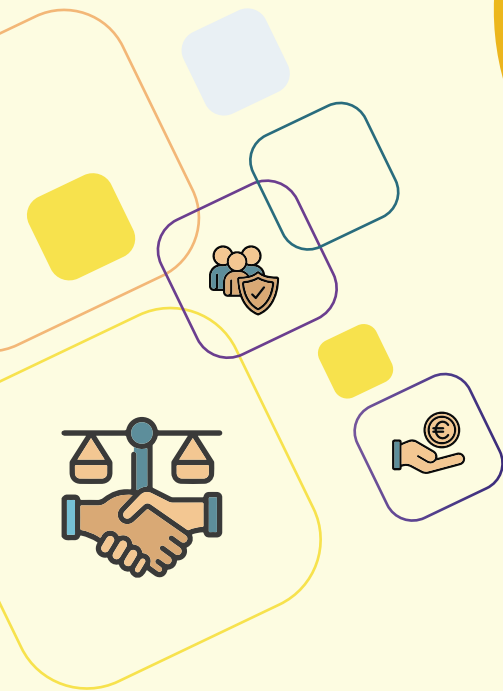




An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS Implementation Plan

Progress Report 3

MARCH 2026

Introduction

It is my pleasure to introduce this third progress update on the implementation of the LSRA's recommendations to address economic and other barriers facing many aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers.

The LSRA began examining these barriers following a request from the then Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD, who asked the Authority to pay particular attention to equity of access and entry to the legal professions, with the objective of achieving greater diversity. This work culminated in the *Breaking Down Barriers* report, which was submitted to the Minister in January 2024 and set out 32 recommendations to address the challenges identified.

The Minister welcomed these recommendations as “meaningful reforms that will make a real difference” and requested the LSRA to prepare an implementation plan, with progress indicators and timelines, and to provide six-monthly progress reports to the Department. The LSRA published its *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* in September 2024, which was noted by Government in October 2024.



The plan provides for the establishment of a *Breaking Down Barriers* Implementation Working Group (IWG), comprising the LSRA and the three legal professional bodies — the Law Society of Ireland, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and The Bar of Ireland — to support the progression of the recommendations through structured engagement. The IWG meets on a quarterly basis, and four meetings have taken place to date.





This report covers the period October 2025 to March 2026. It builds on previous updates and reflects a continued programme of work with the professional bodies and other stakeholders.

This phase of implementation has focused on building a shared understanding of the recommendations, progressing key areas through consultation, and supporting the development of practical measures to address identified barriers.

This work has supported progress across a number of areas, including the development of new and expanded access initiatives,

increased financial supports for training, and collaborative measures to address barriers in early career practice.

As the recently appointed Chief Executive of the LSRA, I look forward to continuing to build on the progress made to date through ongoing engagement and collaboration with stakeholders. The next phase of the implementation will focus on advancing priority actions and embedding recommendations within existing structures. This will support the continued broadening access to education, training and early career opportunities, and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse legal services sector in the public interest.



Niamh Muldoon

Niamh Muldoon
Chief Executive Officer

Advancing the Recommendations

The period since the last progress report in September has been one of transition within the LSRA, following the departure of the former CEO, Dr Brian Doherty and the Head of Research, Communications and Innovation, Nuala Haughey in September and October respectively.

Tony Watson, Head of the LSRA's Complaints, Investigations and Resolutions Department, served as Interim CEO, in the intervening period until the appointment of the new CEO, Niamh Muldoon on 23 March.

While the changes in personnel impacted the pace of progress on the *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, they also provided an opportunity to reflect on the plan within the wider context of the LSRA's work, including the role of the Legal Education and Training Committee, and developments over the past year.

During the reporting period, the LSRA continued to engage with the professional bodies to support the progression of the recommendations through structured consultation and information-sharing.





This work has focused on building a shared understanding of the recommendations, progressing key areas, and supporting the development of practical measures to address identified barriers.

It has also provided a clearer picture of the position of each of the professional bodies, their plans for implementation, and the challenges arising in relation to certain recommendations.

