



THE BAR
OF IRELAND

The Law Library

**SUBMISSION TO THE
LEGAL SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY
ON THE ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE LEGAL
PROFESSIONS AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 33 OF THE
LEGAL SERVICES REGULATION ACT 2015**

January 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council of The Bar of Ireland is the accredited representative body of the independent referral Bar in Ireland, which consists of members of the Law Library and has a current membership of approximately 2,150 practising barristers. The Bar of Ireland is long established, and its members have acquired a reputation amongst solicitors, clients and members of the public at large as providing representation and advices of the highest professional standards. The principles that barristers are independent, owe an overriding duty to the proper administration of justice and that the interests of their clients are defended fearlessly in accordance with ethical duties are at the heart of the independent referral bar.

The Council has prepared these submissions at the request of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority who are in the process of preparing a **seventh** annual report for the Minister on the admission policies of the legal professions in accordance with section 33(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

The submission follows the format of the information sought by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority as set out in the correspondence of 31st October 2025:

Section 2 - Specific data requested by the LSRA;

Section 3 - Demand for barrister services in 2025;

Section 4 - Costs of legal services in 2025 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers;

Section 5 - The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise;

Section 6 - The extent to which the admissions 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;

SECTION 2: SPECIFIC DATA REQUESTED BY THE LSRA

LAW LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP

1. The number of members who joined the Law Library in October 2025

A total of **92** new members joined the Law Library in October 2025.

2. The number of barristers who ceased membership of the Law Library during the legal year 2024-2025 and the reasons provided for cessation of membership

During the legal year 2024/2025 (October 2025 – September 2025) **97** members ceased membership of the Law Library. A breakdown of the reasons for leaving is set out in the table.

TABLE 2: BREAKDOWN OF REASONS FOR CESSATION OF MEMBERSHIP 2024/2025

REASON FOR LEAVING	NUMBER
Deceased	10
Excluded Arrears	1
Excluded PII	5
Excluded LSRA Levy	0
Judge	6
Retired	14
Personal	5
Work Elsewhere	24
No reason given	27
Financial	1
Family	1
Health	1
Converted/Disbarred	2
TOTAL	97

3. The total number of Law Library members at 31 December 2025

The total number of members of the Law Library at 31 December 2025 was **2,130**.

PUPILAGE

4. The number of barristers who commenced pupillage in 2025, with a breakdown by year called to the bar, gender and age (30 and under, 31 and over)

Of the 92 who joined membership of the Law Library in October 2025, 89 commenced their 12-month period of pupillage in October 2025.

TABLE 4: ANALYSIS OF MEMBERS (92) WHO COMMENCED PUPILLAGE IN 2025

<u>YEAR OF CALL OF 92 WHO PUPILLED IN 2025</u>	1990	2004	2007	2014	2016	2018	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	8	16	57
<u>GENDER OF 92</u>						MALE			FEMALE		
						38			54		
<u>AGE RANGE OF 92</u>						Under 30 years of age			31 years of age and older		
						47			45		

5. The number of barristers who commenced pupillage in 2025 and who completed the:

(i) King's Inns full-time BL degree course in 2025

Of the **51** that completed the Barrister-at-Law full-time degree course in 2025, **35** entered pupillage in October 2025.

(ii) King's Inns modular BL degree course in 2025

Of the **76** that completed the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2025, **17** entered pupillage in October 2025.

6. The number of Masters on the Register of Masters who were available for the October 2025 intake of new pupils, and whether the Bar considers this represented sufficient supply?

The total number of Masters on the Register of Masters held by The Bar of Ireland in October 2025 was **163**. 89 new barristers entered membership of the Law Library in October 2025. The Bar considers this to be sufficient supply for the following reasons:

1. Proportion of Masters Available to Take Pupils

The number of Masters on the Register for the 2025/2026 legal year, totalling 163, provides a substantial pool of potential pupillages in the context of an average annual intake of 80+ new members. It is acknowledged that not all of those on the Register for a given year will necessarily enter an arrangement with a pupil in that year. Approximately 25-30 new Masters are enrolled on the Register annually which further

enhances the likelihood of prospective entrants securing a pupillage and greatly exceeds the numbers seeking to join membership of the Law Library.

