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LSRA Annual Report 2023

Regulator encouraged by growing number of consumers and lawyers willing to engage to resolve complaints informally

The number of consumers and legal practitioners willing to engage with each other to informally resolve complaints with the assistance of mediators continues to grow, the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) said in its Annual Report 2023 published today.

The Annual Report shows that the LSRA received a total of 1,290 complaints and closed a total of 1,432 complaints in 2023, the fourth full year that it has operated as the independent complaints handling body for complaints about solicitors and barristers (legal practitioners).

Speaking at the report's publication, LSRA Chief Executive Dr Brian Doherty said it was encouraging that a total of 256 complaints were resolved during the year with the assistance of the LSRA's complaints staff and also its trained mediators.

The report provides a county-by-county breakdown of complaints received during the year based on the business locations of the legal practitioners against whom complaints were brought. Highlights in the report include:

More Complaints Closed than Opened in 2023

- The LSRA's Complaints, Resolutions and Investigations Department received a total of 1,290 complaints during the year, down 4% from 1,352 complaints in 2022. Of these, 1,233 related to solicitors while 57 related to barristers, reflecting the higher number of solicitors and their greater level of contact with consumers.
- The largest category of complaints received, at 835 (65%), were about alleged misconduct. A further 244 complaints (19%) were from clients relating to inadequate standards of legal services, while 30 (2%) were from clients relating to excessive costs (overcharging). The remaining 181 complaints (14%) were mixed grounds complaints, combining two or more of the three statutory complaints grounds.
- Out of the total of 1,290 complaints, 525 (41%) were made against legal practitioners based in county Dublin, while 134 (10%) were brought against legal practitioners based in Cork, 61 (5%) in Limerick and 56 (4%) in Kerry. Multiple complaints may be brought against an individual legal practitioner.
- The LSRA received a total of 3,070 phone calls and e-mails in the year requesting information and/or complaint forms.



Closed Complaints and Enforcement Actions 2023

- A total of 1,432 complaints were closed during 2023. Of these, 699 (49%) were closed as they were found to be inadmissible following a statutory assessment. A total of 111 complaints (8%) were upheld while 138 complaints (10%) were not upheld.
- A further 256 complaints (18%) were resolved with the assistance of the LSRA, and 30 complaints of alleged misconduct were referred to the separate Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal for an inquiry.
- The LSRA made 12 applications to the High Court for orders to enforce its directions in complaints against legal practitioners.

Steady Increase in Limited Liability Partnerships in 2023

- The number of partnerships of solicitors seeking authorisation from the LSRA to operate as Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) grew at a steady pace in 2023, with a total of 36 LLPs authorised during the year. This brought the total number of LLPs authorised since November 2019 to 482.
- A total of 20 LLPs were authorised in county Dublin, with four in Cork, two in Meath and two in Monaghan. The majority of partnerships of solicitors (32, 89%) authorised as LLPs had between two and five partners.

Increase in Numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers in 2023

- The LSRA maintains the Roll of Practising Barristers, a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State which was established on 28th December 2018. The Roll of Practising Barristers is an important tool which allows members of the public to be assured that the barrister providing legal services on their behalf is lawfully entitled to do so.
- A total of 3,051 barristers were on the Roll of Practising Barristers on 31st December 2023, up 3% on the previous year. Of these, 2,139 were members of the Law Library and 921 were practising outside of the Law Library.

Commenting on the report, LSRA Chief Executive, Dr Brian Doherty, said:

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

“It is also encouraging to note that the number of complainants and legal practitioners willing to engage with each other to informally resolve their complaints continues to grow. In the year under review, efforts at informal resolution with the assistance of the LSRA’s trained mediators took place in 93 complaints, up from 61 in 2022 and 38 in 2021. A total of 256 complaints were resolved between the parties with the assistance of the LSRA, including 32 complaints which involved the LSRA’s trained mediators assisting both parties to reach an agreement.”



Dr Doherty continued:

“Informal resolution is not an appropriate way to handle every type of complaint, and the LSRA can only offer its mediator services for consumer complaints about legal services or costs. However, in the right circumstances, this approach can be a very effective and efficient way for both parties to work through their issues or disputes on an entirely voluntarily basis and in a safe and confidential manner with the help of our specialist staff.”

ENDS

The LSRA’s Annual Report 2023 is available here: [LSRA Annual Report 2023 English](#) and [Irish](#) (pdf)