Alongside this engagement, a range of developments have been progressed by the professional bodies. These include the introduction and expansion of flexible and non-traditional training routes, enhanced outreach and access initiatives, and additional financial

supports for training, including targeted grants to support placements in smaller and independent law centre settings.

Collaborative work has also progressed on specific measures, including the development of a Best Practice Protocol to support the timely payment of barristers' fees, and initiatives to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the professions.

The LSRA acknowledges and welcomes the significant work undertaken by the professional bodies across these areas to support a more diverse and accessible legal profession.



Next Phase of Implementation

Reflecting on the past year, the LSRA considers that while some of the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations can be progressed within the original timeframes, the overall scale and complexity of the project requires a broader and more integrated approach.

To support the effective delivery of the recommendations, the LSRA proposes extending the timeline of this project and strengthening oversight by integrating the recommendations into the work programme of the Legal Education and Training Committee, or a similar structure.

The LSRA considers that the long-term success of this project will require enhanced oversight and resourcing. It is therefore proposed that the implementation plan be reviewed with the intention of streamlining certain recommendations and aligning them with larger, thematic projects, taking account of objectives and stakeholder involvement.

Given the considerable overlap between the *Breaking Down Barriers* project and the broader objectives and goals of the Legal

Practitioner, Education and Training (LPET) Committee, it is practical that a number of the recommendations and implementation actions are progressed through the work of the Legal Education and Training Committee.

At present, the responsibility for implementing the plan rests with a small team within the LSRA. As outlined above, changes in personnel have affected continuity and pace of delivery and have highlighted the risks associated with concentrating knowledge within a limited number of individuals.

Providing the Legal Education and Training Committee, or a similar structure with oversight of the implementation plan may broaden ownership and support greater continuity and resilience in delivery.



The role of the Legal Education and Training Committee



As set out in the *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, the Legal Education and Training Committee plays an important role in assisting the LSRA with the delivery of the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations. The LSRA now proposes that this role be expanded to include oversight of the Breaking Down Barriers project, with the administrative support provided by the LSRA.

The Legal Education and Training Committee was proposed following a detailed review of legal practitioner education and training conducted between 2018 and 2020. In its 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, the LSRA made several recommendations to the Minister for Justice for reform in the area.

These recommendations included the establishment of an independent Legal Practitioner, Education and Training (LPET) Committee which will be responsible for setting and maintaining the standards in the provision of legal education and training across all providers.

While legislative amendments to establish the LPET Committee are in development, an interim Legal Education and Training Committee was established under section 16 of the Legal Services Regulation Act. The Legal Education and Training Committee is working to lay the foundations and progress the work of the LPET Committee prior to its establishment.

In 2025, the Legal Education and Training Committee met with its full complement of members for the first time and work commenced its programme of work, which includes the actions listed below.

1. Developing a competency framework for solicitors and barristers.
2. Developing processes which will enable the LPET Committee to accredit new and existing legal education and training providers.
3. Examining the resources required by the LPET Committee and making recommendations on a proposed funding model.
4. Reviewing any legislative changes required to enable the LSRA (or another) to operate as the accrediting body for education programmes enabling eligibility to the professions of barrister and solicitor.

As part of this work the Committee has identified the need for a mapping exercise to better understand the current legal education and training landscape.

The LSRA proposes that relevant recommendations from the *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* – particularly those relating to pathways to the profession, legal education and training, and diversity – are aligned with this mapping exercise.

The LSRA looks forward to continued engagement with the Department and all stakeholders on reform in this important area.

Implementation Plan: Progress to Date

No. Recommendation

1. Increase flexible training routes and annual reporting

The Law Society and King's Inns (the training providers) have provided the LSRA with information on their initiatives to increase flexible routes for legal practitioner training and their impacts, for the *Pathways to the Professions* annual reports for 2024 and 2025. Below is an outline of some new initiatives the training providers are introducing.

