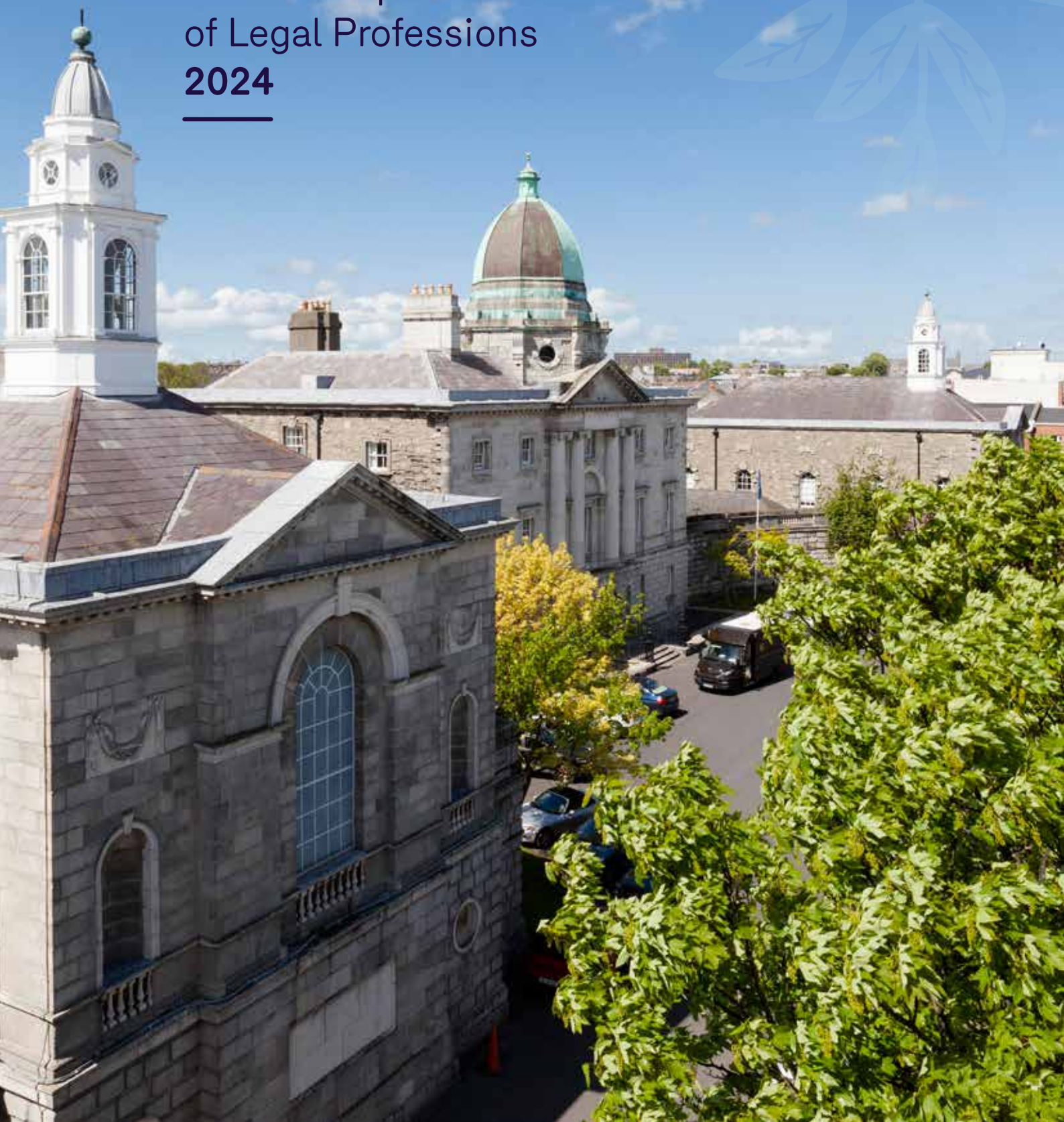




# Annual Report on Admission Policies of Legal Professions **2024**

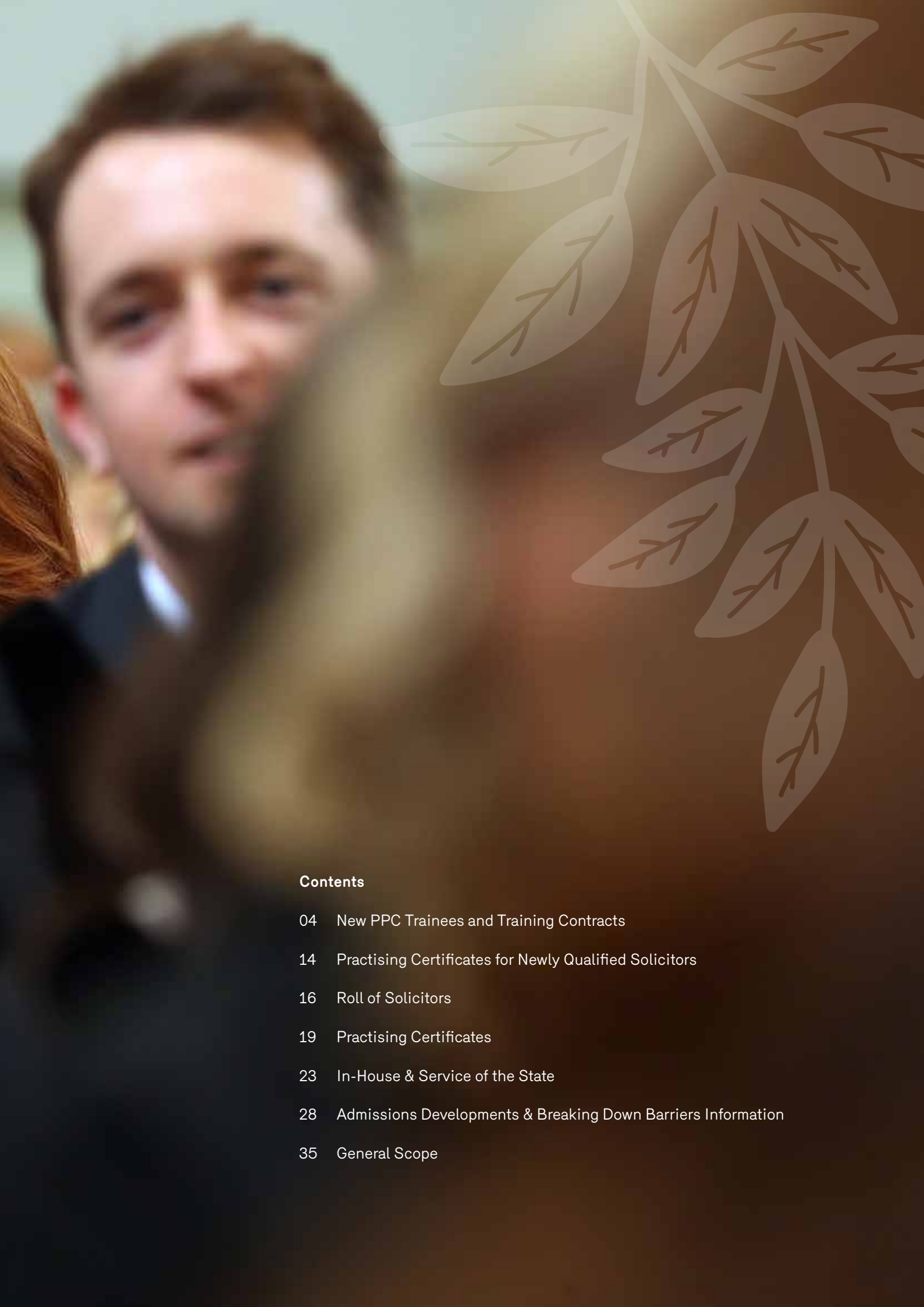
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## New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

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### **The Final Examination - First Part (FE-1)**

The FE-1 is the entrance examination to the Law Society of Ireland. It is normally held twice a year in Spring and Autumn and consists of eight papers on core legal subjects.

1.        **Company Law**
2.        **Constitutional Law**
3.        **Law of Contract**
4.        **Criminal Law**
5.        **European Union Law**
6.        **Equity**
7.        **Law of Property**
8.        **Law of Tort**

This examination ensures that trainee solicitors, who come from third level studies of all disciplines (whether in arts, humanities, engineering or science), Law Clerks and non-graduates who have passed the Preliminary Examination, commence their practical training in the Law Society with a consistent standard of knowledge in those eight subjects.

### **Accelerated access scheme**

Undergraduate students can sit their FE-1 exams and achieve provisional results before obtaining their final degree. On 1 January 2020 regulations came into operation that mean Ireland's future solicitors can take the Final Examination First Part (FE-1) earlier in their studies; can sit and pass less exams in their first attempt; and have a longer timeframe to pass all eight core subjects. The changes outlined in the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2011 (Apprenticeship and Education) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 provide a more flexible approach to becoming a solicitor. These new regulations reduce barriers and provide greater access to the profession for trainees across diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds.



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

- The number of candidates who sat the FE-1 in 2024 and the number who sat FE-1s under the accelerated access scheme.** The total number of candidates who sat the FE-1 in 2024.

Examination Sitting	No of Candidates
March 2024	1,770
October 2024	1,970
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,740</b>

(This is the number of candidates per sitting, some could have sat both sittings.)

By virtue of the way candidates sit the examinations in multiple sequences there is no meaningful overall pass rate. Below is a breakdown of the pass rate per subject examination.

