

Collecting data on the admission policies of the legal profession

The Authority's fourth annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions, as required under section 33 of the Act, was submitted to the Minister for Justice in April 2023.

The Pathways to the Professions report presented comprehensive data on the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during 2022. It followed a statutory consultation which attracted a total of 14 written submissions. The report concluded that: "The year saw a waning of the joint impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of number and patterns of admissions to the solicitors and barristers professions in Ireland."

Ongoing Research in 2023

Exploring Economic and Other Barriers Facing Early Career Solicitors and Barristers

In March 2022, the LSRA submitted a report to the Minister for Justice on the barriers and challenges faced by early career legal professionals. The report was a summary of extensive research including comprehensive surveys of trainee and early career solicitors, student and early career barristers and law undergraduates.

This research and report was in response to a request from the Minister for Justice in November 2020 for the Authority to “consider the economic and other barriers faced by young barristers and young solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and Law Society respectively”.

The LSRA intends to publish the report and recommendations in 2024.

Considering the Creation of a New Profession of Conveyancer

In March 2021, in accordance with section 34(5) (a) of the Act, the Minister for Justice requested a report in relation to the creation of a new profession of conveyancer.

Following a request for tenders, in January 2022 the LSRA selected Indecon International Consultants to carry out an expert analysis on the creation of a new profession of conveyancer. This work continued throughout the year with final report due for publication in 2024.

Simultaneously, the LSRA worked with Ipsos Ireland to carry out a consumer survey on experiences of the conveyancing process in Ireland. The results of this survey are incorporated into the final report for the Minister, which also makes recommendations for reform. The LSRA submitted the report to the Minister in November 2023 and will publish the report and recommendations in 2024.

Consulting on Annual Report on Admissions to Professions

In December 2023, the Authority launched a public consultation inviting written submissions in advance of the Authority's fifth annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions. Under section 33 of the Act, this report must be submitted to the Minister for Justice by the end of April 2024.



International Conference of Legal Regulators 2023

Communications and Engagement

The LSRA prioritises maintaining clear and regular direct engagement with legal professionals and their representative bodies to ensure that solicitors and barristers are kept informed of their regulatory obligations. In 2023, the LSRA continued to expand its engagement with consumers and the public, raising awareness of our work, particularly our complaints handling services.

International Conference of Legal Regulators 2023

In October 2023, the LSRA hosted the International Conference of Legal Regulators (ICLR) in the Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin. The ICLR provides a unique global opportunity for legal regulators, academics, non-governmental organisations and others to share best practice and emerging developments in the field.

More than 100 delegates attended the three day event, and the theme of the conference was ‘*The Future of Legal Regulation – Navigating the Decade Ahead.*’

Irish speakers included Mr Justice David Barnville, the President of the High Court; Dr Catherine Day, the former EU secretary general of the European Commission; and Kathryn Stone OBE, the chair of the Bar Standards Board of England and Wales. Academic speakers included Dr Eimear Brown, Dean of the School of Law at the Honorable Society of King’s Inns in Dublin, Steven Vaughan, Professor of Law and Professional Ethics at University College London, and Prof Dr Matthias Kilian, the Hans-Soldan-Professor for the Law of the Legal Profession at the University of Cologne, Germany.

Topics including artificial intelligence, access to justice and ethics in the legal profession were discussed and the feedback from participants was resoundingly positive.



Expanding Engagement through Digital Platforms

Throughout 2023, the LSRA continued to grow awareness of its regulatory functions and services amongst consumers of legal services and our wider stakeholder base.

Accessibility was a key focus of the LSRA’s communications work in 2023. A consumer guide to the LSRA’s complaints service in plain English was approved by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). Almost 2,500 copies of the guide booklets were delivered to libraries, Citizen’s Information Centres and Community Law Centres around the country.

The LSRA LinkedIn account continued to grow with 993 followers by the end of the year a 90% increase on the previous year. The LSRA Twitter/X following also increased to 708 followers. The LSRA uses these accounts to inform consumers of their rights when it comes to engaging with legal services including giving members of the public information on its complaints service. The platforms are also used to inform and remind legal professionals of their regulatory obligations.



Media Coverage

The LSRA issued a total of 16 press releases and news and activities updates during the year. A number of reports and announcements were covered in national and regional print and broadcast media and legal publications including the online Law Society Gazette and the Irish Legal News. The Chief Executive Dr Brian Doherty took part in several interviews with RTÉ Radio 1 and regional radio stations to highlight key findings from the LSRA’s bi-annual complaints reports. The LSRA’s press office responded to a total of six direct queries from journalists during the year.



4. Governance and Management

Authority Members and Nominating Bodies

The Authority members and their nominating bodies under the Act during 2023 were:



Dr Don Thornhill – Chair
Higher Education Authority

Dr Don Thornhill currently chairs the Legal Services Regulatory Authority. He also chairs the Joint Standing Committee of Dublin Maternity Hospitals. He is also a board member of Trinity College Dublin and of the National Concert Hall as well as being a consultant and adviser on strategy and policy. His previous board chairperson roles have included the National Competitiveness Council, Hibernia College, the Chartered Accountants’ Regulatory Board and the Irish Payments Services Organisation. He has also been a board member of the Irish Management Institute, Forfás, the Irish Tax Institute, the Digital Hub, the Fulbright Commission and Science Foundation Ireland. Between 1993 and 2005 he was successively Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science and Executive Chair of the Higher Education Authority.



Eileen Barrington SC
Honorable Society of King’s Inns

Eileen Barrington is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, the King’s Inns and the College of Europe, Bruges. Eileen commenced practice as a barrister in 1994 and became a Senior Counsel in 2011. She practises mainly in the areas of European, commercial, administrative and regulatory law.



Angela Black
Citizens Information Board

Angela Black, retired Chief Executive of Citizens Information Board, has worked on consumer protection in financial services in Ireland and the EU. She is a Director of the Irish Banking Culture Board and the Social Finance Foundation.



Geraldine Clarke SC
Law Society of Ireland

Geraldine Clarke is a Consultant with Gleeson McGrath Baldwin LLP, Solicitors in Dublin, where she practises in the area of litigation. She is a past President of the Law Society of Ireland. She is a former Chair of the Professional Ethics Committee of the International Bar Association and has served as a Board member of the Irish Financial Services Appeal Tribunal.



