



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

Breaking Down Barriers

*Final Report to the
Minister for Justice*



January 2024

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The representative groups and networks who were part of the External Reference Group were: the Bar of Ireland's Young Bar Committee; the Bar of Ireland's Equality and Diversity Committee; Diversity in Law; the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association's Young Members Committee; the In-House Legal Network; the Irish Women Lawyers' Association; the Law Society's Younger Members Committee; the Law Society's In-House and Public Sector Committee; the OUTlaw Network; and the Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland.

In addition, the Authority is very appreciative of the co-operation of staff at the professional bodies for assisting with data collection and the distribution of surveys to early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers and trainee solicitors. These are the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns. Thanks are also due to the Law Schools in universities and institutes of higher education who assisted the LSRA with the distribution of the survey of law undergraduates. All of these bodies are also to be thanked for their help in raising awareness of the surveys among the target groups via a range of communications channels.

The Authority also thanks market research company Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A, now Ipsos B&A) for securely collecting and analysing the survey data. It also thanks all of those respondents who took part in the online anonymised surveys for their most valuable input.

The Authority is also very appreciative of inputs from a range of stakeholders who were either interviewed for this research or who made written submissions, or both. These include law firms, State bodies and individual legal practitioners. The written submissions and interviews with stakeholders contained many useful insights and proposals, and the Authority is grateful for the input from such a wide range of stakeholders.

Executive Summary

- 1.** In November 2020, following the submission of the *Setting Standards* report which made a number of recommendations to reform professional legal education and training, the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) was asked by the Minister for Justice to “*consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.*”
- 2.** The Minister also requested that the Authority pay particular attention to equity of access and entry to the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.
- 3.** In fulfilment of the Minister’s request, the Authority undertook a three-phased process in which it first *explored* the barriers and challenges facing early career legal professionals through an extensive research study and consultation; secondly the Authority analysed the findings of the research project to better *understand* the nature and scope of those barriers; and finally, the Authority identified a range of measures to *address* the identified barriers through a series of recommendations to the Minister for Justice. At each stage of this three-phased process, the Authority produced a separate report.
- 4.** The Authority has made a total of 32 recommendations to the Minister for Justice. The aim of these reforms is to improve equity of access and entry into the legal profession and increase diversity within the profession. The recommendations are wide ranging, and include that the Authority should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing; that the Authority and the Bar of Ireland should explore innovative solutions to develop appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils; and that demographic data should be collected and published to establish a diversity profile of the legal profession and to inform and monitor actions to encourage greater diversity.



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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is the final report from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) to the Minister for Justice on the economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. This report summarises the evidence, findings and recommendations of extensive research and stakeholder engagement conducted by the Authority under section 34(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). This is contained in the following three supporting reports:
- a. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Exploring the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This research report sets out the research undertaken by the Authority to examine the issue of barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers.
 - b. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Understanding the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This report, which was submitted to the Minister in March 2022, sets out the key findings of the research undertaken.
 - c. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This report sets out the detail and rationale of 32 recommendations for reform made by the Authority to the Minister for Justice.
- 1.1.2 These reports are made in fulfilment of the Minister’s written request of November 2020 for the Authority to “*consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.*”
- 1.1.3 In considering these issues, the Minister requested that the Authority “*pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.*”
- 1.1.4 The Minister also asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

1.2 The Authority’s Work to Date on Legal Education and Training

- 1.2.1** The submission to the Minister for Justice of this report represents another significant milestone in the Authority’s extensive work since 2018 in reporting to the Minister and making recommendations in relation to the education and training arrangements in the State for legal practitioners.
- 1.2.2** This statutory research and reporting has been carried out under section 34 of the Act and has included both qualitative and quantitative research projects as well as public consultations inviting written submissions and a host of stakeholder engagement events and meetings.
- 1.2.3** A chronology of this work is set out below.