### March 2024

EXAM	Company Law	Constitution Law	Law of Contract	Criminal Law	Law of the EU	Equity	Property Law	Law of Torts	TOTAL
Attended	494	447	590	543	458	503	512	479	<b>4,026</b>
Passed	296	312	341	380	366	287	334	353	<b>2,669</b>
% Passed	60%	70%	58%	70%	80%	57%	65%	70%	<b>66%</b>

### October 2024

EXAM	Company Law	Constitution Law	Law of Contract	Criminal Law	Law of the EU	Equity	Property Law	Law of Torts	TOTAL
Attended	593	522	632	580	465	636	657	487	<b>4,572</b>
Passed	372	384	362	397	392	360	382	326	<b>2,975</b>
% Passed	63%	74%	57%	68%	84%	57%	58%	67%	<b>65%</b>

### Total 2024

EXAM	Company Law	Constitution Law	Law of Contract	Criminal Law	Law of the EU	Equity	Property Law	Law of Torts	TOTAL
Attended	1087	969	1222	1123	923	1139	1169	966	<b>8,598</b>
Passed	668	696	703	777	758	647	716	679	<b>5,644</b>
% Passed	61%	72%	58%	69%	82%	57%	61%	70%	<b>66%</b>

**497** undergraduate students sat FE-1s in 2024 under the "accelerated access" scheme introduced in 2020.

- The number of candidates who sat the Preliminary Examination in 2024 and the pass rate.** The total number of candidates who sat the Preliminary Examination in 2024 and the overall pass rate.

Examination Sitting	No of Candidates
Attended	7
Passed	5
<b>% Passed</b>	<b>71%</b>

The Preliminary Examination which is designed for non-graduates is held once a year, usually in March. The examination consists of the following three papers:

- **English**
- **Irish Government and Politics**
- **General Knowledge.**



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

### Professional Practice Course

The Professional Practice Course (PPC) brings together into one academic year the entire taught elements of the solicitor training, thus providing significant logistical and practical advantages to trainees and firms. The core curriculum on the full-time PCC runs from September to April each year and includes a focus on such skills as negotiations, research, drafting, advocacy, interviewing and advising and presentation skills, together with more general skills such as leadership, project management, office and legal technology, and finance skills. Professional responsibility, including enhanced coverage of legal ethics, solicitors' accounts and rules of professional conduct and law firm life, also forms an integral part of the core curriculum. These are in addition to courses, such as business law, dispute resolution, land law, probate, family law taxation. The current syllabus is currently under review by the Law Society's Education Committee as part of our on-going biennial review of the PPC.

### Advanced Electives

Trainees must also complete four or more advanced electives as part of their overall training. Advanced electives can be completed at any point during the traineeship period, including during the in-office training period. A programme of advanced electives is; (i) by the Law School at the Law Society (ii) co-provided and (iii) external advanced electives are also accredited by the Law Society. A suite of 21 Law School advanced electives are on offer immediately following the completion of the compulsory element of the PPC in two distinct blocks, Block 1 in May and Block 2 in June. Our commitment, as always, is to enhance the skills and career opportunities of trainee solicitors. We strive to do this by providing a diverse range of advanced electives that cover core areas for every solicitor's practice, together with more niche innovative topics including topics outside the strictly legal domain.

**A selection of external advanced electives provided by firms in 2024 were accredited by the Law Society.**

Firm	Elective	Trainees	Subjects per firm
A & L Goodbody	FINANCE AND REAL ESTATE	47	2 x A & L Goodbody
A & L Goodbody	CORPORATE TRANSACTIONS	47	
Arthur Cox	CIVIL LITIGATION	53	4 x Arthur Cox
Arthur Cox	CORPORATE LAW AND PRACTICE	53	
Arthur Cox	FINANCE LAW AND PRACTICE	53	
Arthur Cox	COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS	52	
Mc Cann Fitzgerald	BANKING FINANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES	42	4 x Mc Cann Fitzgerald
Mc Cann Fitzgerald	CORPORATE TRANSACTIONS	49	
Mc Cann Fitzgerald	DISPUTES & LEGAL TECHNOLOGY	49	
Mc Cann Fitzgerald	REAL ESTATE & CONSTRUCTION	49	
Matheson	BUSINESS LAW	41	4 x Matheson
Matheson	COMMERCIAL LAW	41	
Matheson	LAW TECH INNOVATION & ADVANCED LEGAL RESEARCH	41	
Matheson	DIGITAL ECONOMY	41	
William Fry	CORPORATE TRANSACTIONS	20	1 x William Fry

### Hybrid PPC

The Hybrid PPC makes greater use of best practice in online learning, doing away with the need to relocate to Dublin for an extended period. It also permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during the delivery of the PPC. As such it was deliberately structured in such a way so as to meet the Society's priority with regard to diversity and inclusion, making the training more accessible for more mature trainees and those with family and other caring commitments.

The PPC has four interconnected pillars reflecting the diverse competencies required of solicitors. These



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

pillars are:

- Knowledge and Analytical Thinking
- Legal Skills
- Psychological Development
- Professional Responsibility
- The Complete Lawyer module

The Complete Lawyer is unique to Irish professional legal training and forms the third pillar of professional education in both the PPC Fused and PPC Hybrid courses. It is designed to harness the power and potential of trainee solicitors for enhanced learning, wellbeing and success both personally and professionally. The Complete Lawyer module is delivered by the Psychological Services team, in collaboration with leading experts, experienced practitioners, psychotherapists, group psychotherapists, executive coaches and suitably qualified professionals.

This module is delivered through a mix of in-person, live and recorded zoom sessions, and is accompanied by a Reflective Practice series, in which the five key aspects of life in professional practice are explored experientially in skills groups:

- Psychology of a Lawyer
- Psychology of Belonging
- Psychology of a Legal Workplace
- Psychology of Leadership
- Psychology of Mental Health and Wellbeing

### 3. The number of trainees who commenced the Professional Practice Course (PPC) in 2024, with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid PPC trainees.

542

Trainees commenced the Professional Practice Course (PPC) in 2024

442

Trainees attending the 2024 full-time PPC which commenced in September 2024

100

Trainees attending the Hybrid PPC which commenced in December 2024



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

### TOTAL NUMBER ON COURSE OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>TOTAL</b>	384	405	412	448	501	473	538	560	561	<b>542</b>

### OVERVIEW BY GENDER

<b>Female</b>	224	236	243	268	297	307	329	365	319	<b>358</b>
<b>Male</b>	160	169	169	180	205	166	209	195	242	<b>184</b>

### OVERVIEW BY AGE

<b>30 or under</b>	86%	87%	90%	89%	88%	90%	88%	95%	91%	<b>90%</b>
<b>Over 30</b>	14%	13%	10%	11%	12%	10%	12%	5%	9%	<b>10%</b>

### OVERVIEW BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

<b>Law Degree</b>	307	315	346	357	398	386	447	467	498	<b>451</b>
<b>Non Law Degree</b>	76	86	58	84	100	79	88	85	60	<b>85</b>
<b>No Degree</b>	1	7	8	7	3	8	4	6	3	<b>6</b>

4. The top 20 law firms by highest PPC trainee intake with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid trainees.

### TOP 20 PPC TRAINING FIRMS FILTERED BY HIGHEST INTAKE

Firm Name	2024 Trainee intake
1 Matheson	47
2 McCann FitzGerald	46
3 Arthur Cox	45
4 A & L Goodbody	41
5 William Fry	24
6 Mason Hayes & Curran	20
7 Eversheds Sutherland	19
8 ByrneWallace Shields	16
9 RDJ	13
10 Maples & Calder	9
11 Hayes	9
12 DLA Piper	9
13 Dillon Eustace	7
14 Addleshaw Goddard	7
15 Beauchamps	6
16 AMOSS	6
17 Ogier (Ireland)	6
18 Fieldfisher	5
19 Flynn O'Driscoll	5
20 Pinsent Masons	4



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

4. The top 20 law firms by highest PPC trainee intake with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid trainees.

FIRMS TAKING ON 2 TRAINEES FROM HYBRID PPC	
Firm Name	2024 Trainee intake
1 An Garda Síochána	2
2 Damien Tansey Solicitors	2
3 Dublin City Council	2
4 Farrell McElwee Solicitors	2
5 Gleeson McGrath Baldwin	2
6 P.J. O'Driscoll & Sons	2
7 Tracey Solicitors	2
8 Tracy Horan Solicitors	2
9 Wallace Corporate Counsel	2

FIRMS TAKING ON 19 OR MORE TRAINEES IN 2024										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Matheson	36	39	44	39	46	51	45	44	48	<b>47</b>
McCann FitzGerald	20	30	30	39	31	36	28	30	42	<b>46</b>
Arthur Cox	31	40	31	36	46	47	42	48	52	<b>45</b>
A & L Goodbody	31	36	30	31	39	46	45	51	47	<b>41</b>
William Fry	23	26	28	25	27	26	30	31	20	<b>24</b>
Mason Hayes & Curran	13	12	15	14	18	11	14	13	16	<b>20</b>
Eversheds Sutherland	13	16	14	16	17	11	15	21	20	<b>19</b>



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

5. A breakdown of the 2024 PPC intake, with separate statistics for the full-time and hybrid PPC trainees, based on the following: (i) gender; (ii) age (30 and under, 31 and over); (ii) degree status (law degree, non-law degree or no degree).