- » The Law Society is examining a solicitor apprenticeship model as a new route to qualification for school leavers, and legal executives/law clerks.
- » Commencing December 2026, the Law Society will introduce a new Modular Professional Practice Course (PPC), which will be in addition to the full-time PPC and the PPC Hybrid.
- » The King's Inns has adopted the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, a mechanism through which prior learning is identified, assessed and formally recognised by educational institutions within programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The LSRA welcomes these initiatives and will continue to report information provided by the training providers in *Pathways to the Professions* annual reports.

2. Annual reporting on diversity of students and trainees

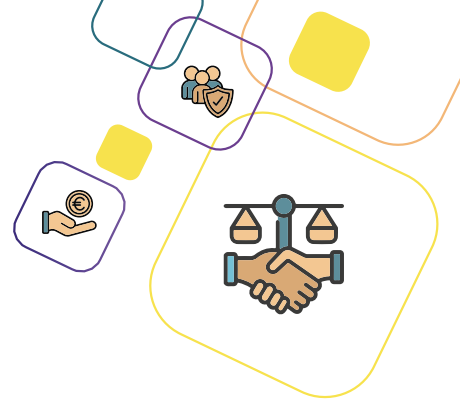
In October, UK based diversity experts, the Bridge Group provided the LSRA with an expert research report on the appropriate diversity data to be collected by training providers.

Due to the complexity of this project and the importance of safeguarding data protection, training providers were unable to collect the data for their student/trainee intake in autumn 2025.

The next step in the delivery of this project is to incorporate GDPR measures to safeguard data protection.

The training providers are actively engaging with data protection experts secured by the LSRA, to undertake Data Protection Impact Assessments. Depending on the timeline, and all GDPR procedures in place, the training providers may be in a position to undertake the demographic data collection exercise for the intake of trainee solicitors in Autumn 2026.

When available, this information will be reported in the *Pathways to the Professions* annual report.



No. Recommendation

3. **Explore levy and other funding for financial supports for diversity**

The professional bodies have provided the LSRA with their views and suggestions on the most appropriate funding mechanisms and the anticipated impact of any additional funding. In addition, each provided information on their existing schemes, including the resources associated with them, including both monetary costs and human resources.

The LSRA will continue to engage with the professional bodies to further enhance funding mechanisms.

4. **Review mandatory pupillage in the King’s Inns Professional Code of Conduct Code**

The King’s Inns and The Bar of Ireland have shared their views with the LSRA on the requirement of mandatory pupillage in the King’s Inns Professional Code of Conduct. Both bodies are in favour retaining the requirement. The King’s Inns noted that it is committed to keeping the provisions of its Professional Code of Conduct, including the provision relating to pupillage, under periodic review.

The development of the National Competency Framework is ongoing, and the pupillage requirement will remain under periodic review.

5. **Explore and develop financial supports for barrister pupils**

The Bar of Ireland has outlined that having conducted a preliminary analysis of minimum payments for pupils along with an exploration of potential public funding models, it is of the view that any introduction of financial supports for pupils must be externally funded – either directly by Government or via an appropriate State-administered access scheme.

The Bar Council fully supports the principle of reducing financial barriers to entering the profession and welcomes ongoing engagement with the LSRA, Government departments, and relevant agencies to explore appropriate and proportionate models.

Engagement is ongoing between the LSRA and The Bar of Ireland on proposals for financial supports and funding mechanisms for barrister pupils.

No.	Recommendation
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6. **Pupillage outside of Dublin**

The Bar of Ireland outlined that in 2022 it convened a working group to examine the feasibility of completing pupillage outside of Dublin. After examining the issue, it concluded that the conditions necessary for meaningful pupillage are not consistently available outside Dublin.

The Bar of Ireland indicated that the Bar Council is considering certain measures that could provide a stronger foundation for a future assessment of this recommendation and that it remains open to exploring proportionate and data-informed approaches that support wider access, while maintaining training standards.

The LSRA looks forward to further updates these initiatives.