Joan Crawford
Legal Aid Board

Joan Crawford is Chief Executive Officer for the Legal Aid Board, having worked as Director of Internal Service Delivery, Regional Manager, Managing Solicitor and a solicitor in various Law Centres in the Dublin region. In her current role Joan is also involved in developing policy, governance and strategy for the Board. She has experience in general practice and local government, as well as extensive experience in family law and mediation, child abduction and child care cases in all courts. Joan has a Masters in Public Management and Diplomas in European Law, Child Care Law and Mental Health and Capacity Law. She is a member of the and Family Lawyers’ Association.



Shane Galligan
Institute of Legal Costs Accountants

Shane Galligan is a partner with Behan & Associates, Legal Costs Accountants, a fellow of the Institute of Legal Costs Accountants, Chair of the Education Committee and, since 2012, a member of the six-person Governing Council of the Institute.

He is also member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators and an Accredited Mediator (CI Arb).



Dermott Jewell

Consumers' Association of Ireland

Dermott Jewell is Policy and Council Advisor to the Consumers' Association of Ireland. Specialising in management law, he is an independent consumer expert and trainer. He was elected President of ANEC – The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation in June 2019.

Mr Jewell is a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitration (Irish Branch) CI Arb with accreditations in Employment Investigation and Mediation. He is a Member of the Irish Institute of Mediation and holds the IPA-UCD Professional Certificate in Governance.



Deirdre Malone

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Deirdre Malone is a former Global Director of Legal Policy at Twitter. She holds an honours degree in law from Trinity College Dublin (2003) and a diploma in Charity Law, Trusteeship and Governance from the Law Society of Ireland (2020). She was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 2006 and practiced as a barrister for several years from Garden Court Chambers, specialising in inquests and actions against the police. She was Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust 2014-2019 and was Legal Manager of the Public Interest Law Alliance, a public interest law network that seeks to engage the legal community and civil society in using the law to advance social change from 2019-2021. Previously Deirdre has also worked in the legal department of Liberty (National Council for Civil Liberties UK), in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Ireland), and as a researcher for the Attorney General of Ireland.



Sara Moorhead SC

Bar of Ireland

Sara Moorhead is a Senior Counsel and a Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) Accredited Mediator. She is primarily a trial lawyer/courtroom advocate. She has extensive expertise in the areas of Judicial Review, Personal Injuries, Administrative and Contract Law, Medical Negligence, Professional Negligence, Insurance Law, non-Jury, Asylum and Immigration law. She has represented the Government in proceedings before the European Court of Justice. She has also advised the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser and acted as Legal Counsel in a number of Tribunals of Inquiry.



Simon Murphy

Law Society of Ireland

Simon Murphy is a partner in JRAP O'Meara LLP Solicitors in Cork. He is a qualified Arbitrator and Mediator. He has previously chaired the main Law Society of Ireland Regulatory Committees and currently holds a number of regulatory roles across various professions.

Simon served as an elected member of the Council of the Law Society of Ireland for many years and was President of the Law Society of Ireland in 2015-2016. He is also a former president of the Southern Law Association.



Síona Ryan

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

Síona Ryan is the Director for Policy, Research and International at the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission charged with influencing policy development, promoting competition and advocating for the interests of consumers. She has over two decades of public policy experience operating across Irish, European and international institutions and holds both a MA in International Relations and a MA in Law.

Authority Appointments and Reappointments in 2023

There were no new appointments to the Authority in 2023. There was one resignation with IHREC nominee, Deirdre Malone retiring with effect from 9 August 2023 due to a change in employment. This vacancy was not filled in 2023.



LSRA offices in Stoneybatter, Dublin 7

TABLE 4: Authority Members’ Terms of Office

Authority Member	Organisation	1 st Term of Appoint-ment ¹	2 nd Term Appoint-ment ²	3 rd Term Appoint-ment
Eileen Barrington	Honorable Society of the King’s Inns	4 Years	4 Years	-
Angela Black	Citizens Information Board	4 Years	4 Years	-
Geraldine Clarke	Law Society of Ireland	3 Years	3 Years	2 Years
Joan Crawford	Legal Aid Board	4 Years	4 Years	-
Shane Galligan ³	Institute of Legal Costs Accountants	14 Months	3 Years	-
Dermott Jewell	Consumers’ Association of Ireland	3 Years	3 Years	2 Years
Deirdre Malone ⁴	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	4 Years	-	-
Sara Moorhead ⁵	Bar Council (Bar of Ireland)	17 Months	3 Years	3 Years
Simon Murphy ⁶	Law Society of Ireland	4 Years	-	-
Síona Ryan ⁷	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	7 Months	3 Years	-
Don Thornhill (Chair)	Higher Education Authority	4 Years	4 Years	-

¹ Under section 10 of the Act, five of the Authority members, selected by the drawing of lots, shall hold office for a period of 3 years, with the remaining members, including the Chair holding office for a period of 4 years. Members can be reappointed to the Authority, however the aggregate term of appointment shall not exceed 8 years.

² Members on three year term agreed to extend their terms by a further three years under section 10 of the 2015 Act.

³ Shane Galligan was appointed to the Authority with effect from 22 July 2021 to 30 September 2022 for the remaining term vacated by Stephen Fitzpatrick on his resignation and reappointed for a further 3 years from 1 October 2022.

⁴ Deirdre Malone was appointed to the Authority with effect from 1 October 2020 by letter dated 23 February 2021. Ms. Malone resigned from the Authority with effect from 9 August 2023. The casual vacancy arising from this resignation was not filled in 2023.

⁵ Sara Moorhead was appointed to the Authority in May 2018 following the appointment of David Barnville to the High Court. This appointment was for the remaining term of the original appointment and was renewed from 1 October 2019. Ms Moorhead was reappointed for a further 3 years from 1 October 2022.

⁶ Simon Murphy was appointed to the Authority from 1 October 2020 following his nomination by the Law Society to replace James MacGuill.