FEMALE	MALE	18-25 YRS	
284	158	234	PPC FULL-TIME
74	26	22	PPC HYBRID

26-30 YRS	31-39 YRS	40+ YRS	
189	19	0	PPC FULL-TIME
46	19	13	PPC HYBRID

LAW DEGREE	NON LAW DEGREE	NO DEGREE	
379	62	1	PPC FULL-TIME
72	23	5	PPC HYBRID



| New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

6. A breakdown of the number of training contracts for the 2024 PPC intake with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid trainees based on type of organisation (e.g. law firm; in-house” with public or state bodies; “in-house” with private bodies).

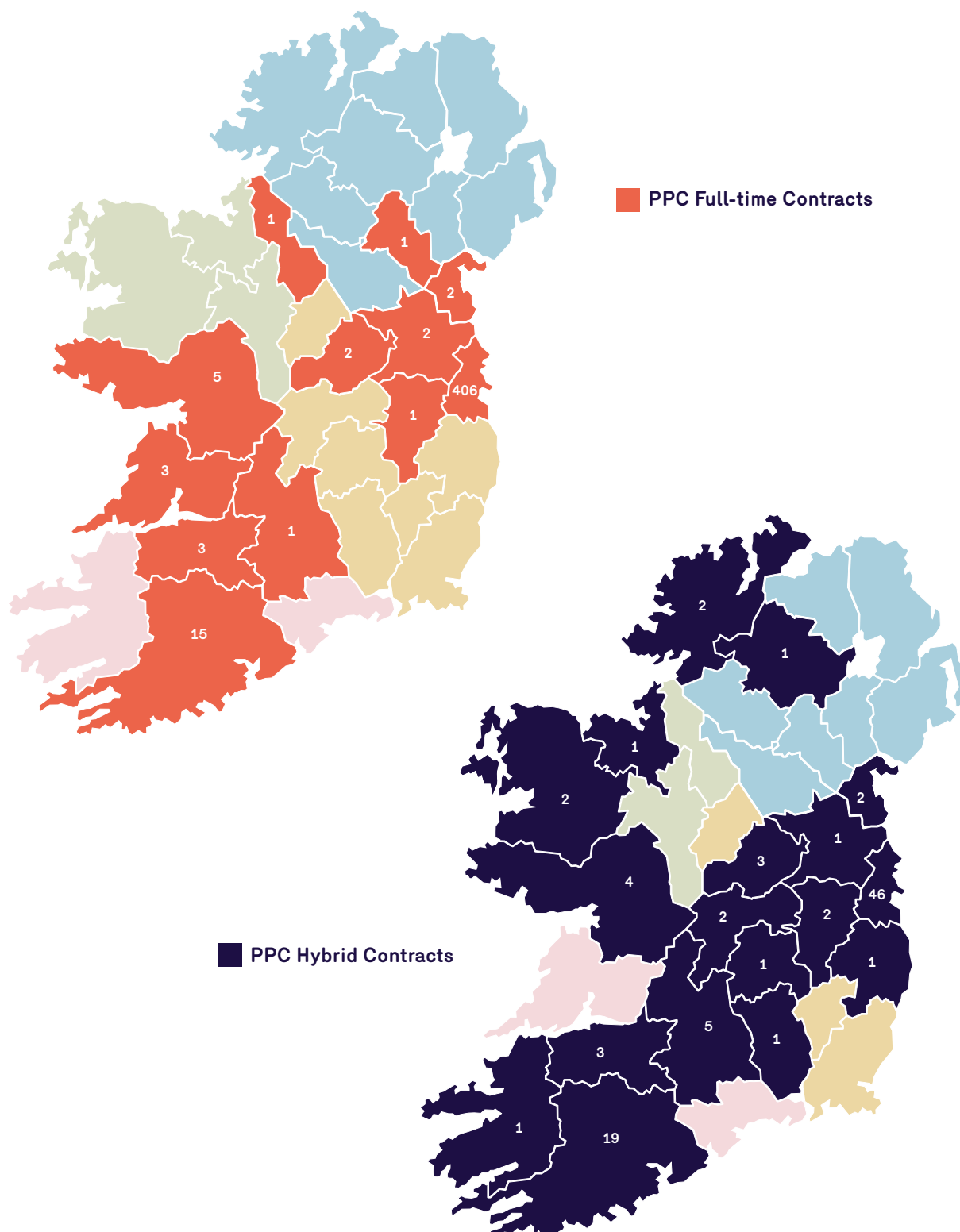
TOTAL TRAINING CONTRACTS			
442			PPC FULL-TIME
100			PPC HYBRID
LAW FIRM	IN-HOUSE	STATE BODY	
427	9	6	PPC FULL-TIME
89	5	6	PPC HYBRID



## | New PPC Trainees and Training Contracts

7. A breakdown of the number of training contracts for the 2024 PPC intake with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid trainees based on the county location of the training firm/organisation.

Number of training contracts based on county on 2024 PPC Full-time & Hybrid





# Practising Certificates for Newly Qualified Solicitors

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## | Practising Certificates for Newly Qualified Solicitors

8. The number of first-time practising certificates issued in 2024 to Law Society newly qualified solicitors.

378 Practising Certificates were issued to solicitors who were admitted to the Roll in that practice year

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7 were surrendered in 2024

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371 remained in circulation on 31 December 2024



## Roll of Solicitors

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## | Roll of Solicitors

9. **The number of solicitors admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024 with a breakdown based on the route of admission (qualifying trainee, England and Wales qualified, NI qualified, s 52, barristers, EU lawyers etc.).**

590

Newly qualified solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024. Numbers remain higher than expected from solicitors applying to the Roll from England & Wales

330

Trainees (101 of this number are trainees from the PPC Hybrid)

174

From England and Wales

35

From NI

31

QLTT\* see additional data on the next page

2

Establishment Directive

18

Transferring barristers

In 2023 the Law Society successfully delivered the full rollout of the new Solicitors' education model (the biggest change since 2002). This included the redesign of syllabi and teaching methods for the core PPC, as well as the provision of 21 new Advanced Electives and the introduction of the fused model for the PPC Hybrid. The new 'fused' PPC brings together into one academic year the entire taught elements of the solicitor training, thus providing significant logistical and practical advantages to trainees and firms. As a direct result of the restructuring of the PPC the number of trainee solicitors admitted to the roll in 2024 is lower than previous years. There will be a higher intake in 2025 as of 31 January 2025, 171 trainees have been admitted to the Roll with another 40 applications being processed.

**Solicitors were admitted to the Roll under the EU Recognition of Professional Qualifications Regulations 2017 (S.I. No 8 of 2017). 31 candidates were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024 following successful completion of the QLTT exams.**

**Breakdown:** New York **7** | Pennsylvania **1** | California **1** | NSW(Australia) **7** | New Zealand **2** | Scotland **2**

## EU 12.

**EU Breakdown:** Spain **2** | Italy **2** | Portugal **4** | Hungary **1** | Austria **1** | Malta **1**

Two Italian lawyers were admitted under the Establishment Directive which entitles a lawyer to move to any other EU Member State and practice law under his home title. After a period of three years the visiting lawyer may choose to take out the local qualification



## | Roll of Solicitors

### \*Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT)

The QLTT is a conversion test which enables lawyers qualified in certain countries outside the Republic of Ireland, to qualify as solicitors in this jurisdiction. There are two sittings of the examination each year usually in summer and winter. The test consists of papers in Constitutional Law and Criminal Law or Company Law (at the option of the candidate), Contract and Tort, Land Law and Conveyancing, Probate and Taxation and Solicitors' Accounts. There is also an oral examination in Professional Conduct. The QLTT enables lawyers qualified in other jurisdictions to re-qualify as solicitors in Ireland. The growing diversity among the profession is reflective of the diversity present in modern Irish society. A more diverse representation in the profession will help to increase access to justice for all in the future. As candidates can choose the number of examinations to attempt in a sitting there is no meaningful overall pass rate.

#### June 2024

EXAM	Constitutional Law & Company Law or Criminal Law	Contract & Tort	EU Law	Land Law & Conveyancing	Probate & Taxation	Professional Conduct	Solicitors' Accounts
No. Sat	15	9	6	16	15	10	13
No. Pass	14	4	4	12	12	10	12
% Pass	93%	44%	67%	75%	80%	100%	92%

#### November 2024

EXAM	Constitutional Law & Company Law or Criminal Law	Contract & Tort	EU Law	Land Law & Conveyancing	Probate & Taxation	Professional Conduct	Solicitors' Accounts
No. Sat	13	11	6	14	16	17	14
No. Pass	10	5	6	9	14	17	13
% Pass	71%	45%	100%	64%	88%	100%	93%

#### Total 2024

EXAM	Constitutional Law & Company Law or Criminal Law	Contract & Tort	EU Law	Land Law & Conveyancing	Probate & Taxation	Professional Conduct	Solicitors' Accounts
No. Sat	28	20	12	40	31	27	27
No. Pass	24	9	10	21	26	27	25
% Pass	86%	45%	83%	53%	84%	100%	93%

#### 10. The number of solicitors removed from the Roll in 2024 and the reasons for this.

4

Solicitors submitted requests for removal from the Roll in 2024.

#### 11. The number of solicitors on the Roll as at 31 December 2024.

24,714

Solicitors were on the Roll as at 31 December 2024



## Practising Certificates





| Practising Certificates

12. The number of practising certificates issued in 2024.

12,278

Practising certificates were issued in 2024.