7. **System of quality assurance and formalised oversight of pupillages**

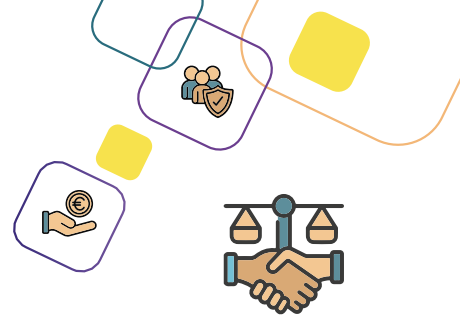
The Bar of Ireland detailed the work it has undertaken in recent years to modernise and enhance pupillage. This work includes:

- » a two-year research programme, involving engagement with masters, recent pupils and relevant committees
- » enhancements to the guidance available to pupils

The Bar of Ireland has developed the Advancing Pupillage Work Plan (2024–2027), which will provide measures to enhance quality, consistency and oversight of pupillages which include:

- » a clearer, modernised framework of aims and learning outcomes which are organised around broad domains of competence appropriate to a barristers practice and will be implemented for the October 2026 intake of pupils
- » mechanisms to enhance quality assurance
- » support and guidance for masters, which may include optional master workshops, additional online resources and peer-support initiatives

The LSRA welcomes this initiative and looks forward to an update following the implementation of the Advancing Pupillage Work Plan.



No.	Recommendation
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8. **Solicitor apprenticeship**

The Law Society of Ireland is in the process of exploring the introduction of a solicitor apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship model has been approved in principle by the Law Society’s Education Committee. Drafting of the new regulations is underway for the proposed solicitor apprenticeship. When finalised the Professional Solicitor Apprenticeship Regulations will require the approval of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

The LSRA welcomes this initiative and awaits periodic updates.

9. **Minimum pay threshold for trainee solicitors**

The Law Society has informed the LSRA that it welcomes the opportunity to fully engage with this recommendation but that there are more complex considerations. At present, trainee solicitors must be paid a minimum salary under the National Minimum Wage Act 2000. The Education Committee of the Law Society recommends that trainee solicitors are the non-statutory “living wage.”

The LSRA understands that this recommendation was considered further by the Law Society’s Education Committee recently and looks forward to an update on this.

10. **Solicitor traineeships in public and private sector**

The Law Society hosted a symposium on training contracts in the public sector in November 2025. It provided practitioners in the public sector with guidance on employing trainee solicitors in their organisations.

The symposium was attended by 70 solicitors mainly from public sector, with over 20 organisations represented. Speakers included the Law Society’s Traineeship Executive, and training solicitors and trainee solicitors from Tusla, Dublin City Council, An Garda Síochána and the Chief State Solicitor’s office.

The Law Society has indicated that this will be an annual occurrence. The LSRA welcomes this initiative and will continue to monitor the progress of traineeships in the public and private sector.

The LSRA has explored the viability of running a training contract scheme and has determined that this would not be an appropriate endeavour considering its role as regulator. The LSRA will continue offer internship placements.

No. Recommendation

11. **Increased financial supports for small firms to provide training contracts**

The Law Society has informed the LSRA that it is actively engaged with detailed proposals to increase its financial supports for small regional firms. To date the Law Society has awarded 32 Small Practice Traineeship Grants which enable smaller regional practices to offer solicitor trainee contracts.

From 2025 onwards the Law Society will offer an additional Small Practice Traineeship Grant, bringing the total number offered each year to six. In addition, an Independent Law Centre Traineeship Grant has been made available for 2026.

The Law Society also provides indirect support to trainees that secure training contracts with smaller law firms through Access and Bursary allocations.

The LSRA welcomes these initiatives and looks forward to updates on further development.

12. **LPET Committee to evaluate effectiveness of access initiatives**

The Legal Education and Training Committee is in the process of developing the National Competency Framework for the legal education and training of solicitors and barristers and will continue to monitor access initiatives to the legal profession.

13. **Professional bodies to evaluate access initiatives and consider new initiatives**

The Bar of Ireland, the King's Inns and the Law Society have provided the LSRA with information on their access initiatives for the *Pathways to the Professions* annual reports for 2024 and 2025. Below is an outline of some new initiatives they are introducing.