⁷ Síona Ryan was appointed to the Authority from 23 February 2022 to 30 September 2022 to replace Deirdre McHugh for the remainder of that term. Ms Ryan was reappointed from 1 October 2022 for a 3 year term.

Authority’s Activities

The Authority met on five occasions during the year, bringing through a significant body of work to continue to build and execute the functions of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority. The minutes of all Authority meetings are published on the LSRA website.

Authority Meeting 1

At its first meeting of the year on 9 February 2023, the Authority reviewed and approved the LSRA’s 2023 Business Plan. The Authority were updated on developments in relation to key legislative amendments required by the LSRA, including in relation to a revised levy model and the introduction of Legal Partnerships. These amendments were included in the Courts & Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) legislation. The Authority had referred Draft Solicitors Accounts Regulations for expert financial analysis in December 2022 and received an update on this including confirmation that the Law Society would be making minor amendments to those Regulations. The Authority subsequently provided the required concurrence to the introduction of those Regulations with the CEO signed on 15 March 2023. The Authority approved a policy relating to the naming by the LSRA of Legal Practitioners who are subject to sanction by the LSRA’s Complaints Committee under section 73(2)(d)(iv) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. The authority reviewed and approved the LSRA Communications and Engagement Work Plan 2023. The Authority was updated on the performance of the LSRA’s Complaints & Resolutions Department and the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (LPDT). The Authority was provided with updates in respect of the section 34 “Barriers” Report and the section 34 “Setting Standards” Report. The Authority was provided with a detailed update on the LSRA finances, was provided with a report from the Finance, Audit & Risk (FAR) Committee Chairperson and noted that certification in respect of the 2021 Financial Statements was received from the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General in late December 2022. The Authority was updated on the planning programme for the International Conference of Legal Regulators (ICLR) 2023 to be hosted by the LSRA in October 2023.

Authority Meeting 2

At its second meeting on 30 March 2023, the Authority approved the Draft Financial Statements for 2022 for submission to the Department of Justice and the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General. The Authority was provided with a report on the biannual Governance Meeting between the LSRA and the Department of Justice.

The Authority was further updated on the progress of the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (including legislative amendments for the LSRA Levy Model and the introduction of Legal Partnerships). The Authority was updated on the performance of the Complaints & Resolutions Department and the LPDT. The Authority was updated on the Draft Section 33 Admissions Report (due for submission to the Minister by end April 2023) and on the section 34 “Barriers” and “Setting Standards” reports. The Authority approved by Resolution the reappointment of Dr Don Thornhill as lay member to the Advisory Committee on the grant of Patents of Precedence from 2 April 2023 to 30 September 2024. The Authority reviewed the LSRA Management Accounts for end January 2023 and was provided with a report from the Chair of the FAR Committee. The Authority was updated on planning for the ICLR Conference 2023.

Authority Meeting 3

At its third meeting on 25 May 2023, the Authority was updated on the performance of the Complaints & Resolutions Department and the LPDT. This included scrutiny of the first biannual complaints statistics report for 2023. Updates were provided on the section 34 “Barriers” and “Setting Standards” report. The Authority discussed an early draft of the section 34 Report on the Profession of Conveyancer.

Report and individual Authority Members were invited by the Chairperson to provide further detailed feedback directly to the LSRA Executive where appropriate. The Authority was further updated on the progress of the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (including legislative amendments for the LSRA Levy Model and the introduction of Legal Partnerships). The Authority was updated on the LSRA’s financial position and reviewed the latest LSRA Management Accounts. The Authority was updated on planning for the ICLR Conference 2023.

Authority Meeting 4

At its fourth meeting on 14 September 2023, the Authority was updated on the progress of the levy process in 2023 in respect of 2022 levy year. The Authority noted that the levy was being calculated under the revised levy model which came into operation on 31 July 2023 as commenced under the Courts & Civil Law Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 2023. This update included an update on the LSRA’s financial position and a review of the latest LSRA Management Accounts. The Authority reviewed the Internal Audit Report on Internal Controls for 2022. The Authority also noted that an audit of GDPR Compliance for the LSRA would be taking place in Q4 2023. The Authority was updated on the performance of the Complaints & Resolutions Department and the LPDT. The Authority approved a proposal from the LSRA Executive in respect of the publication of Tribunal Determinations and High Court Decisions. This involves publication in respect of solicitors to the Law Society Gazette and on the LSRA website and in respect of barristers to the LSRA website. The LSRA Chairperson and CEO met with representatives of the Department of Justice on the 15th of June 2023 and again on the 6th of July 2023. At these meetings a way forward was explored which would lead to the introduction of a statutory LPET Committee and the finalisation and submission of the “Barriers” report. The Authority, by resolution, established the Section 16 Education & training Committee, appointing Dr Don Thornhill as Chairperson of the Committee and Ms Joan Crawford as member of the Committee. The Authority also approved that Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) should be invited to nominate a member to the Committee. The LSRA Executive is to engage with the Department of Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) for sanction on membership and any associated fees. A further draft of the section 34 Report on the Profession of Conveyancer was provided to the Authority for consideration and feedback by the Authority Members. The Authority was updated on planning for the ICLR Conference 2023.

Authority Meeting 5

At its fifth meeting on 16 November 2023, the Authority was updated on the levy process for the 2022 Financial Year and on the LSRA’s financial position. The Authority reviewed the latest Management Accounts and was provided with a report from the Chair of the FAR Committee. The Authority noted the first Draft Budget for the LSRA for the 2024 Financial Year. The Authority was updated on the performance of the Complaints & Resolutions Department and the LPDT. This included scrutiny of the second biannual complaints statistics report for 2023. Updates were provided in relation to next steps for the section 34 “Barriers” report including the submission of a revised Authority recommendations report to the Minister.

The Authority was provided with a progress update on the establishment of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. The Authority was updated in respect of audit activity in respect of updates on Internal Audit, OCAG Audit of LSRA Financial Statements and Audit of GDPR Compliance for the LSRA. The Authority was provided with a review of the LSRA’s activities for 2023 by the CEO and noted the significant work undertaken by the LSRA in the year, including the success off the ICLR Conference which was hosted by the LSRA at the end of October 2023.