13. The number of practising certificates surrendered and suspended in 2024.

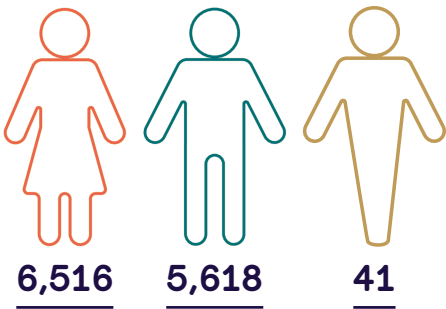
85

Practising certificates were surrendered and 2 practising certificates were suspended.

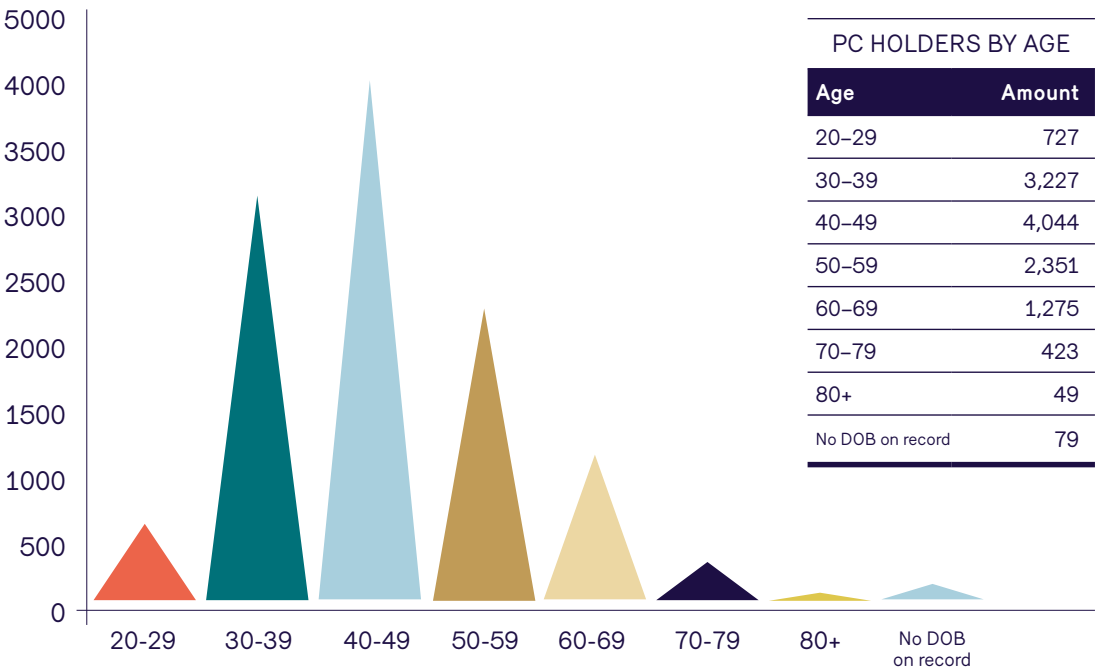
14. The number of practising certificates held as at 31 December 2024.

12,175

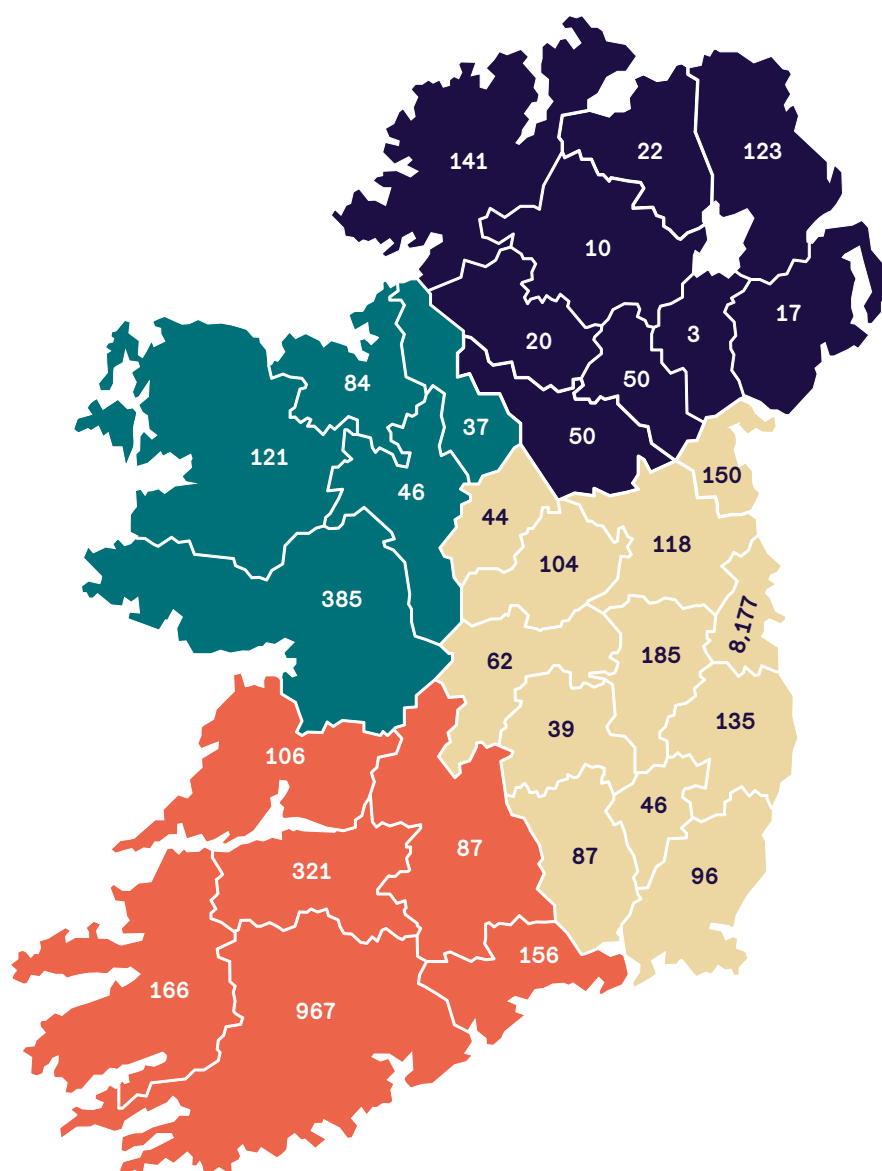
Practising certificates held on 31 December 2024 is the total number of practising certificates issued net of surrenders, suspended pcs, and any pc linked to a solicitor marked as deceased within that practice year.



PC HOLDERS BY GENDER	
Gender	Count of Gender
Female	6,516
Male	5,618
Other	41
Total	12,175







PC HOLDERS BY LOCATION	
County	
Antrim	123
Armagh	3
Carlow	46
Cavan	50
Clare	106
Cork	967
Derry	22
Donegal	141
Down	17
Dublin	8,177
Fermanagh	4
Galway	385
Kerry	166
Kildare	185
Kilkenny	87
Laois	39
Leitrim	37
Limerick	321
Longford	44
Louth	150
Mayo	121
Meath	118
Monaghan	50
Offaly	62
Roscommon	46
Sligo	84
Tipperary	156
Tyrone	10
Waterford	123
Westmeath	104
Wexford	96
Wicklow	135



## | Practising Certificates

### 15. A breakdown of the number of practising certificates held by each of the top 20 largest employers of solicitors as at 31 December 2024.

This table incorporates firm principal office and branches in Ireland.

	Firm Name (Ireland)	2024	2023
1	Matheson	371	361
2	A&L Goodbody	371	365
3	Arthur Cox	333	326
4	Mason Hayes & Curran	313	290
5	McCann FitzGerald	290	279
6	William Fry	216	208
7	Chief State Solicitor's Office	199	186
8	ByrneWallace Shields	153	148
9	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	132	129
10	Legal Aid Board	121	115
11	Central Bank of Ireland	119	123
12	Eversheds Sutherland	107	99
13	Maples and Calder	107	98
14	RDJ	105	106
15	Beauchamps	98	94
16	Allied Irish Banks plc	98	97
17	Philip Lee	84	84
18	Dillon Eustace	82	85
19	Hayes Solicitors	81	74
20	Addleshaw Goddard	80	70



A photograph of a group of people in a meeting or conference. In the foreground, a woman with brown hair, wearing a green textured sweater, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a white document. In the background, other people are visible, including a woman with blonde hair and a woman with dark hair. The image is partially covered by a white diagonal overlay in the top left corner, which contains the text 'In-House & Service of the State' and a faint green leaf graphic.

## In-House & Service of the State

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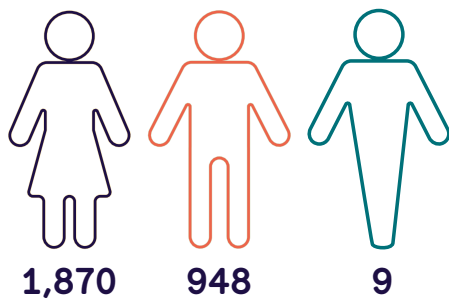


**16. The number of solicitors recorded as working “in-house” with practising certificates as at 31 December 2024.**

2,827

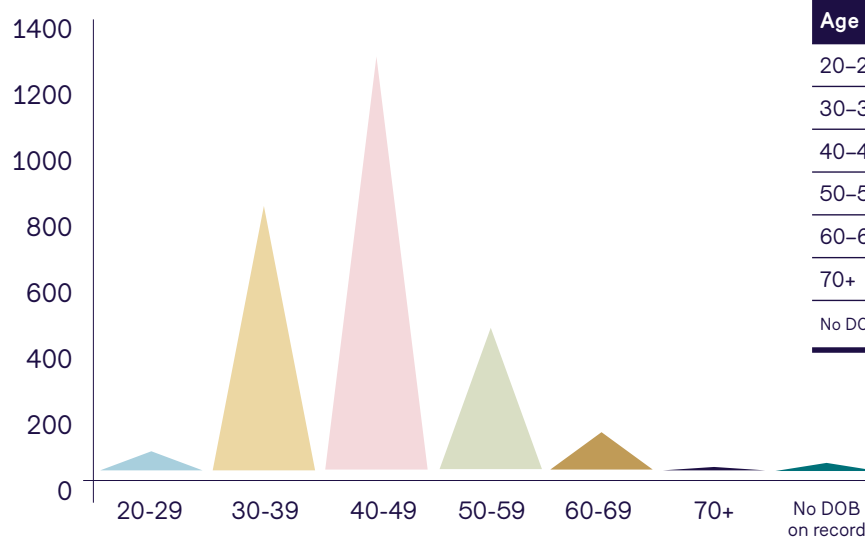
Solicitors were recorded as “in-house” with practising certificates as at 31 December 2024.