First Education and Training Report – September 2018

- 1.2.4** Section 34(1)(a) of the Act required that the Authority, following an appropriate public consultation process, prepare and furnish to the Minister for Justice and Equality a report on the education and training arrangements for legal practitioners, including the manner in which such education and training was provided. The Act further required that this report be submitted to the Minister by 1 October 2018.¹
- 1.2.5** Section 34(3)(b) of the Act required that the report contain:
- “a review of the existing arrangements relating to the education and training of legal practitioners and make such recommendations as it considers appropriate in relation to the arrangements that in the opinion of the Authority should be in place for the provision of the education and training referred to in that subsection, including the accreditation of bodies to provide such education and training, and the reforms or amendments, whether administrative or legislative, that are required to facilitate those arrangements.”*

¹ Section 34(3) of the 2015 Act required that the report into legal education and training be provided to the Minister within 2 years of the establishment date of the Authority, which was 1 October 2016. The first report was submitted to the Minister on 28 September 2018.

- 1.2.6** The first report of the Authority into legal education and training in the State under section 34(1)(a) was submitted to the Minister for Justice and Equality on 28 September 2018.
- 1.2.7** The report was in two parts. The first part was a report from the Authority to the Minister and the second part was a research report from Hook Tangaza, the external Review Team engaged by the Authority to undertake the research, manage the public consultation exercise and report to the Authority on their findings.
- 1.2.8** The Hook Tangaza Review Team submitted its report to the LSRA in August of 2018. The review team found evidence of:
- a lack of clarity around the competencies required of a solicitor or barrister,
 - the existence of indirect barriers to entry into the professions,
 - the existence of unnecessary duplication in learning and assessment,
 - a mismatch of the skills taught in current professional qualification courses with the needs of the users of legal services,
 - the existence of some quality gaps, and
 - a lack of independent oversight of the system of legal practitioner education and training.
- 1.2.9** The review team submitted 14 proposals to the Authority for its consideration. These proposals aimed to:
- provide a clear definition of professional legal competence, and
 - ensure that the design of a new competence framework meets the requirement of all stakeholders,
 - remove barriers to access, including by reducing duplication in learning and in the costs and time required to qualify,
 - reduce duplication and costs in learning,
 - ensure the provision and assessment of education is aligned with goals of developing and assuring professional competence, and
 - ensure ongoing independent oversight of legal education and training in the State.

1.2.10 The Authority considered the Review Report by Hook Tangaza. It decided that the public interest would best be served by submitting that report along with its own report to the Minister for Justice and Equality in compliance with the statutory deadline and outlining the further steps that it proposed to take without prejudice to its final proposals.

1.2.11 In its report, the Authority stated that:

- the research report set out a detailed case for reform of the education and training of legal practitioners, and
- the proposals, if implemented, had the capacity to significantly affect the education and training of legal practitioners and the wider legal services sector, and
- legislative change would also be required.

1.2.12 The Authority expressed the view that such significant change should only be made following careful consideration and informed debate on both the proposals for change and their proposed implementation and impact. The Authority therefore advised the Minister that it would make its final recommendations and set out a proposed implementation process after further consultation with stakeholders in legal services, legal education and training, and in the wider community.

1.2.13 The Authority subsequently undertook a detailed consultation exercise, including hosting a one day symposium on Legal Education and Training in September 2019, prior to making a set of substantial recommendations in its second report to the Minister on legal practitioner education and training under section 34(1)(a) of the Act, which it submitted in September 2020.

Second Education and Training Report – September 2020

1.2.14 The Authority's second report on legal education and training, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, made a total of twelve recommendations for reform of legal practitioner education and training, with the following two central recommendations:

1. A clear definition of the competence and standards required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed.

2. The introduction of a statutory framework to establish a new and independent Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (the LPET Committee). The LPET Committee would be statutorily required and empowered to:

- Set the Competency Framework for legal practitioner education and training;
- Develop a common set of competencies and standards for admission to professional legal training;
- Ensure that existing providers of legal education and training adhere to the standards required by the Competency Framework on an ongoing basis;
- Scrutinise and accredit new providers of legal education and training based on set criteria established by the LPET Committee;
- Monitor the quality of legal education and training;
- Encourage innovation in the provision of legal education and training;
- Encourage diversity in legal education and training;
- Engage with key stakeholders in legal education and training.