2. No Evidence of Pupillage Shortages

There is no evidence to suggest significant challenges in securing pupillages in this jurisdiction. Applications made in good time rarely fail due to a lack of available Masters.

The factors underpinning the formation of a Master/Pupil relationship are multifactorial and where applicants have not progressed in a particular year on the grounds that there is no pupillage arrangement in place, the majority of such applicants have been successful the following year.

3. Nature of the Master-Pupil Relationship

The relationship between a Master and a Pupil is independent, shaped by multiple factors, including professional compatibility, financial considerations, and the personal responsibility borne by the supervising barrister. Masters face considerable reputational exposure if the pupil is a poor fit with their practice.

4. Sufficient Criteria to Ensure Pupil Readiness

The application process for addition to the Register of Masters ensures that applicants can offer pupils the exposure and range of experiences required to establish a practice at the independent referral bar. This careful selection process reinforces the importance of quality of experience over quantity to safeguard the integrity of the training experience of the Pupil.

5. Alternative Routes and Flexibility

The system offers ample flexibility for applicants who cannot initially secure a Master from the published Register. Opportunities for addition to the Register ensure that any gaps in availability can be addressed. Moreover, completion of a Law Library pupillage is not mandatory for those intending to practise outside the independent referral bar. As stipulated in the King's Inns Code of Conduct, pupillage may also be completed with any practitioner who has over seven years of experience, offering additional pathways for candidates.

6. Attrition Rates in Early Years

Attrition rates are evident in the early years and while some of this may be related to suitability for self-employed career and/or establishing a pipeline of work, delays in payment and cash flow considerations, the attrition rate is suggestive that supply exceeds demand for barrister services from those in their initial years of practice.

ADMISSIONS DEVELOPMENTS & BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS INFORMATION

7. Please provide details of existing Bar of Ireland access initiatives at second and third level and the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives in 2025, and of new potential initiatives being considered (Please see recommendation 13 in the Barriers Implementation Plan)

The Bar of Ireland is actively engaged in the promotion of the profession at second and third level through our Transition Year programme: *Look into Law*, University Outreach programme: *Your Call*, and the Denham Fellowship.

Transition Year Programme:

Our TY programme, 'Look into Law', consisted of two components in 2025:

- Two deliveries of an online Q&A event open to all schools where a panel of barristers answer students' questions about a career as a barrister,
- A four-day hybrid programme for 100 students which consists of two days of online taught components covering key aspects of the justice system and the barrister profession and two onsite days which consist of tours of the Courts and King's Inns, barrister shadowing and participation in a mock trial.

There is no restriction on the number that can participate in the online Q&A events that see strong participation from DEIS schools. The hybrid programme has been updated for 2026 following input from participants and Transition Year coordinators to consist of one day of online content and a three-day onsite component. The online day of content will now be open to all transition year students and not just those participating in the onsite component. The four-day programme reserves 20% of places for students from DEIS schools although the final number of participants from DEIS schools is approximately 30-40%, as DEIS schools which have not been initially allocated a place are retained in the lottery for the remaining places on the programme.

University Level Programme:

In 2024, The Bar of Ireland invested in an expanded range of supports to enhance the promotion of the profession at university level. These include a dedicated member of the executive staff to coordinate the programme of activity across universities.

The Bar of Ireland is represented at approximately 10-12 law career fairs annually, where members of the profession volunteer their time to promote the profession to university students. The Bar also provides speakers for other events that showcase the career and the unique expertise of a barrister, such as workshops on advocacy and on how effective listening is important in legal practice.

The Bar of Ireland Instagram account continues to grow and offers further opportunity to interact with third level students regarding the profession.

In 2025, The Bar of Ireland launched a two-week funded internship programme offering four interns a '*behind the scenes*' experience of life as an independent referral barrister. In nominating candidates for the internship, universities are invited to consider diversity factors in addition to academic and general interest in a career at the Bar. All candidates nominated by their university were also invited to attend an open day showcasing the profession. Following the success of the inaugural programme in 2025, the number of internships available for 2026 has been increased from four to eight.