Below is a table of information relating to PC holders who were noted as practising in-house in the practice year 2024 and their breakdown by gender, age-range and location. This number excludes any practising certificates surrendered and any solicitors marked as deceased with a pc in the practice year:



IN HOUSE SOLICITORS BY GENDER

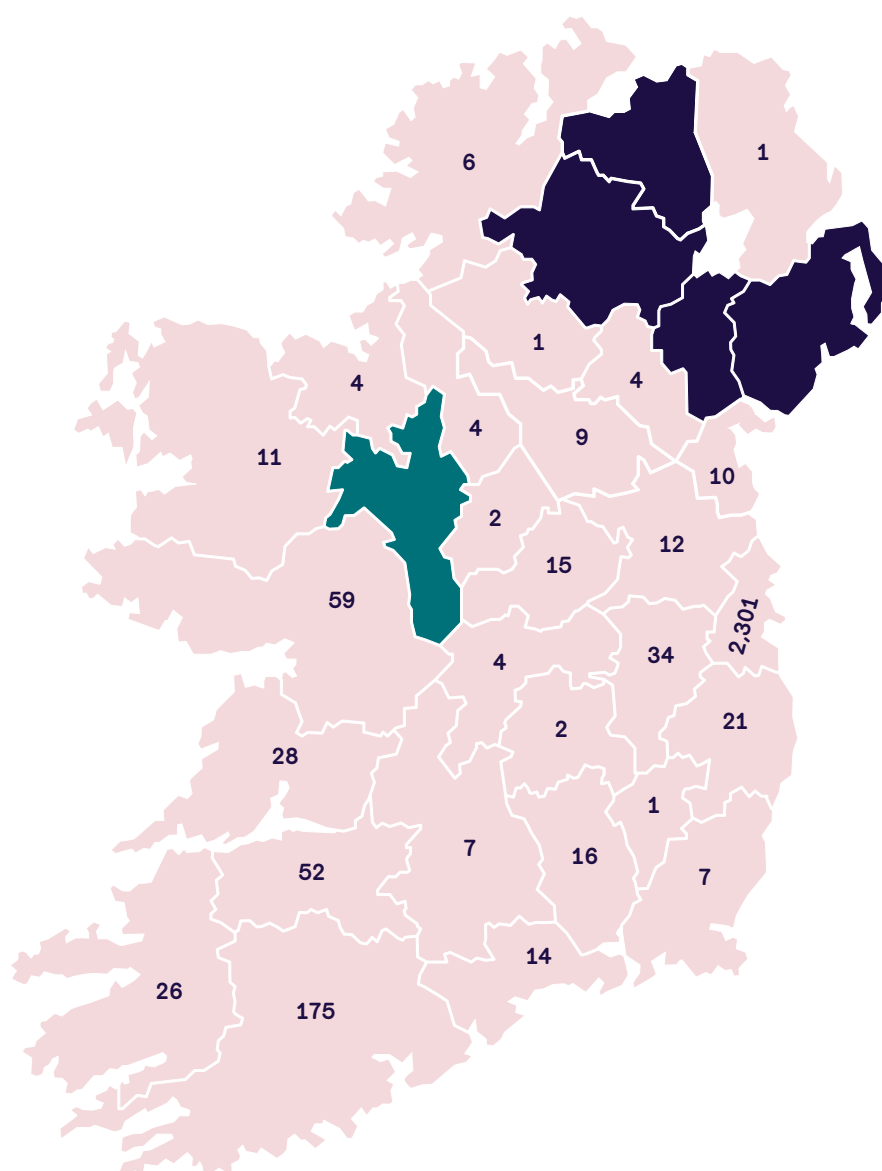
Gender	Count of Gender
Female	1,870
Male	948
Other	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,827</b>



IN HOUSE SOLICITORS BY AGE

Age	Amount
20-29	33
30-39	847
40-49	1,337
50-59	470
60-69	117
70+	5
No DOB on record	19





IN-HOUSE SOLICITORS  
(WITH A PC) BY  
LOCATION

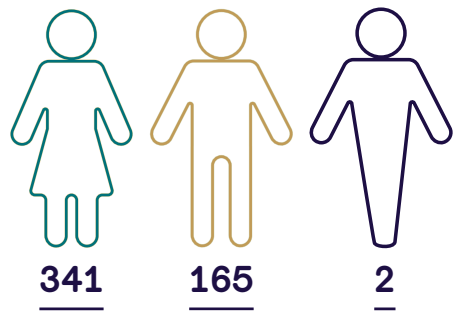
County	
Antrim	1
Armagh	0
Carlow	1
Cavan	9
Clare	28
Cork	175
Derry	0
Donegal	6
Down	0
Dublin	2,301
Fermanagh	1
Galway	59
Kerry	26
Kildare	34
Kilkenny	16
Laois	2
Leitrim	4
Limerick	52
Longford	2
Louth	10
Mayo	11
Meath	12
Monaghan	4
Offaly	4
Roscommon	0
Sligo	4
Tipperary	7
Tyrone	0
Waterford	14
Westmeath	15
Wexford	7
Wicklow	21



17. The number of solicitors recorded as working in the full-time service of the State as at 31 December 2024.

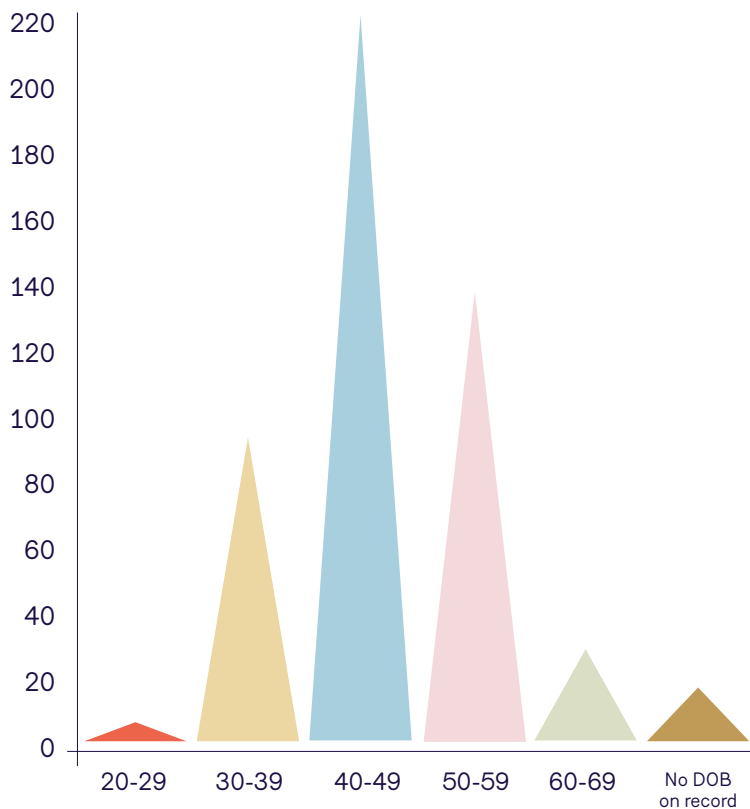
508

Solicitors took out an SOS application in the practice year 2024.