1.3 Request from Minister for Research into “Barriers”

- 1.3.1** In a letter dated 18 November 2020, the Minister for Justice welcomed the Authority’s *Setting Standards* report and requested that, in support of the Minister’s ongoing consideration of the report, the LSRA also give consideration to “*the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young solicitors and barristers and make a further report with recommendations.*”
- 1.3.2** The Minister asked the Authority to give particular consideration to the following:
- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
 - The other costs associated with joining each profession;
 - The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms, the information on the terms and conditions available and how they are selected,
 - Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.
- 1.3.3** The Minister asked the LSRA to pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister asked the Authority, having considered these issues, to make recommendations in relations to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.
- 1.3.4** The Minister asked the Authority to engage appropriately with all relevant stakeholders in particular university law students, those students currently in the King’s Inns and the Law Society, and newly qualified members of both professions including the Young Bar Committee and the Society of Young Solicitors Ireland, as well as more long standing members of both professions and their representative bodies. A subsequent request was also received from the Minister asking the Authority to extend consideration of the barriers to include those who had completed the King’s Inns or Law Society professional courses in recent years but who had not chosen to practice law at this time.

- 1.3.5** The Minister also committed to engaging with the LSRA on an implementation plan to reform the way legal professional education currently works.
- 1.3.6** On foot of the Minister’s request, the Authority embarked on the research and engagement required to prepare the requested report in accordance with section 34 of the Act. The Authority also commenced engagement with Department of Justice officials on an implementation plan for the reform of legal practitioner education and training set out in the *Setting Standards* report.
- 1.3.7** A summary of this work is set out below.



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2 AUTHORITY'S THREE PHASED BARRIERS PROCESS

2.1

PHASE 1: BARRIERS RESEARCH: *Exploring the Challenges*

- 2.1.1** In the first phase of the process the Authority undertook a range of evidence gathering activities to explore and identify the potential barriers facing early career legal practitioners. These included a statutory consultation and the Authority's first comprehensive surveys of early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers, trainee solicitors, law undergraduates and qualified but non-practising legal professionals. This led to the production of a research study, *Breaking Down Barriers: Exploring the challenges facing early career legal professionals*. This research study was based around the framework for the research as set out in the Minister's request.
- 2.1.2** This report documented the findings of the Authority's surveys. Barriers to entry and early career progression in the profession were examined. The study also considered in detail the current arrangements for the training of solicitors and barristers, including issues of costs as well as information and arrangements for aspirant legal professionals seeking practical training opportunities.
- 2.1.3** The research reviewed submissions and recommendations to an LSRA statutory consultation process and obtained new stakeholder inputs concerning aspects of the study through direct interviews. Based on the evidence, this report identified a range of economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. It also documented recommendations made by a range of stakeholders.

Barriers Research Evidence Gathering

Survey responses from:

433

TRAINEE AND EARLY
CAREER PRACTISING
SOLICITORS



590

LAW UNDERGRADUATES
IN 15 HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTES



16

IN-DEPTH
INTERVIEWS WITH
EARLY CAREER
SOLICITORS AND
BARRISTERS



366

STUDENT AND EARLY
CAREER PRACTISING
BARRISTERS



86

NON-PRACTISING
RECENTLY QUALIFIED
SOLICITORS AND
BARRISTERS

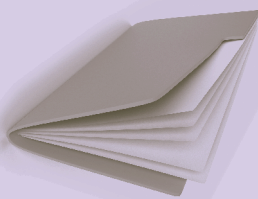


34

INTERVIEWS
WITH A RANGE OF
EMPLOYERS AND
PRACTITIONERS

1

CONSULTATION
DOCUMENT WHICH
LAUNCHED A TWO
MONTH STATUTORY
CONSULTATION PROCESS



34

WRITTEN
SUBMISSIONS

2.2

PHASE 2: BARRIERS RESEARCH: *Understanding the Challenges*

- 2.2.1** In phase two, the Authority analysed the evidence gathered during its research study, and in March 2022 submitted to the Minister for Justice its research findings report, *Breaking Down Barriers: Understanding the challenges facing early career legal professionals*.
- 2.2.2** The Authority’s research findings showed that aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers face a range of economic and other barriers on their career pathways, and that these barriers are more magnified for certain groups. The report identified an intersectional dimension to the findings, with multiple barriers including individual, structural and institutional dimensions, some of which are systemic.
- 2.2.3** The Authority summarised the key barriers and challenges facing early career solicitors and barristers as follows:

- 1.** The most significant barriers to entry to the legal professions are the costs of qualification and the length of time it takes post-graduation before a prospective solicitor or barrister can expect to qualify and begin to earn a reasonable salary.
- 2.** There is a lack of easily available, full and clear information for prospective solicitors and barristers about training and pupillage opportunities and selection processes, as well as the various career pathways that may be available.
- 3.** The main challenges facing early career solicitors are long working hours and lack of workplace flexibility and the impact of these on work-life balance. Despite these challenges, junior solicitors show moderate levels of career satisfaction.
- 4.** Early career self-employed barristers face considerable challenges in earning a living, with job security and better remuneration the key motivations for barristers taking up employed positions. Despite these challenges, junior barristers show moderate levels of career satisfaction.
- 5.** There is a perception that the legal professions lack diversity and are heavily reliant on prior connections and networks, which may discourage candidates from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds from considering the professions as a career.

The Implementation Plan for Reform of Legal Practitioner Education and Training

- 2.2.4** During 2022 and 2023 the Authority held a series of meetings with Department of Justice officials to discuss the findings and explore the mechanics of implementing the reforms identified in its *Setting Standards* report.
- 2.2.5** Following this engagement the Authority commenced the establishment, in September 2023, of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act. The section 16 Education and Training Committee established by the Authority will lay the foundations and build the framework for the introduction of the independent statutory Legal Practitioners Education and Training Committee (LPET Committee) as recommended in the *Setting Standards* report.
- 2.2.6** The section 16 Education and Training Committee of the Authority will develop the processes to enable the independent statutory LPET Committee, once the required legislation has been commenced, to accredit new and existing legal education and training providers. The Committee will work with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to ensure that any of its existing processes and expertise are availed of to the maximum extent possible. The Committee will also make recommendations in relation to the funding model of the LPET Committee and any legislative changes that may be required.
- 2.2.7** Another priority for the section 16 Education and Training Committee will be the development of a competency framework for solicitors and barristers, in consultation with QQI as well as the professional legal training bodies and other key stakeholders. This work is ongoing.

Further Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.2.8** In its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings March 2022 report, the Authority noted that, given the multi-faceted nature of the barriers identified in this report, there was scope to make recommendations for actions for reform to be taken by range of stakeholders, including itself.
- 2.2.9** The Authority also submitted to the Minister that the proposals for substantial reform of the legal practitioner education and training system (made in its *2020 Setting Standards* report) would go some way to addressing entry barriers identified in its findings report. In addition, it was noted that the forthcoming introduction of legal partnerships would, in some part, satisfy the clear demand, from young barristers in particular, for new business models in which to practice.
- 2.2.10** The Authority undertook to carefully consider its findings and to undertake a period of further engagement and consultation with stakeholders before submitting to the Minister a further report with the recommendations it considers to be appropriate to address the barriers identified.

Updates and Progress Made by Key Stakeholders

- 2.2.11** The Authority is aware of a range of developments that have taken place since it submitted its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings report to the Minister in March 2022. These include the progress it has itself made towards the establishment of a statutorily independent LPET Committee as outlined above.
- 2.2.12** Furthermore, the Authority acknowledges that since it began examining this area, the professional bodies for solicitors and barristers have introduced a range of initiatives and reforms which may in themselves help to alleviate some of the barriers to entry and early career challenges identified in its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings report, which it submitted to the Minister in March 2022.