TABLE 5: LSRA Authority Meeting Attendances 2023

Members	09/02/23	30/03/23	25/05/23	14/09/23	16/11/23
Eileen Barrington SC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Angela Black	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geraldine Clarke SC	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Joan Crawford	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Shane Galligan	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dermott Jewell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deirdre Malone*	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a
Sara Moorhead	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simon Murphy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Síona Ryan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Don Thornhill (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Deirdre Malone resigned from the Authority with effect from 9 August 2023.

Financial Statements and Procurement

In 2023, the Authority submitted its sixth set of Financial Statements for the period from January 2022 to December 2022, to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit. On 13 December 2023, the Comptroller and Auditor General certified the accounts and reported that the LSRA Financial Statements gave a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the LSRA at 31 December 2022 and of its income and expenditure from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102.

The Authority undertook procurement exercises in 2023 with the advice and assistance of the Office of Government Procurement where relevant. The procurement exercises employed the existing All-of-Government Frameworks or for smaller procurements, were carried out in line with OGP Procurement Guidelines.

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

The LSRA’s Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee is Chaired by Authority member, Angela Black. Authority member Geraldine Clarke SC also sits on the committee along with the independent external members of the committee who are Peter O’Brien and Claire Byrne. The Secretary to the Authority is also Secretary to the FAR Committee.

The FAR Committee met four times in 2023. At each meeting, the FAR Committee receives a briefing from the Chief Executive Officer and formally reviews the LSRA Risk Register, examining all steps taken by the LSRA executive to mitigate those risks.

The FAR Committee also reviews Financial Statements, up-to-date management accounts and associated financial information at each meeting. The FAR Committee also reviews audit reports, both internal and external for the LSRA. The oversight remit of the FAR Committee includes the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (LPDT) which is funded by the LSRA and is included in its accounts. The LSRA Risk Register, audit reports, budget and financial statements are also considered and evaluated at Authority meetings.

TABLE 6: LSRA Finance, Audit & Risk (FAR) Committee Attendance 2023

Member	02/02/23	23/03/23	09/06/23	20/10/23
Angela Black (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Claire Byrne	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geraldine Clarke SC	✗	✓	✓	✓
Peter O’Brien	✓	✓	✗	✓

Governance Arrangements

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority is a statutorily independent body. Under section 13(3) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, the Authority is required to be independent in the performance of its functions.

The LSRA’s governance framework is guided by:

- the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (as amended);
- the DPER Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) which has been adopted by the Authority;
- the DPER Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies: Business and Financial Reporting Requirements (2016);
- Public Financial Procedures including the Public Spending Code.

The LSRA has developed a suite of governance documents including:

- Code of Conduct for Authority members;
- Code of Conduct for staff of the Authority;
- Terms of Reference for the Authority;
- Schedule of delegations and matters reserved to the Authority;
- Protected Disclosures Policy;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Risk Register and Risk Management Strategy;
- Financial Policies and Procedures;
- Policy and Procedure for the Disclosure of Interests;
- Strategic Plan 2022-2025;

- Corporate Governance Assurance Agreement 2020-2023 between the LSRA and the Department of Justice;
- Duly Authorised Register of staff authorised to perform section 13(7) functions under the Act;
- Quality Service Charter;
- Quality Service Action Plan.

Where appropriate, these documents have been made available on the LSRA’s website.

The Role of the Authority and the Chief Executive

The Authority has approved a terms of reference for the LSRA which sets out the respective roles of the Authority and of the Chief Executive as follows:

The Authority:

The Authority is responsible for

- i. Reviewing and guiding the strategic direction and major plans of action of the LSRA;
- ii. Ensuring compliance with all applicable statutory objectives;
- iii. Holding the CEO and senior management to account for the effective performance of their responsibilities;
- iv. Risk management policies and procedures;
- v. Annual budgets and business plans;
- vi. Setting performance objectives;
- vii. Monitoring implementation and performance;
- viii. Overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions.

The Chief Executive:

The Authority delegates operational responsibility for the day-to-day running of the LSRA to the Chief Executive Officer and the LSRA’s senior management team. The Chief Executive Officer attends Authority meetings at the invitation of the Authority Chairperson and provides regular reports on all aspects of the operation of the LSRA as required by Authority members. The Chief Executive Officer also attends the FAR Committee meetings for the purpose of providing an update on risk and financial management.

The Chief Executive Officer’s role and responsibilities are set out in the Act. Section 24(3) of the Act states that the Chief Executive Officer shall:

- i. implement the policies and decisions of the Authority,
- ii. manage and control generally the Authority’s staff, administration and business,
- iii. be responsible to the Authority for the performance of his or her functions, and
- iv. perform such other functions (if any) as may be required by the Authority or as may be authorised under this Act.

Under section 13(7) of the Act, any function of the Authority may be performed through or by the Chief Executive or any member of its staff duly authorised in that behalf by the Authority.

The Chief Executive Officer ensures that the Authority is kept up to date and fully informed about strategic issues and challenges affecting the LSRA and the environment in which it operates.

Conflicts of Interest

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority has developed a “Policy and Procedure for the Disclosure of Interests”. Under the policy, and the Codes of Conduct for Authority members and staff, Authority members and the Chief Executive Officer register their interests in any other relevant undertakings with the Secretary of the Authority on appointment and on an annual basis. In addition, declaration of interests on specific agenda items is included as a standing item for each Authority Meeting and each Finance Audit and Risk Committee Meeting.

Performance Evaluation

The Authority undertook an internal evaluation of its performance in 2023. Once the report on that evaluation is finalised and approved by the Authority, an external evaluation will be undertaken.

Department of Justice Governance and Agencies Meetings

Over the course of 2023, the LSRA engaged extensively both formally and informally with officials from the Department of Justice. Two formal Governance Meetings were held in 2023 between the LSRA and the Civil Governance Unit of the Department of Justice, on 28 March and 21 September.

Financial Reporting

All appropriate procedures for financial reporting were adhered to in 2023 by the Authority. An annual budget for 2023 was agreed at the final meeting of the Authority in 2022. Due to the transition to the new levy model in 2023 which includes a new element on budgeted expenditure, further monitoring and revision of this budget were required in 2023 up to the point of the levy calculation process being completed in October/November 2023. The budget was also reviewed by the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee (the original budget at its meeting of 2 February 2023 and a revised budget at its meeting of 20 October 2023).