SOS SOLICITORS BY GENDER

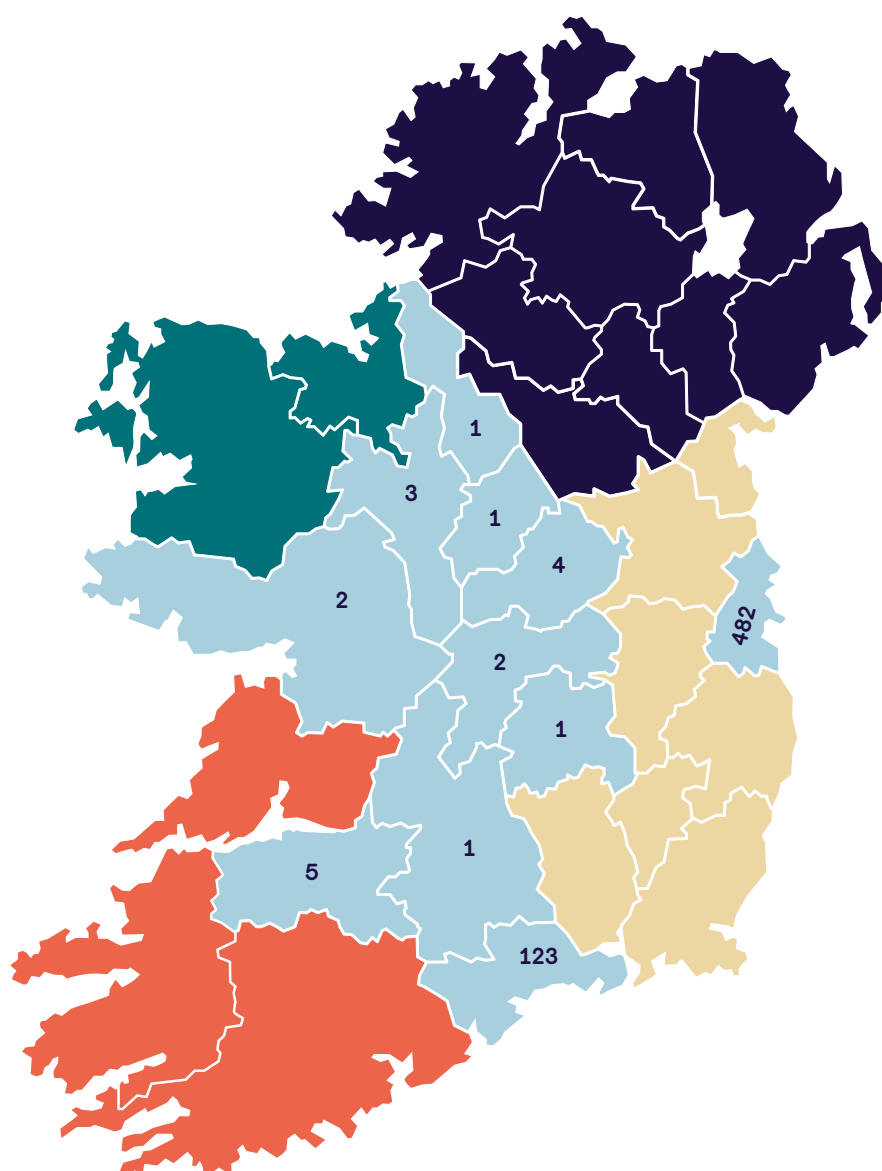
Gender	Count of Gender
Female	341
Male	165
Other	2
Total	508



SOS SOLICITORS BY AGE

Age	Amount
20-29	3
30-39	95
40-49	219
50-59	141
60-69	30
No DOB on record	20





## SOS SOLICITORS BY LOCATION

County	
Antrim	0
Armagh	0
Carlow	0
Cavan	0
Clare	0
Cork	0
Derry	0
Donegal	0
Down	0
Dublin	482
Fermanagh	0
Galway	2
Kerry	0
Kildare	0
Kilkenny	0
Laois	1
Leitrim	1
Limerick	5
Longford	1
Louth	0
Mayo	0
Meath	0
Monaghan	0
Offaly	2
Roscommon	3
Sligo	0
Tipperary	1
Tyrone	0
Waterford	0
Westmeath	4
Wexford	0
Wicklow	0



## Admissions Developments & Breaking Down Barriers Information

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**18. Please provide details of existing Law Society initiatives to further increase flexible routes for solicitor training and their impact in 2024. (Please see recommendation no 1 in Barriers Implementation Plan.)**

**PPC Hybrid**

The sixth iteration of the PPC Hybrid began in December 2024. The PPC Hybrid makes greater use of best practice in online learning, doing away with the need for PPC Hybrid trainees to relocate to Dublin for an extended period. The PPC Hybrid is delivered through a mixture of onsite and online weekend sessions. This permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during the course delivery. Trainees are also able to access a number of pre-recorded e-lectures, which they can work through in a schedule that meets their own needs.

The genesis behind the PPC Hybrid was to offer an alternative pathway to qualification which took into account the needs of those who may not be in a position to attend a course in Dublin on a full-time basis and who were seeking a more flexible learning approach. The PPC Hybrid was deliberately structured to meet the Law Society's priorities for diversity and inclusion, making training more accessible for mature trainees and those with family and other caring commitments. This accessibility is at the forefront of planning with regard to the PPC Hybrid and the course continues to evolve year-on-year based on the feedback of trainees, as we seek to make the programme structure as inclusive as possible. For example, we now recommend that trainees are only obliged to carry out a 4-day working week while undertaking the course. This means that on Fridays where there are no online or onsite sessions, trainees are free to catch-up on their coursework. We have noted that this has had a positive effect for our Hybrid trainees, reducing the overall intensity of the course delivery.

Where possible, we have also made best efforts to ease the financial burden on PPC Hybrid trainees. With this in mind, final examinations are now structured in such a way that trainees can travel to and from the exam venue on the same day, regardless of where in the country they are located. In this regard, PPC Hybrid exams have a later start time each day and are spread out over a two-week period to allow trainees this flexibility, where possible avoiding the expense of hotel accommodation in Dublin.

As part of our on-going biennial review of the PPC, we are also considering how to provide even greater learner flexibility within the structure of the programme. For example, we are considering offering specific elements of the training on a modular basis, allowing students to access the programme at a pace suitable to their own needs. It is contended that such a modular system would also facilitate the apprenticeship model of training (see below). Changes identified as part of that biennial review will be introduced through the course of 2025.

**Apprenticeship model of training**

The Law Society is currently examining the solicitor apprenticeship model as a new route to qualification for school leavers. To that end, we have initiated a cross-departmental working group to develop further proposals to implement that new model of training. This will include identification and implementation of a number of 'off-ramp' qualification points for learners prior to full qualification, such as a standalone legal executive qualification which will be launched in 2025. The aim of the apprenticeship model will be to encourage students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage. The apprentice model will need to be adopted by organisations so that students who complete it have equal parity with those that have taken the 'traditional' route to the profession. Recruitment will need to focus on potential rather than academic achievements. Data will need to be collected and reviewed annually so that necessary adjustments or changes can be made to ensure more people have access to the profession. Retention and equal pay (on qualification) from this programme (or similar programmes) is key to achieve long term success.



**19. Please provide details of existing Law Society access initiatives at second and third level and broadly outline the Law Society's plans to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives. (Please see recommendation no 13 in Barriers Implementation Plan.)**

The Law Society places an emphasis on inclusion, diversity and student-centred learning and delivers a proactive programme of access initiatives, which engage with those interested in pursuing the solicitor qualification.

The programme provides access to the profession across diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds. It delivers a suite of initiatives that raise aspirations and empower people of all ages to make informed career choices. It offers an insight into the role of a solicitor in practice and delivers easy-to-consume information on the many flexible routes to qualification. There is a particular emphasis placed on providing a welcoming, encouraging and inclusive environment, which supports everyone on their route to qualification. The impact and effectiveness of the programme has been measured in the demand for the initiatives on offer, each year huge numbers of students take part in the programme and their feedback forms the basis for future offerings.

Engagement with our schools especially DEIS Schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) plays an important role in encouraging participation in higher education for traditionally underrepresented groups and the positive promotion of the solicitor profession as a career opportunity.

**Street Law**

The Street Law initiative places trainee solicitors studying at the Law Society in local schools, prisons and community settings to teach about law.

Using a unique pedagogical approach and best practice in civic education, the programme taps into people's inherent interest in the law and aims to promote legal literacy, equality, access to law, and to teach high cognitive and social skills that enhance each participant's effectiveness in legal matters.

Over 3,000 transition year students have completed the Law Society's Street Law programme. Originally developed in Georgetown University in the United States, the Street Law programme has been run by the Law Society since 2013.





## | Admissions Developments & Breaking Down Barriers Information

Each year, over 40 volunteer trainee solicitors participate. As part of the programme, the trainee solicitors attend an orientation weekend facilitated by Law Society staff and guest trainers from international universities. The intense weekend of training prepares the trainees to teach the Street Law course to Transition Year students at partnering DEIS schools in the local community. They deliver the programme over six lessons and cover topics such as the court systems, family law, discrimination law and sexual offences.

### **Mock Trials**

Each year the Law Society hosts pupils from local secondary and primary schools in mock trials. Ahead of the trials, the pupils take part in school rehearsals, being tutored in legal precepts. Mock trials help students gain a basic understanding of the legal mechanism through which society resolves many of its disputes.

### **Solicitors of the Future and T Y Law Module Programmes.**

Over 18, 000 transition students have taken part on our Solicitors of the Future and T Y Law Module programmes. These programmes provide students an opportunity to explore a future career as a solicitor and learn how the law is relevant to their daily lives.

Through presentations and legal lessons, students learn from a broad range of material covering Climate Justice, Criminal Law, Employment Law, Human Rights Practice, Juvenile Justice, and The Children's Courts.

The TY Law module is released online and the ease of access and flexibility of the programmes is one of the main reasons for its success. Teachers can access video presentations and information booklets, released online, when it suits the school's timetable. Students can opt to study alone or as part of a group.

Solicitors of the Future provides a weeklong immersive experience with students attending legal lessons onsite at the Law Society campus. Interactive workshops and mock trials are held during the school's midterm break and as a result, places on the programme are in high demand.

### **Becoming a Solicitor Symposium**

Each year we host the Becoming a Solicitor Symposium for third-level students from around Ireland.

Over 3,000 students have participated in the event which delivers online video presentations, live panel discussions and Q&A sessions and explores the opportunity to join the solicitor profession. Speakers focus on breaking down perceived barriers to entering the legal profession and highlighting the many flexible routes to becoming a solicitor and the financial supports available to students throughout the training process. As a follow up, students can book a one-to-one session which are career-focused and talk through the opportunities available to them as they plan their legal careers. From the success of the symposium, we started to host a selection of online pop-up talks and career seminars in collaboration with universities, colleges and law schools across Ireland.