The Denham Fellowship:

The Denham Fellowship, now in its ninth year, assists two aspiring barristers annually who come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to gain access to professional legal education at the King's Inns and professional practice at the Law Library.

Those awarded the fellowship are provided with financial, educational and professional support from point of entry to the Barrister-at-Law degree programme at the King's Inns all the way through their first four years of practice at the Law Library.

8. Please provide details of any evaluation undertaken into the effectiveness of The Bar of Ireland's funded access programmes in 2025 and any proposals for their expansion (Please see recommendation no 14 in Breaking Down Barriers report).

Transition Year Programme: Owing to data protection constraints, it is not currently possible to accurately track progression from the Transition Year programme to higher education law programmes. Students are, however, invited to complete an initial knowledge survey on commencing the programme and this is repeated at the end of the programme, along with questions regarding their intent to pursue a career at the Bar in future.

The programme for 2025 received a **4.2/5** score for participant satisfaction with the programme. Feedback collected indicated that the programme has a positive impact on a student's intention to pursue a career in law. The longer term impact of the programme is starting to emerge at university level law career fairs and in the annual new intake of pupils, where participants are reporting that the TY programme was a factor in their decision to pursue a career in law.

University Internship: This programme is currently in its second year. Progression to the BL degree programme will be monitored via follow up interview. The University Internship programme will be expanded in 2026 to make eight places available.

Denham Fellowship: The programme undergoes regular review by its governing committee with the most recent strategic review of the programme completed in 2023. The recommendations of this review have now been implemented, and the next review will take place at the end of 2026. Given the small number of fellows who have completed the programme in full it is not possible at this stage to provide an accurate assessment of the programme's longer-term effectiveness. Early data suggests that once commenced, Fellows are able to follow the programme through to their exit in year four of practice at the independent referral bar. An assessment of the longer-term impact of the programme will be commenced in 2027.

9. Please outline any changes to the admission policies of the Bar of Ireland during 2025
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There have been no changes to the admission policies to enter membership of the Law Library in 2025.

SECTION 3: DEMAND FOR BARRISTER SERVICES IN 2025

Our previous submissions provided detail in relation to the services procured by various **state agencies** that gave some level of indication of the demand for barristers' services in the **public sector** – see section 4 of the February 2020 submission.

Over the last few years, our submissions have highlighted the demand for services under criminal legal aid and civil legal aid schemes.

The Bar of Ireland welcomed the progress in Budget 2026 towards the long-overdue restoration of professional fees for criminal barristers, marking a significant step in fulfilling the commitment contained in the Programme for Government to '*fully restore criminal legal aid fees*' during this year's budgetary cycle. The date to implement the 8% restoration of professional fees announced in Budget 2026 has yet to be confirmed and it is imperative that engagement gets underway with Government to determine an independent mechanism to review professional fees on an ongoing basis, that should include restoration of the link to the national wage agreements.

The publication of the Report on the review of the Civil Legal Aid Scheme was welcomed by The Bar of Ireland in July 2025. The Review Group has identified a need for a much broader-based and more comprehensive civil legal aid system and has provided an outline of how such a system should be structured and implemented. That process will take time, but it is an immensely important one and must advance with a sense of urgency.

The Review Group has clearly stated that existing levels of fee payments significantly impede the ability of the Legal Aid Board to do its job in meeting the legal aid needs of the most vulnerable in society in a timely fashion. That needs to be addressed immediately.

The recommendation of the Review Group is that an immediate review is required to examine the Legal Aid Board's ability to recruit and retain in-house solicitors and external expertise, including independent expert barristers. In this regard, the Council has called on the Minister for Justice to immediately establish a meaningful, independent, time-limited and binding mechanism to determine adequate fee structures and fee rates for independent, expert barristers who provide civil legal aid.

The continued application of FEMPI-era pay cuts, long after the process of public sector pay restoration has been completed, is wholly unjustifiable. The Government should implement the immediate and complete reversal of those pay cuts. It is vital that equal priority be given to addressing pay structures and rates within the civil legal aid system. The right of access to justice for all citizens depends on ensuring that practitioners are adequately supported to continue this essential work.