At each meeting of the Authority, up-to-date management accounts were presented by the Chief Executive. Monthly management accounts were produced throughout the year by the accounting service providers to the Authority and to the Executive ensuring that senior management have access to relevant and timely financial and non-financial information. The management accounts were also provided to and scrutinised by the FAR Committee.

An Annual Financial Statement of the Accounts of the LSRA for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 was prepared and submitted to the Department of Justice and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG) by the deadline of 31 March 2023. Audited accounts were approved by the OCAG on 13 December 2023 and subsequently submitted to the Minister for Justice along with the signed Letter of Representation, the Chairperson's Comprehensive Report to the Minister and a copy of the audit report to be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Anti-Money Laundering

The LSRA is the competent authority under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 as amended for all barristers in the State who are entered on the Roll of Practising Barristers, which the LSRA maintains. As the competent authority, the LSRA is tasked with monitoring these barristers ("designated persons") and taking reasonably necessary measures to secure their compliance with the requirements of Part 4 of the 2010 Act.

The LSRA is a member of the Anti-Money Laundering Steering Committee (AMLSC) which is chaired by the Department of Finance and provides oversight and active review of Ireland's AML/Combating the Finance of Terrorism, (CFT) framework. The LSRA attended meetings of the AMLSC's Risk Assessment sub group in March, May and October 2023. It also submitted AML and CFT related data and statistics for the AMLSC's Annual Report 2022.

The LSRA also continued in 2023 to monitor and update information published on its website to assist practising barristers with their evolving obligations under EU sanctions against the Russian State and related Russian persons and entities.

Tax Law

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority complied with its obligations under tax law in 2023.

GDPR and Data Protection

The LSRA is registered as a Data Controller with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. The LSRA's Data Protection Policy is available on the website. In 2023, the LSRA received 15 Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Acts.

The LSRA had 16 data breaches in 2023. Of these breaches, 15 were determined as low level breaches. One breach was deemed medium risk but notifiable to the Data Protection Commission and was notified to the DPC in December 2023.

Transparency Actions

The Authority has adopted Transparency and Accountability as among its core values. The Authority is committed to transparency in relation to its work and decision-making. The minutes of all Authority meetings and the actions points arising are published on the LSRA website. The LSRA also publishes all of the statutory reports prepared by or on behalf of the Authority. Submissions made to the Authority as part of public consultations are also routinely made available on the LSRA website.

The LSRA's website is updated regularly with information for consumers, legal practitioners, journalists and other stakeholders about the ongoing work of the LSRA in performing its statutory functions. Key internal policy documentation on the website includes the LSRA's Protected Disclosures Policy and the Corporate Governance Assurance Agreement between the LSRA and the Department of Justice.

The LSRA's social media channels are regularly updated with information for consumers about our complaints handling services. This information is presented in accessible language and mediums including graphics and animated videos with captions. The LSRA's social media channels are also an important medium for the LSRA to communicate directly with solicitors and barristers as well as other key stakeholders. All job vacancies are posted on the LSRA website and social media.

Freedom of Information Requests and General Queries

The LSRA is an FOI body under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In 2023, the LSRA received a total of 15 FOI requests under the Act. The requests were dealt with in compliance with the Act.

Queries and requests for general information from the public, media, members of the legal professions and other stakeholders are acknowledged and responded to by the executive team. It is the objective of the LSRA to acknowledge all queries and requests within three days of receipt and to issue a substantive response, where possible, within 14 days.

Irish Language

In 2020, the LSRA was included as a public body for the purposes of the Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021, under the Official Languages Act 2003 (Public Bodies) Regulations 2019 (SI 230 of 2020). Actions the LSRA has taken to provide our services through Irish include:

- Correspondence received in Irish from complaints and legal practitioners is responded to in Irish.
- Irish language versions of corporate reports are available in Irish, including annual reports and statements of strategy.
- Service documents are available in Irish on the website, including guidance for barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers and Complaints Forms.
- Complaints department staff can deal with telephone inquiries in Irish.
- Recruitment materials are available in Irish and applicants may apply for vacancies in Irish.
- The LSRA Secretariat to the Advisory Committee on the grant of Patents of Precedence facilitates applications in both English and Irish.

In 2023, the CEO of the LSRA appointed a senior manager, under section 4B of the 2021 Act, to oversee the performance of and report on the LSRA’s obligations under the Act.

Table 7: Freedom of Information Requests 2023

Ref	Requestor Category	Granted	Part Granted	Refused	With-drawn	Awaiting Decision
01	Member of the Public		X			
02	Member of the Public		X			
03	Member of the Public	X				
04	Member of the Public	X				
05	Member of the Public	X				
06	Member of the Public	X				
07	Legal Practitioner		X			
08	Member of the Public	X				
09	Member of the Public	X				
10	Journalist	X				
11	Member of the Public		X			
12	Member of the Public	X				
13	Member of the Public		X			
14	Member of the Public			X		
15	Member of the Public	X				

Protected Disclosures

The LSRA has introduced a Protected Disclosures Policy and Procedure. There were no Protected Disclosures made to the LSRA in 2023. Two matters were transmitted to the LSRA by the Protected Disclosures Commissioner under the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 (as amended). One matter was transmitted under section 10C(1)(b) of the Act and another matter under section 10D(1)(b)(ii). Both matters were assessed as warranting no further follow up. A report reflecting this position has been published on the LSRA website.

Compliance with DPER Code

The LSRA has adopted the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016). The LSRA fully complied with the DPER Code in 2023 with the following exceptions:

- **Section 4.6 - Performance Review:** following the finalisation of the Authority’s 2023 self-assessment report, an external assessment of effectiveness will be undertaken in 2024.
- **Sections 8.14, 8.15 - Periodic Critical Review (PCR):** The LSRA will engage with the Department of Justice in 2024 in respect of scheduling a PCR.
- **Section 8.16 - Contracts Database:** To be revised in 2024.
- **Section 8.20 - Corporate Procurement Plan:** To be reviewed and implemented in 2024.