### **Gráinne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition.**

Each year the Law Society invites transition year students from across the country to enter the Gráinne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition. The competition aims to encourage young people to engage with the law and consider their own legal rights, and how the law impacts society. It challenges students in their learning to develop their creativity in an engaging way. With this competition, we honour the life and legacy of the late Judge Gráinne O'Neill.

Essays go through two rounds of judging, with the first round facilitated by local Bar Associations and the national judging panel comprising of eight judges from across Law Society Committees, staff members and competition stakeholders. 30 student finalists, their parents, guardians, and teachers, are invited to Blackhall Place to celebrate their achievements.

### **Taskmasters**

In 2024, the Law Society piloted a new project which enables young people to learn about aspects of the law through fun, interactive tasks. Trainee solicitors were placed in local schools to work with the pupils on challenges that were designed with a basis of learning the law. After four weeks of preparation, the pupils took part in the Taskmaster regional final hosted by the Law Society with the winning participants progressing to the competition final at the University of Warwick. The Irish team took on 32 other schools and did exceptionally well placing third. We will be compiling a report on the various initiatives for the relevant Law Society Committees to review in 2025 and 2026 in tandem with other work being undertaken on breaking down barriers to the legal profession.

### **Returns Programme**

Since 2019, the Law Society's Returns Programme has supported over 120 solicitors in returning to law. This free initiative supports solicitors who have been away from work for a period of time - and who now want to take up employment in the profession again. Candidates have been away from law for all sorts of reasons, with family care responsibilities being the most common.

The programme involves a series of workshops conducted over Zoom and one-to-one support from a career adviser. The workshops provide solicitors with upskilling opportunities and critical return to work tools such as CV drafting and interview preparation. Solicitors with family care responsibilities are guided on how to manage increased demands on their time, to focus on their personal priorities and to identify job market opportunities that align with what they are looking for work-wise. In the modern working world, people move in and out of professional life for many different reasons. The Law Society is delighted to offer the Returns Programme to support solicitors, who are now ready to re-enter the workforce.



**20. Please outline any changes to the admission policies of the Law Society during 2024.**

We are continuing to implement changes introduced in recent years. As part of our on-going biennial review of the PPC, we are considering how to provide even greater learner flexibility within the structure of the programme. The Law Society is also currently examining the solicitor apprenticeship model as a new route to qualification for school leavers (detailed in question 18).

All practising solicitors now contribute €15 towards a 'Professional Access Programme' through their Practising Certificate fee for 2025.

The role of the Professional Access Programme is to implement further initiatives which aim to reduce barriers for those seeking to enter, return to, or progress within the solicitors' profession. The overall objective of this initiative is to promote greater diversity in the legal profession, following the LSRA's 'Breaking Down Barriers' report published in September 2024.

There are currently 203 individuals participating on the Access Scholarship Scheme. **113** individuals are currently pursuing FE-1 exams and receiving financial support in respect of same. **90** individuals are at post FE-1 level and receiving financial support in respect of the fulltime and Hybrid Professional Practice Courses. Of the individuals at post FE-1 level, **35** joined the PPC fused courses in 2024 with Access funding. **236** individuals have qualified as solicitors with financial support from the Access Scholarship programme.

**Stages of education funding**

Students are assisted throughout all stages of their professional legal education:

**Final Entrance Exams – First part (FE-1)**

Funding is available for expenses directly related to taking FE-1 entrance exams to study to become a solicitor. This includes overnight accommodation during the week of exams, contributions towards additional childcare costs, support with loss of income while taking exams and travel expenses to and from the exam venue. Access FE-1 candidates are entitled to use the Law Society library when preparing for exams. Students living outside of Dublin may have books posted to them.

**Procuring a training contract**

The Law Society assists Access students with best practice tips on how to secure a traineeship. Law Society staff and experienced practicing lawyers work with students to provide vital information on what works best in terms of CVs, cover letters and approaches to interviews. Mentoring appointments are also available at all stages of the programme to help build confidence and communication skills.

**Small Practice Traineeship Grant**

Twenty-six grants have been awarded since the introduction of the Scheme with five grants of €25,000 each awarded in 2024. The scheme provides funding of €18,000 to the training firm over the course of the two-year training contract. It will also provide funding of €7,000 to the trainee solicitor by way of a discount on the Professional Practice Course fee.

Supporting small rural practices with the financial cost of employing a trainee solicitor plays an important role in providing greater access to the profession for trainees from rural and diverse backgrounds. With sole practitioners and smaller practices in almost every small town in every corner of Ireland, the Small Practice Traineeship Grant can offer a trainee solicitor the opportunity to stay in their local community, without having to relocate to Dublin.



### **Additional Financial Assistance Programmes**

- The Scott Scholarship, named in memory of late Arthur Cox partner Frank Scott, supports students who are hoping for a career as a solicitor. The Scott Scholarship (funded by Ian Scott), provides full fees sponsorship to the successful candidate wishing to attend the PPC. The Scott Scholarship has provided six scholarships to date, with one awarded in 2024.
- The Society operates a Bursary Scheme which provides maintenance grants to trainees attending the Professional Practice Courses. This assists in reducing the financial burden on trainees when qualifying as a solicitor. It provides financial assistance where their own resources or those of their family are inadequate to fund their studies. The programme is helping to create a broader spectrum of solicitors; vital in building a legal profession reflecting the diversity of the society it serves. Applications are decided by the Bursary Committee (a sub-committee of the Education Committee) based on comparative hardship.
- Trainees can also avail of a Hardship Fund to cater for situations whereby they face an unexpected situation impacting on their financial capacity.



## General Scope





## 1. The level of demand for the services of practicing solicitors in 2024.

In recent years the Irish legal profession has weathered major global events and shown its resilience in successfully navigating significant challenges, such as a maintenance of business during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, challenges still exist for the sector. Talent and recruitment and retention in smaller practices remains a critical issue particularly in regional areas. When these issues are combined with challenges related to retirement and succession planning, and rising business costs, many smaller practices face uncertain futures. With 65% of sole practitioners aged 50+, a substantial portion of solicitors will reach retirement over the next decade. A suite of targeted supports are required to safeguard access to small legal practices in rural communities.

The level of demand for the services of practising solicitors in 2024 however shows an increase that might contribute to settling some of the above challenges. The demand for solicitors' services is here assessed through a range of indicators including surveys capturing key market issues and sentiment in the profession, and employment trends.

According to the SOLAS National Skills Bulletin 2024, employment levels amongst barristers, judges, solicitors and related professionals have fluctuated over the past five years, with an additional 2,800 persons employed through 2023.<sup>1</sup> With 16,300 people now employed across the sector, numbers have returned to their pre-Covid levels. The majority of these roles are within the solicitor profession, with over 12,000 practising solicitors registered with the Law Society. The average annual growth rate over the past five years stands at 3.7% which is amongst the highest for those in legal and security occupations.

After an extended period of uncertainty, stability does appear to be returning to the profession. It is important to note however that sentiment is split between bigger law firms situated primarily in Dublin and Cork, and smaller regional firms.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the bigger firms tend to record an improving outlook over the year ahead, reflecting the buoyancy in the wider economy, only a minority of smaller regional firms agrees with this assessment. Changes in staff levels over the past 12 months reflect these outlooks with the majority of bigger firms increasing their trainee intake to meet the demands of a diverse client base. Ireland is increasingly emerging as a key destination for legal advice and transactional services that support the global financial services industry, life-sciences sector, aviation and technology sectors, which requires specialist legal knowledge, expertise and skills. This dynamic draws many trainee solicitors towards the larger urban centres to pursue training contracts. As a result, there is an increasing imbalance between different parts of the sector, resulting in regional disparities.

Nevertheless, employment and sentiment levels indicate a modest increase in demand for services and a cautious optimism on future demand levels for the sector. The Law Society provides practice support to firms facing challenges and assists trainees and experienced professionals across their careers, whether in larger or smaller firms.

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1. Nora Condon et al., 'National Skills Bulletin 2024', SOLAS (November 2024): <https://www.solas.ie/ff70398/x/be80f7adoc/national-skills-bulletin-2024.pdf>.

2. Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024, Evelyn Partners



**2. The costs of legal services in 2024 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.**

Without a consistent method of capturing and tracking the cost of legal services in Ireland it is difficult to establish a consensus on whether services were made available to consumers at a reasonable cost. A range of indicators have been used, therefore, to provide further insight. The Services Producer Price Index (SPPI) <sup>3</sup>, created by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), measures changes in the average level of prices charged by producers for a selected range of services supplied to businesses and government. Annually, Legal Accounting, PR and Business Management Consultancy recorded growth of just under 2% in Q3 2024.<sup>4</sup> This represents the third lowest level of growth amongst services prices, after sectors such as Real Estate and Rental (22%) and Transport (12%) and is relatively modest when compared to overall services prices growth of 7.4%.

