

SUBMISSION TO THE LSRA ON BEHALF OF DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL LAW AGENT AND LAW DEPARTMENT

(The following submission is made on behalf of the Law Agent and is based on the input of the solicitors and trainees in the Law Department, so for convenience it refers below to “we” or “the Law Department”. Where some views are those of individuals this is indicated as such. The areas of LSRA requested points of submission are shown in italics)

1. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2025.

Demand for inhouse legal services continues to grow in terms of the increasing complexity of legal issues arising and new areas of law

2. The costs of legal services in 2025 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.

As public sector consumers we are always conscious of the costs of legal services and welcome any initiatives to reduce the cost of such services. We do however have good access to legal services from Barristers and solicitors’ firms. We are growing our own in house legal function and this represents best value for the public sector in terms of costs of legal services. We have increased our trainee programme and expanded the services available inhouse in pursuit of better value. As regards domestic consumers please note the following comment from an individual solicitor in the Law Department

- The nature of legal services often means that the public have no real way of assessing how much work is or should be involved in “routine” transactions and tend to suspect that costs are too high even where in fact the margins might be fairly modest.

3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.

(a) In general the overall standard of education and training of trainees and newly qualified solicitors is quite high. We have been happy with the knowledge gained by the trainees in the main areas that they have studied.

(b) There is a danger however that the training has become or is becoming too narrow and focussed on the needs of the “big firms” with an overly heavy emphasis on large scale commercial issues. It is an understandable trap that the Law Society Education Centre could fall into, as these firms provide the majority of training

contracts and would be the major source of feedback on the content of the training.

- (c) We would welcome further training options for regulatory enforcement and quasi criminal proceedings

The following comments do not all represent direct issues for the work of the Law Department but are based on concerns of individual solicitors and/or trainees in the Law Department regarding the profession as a whole.

- It was reported in July 2025 that the DPP was concerned that there was a lack of new entrants as criminal solicitors outside Dublin and an increasing shortage of such practitioners going forward. As well as the difficulties in recruitment in rural areas (*note: see more under 4 below*), it appears that the training course now covers less on the area of criminal law / District Court work than it did formerly. This could lead to further shortages. We in the Law Department would welcome better training in relation to Criminal Law, District Court work and regulatory matters
 - The area of taxation has been downgraded in the PPC and is no longer examinable. Anecdotally, trainees are advised that they should be telling their clients to go and get advice from a tax specialist. We do understand that taxation advice should always be provided by specialist practitioners, however the basics of Tax should be covered in PPC. Clients of rural or suburban practices who come in to their solicitor to make their Will will not be inclined to go to a separate practitioner for such advice. The same could apply to other issues e.g. voluntary transfers. A solicitor working outside the bigger Dublin firms needs sufficient knowledge of taxation to advise clients in relatively routine circumstances.
4. *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.*
- (a) The solicitors' profession and indeed the Law Society itself have already noted that the pool of trainee and newly qualified solicitors is increasingly Dublin-based and working for the bigger firms. Rural practitioners have confirmed that they are having difficulty with recruitment.

Several factors contribute to this, including that available traineeships are mainly in Dublin, and the costs of living in Dublin during the PPC is almost prohibitive to students from outside Dublin, unless their parents are well off and able to subsidise this.

- (b) It is also a financial challenge even to Dublin based trainees to finance their education and maintain themselves through to qualification.

Individuals have made the following comments:

- The cost of sitting the FE1s has risen substantially over the last few years.
 - Many smaller firms do not cover fees for the PPC nor do they facilitate Fridays off where trainees are availing of the PPC Hybrid. The Law Society has issued guidance, but it is only guidance and is not binding.
- (c) The Law Agent and the Law Department as a whole are very much in favour of continuing and expanding the various initiatives by the Law Society which have somewhat widened the access to training contracts or made them more affordable (e.g. the hybrid model) – helping to include students who are, for example
- from rural areas
 - from economically less privileged backgrounds
 - mature students / late entrants to the profession
- (d) It is to be welcomed that the SUSI grant now applies to students on the fulltime PPC but there is nothing available for the students on the hybrid course except for a very small number of bursaries.
- (e) The Law Department has in recent years itself been one of the public bodies which offers training contracts and we believe this has been a great success for us and for our trainees and has made a contribution to widening such access and we would encourage other public bodies to follow this example.
- (f) Any existing shortage of solicitors in rural areas will only worsen unless more firms in those areas can offer traineeships and they should be canvassed as to what would make this more viable or more attractive.



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

- (g) We also believe that substantial prior work experience can make trainees more attractive, especially to those smaller solicitors' firms who might feel they can't sustain taking on someone who can't be effective immediately. We take on DCU students for paid internships for an academic year and pay them a proper wage. They gain immensely valuable hands-on experience which really makes them a practical asset at a later trainee stage. More bodies should be encouraged to do similarly to boost the options available.

5. Any other issues which have a bearing on the admission policies of the legal professions and the assessment to be conducted by the LSRA in preparing its annual report.

The Law Department has no further issues to raise. We thank the LRSA for requesting our input.

Yvonne C. Kelly, Law Agent