2.2.13 The Authority commends the professional bodies for being proactive in this important area. The initiatives include but are not limited to:

- The Law Society of Ireland in March 2022 established the Law Society Psychological Services with Dignity at Work at the core of its long-term, strategic ambitions. The Service actions projects and supports throughout six stages of the legal lifecycle to help build safe, healthy and high functioning workplace cultures.
- The Law Society in September 2023 changed the structure of its Professional Practice Course (PPC) for solicitors. The course is now taught in one continuous block followed by an unbroken period of in-office training. Previously, the PPC course was delivered in two separate blocks sandwiched with two periods of in-office training. The structure of the sandwich PCC model had been criticised as restrictive for training firms.
- The Law Society and the King's Inns have developed their own Competency Frameworks. As outlined above, the introduction of Competency Frameworks are one of the two central recommendations made in *Setting Standards* report.
- The Bar of Ireland in March 2023 introduced an Equitable Briefing Policy, which seeks to ensure the wide areas of legal practice benefit from the contribution of all genders and to address the underrepresentation of female counsel at senior levels. The policy invites briefing entities – solicitor firms, in-house legal departments and State bodies, as well as counsel – to endeavour to consider gender when presenting or constructing panels of counsel, once satisfied that requisite standard of expertise, skill and seniority has been met.
- The Bar of Ireland in June 2022 launched its first Equality Action Plan with recommended actions for its own committees and departments to promote and enhance equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar, with a particular focus on addressing the challenges faced by underrepresented, disadvantaged and minority groups.

- The Bar of Ireland in June 2022 published a significant externally commissioned strategic review of its future landscape, conducted by Ernst and Young. This report concluded that social and economic barriers limit access to the profession and that diversity and inclusion is an issue for the Bar of Ireland. The report made a series of recommendations. These included that the Bar of Ireland should consider changing its business model to allow barristers to form groupings (called ‘meitheal’) of senior and junior counsel and new entrants. The report further recommended that as such groupings come on stream, the Bar of Ireland should review the idea of a minimum payment for barristers within their year of pupillage, similar to that in the Bar Council of England and Wales. The Council of the Bar of Ireland did not favour the introduction of this new business model but said it would explore alternative ways of addressing challenges identified in the report.
- Criminal barristers in October 2023 engaged in a high-profile one-day withdrawal of professional services. The Council of the Bar of Ireland recommended the action to its members as part of its campaign calling on Government to implement a meaningful, independent and time-limited mechanism to determine the fees payable to barristers by the Director of Public Prosecutions and under the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) scheme.

The Minister for Justice announced funding in Budget 2024 of €9 million to make progress in increasing the fees payable to legal professionals for criminal legal aid by 10% in early 2024. In conjunction with the increase in fees, the Minister stated an intention to build on the strengths of the criminal legal aid scheme while addressing any issues relating to how it is structured.

2.3

PHASE 3: BARRIERS RECOMMENDATIONS: *Addressing the Challenges*

- 2.3.1** Having considered the findings from the Barriers research project, the Authority developed a series of 32 recommendations for reform which are designed to improve equity of access and entry into the legal profession and over time to achieve greater diversity within the profession. These recommendations and the rationale are set out in full in the Authority’s report *Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the Challenges Facing Early Career Legal Professionals* and are summarised below.
- 2.3.2** Given the multi-faceted nature of the entry barriers and early career challenges identified, the Authority’s recommendations call for range of actions to be taken by various stakeholders including itself.
- 2.3.3** Many of the recommendations build upon the Authority’s earlier proposals for reform of legal practitioner education and training contained in its *Setting Standards* report. As has been set out above, a central component of these reforms is the establishment of an independent LPET Committee. The functions of the LPET Committee, as recommended by the Authority, include “*encouraging diversity in legal education and training*”. Accordingly, several of the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations are addressed to the LPET Committee, once established.



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3 ACTION ON BARRIERS

32 Recommendations

1. The Law Society of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns should continue to increase flexible routes for legal practitioner training, reporting annually to the LSRA and the LPET Committee once established on their initiatives and their impact.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

2. Legal practitioner training providers should report annually using agreed templates to the LSRA, and the LPET Committee once established, on the diversity of intake in all legal practitioner training courses. The data gathered would be used to enhance and expand flexible training routes, including hybrid, blended, remote and asynchronous learning.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

3. The LSRA and the professional bodies should explore the use of the annual levy on the professions and other funding mechanisms to develop increased financial support for prospective solicitors and barristers to increase diversity of intake.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and Law Society.