Organisational Developments

Staff resources

Under the terms of the 2015 Act, the Authority appoints its own staff with the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. There were five competitions held in 2023 for numerous roles within

the LSRA. The Authority seconds a small number of staff to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (LPDT) and in 2023 it engaged five staff on part-time contracts for specific projects (e.g. mediation).

Table 8: LSRA Staff 2023

Position	2023*
Assistant Secretary	1
Principal Officer	2
Assistant Principal Officer	5
Registrar	1
Legal Advisor	2
State Solicitor	12
Higher Executive Officer	9
Legal Researcher	1
Officer Manager	1
Executive Officer	3
Clerical Officer	19
Contractors	5
TOTAL	61

* Staff numbers as at 31 December 2023. These reflect job sharing arrangements. A total of 61 staff members equates to 58.86 FTEs (Full Time Equivalents)

Attendance Management and Performance

The amount of staff time spent working on complaints is documented in timesheets based on units of 15 minutes. This assists the LSRA in calculating the annual levy on the professions. Softworks, a Time Management System continues to assist with calculations and apportionment for the levy. The LSRA has a probation management process in place for all new staff. There is also a Performance Management Development system for all staff. Training was provided during 2023 to all new recruits.

Continuous Development for Our Staff

Staff attended numerous training courses, conferences and seminars during 2023 in many different areas. The LSRA provided courses in Word and Excel to all staff as well as courses in Time Management and Resilience. A bespoke course on customer service delivery was designed and delivered to all staff working in the Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department.

An All Staff Day took place in November 2023 which gave staff a chance to hear inputs from department heads in the LSRA and LPDT and to assess how their role contributes to the goals of the organisation as a whole. Staff also received information and guidance on staff welfare and available support services.

The LSRA's staff Lunch and Learn programme continued in 2023 with presentations from the Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator, the Bar of Ireland and the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

Health and Safety 2023

The Department of Justice ICT Unit assisted Corporate Services to arrange for new staff to have remote access to the LSRA business systems. The LSRA complied with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (General Applications) Regulations 2007. The LSRA adhered to health and safety policies and procedures and provided appropriate training, safety awareness programmes and personal protective equipment. Staff received training in 2023 on both First Aid and Fire Safety.

Public Sector Duty and Human Rights

The LSRA continued to meet its obligations to staff and customers under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a duty on public bodies such as the Authority to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of staff and people to whom services are provided.

The LSRA's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 identified the following five areas for improvement:

- Updating our Customer Service Charter and how we respond to enquiries from the public in all its diversity.
- Increasing the accessibility of our communications to ensure that consumers and legal practitioners are enabled to understand our regulatory role and services, particularly in relation to receipt and investigation of complaints.
- Upgrading our website in line with the European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020.
- Expanding our ongoing programme of events and stakeholder engagement to ensure that consumers of legal services, legal practitioners and their representative bodies and other stakeholders can share their views and inform our regulatory functions and statutory objectives.
- Report on progress in our Annual Report.

In addition, as part of the LSRA's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, the Authority endorses the Our Public Service 2020 Vision Statement, Commitments and Maturity Model, which we are confident will enrich our workplace and foster public trust and confidence in our organisation.

The LSRA undertook the following improvement work in these areas in 2023:

- **The production of a plain English guide for consumers on the LSRA's complaints service. The booklet was approved by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) with almost 2,500 copies delivered to libraries, Citizens Information Centres and Community Law Centres around the country.**
- An expanded programme of stakeholder events around the country.
- Work began on a plain English review of letter and email correspondences with complainants.
- Further resources were devoted to the receipt of and response to queries.

Service Level Agreement between LSRA and LPDT

A Service Level Agreement is in place between the LSRA and the LPDT for the period 2022 to 2025. The Office of the CEO and the Corporate Affairs Departments of the LSRA continued to provide administrative supports to the LPDT in 2023. This included support and advice on governance, procurement, services and supplies, staff training and other HR supports. The Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee of the LSRA provides oversight to the Tribunal.

Information Technology

The LSRA has a Service Level Agreement, Governance Assurance and Data Processing Agreement in place with the Department of Justice. The Department's IT section assisted Corporate Services in arranging for all new starters to have remote access to the LSRA internal systems to enable them to work securely from home. The LSRA attended update briefings for agencies provided by the IM&T Division of the Department of Justice in 2023.

Energy Efficiencies

A survey of the LSRA premises was conducted in 2023 in relation to options to further improve energy efficiency, in particularly in relation to heating. Energy awareness campaigns, Green Team and actions for implementing reduction in carbon emissions through improving waste management by increasing recycling will continue in line with Government policy in 2024.

Procurement Activities

Procurement conducted in 2023 was in line with EU law and Government circulars and guidelines. The LSRA seeks to undertake all procurement through the Framework Agreements available through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) where feasible. 2023 Procurement includes the following areas:

- 1. Cleaning contractor for LSRA and LPDT premises.**
- 2. Security contractor for LSRA and LPDT premises.**
- 3. Website resources for complaints service animated videos.**
- 4. Event management supports for International Conference of Legal Regulators (ICLR) 2023.**
- 5. Insurance services.**