In this connection, The Bar of Ireland welcomes the recommendations of the LSRA, endorsed by the Minister for Justice, set out in the *'Breaking Down Barriers: Implementation Plan'*¹ to provide *'engagement between relevant stakeholders should be intensified so that the concerns identified in the LSRA research around the levels and structure of professional fees for State funded legal aid work undertaken by junior barristers are explored and addressed'* and notes that the LSRA proposes *'to engage with relevant stakeholders to explore recommendation with the purpose of developing a roadmap addressing concerns in a timely manner'*.

An update from the LSRA on its efforts to progress this recommendation is outstanding and must be treated with urgency.

¹ See page 27 of the Report <https://www.lsr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/LSRA-Barriers-Report-Implementation-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

SECTION 4: COSTS OF LEGAL SERVICES IN 2025

As noted in our previous submissions, Chapter 9 of the Kelly Report addresses litigation costs² and notes that the Review Group had examined various options by means of which the mandate given to it to recommend a reduction in levels of litigation costs might be achieved.

Following the completion by Indecon economic consultants, (commissioned by the Department of Justice), of ‘a detailed examination of the recommendations contained within the Peter Kelly report on legal costs..... and a detailed economic and legal evaluation, which will include examining making such scales binding, except where both parties agree to opt out’, on 7 February 2024, the Department of Justice published a report titled the [Multi-Criteria Impact Evaluation of Options for the Control of Litigation Costs](#).

The report, prepared by Indecon, represents an independent examination of possible models to control litigation costs in Ireland and endorses the option of **non-binding guidelines**³:

Table 7.1: Summary of Key Conclusions	
1.	LITIGATION COSTS IN IRELAND ARE SIGNIFICANT AND VARY BY SETTLEMENT CHANNEL For employer liability injury settlement cases which were litigated, average legal costs accounted for 33% of total settlement costs. Where direct settlements are made, legal costs are lower at between 8-14%, and are much lower at between 2-4% when cases are dealt with by PIAB. There is also some evidence that litigation costs in other countries are lower than in Ireland although causation is difficult to determine.
2.	MEASURES TO REDUCE LITIGATION COSTS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN OTHER COUNTRIES There is a lack of clear evidence of the precise impact of reforms in other countries in terms of reducing litigation costs or improving service quality. As a result there is no simple solutions which can be transposed to Irish circumstances. A number of the measures implemented in other countries, notably in the UK, however, appear to have had some impact on reducing costs.
3.	DESPITE THE PROGRESS MADE IN RECENT YEARS IN COLLATING AND PUBLISHING DATA ON LEGAL COSTS, MAJOR GAPS IN INFORMATION ON THE COSTS OF LITIGATION STILL EXIST Work by the Central Bank and other organisations has provided greater clarity on legal costs but significant gaps remain. The information gaps reflect a barrier to evidence-based policy and hinders transparency for users of legal services. Continued work on improving information is required.
4.	THERE ARE ISSUES RELATING TO THE TWO MAIN OPTIONS WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN IDENTIFIED TO REDUCE LITIGATION COSTS NAMELY (I) NON BINDING GUIDELINES ON MAXIMUM LITIGATION COSTS AND (II) MAXIMUM LITIGATION COSTS On the first option Indecon agrees with the conclusion of the Chair of the Review Group, the Hon. Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, that more radical measures than the introduction of non-binding guidelines will be needed if costs are to be reduced. Indecon also agrees with the conclusion of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission that the option of non-binding guidelines does not constitute a significant change to the existing process. Indecon however believes that binding guidelines depending on how they are implemented and on what level they are set may not have the desired results. Indeed, while they have the potential to reduce costs there is a risk that if levels are set at average cost elements, costs would rise for most litigants.
9.	THERE IS MERIT IN CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE NEW OPTIONS TO REDUCE LITIGATION COSTS IN PARTICULAR (I) NON-BINDING GUIDELINES ON LITIGATION COSTS BUT WITH SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY MEASURES AND (II) BINDING MAXIMUM LITIGATION COSTS BUT ONLY FOR NON-COMPLEX PERSONAL INJURY CASES Both of these options would enable policy makers to secure additional information which would facilitate any future evidence-based policy reforms which may be needed. The option of non-binding guidelines with enhanced transparency measures would act as an incentive for cost reductions.
6.	THE NEW OPTION OF NON BINDING GUIDELINES BUT WITH SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY MEASURES SCORES MOST HIGHLY IN THE MULTI CRITERIA ANALYSIS This option is likely to best facilitate the objectives of enhancing competition and is also likely to have significant potential impacts in terms of reducing the cost of litigation, maintaining the quality of service and meeting other policy objectives. It would also enable policymakers to have much greater access to information on aspects of the cost of litigation. Indecon believes this option merits careful consideration.
Source: Indecon analysis	