The annual rate of price inflation for legal services (captured under Other Services, a sub-category of Miscellaneous Goods and Services) declined through 2024. At the beginning of the year, annual inflation of 2.6% was recorded over January 2023. By the end of the year, the annualised rate of inflation stood at 0.6% (November 2024, latest available).<sup>5</sup>

While costs have remained relatively flat in the past year, the Law Society of Ireland. Its 2025 submission, called for an increase in legal aid fees and payments to solicitors to ensure access to justice for the most vulnerable of consumers.<sup>6</sup> Fees and eligibility criteria for both civil and criminal legal aid work has remained relatively unchanged since before the 2008 financial crisis and is no longer reflective of the increasing complexity of work required, nor does it take account of the substantial increase in all associated costs and expenses (not to mention inflation) that have arisen in the intervening period. Following similar calls from the Bar of Ireland <sup>7</sup> for the full restoration of cuts made c. 15 years ago, the Government committed to a 8% rise in fees for criminal legal aid from 1 January 2025. <sup>8</sup>

In the 12 months to September 2024, only 22 complaints relating to excess costs were received by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, equating to less than 2% of all complaints received during the period.<sup>9</sup> This marks a decline in excess cost complaints on the previous year when 51 complaints were received (4% of total). <sup>10</sup>

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3. *Note: In most cases, the services captured by this Index are provided to business customers only and so individual price indices should not be considered indicative of more general price trends in the economy. The Index covers transaction costs from business to business and excludes consumers who are covered in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).*

4. *Services Producer Price Index Q3 2024, CSO*

5. *EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices, CSO*

6. *Budget 2025 Submission (September 2024), Law Society of Ireland*



**3. The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.**

The admission policies of the legal professions in Ireland play a crucial role in balancing public interest by ensuring that legal services are available at a reasonable cost while maintaining high standards of education and training. With the demand for legal services fluctuating, particularly post-Covid, the legal sector has seen a varied employment growth rate. Large firms have increased their intake of trainee solicitors significantly, indicating a recognition of the need for more professionals to meet public demand vis-à-vis the growing demand for solicitors in commercial endeavours. In contrast, smaller regional firms have maintained a more conservative approach, reflecting both their cautious optimism about future demand and economic challenges that are faced in some parts of the country. The ability of firms in the legal profession to attract and retain staff remains an issue with approximately six in every 10 firms in the sector seeing this as a key challenge in the short- to medium-term.<sup>11</sup>

The data in this submission shows there are 24,714 solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors as of 31 December 2024, and the number of new trainees admitted to the Law Society remains at a high level. Despite the increase in the number of legal professionals, the challenge of wage and cost inflation persists. This could potentially offset the benefits of higher admissions by driving up the cost of legal services. As a result, there is some level of unmet legal need in Ireland. For solicitors to contribute to the delivery of people-centred justice, their services should increasingly include mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Whilst the Law Society is due to release a 'find your mediator' portal, this move needs to be strongly supported by the entirety of the legal environment to balance public interest, alleviate the pressure on the courts, and fully exploit the services of solicitors.

Ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost also requires a robust framework for education and training standards. This guarantees that newly admitted practitioners are well-prepared to deliver high-quality services, meeting public expectations and maintaining the profession's integrity. In order to better meet public demand and ensure the representativeness of the general public in the legal profession, the Law Society consistently supports a variety of learning models, offering part-time and remote routes into the profession. In addition, the Law Society is keen to develop an apprenticeship programme which will help to meet the demand for legal services especially in more rural areas and in a variety of specialisation areas.

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7. *The Bar of Ireland Pre-Budget Submission 2025, July 2024*

8. *Fees For Criminal Legal Aid to Rise 8%, Gazette.ie (15 January 2025)*

9. *Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 1 - 2024 and Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 2 - 2024*

10. *Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 1 - 2023 and Legal Services Regulatory, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 2 - 2023*



## Final Observations

Respondents may also wish to comment on any other issues in relation to the operation of the Act, including the objectives of the Authority under section 13(4), which are:

- a) protecting and promoting the public interest,
- a) supporting the proper and effective administration of justice,
- b) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services,
- c) promoting competition in the provision of legal services in the State,
- d) encouraging an independent, strong and effective legal profession, and
- e) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles of independence and integrity, acting in the client's best interests, compliance with duties owed to the court and confidentiality.

The Law Society welcomes the opportunity to comment on the operation of the Act, particularly in relation to the objectives of the Authority under section 13(4). The Law Society's mission is to support and shape a legal system that serves as a foundation for a modern, thriving and progressive society. We are committed to advancing the public interest and ensuring the proper administration of justice. Solicitors are at the heart of this process and play an essential role in protecting the rights and interests of individuals, fostering a fair and accessible legal system, and upholding the rule of law.

Solicitors serve as trusted advisors and advocates, offering invaluable access to legal services throughout an individual's life. Solicitors ensure that justice is accessible and equitable, both within and beyond the courtroom. We strongly advocate for a legal system that adopts a people-centred approach, addressing legal challenges in ways that are responsive to the needs of the public.

For the continued success of the Act and the legal professions, we highlight four key areas that require renewed focus and enhancement: (not just from the Law Society, but from all parties involved in the justice system in Ireland); alternative dispute resolution, family justice, legal aid, and the courts system.

### 1. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

The Law Society is a strong advocate for alternative dispute resolution, which offers a viable alternative to the often costly and time-consuming court process. ADR, including mediation, can reduce the financial burden on people and businesses and spare them from protracted and adversarial legal conflicts. Solicitors play a crucial role in guiding clients through these alternatives, helping them resolve disputes in ways that are often faster, more cost-effective, and less stressful than traditional litigation.

We continue to call for the establishment of the Mediation Council as provided for in the Mediation Act 2017, and to expand access to mediation as an alternative to the Courts. In Spring 2025, the Law Society will launch an online portal to connect people and organisations with mediators, enabling them to compare and select the best-suited professional for their needs. By strengthening public awareness of ADR, we can ensure that people are empowered to resolve disputes outside of the courtroom, contributing to a more efficient and accessible justice system.

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11. Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024, Evelyn Partners



## 2. **Family Justice**

Solicitors are integral to the administration of family justice, offering expert guidance and representation in some of the most sensitive legal matters. The Law Society is committed to ensuring that family justice is prioritised within the justice system, with a focus on efficiency and timeliness. Family justice requires a system that not only addresses legal matters but also protects the welfare and rights of children and families during vulnerable times.

The Law Society strongly supports the ambitious plans laid out in the 2024 Family Courts Act, but cautions that adequate resources must be in place for it to succeed. The Law Society also advocates for the creation of a dedicated Family Courts Building on Hammond Lane in Dublin (and indeed in other locations throughout the country), where physical space can be designed to better accommodate the privacy and needs of families, particularly children. Children need to be heard and protected in these vulnerable moments.

Solicitors are actively engaged in shaping the future of family justice. We continue to work to ensure that the system is accessible, responsive, and efficient for those who need it most.

## 3. **Legal Aid**

Access to legal aid is fundamental to ensuring that justice is available to all, regardless of their financial circumstances.

The Law Society has consistently advocated the restoration of criminal legal aid funding to pre-2008 levels, enabling solicitors—especially those in smaller practices—to effectively serve their clients. Without this restoration, many solicitors will continue to struggle to sustain legal aid case work, potentially leaving large sections of the population without access to adequate legal representation.

We have also advocated to broaden the scope of civil legal aid and the raising of income thresholds for eligibility. As income thresholds have not been updated since 2006, the current system excludes many individuals who are in dire need of legal assistance. Applicants must have an annual disposable income of less than €18,000 (less than 50% of the industrial wage) to qualify. These outdated thresholds mean that legal advice is out of reach for the vast majority of people and an increasing number of people fear the impact of legal costs when considering the engagement of legal services.

Solicitors play an essential role in ensuring that the legal aid system reaches those who need it, and we continue to push for reforms that expand access to justice.

## 4. **Courts System**

Solicitors are critical to the functioning of the courts, representing clients, presenting evidence, and helping to ensure that legal procedures are followed.

For the courts system to function effectively, it must undergo significant modernisation and reform. The physical condition and accessibility issues of the courts system need to be addressed to deliver inclusive and people-centred experiences.



The Law Society strongly supports the introduction of case management systems, the roll-out of a digital plan, and the implementation of a paperless court system. These changes will not only streamline legal processes but also reduce costs operating costs. Furthermore, the Law Society calls for an increase in the number of judges, and court staff, to ensure that cases are heard in a timely manner, reducing delays and promoting faster access to justice.

The development of an improved courts service needs to be underpinned by effective data collection, allowing appropriate measurement of the success or otherwise of the Court System. This will ensure better service delivery. Indeed, whilst some data is being collected, experiential and qualitative data as much as quantitative data regarding the length of trials in first- and second instance courts are currently not collected. In order to make the legal profession work effectively for everyone, better feedback loops need to be installed that regularly evaluate and adjust ways of working in the Irish legal system.

### **Conclusion**

As we continue to work towards improving the legal system in Ireland, the Law Society remains a committed and collaborative partner. We are driven by a shared mission to enhance access to justice and to ensure that solicitors continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of law and the legal profession.

Our ongoing efforts include:

- Innovative educational offerings: We regularly update training programs to reflect recent legal developments, ensuring that solicitors are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to serve their clients effectively.
- Widening access to the profession: We are developing new pathways into the legal profession, including an apprenticeship program, and offer training grants, part-time solutions, and blended learning options to attract a broader, more diverse range of talent.
- Supporting the legal profession: We work to assist smaller practices in maintaining sustainability and helping them retain and employ trainee solicitors. We also advocate for increased training opportunities in both the public and private sectors, ensuring that the legal profession remains vibrant and accessible to all. The Law Society also provides a comprehensive psychological service to enhance and develop the psychological dimensions of legal practice, culture and professionals.

Solicitors are at the heart of a functioning legal system. From family matters to business transactions, from criminal cases to civil disputes, the solicitor profession is essential in upholding the rule of law, protecting individual rights, supporting business and ensuring that justice is accessible for everyone.



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