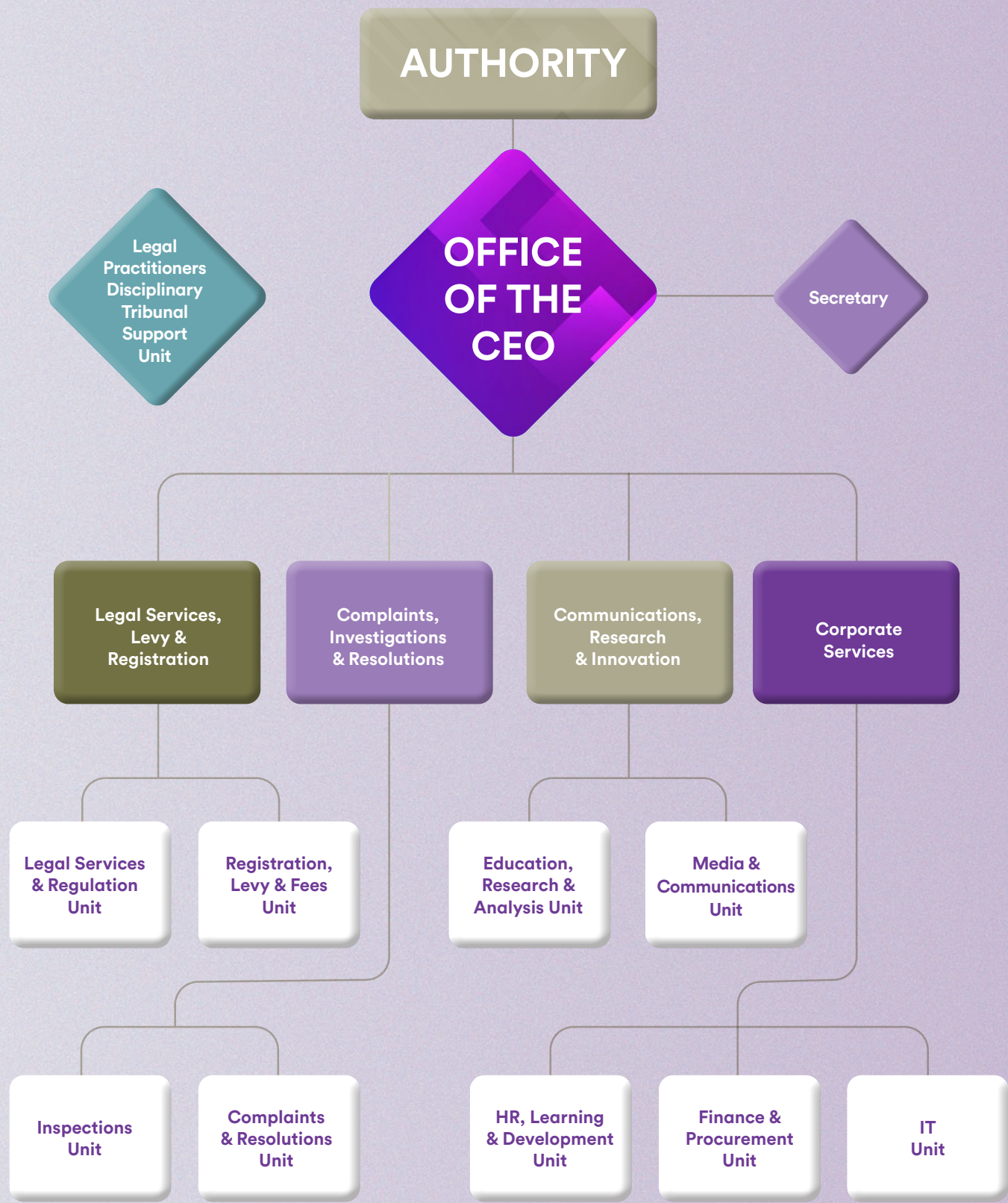
Prompt Payment of Accounts

It is the policy of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority to fully comply with the terms of the Prompt Payments of Accounts Act 1997. The LSRA has procedures in place to ensure that all invoices are paid within the statutory time limit. While the procedures have been designed to ensure compliance with the Act, they only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance with the Act. In 2023, three invoices incurred late payment penalties.

Senior Management Team

During 2023, the Senior Management (SMT) met on six occasions to review all major issues relevant to the efficient and effective operation of the Authority. One of the main responsibilities of the SMT is to monitor progress on achieving the targets set out in the Annual Business Plan for each Department and to drive activity to achieve the goals set out in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

Organisational Structure



Senior Management Team

Office of the CEO



Dr Brian Doherty
Chief Executive Officer

Brian Doherty is the Chief Executive Officer of the Legal Service Regulatory Authority. He was called to the Bar in 1996 and initially practised in Belfast. He joined the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland when it was set up in 2000 as one of the first civilian investigators, working on allegations of misconduct against the then RUC, later the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In 2007 he moved to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission as a senior investigating officer, later progressing to acting Deputy Director of Investigations. He returned to the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman in 2014 to run the Current Investigations Directorate. Brian took up post as the CEO of the LSRA in September 2017.



Ultan Ryan
Secretary

Ultan Ryan joined the Civil Service in 1985 and worked for the Central Statistics Office before joining the Department of Social Welfare as a systems analyst in 1992. Ultan moved to the Department of Justice and Equality in 2000 where he worked on Cross-Border Justice projects including as Secretary to the Remembrance Commission. Ultan worked as project manager and operations manager with the Reception and Integration Agency before assignment to the LSRA in January 2017.

Communications, Research and Innovation Department



Nuala Haughey
Head of Communications, Research and Innovation Department

Nuala Haughey was appointed Head of Communications, Research and Innovation in November 2019. Nuala's background is in journalism and policy analysis. She is a former award winning Social Affairs Correspondent with *The Irish Times* and has extensive experience as a communications consultant with the European Commission. Nuala has also worked as a political communications director and a policy analyst and researcher.

Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department



Tony Watson
Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department

Tony Watson joined the LSRA in September 2019 and is the Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions. He qualified as a solicitor in England and worked as a litigator in London. He moved to Ireland in 2005 and joined the Complaints Section of the Law Society, where he was Deputy Head of Complaints prior to joining the LSRA. Tony has extensive experience in the regulation of lawyers, and the investigation and resolution of complaints in particular.



Eleanor Carmody
Head of Complaints and Resolutions Unit

Eleanor joined the LSRA in September 2019 as a Complaints Resolution Officer, and was appointed Head of the Complaints and Resolutions Unit in February 2020. Eleanor qualified as a solicitor in 1999 and worked mainly as a conveyancer in a general practice in Fermoy, Co. Cork. She joined the Law Society in 2008 and worked as a solicitor in the Complaints and Client Relations section investigating complaints against solicitors.

Corporate Services Department



Deirdre Fleming
Head of Corporate Services Department

Deirdre Fleming was appointed Head of Corporate Services in October 2019. Deirdre has significant experience in corporate services and finance within the public sector including in the Houses of Oireachtas, Law Reform Commission and recently the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Legal Services, Levy and Registration Department



Alison McIntyre
Head of Legal Services, Levy and Registration Department

Alison Emily McIntyre was appointed Head of Legal Services, Levy and Registration Department in October 2019 and took up her role in March 2020. Prior to this Alison was an Assistant Commissioner with the Irish Data Protection Commission where she worked as a legal adviser and as their Data Protection Officer. Alison has experience in private practice and in public sector organisations.