- » The Law Society increased its member contribution to the grant-funded access programmes.
- » The Law Society now offers a new traineeship grant with an Independent Law Centre.
- » The King's Inns is developing an outreach programme for secondary schools.
- » The Bar of Ireland is expanding its Internship Programme to make more places available.
- » The Bar of Ireland is expanding the online component of its transition year programme to provide access to all transition years students wishing to avail of it.

The LSRA welcomes these initiatives and will continue to report information provided by the three professional bodies in *Pathways to the Professions* annual reports.

No.	Recommendation
14.	<p>Professional bodies evaluation of funded access programmes</p> <p>The professional bodies have provided the LSRA with information on evaluation of their funded access programmes, this information will be published in the <i>Pathways to the Professions 2025</i> report.</p> <p>This is a reoccurring obligation and, the LSRA will continue to report on this information in <i>Pathways to the Professions</i> annual reports.</p>
15.	<p>Improved information, outreach and supports for securing training contracts</p> <p>The LSRA has recently engaged with the Law Society on its plan to improve information, outreach and supports for training contracts.</p> <p>The Law Society will monitor the impact of its initiatives.</p>
16.	<p>Improved system for selection of masters</p> <p>The Bar of Ireland and the King’s Inns have provided the LSRA with information on work already undertaken to improve information, outreach and supports available for prospective barristers to identify masters.</p> <p>The LSRA will continue to engage and monitor the impact of these initiatives.</p>
17.	<p>Provision of information on career pathways in law</p> <p>The LSRA engaged the services of Barncat Consulting to report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» the current career pathways for solicitors and barristers <li>» how these pathways are currently highlighted by the Law Society and the King’s Inns, and public and private employers <li>» gaps in provision of career pathways information (from third level on) <p>In March 2026, Barncat Consulting submitted its report to the LSRA along with recommendations on how to best highlight different career pathways in law. The report is intended to assist and support representative bodies and educators and will be shared with the implementation group and other providers of legal education and training.</p>



No.	Recommendation
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18.	Positive workplace culture
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The LSRA continues to engage with the psychological services in the Law Society.

The LSRA notes and welcomes Law Society initiatives such as Well Within the Law and other supports, and will continue to explore meaningful initiatives relating to workplace culture.

19.	Initiatives to sustain early careers or self-employed barristers
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The LSRA secured the services of Barncat Consulting to draft a position paper on new initiatives to increase career sustainability for early career barristers, based on the research and findings from the *Breaking Down Barriers* report, interviews with relevant stakeholders and other relevant reports.

The LSRA is engaging with Barncat in anticipation of a final report in due course.

20.	Direct access to barristers in non-contentious matters
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The LSRA and The Bar of Ireland have each published guidance on section 101.

This recommendation is complete and requires no further action.

21.	Expanded direct access to barristers in contentious matters
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After initial analysis the LSRA has determined that further consideration is required for this recommendation.

The LSRA will continue its analysis.

No.	Recommendation
22.	<p>Revisit introduction of Multi-Disciplinary Practices</p> <p>The LSRA has previously considered the introduction of Multi-Disciplinary Practices and, for reasons of sequencing and resources, it prioritised the prior introduction of Limited Liability Partnerships and Legal Partnerships.</p> <p>The LSRA introduced Limited Liability Partnerships in September 2020 and Legal Partnerships in September 2024. In light of limited uptake of Legal Partnerships, the period for review will be extended.</p> <p>Prior to the introduction of Multi-Disciplinary Practices, the LSRA will engage with the professional bodies.</p> <hr/>
23.	<p>Develop guidance for employed barristers representing employers</p> <p>The LSRA will undertake a public consultation to enable informed progression.</p> <hr/>
24.	<p>Introduce measures to ensure barristers fees are paid in timely manner</p> <p>In July 2020 The Bar of Ireland introduced a Fee Recovery Unit and in November 2025, The Bar of Ireland and Law Society developed a “Best Practice Protocol” to ensure barristers are paid fees in a timely manner in November 2025.</p> <p>The LSRA welcomes these measures and will continue to monitor progress in this regard.</p> <hr/>
25.	<p>Consider options to allow barristers to sue for fees</p> <p>In June 2025, The Bar of Ireland provided the LSRA with substantive material on its position on this recommendation.</p> <p>The LSRA will continue to explore this recommendation.</p>