² See pages 265 - 325

³ See page 110 of the Indecon Economic Evaluation of Civil Litigation Cost Models <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/af946-civil-litigation-cost-models-a-multi-criteria-impact-evaluation-of-options-for-the-control-of-litigation-costs/>

In the view of The Bar of Ireland, the most optimal manner to positively impact on legal costs is through a combination of four measures:

1. Increased investment in the justice system, in particular the number of judges and support staff, better case management and adoption of technology.
2. Investment in effective civil legal aid to ensure access to justice for all regardless of means.
3. The introduction of non-binding guidelines in respect of legal costs.
4. A reduction in state-imposed revenue on a Bill of Costs.

The Programme for Government provides that the Government will '*continue work to develop new guidelines to set clear rates and scales of fees for all forms of civil litigation, promoting transparency, competitiveness and fairness in legal costs*'. In this regard, The Bar of Ireland is actively participating in a consultation launched by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment on 3 December 2025 in relation to the regulation of costs payable in matters prescribed on foot of section 295 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Scale of Fees).

SECTION 5: THE STANDARD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PERSONS ADMITTED TO PRACTISE

Continuing Professional Development Scheme

Prior submissions to the authority have detailed the introduction of a [revised CPD scheme](#) for members of the Law Library. In 2024, the Council introduced a randomised audit of compliance with the scheme. The results of this audit are under consideration by Council and its Professional Practices Committee. A randomised audit of compliance for the 2024/25 CPD year is now underway.

As noted in our 2024 and 2025 submissions, this scheme only applies to members of the Law Library and those on the Roll of Practising Barristers who are not members of the Law Library, do not have any defined statutory requirement to engage in a prescribed level of CPD. This continues to present a regulatory risk and is one that should be prioritised by the LSRA in the interest of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services as provided under section 13(4)(c) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

Pupillage

In addition to the operation of a CPD scheme for members, The Bar of Ireland also oversees the initial professional development of new entrants to the independent referral bar through its pupillage requirements (as set out in the Code of Conduct for The Bar of Ireland and the Guidelines for Pupils and Guidelines for Masters).

Since its 2025 submission, The Bar of Ireland has progressed a focused programme of work to enhance the standardisation, consistency and oversight of pupillage. This has been informed by research completed by the Education & Training Committee in 2025 and by Recommendation 7 of the Breaking Down Barriers report. This work is being advanced through a dedicated subcommittee.

Key developments in 2025 include the refinement of the aims of pupillage and a consultation to identify learning outcomes for pupillage that are aligned with the core competencies required for independent practice. These learning outcomes are designed to support greater consistency of pupillage across diverse practice settings while retaining necessary flexibility, and once finalised will be implemented for the October 2026 intake of pupils. Updated guidelines for Pupils and Masters will be published in the coming months.

In parallel, the Council is giving detailed consideration to proportionate quality-assurance measures linked to the introduction of learning outcomes, including pupil activity logs, clearer indicators of successful completion of pupillage, enhanced supports for accessibility and reasonable accommodation and supports for Masters, such as workshops and enhanced online resources.

SECTION 6: THE EXTENT TO WHICH ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION 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 Bar of Ireland welcomed the publication of the LSRA 'Breaking Down Barriers Reports' and Implementation Plan in September 2024. The Bar of Ireland has been actively working with the LSRA to respond to the 32 recommendations contained in the Implementation Plan and will continue to do so over the coming months and years along with the other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The Council of The Bar of Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the admission policies of the legal professions in accordance with section 33(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 and is available to provide any further insight and clarity as may be required.