4. The Honorable Society of King's Inns should review the mandatory requirement in its Code of Conduct that barristers undertake nine months' pupillage before they can represent clients before courts. This should be done once the King's Inns demonstrates to the LPET Committee, once established, that its Barrister-at-Law degree meets the competency framework standard for entering practice as a barrister.

ACTION BY:

The King's Inns, LPET Committee.

5. The LSRA and the Bar of Ireland should explore innovative solutions to develop appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils, including undertaking an analysis of a minimum payment for barristers within their year of pupillage.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Bar of Ireland.

6. The Bar of Ireland should allow pupils to undertake their pupillages with barristers whose practices are not predominantly Dublin based.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland.*

7. The Bar of Ireland should introduce greater standardisation of the training provided to all barrister pupils and institute a system of quality assurance and more formalised oversight of pupillages including mandatory training of prospective masters.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland.*

8. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established should engage with key stakeholders to explore the introduction of solicitor apprenticeships, including provision for grants for employers of apprentices.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, law firms, Law Society, SOLAS, Higher Education Authority, National Apprenticeship Office, QQI, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.*

9. The Law Society should actively engage with firms and organisations which train solicitors to ensure that all solicitor trainees receive a minimum pay threshold during training. Legislative amendments should be introduced to allow the Law Society to monitor and enforce breaches of the minimum pay threshold for trainees.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, training firms and organisations.*

10. The Law Society should work with key stakeholders to actively encourage and support direct intake of trainee solicitors in the public and private sectors, with particular focus on the civil and public service. Public sector agencies that routinely recruit solicitors are encouraged to establish direct trainee intake schemes.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, relevant State agencies and public sector bodies, local authorities, private corporations.*

11. The Law Society should increase its financial supports for small firms to provide training contracts and also extend this funding to include independent law centres. It should also increase flexible options for training firms to take on trainees such as allowing several small firms to share one trainee solicitor.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society.*

12. The LPET Committee once established should, as a priority, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of existing access initiatives and identify additional measures to increase access to the legal profession, including flexible training options and additional access route for non-graduates. The LPET Committee to engage with employers, professional bodies, education and training providers, interest groups and academics working in the field to achieve a shared vision of how to improve diversity within the profession and to put in place and monitor initiatives to achieve this vision.

ACTION BY: *The LPET Committee.*

13. The Law Society, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland should evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their existing access initiatives at second and third level (DEIS school initiatives, transition year programmes, mentoring programmes, and other experiential education initiatives). Based on their findings, and the findings of the LSRA research, they should consider new initiatives (like targeted internships or mini-pupillages for DEIS/minority students to help them gain connections). These initiatives should be kept under review for efficacy.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and any future provider of legal education.*

14. The Law Society, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland should evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their existing funded access programmes and consider their expansion (e.g. bursaries, awards, sponsorships etc., targeted internships for under-represented groups, philanthropic funding for bursaries).

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland.*

15. The Law Society should work with relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available on how to secure training contracts by addressing the barriers identified in the LSRA research, particularly around information gaps and information asymmetry. A merit-based system for the recruitment of trainee solicitors should be open and transparent, with greater clarity for all on the pathways, terms and conditions and selection processes and improved supports for trainees and training firms during the training period. The Law Society should consider the introduction of a centralised portal or online resource for prospective trainee solicitors.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, law firms.*

16. The Bar of Ireland should work with the Honorable Society of King's Inns and relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available for prospective barristers to identify masters with whom to undertake their mandatory pupillage year at the Bar. A reformed system for the selection of masters should be more formalised, fair and transparent, with enhanced mechanisms for support and supervision of pupillages during the pupillage period.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland, King's Inns.*

17. The LPET Committee, once established, should engage with the Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society and public and private sector employers to highlight different career pathways for barristers and solicitors. Further, the introduction of legal partnerships is an opportunity for the LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, in collaboration with the King's Inns and the Law Society, to roll out an information campaign and enhanced outreach as well as other supports for barristers and solicitors interested in this new business model.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society and King's Inns.*

18. The LSRA should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing. The LSRA to engage with the Law Society in consultation with other key stakeholders to create a self-assessment template to be completed and reported on an annual basis to the Law Society and the LSRA by all law firms over a stated size. This self-assessment will measure activity undertaken by the firm to ensure a positive workplace culture, dignity in the workplace, a reasonable work-life balance for staff, and employee wellbeing. These reports will be published on the websites of the LSRA and Law Society and by the firms themselves.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Law Society, law firms.*