No.	Recommendation
26.	<p>Address concerns about fee levels and structures for legal aid work</p> <p>The LSRA has engaged with The Bar of Ireland and understands that engagement between the Department, the Legal Aid Board and the Bar Council is ongoing.</p> <hr/>
27.	<p>Ensure transparency in procurement of State funded work</p> <p>The Bar of Ireland has shared with the LSRA the information that it has gathered on the various procurement methods used by the different State agencies.</p> <p>The LSRA will engage with the Department on how best to promote awareness and accessibility for State-commissioned legal services from junior counsel.</p> <hr/>
28.	<p>Create a disability action plan for the legal professions</p> <p>The LSRA is engaging with the Courts Service, the National Disability Authority and the professional bodies on their initiatives on reasonable accommodations.</p> <hr/>
29.	<p>Targeted actions for legal professions to reflect diversity of modern Ireland</p> <p>The LSRA notes and welcomes the Law Society’s Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, the King’s Inns Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and The Bar of Ireland’s Equality Action Plan.</p> <p>The LSRA will continue to engage with all stakeholders to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>

No. Recommendation

30. **Collect and publish demographic data on legal professions**

Periodic reporting of demographic data is anticipated to be informed by the data collected by the three professional bodies.

31. **Removal of barriers to entry for non-EEA students**

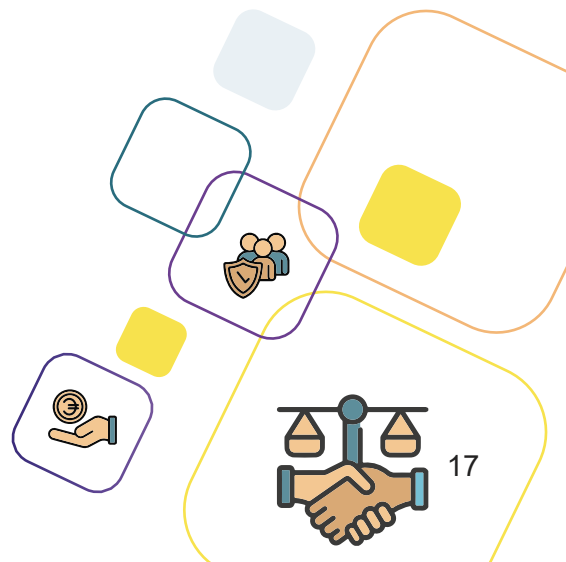
The King's Inns and the Law Society have provided with the LSRA with a review of their existing arrangements for entry for non-EEA students on their respective Professional Practice Course and Barrister-at-Law Degree course.

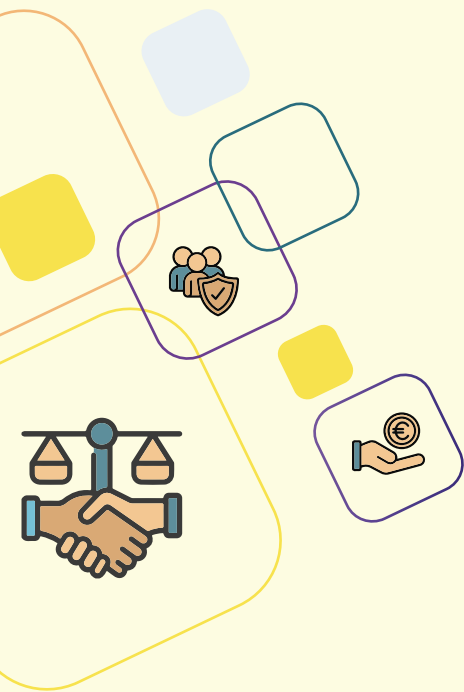
The LSRA will continue to engage with the training providers on recognition of foreign qualifications.

32. **Transfer between branches of the legal profession**

The LSRA notes and welcomes the engagement between the three professional bodies to consider a mutual recognition framework for solicitors and barristers with less than three years post-qualification experience.





The LSRA will continue to monitor progress in this area.





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