Padraig Langan
Head of Registration, Levy and Fees Unit

Padraig Langan was appointed the Head of the Registration, Levy and Fees Unit in July 2018. Previous to this, Padraig worked in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the Press Office and, prior to that, the Meat and Milk Policy Division where he gained experience working on policy issues. Padraig has more than 20 years of experience in the public sector.

Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal Support Unit



Kay Lynch
Registrar of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal

Kay Lynch was appointed Registrar of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal in September 2019. Prior to her appointment, Kay worked as an executive with the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal since 2014. She is a qualified solicitor and holds diplomas in Professional Regulation (University College Dublin) and Judicial Skills and Decision-Making (Law Society of Ireland).

Appendix 1: Key Activities in 2023

Date	Key Activity
10 January	Chicago-Ireland Handover Meeting for the International Conference of Legal Regulators 2023
25 January	Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department and Head of Unit attend Fitness to Practice Forum of Irish Regulators
02 February	First FAR Committee Meeting of 2023
09 February	35th Meeting of the Authority
09 February	Lunch and Learn for LSRA staff featuring a presentation from the Bar of Ireland on its Competency Framework for Barristers
15 February	Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department delivers presentation to trainee solicitors at Law Society school in Dublin on Ethics and Conduct
20 February	CEO meets with Chairperson of the LPDT
23 February	Lunch and Learn for LSRA staff featuring a presentation from the Registrar of the LDPT
2 March	CEO attends launch of Bar of Ireland’s Equitable Briefing Policy
10 March	Lunch and Learn for LSRA staff featuring a presentation from the Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator
15 March	CEO signs the Law Society of Ireland’s Solicitors Accounts Regulations 2023 on behalf of the LSRA
15 March	Kick-off Meeting for the ICLR 2023 Organising Committee
20 March	CEO speaks to Galway Solicitors Bar Association and visits Galway Citizens Information Centre
23 March	Second FAR Committee Meeting of 2023

Date	Key Activity
28 March	Governance meeting with the Department of Justice
30 March	36th Meeting of the Authority
06 April	Publication of the first LSRA Complaints Report of 2023 under section 73 of the Act
8 May	LSRA Chairperson delivers presentation to the PROBUS group at the Royal Saint George Yacht Club in Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin
16 May	Law Society Update Meeting
19 May	Second FAR Committee Meeting of 2023
22 May	Meeting with Law Society on Regulatory Matters
25 May	37th Meeting of the Authority
31 May	CEO meets with Under Treasurer of the Honorable Society of King’s Inns
02 June	CEO delivers a presentation to Judicial Assistants Careers Week
09 June	Third FAR Committee Meeting of 2023
13 June	CEO delivers CPD presentation to the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association’s Regulatory Webinar
15 June	CEO and Chairperson meet with representatives of the Department of Justice on Legal Education and Training
26 June	CEO meets with Chairperson of the LPDT
28 June	CEO meets with Under Treasurer of the Honorable Society of King’s Inns
29 June	Complaints Committee Plenary Meeting with talk by Patricia Dillon SC
28 July	Number of Barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers passes 3,000

Date	Key Activity
31 July	Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 comes in to operation bringing changes to the levy calculation model
03 August	CEO meets Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
15 August	Law Society Update Meeting
31 August	Meeting with Law Society on reporting obligations
08 September	Meeting with Law Society on the levy
14 September	38th Meeting of the Authority
15 September	CEO meets with the CEO of the Bar of Ireland
15 September	Meeting with Law Society on the levy
21 September	Governance meeting with the Department of Justice
21 September	Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department talks to Law Society’s Guidance and Ethics Committee
27 September	Publication of the second LSRA Complaints Report of 2023 under section 73 of the Act
25-27 October	LSRA hosts International Conference of Legal Regulators in Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin
19 October	Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department delivers a presentation to trainee solicitors at Law Society school in Dublin on Ethics and Conduct
20 October	Head of Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department delivers CPD talk in Castleblayney, North East CPD day
20 October	Fourth FAR Committee Meeting of 2023
02 November	Levy Assessment Notices for the 2022 levy year issued

Date	Key Activity
14 November	Submission of report on conveyancing to the Minister for Justice
16 November	39th Meeting of the Authority
22 November	LSRA staff attend All Staff Day in Dublin
23 November	CEO delivers a presentation to Mason Hayes and Curran Regulatory Masterclass
25 November	CEO delivers a presentation to the Family Lawyers Conference
28 November	CEO addresses barristers at a “Meet the Regulator” event at the Honorable Society of the King’s Inns, Dublin
4 December	Meeting with The Bar of Ireland on the levy
15 December	LSRA opens a public consultation on the Admission Policies of the Legal Profession

A word cloud of positive workplace attributes. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with 'SUPPORTIVE' being the largest word in the center. Other prominent words include 'INCLUSIVE', 'PROGRESSIVE', 'CONNECTED', 'RESPECT', 'COLLABORATIVE', 'UNIFIED', 'DIVERSE', 'CONFIDENT', 'OWNERSHIP', 'ENLIGHTENED', 'OPENNESS', 'CAMARADERIE', 'STRUCTURED', 'ESTABLISHED', 'TEAM', 'FRIENDLY', 'CARING', 'HAPPY', 'OPEN', 'UNIFIED', 'COLLABORATIVE', 'UNITED', 'RESPECT', 'TEAM', 'FRIENDLY', 'CARING', 'HAPPY', 'OPEN', 'UNIFIED', 'COLLABORATIVE', 'UNITED', 'RESPECT', 'TEAM', 'FRIENDLY', 'CARING', 'HAPPY', 'OPEN'. The words are in various colors including purple, blue, green, orange, and brown.



LSRA

An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhíse Dlí

Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

*Legal Services Regulatory Authority
Unit 1-3, Manor Street Business Park
Stoneybatter, Dublin 7*

Postcode: D07 K290

Email: lsra-inbox@lsra.ie

Website: www.lsra.ie

Twitter/X: @LSRAIreland