19. The LSRA should engage with the barrister profession to consider initiatives to make a career as a self-employed practising barrister more sustainable in the early years, in particular for women and under-represented groups. Reforms could include, for example, targeted initiatives, practical information on the self-employed profession, practical supports in relation to building and managing a practice, alternative career pathways and new business models including legal partnerships, professional wellbeing, mentoring and personal development

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Bar of Ireland and self-employed barristers who are not members of the Law Library.*

20. The LSRA should engage with the Department of Justice on introducing direct professional access to barristers in non-contentious matters. This would be achieved with the commencement of section 101 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. Section 101 states that no professional code shall operate to prevent a barrister from providing legal services as a practising barrister in relation to a matter, other than a contentious matter, where his or her instructions on that matter were received directly from a person who is not a solicitor. The LSRA to engage with the profession and develop and provide guidance where necessary on the receipt of direct instructions in non-contentious matters.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Department of Justice.*

- 21.** The LSRA should progress work on a scheme for expanded direct access to barristers. The LSRA previously recommended that direct access to barristers be permitted to organisational clients in contentious matters in certain circumstances.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 22.** The LSRA should revisit the introduction of multi-disciplinary practices (MDPs). The LSRA has previously considered the introduction of MDPs under the 2015 Act and for reasons of sequencing and resources prioritised the prior introduction of legal partnerships and limited liability partnerships. Following the introduction of legal partnerships, the LSRA should monitor their uptake and impact and revisit the introduction of MDPs.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 23.** The LSRA should develop guidance for barristers and employers on section 212 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 which allows an employed practising barrister to appear on behalf of their employer in a court, tribunal or forum of arbitration.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 24.** Relevant stakeholders should collaborate on measures to ensure that barristers are paid fees in a timely manner.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland, Law Society, Department of Justice, LSRA and relevant State agencies.*

- 25.** The LSRA should consult with key stakeholders on options for changing the law to allow barristers to sue for their fees, and report on the matter with recommendations to the Department of Justice.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Bar of Ireland, Law Society, non-Law Library practising barristers*

- 26.** 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.

ACTION BY:

The Departments of Justice and Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform, Bar of Ireland, relevant State agencies.

- 27.** The Department of Justice should consider current mechanisms across all government departments and State agencies to ensure transparency in the procurement and distribution of State funded work for early career barristers and solicitors including the potential for the introduction of equitable briefing policies and standards.

ACTION BY:

The Department of Justice, government departments, State agencies, buyers of legal services on behalf of the State.

- 28.** The Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland and the Courts Service should create an action plan to address issues facing members of the legal profession with disabilities. Employers should consider introducing a form of reasonable accommodation or disability passport for the legal profession.

ACTION BY:

The Courts Service, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, Law Society, employers.

- 29.** The LSRA, the professional bodies and other legal profession stakeholders should commit to taking targeted actions towards building solicitor and barrister professions that reflect the diversity of modern Irish society.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Law Society, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, law firms, employers, Department of Justice.

- 30.** Demographic data on the legal profession should be routinely collected and published to establish a diversity profile and to inform and monitor actions to encourage greater diversity. The data should include the range of protected characteristics under equality legislation, as well as socio-economic status. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, to engage with the professional bodies on defining, lawful gathering and monitoring of the required data.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, LPET Committee, King's Inns, Law Society, Bar of Ireland.

- 31.** The LSRA, the LPET Committee once established, the Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns should review training arrangements for non-EEA students in order to remove barriers to entry.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society, King's Inns, Department of Justice.

- 32.** The professional bodies should consider reducing entry requirements on a reciprocal basis for transfers between both branches of the legal profession, including a mutual recognition framework for solicitors and barristers with less than three years post-qualification experience. Transfer arrangements for foreign-qualified lawyers should also be reviewed. This should be done once appropriate Competence Frameworks and standards have been established for solicitors and barristers. The LPET Committee, once established, should regularly review transfer arrangements.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, LPET Committee.



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