

# Breaking Down Barriers

## Implementation Plan



An tÚdarás Rialála  
Seirbhísí Dlí  
Legal Services  
Regulatory Authority



30 September 2024

# INTRODUCTION

Following a request from the Minister for Justice under section 34 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (as amended) (“the Act”), the LSRA prepared and submitted a series of reports to the Minister in which it set out to explore, understand and address the challenges facing early career solicitors and barristers in the State. The final report to the Minister “*Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the challenges facing early career legal professionals*” makes 32 recommendations for reforms which are intended to address the findings of the research undertaken, which established 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 magnified for certain groups and have a negative impact on diversity in the legal profession.

In accepting the recommendations, the Minister for Justice wrote to the Chair of the LSRA, Dr Don Thornhill to request that the LSRA prepare an implementation plan which “*should maximise the impact of the recommendations to the greatest extent possible, resulting in concrete, identifiable changes in the career pathways and experiences of new and recent entrants to the legal profession.*” The Minister also requested that the plan should be “*outcome orientated, contain indicators of progress and stepped timelines to allow for regular monitoring and six-monthly progress reports to be submitted*” to the Department of Justice.

In order therefore to ensure the timely implementation of the 32 recommendations from its *Breaking Down Barriers* reports, the LSRA executive plans to establish and manage an implementation process involving all relevant stakeholders.

As identified in the *Breaking Down Barriers* report recommendations, the key stakeholders for implementation purposes for the majority of the recommendations are the legal professional bodies – the Law Society of Ireland, the Honorable Society of King’s Inns and the Bar of Ireland – as well as the LSRA itself.

During the preparation of the *Breaking Down Barriers* reports, the LSRA engaged extensively with these key stakeholders and sought their feedback. The reports were published on 18 September 2024. Whilst some of the professional bodies, and other stakeholders, have already issued statements welcoming the findings, the LSRA anticipates that the 32 recommendations will now be further considered in detail by the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland, the Honorable Society of King’s Inns and other stakeholders and that further engagement will take place across the implementation of the recommendations.

# THE ROLE OF THE SECTION 16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

The LSRA acknowledges that responsibility for some of the key recommendations in its *Breaking Down Barriers* reports lie with the yet to be established independent statutory Legal Practitioners Education and Training Committee (“the LPET Committee”). The establishment of this body was recommended in the LSRA’s 2020 report to the Minister for Justice “*Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*”. As envisaged, the LPET Committee would establish a competency framework for legal practitioners, develop an accreditation and validation framework for legal education and training providers, manage the introduction of new providers or alternative routes to qualification and monitor the quality of education and training. Its functions will also include “*encouraging diversity in legal education and training*”. Accordingly, several of the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations are addressed to the LPET Committee, once established.

The LSRA has already made progress towards setting up the LPET Committee, whose creation will require primary legislation. It has established an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the 2015 Act. The purpose of this committee is to undertake the preparatory work necessary for the introduction of the independent statutory LPET Committee as recommended in the LSRA’s report, “*Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*”.

The Section 16 Education and Training Committee is chaired by Dr Don Thornhill and will, when fully established, have seven members including a nominee from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and four members recruited by way of an open competition.

Where any of the 32 Breaking Down Barriers recommendations relate to legal professional education and training, or where the implementation of the recommendation requires the input of the LPET Committee, the views and assistance of the Section 16 Education and Training Committee will be sought as appropriate.

# IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

The implementation process for the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations will be led by the CEO of the LSRA who will chair the Barriers Implementation Working Group. The LSRA's Research Department will provide the secretariat for the implementation process. The professional bodies will be invited to nominate representatives to sit on the Implementation Working Group. The table below sets out the 32 recommendations, identifies their owners and proposes implementation actions and timelines. It also contains indicative progress indicators which, as with any project, are subject to change as the implementation process both evolves and progresses and as work begins on reform delivery.

## The implementation process will involve:

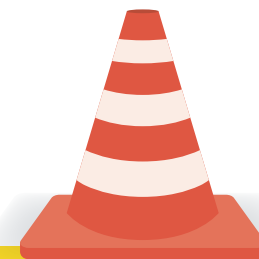
- Quarterly progress update meetings with the legal professional bodies; the Law Society of Ireland, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland;
- Discussion and implementation meetings as necessary with other stakeholders who are key to the implementation of specific recommendations, e.g. the Courts Service, the Department of Justice, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, QQI;
- Six monthly update reports to the Authority and progress reports to the Department of Justice;
- The use of the LSRA's annual "*Pathways to the Professions*" reports on admissions to the legal professions, under section 33 of the Act, as a reporting mechanism on issues such as diversity among entrants to legal professional education and training.

# RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS, TIMELINES AND PROGRESS INDICATORS

The 32 recommendations are grouped into five categories as follows:

- 1 BARRIERS TO ENTRY: Qualification**
- 2 BARRIERS TO ENTRY: Information**
- 3 EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES: Solicitors**
- 4 EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES: Barristers**
- 5 BARRIERS TO ENTRY: Diversity and Connections**





# 1. BARRIERS TO ENTRY

## Qualification

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.

Both branches of the profession face challenges in opening access to individuals from more diverse backgrounds because of the significant costs of professional training and the mechanisms for obtaining and undertaking practical training. For candidates with different needs and responsibilities, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, the direct and indirect costs involved may act as a deterrent to entry to the professions, sending them instead into other career pathways.

# PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PATHWAYS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, LSI, HSKI	The LSRA, Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns to meet and agree a template for an annual report on initiatives and their impact.	Q4 2024	Reporting template agreed.
			The LSRA to seek the input of the section 16 Education and Training Committee.	Q4 2024	Engagement with and input received from the Committee.
			The LSRA to invite the Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns to submit their first annual reports on increasing flexible routes for legal practitioner training and their impacts to the LSRA.	Q1 2025	Annual reports requested and received as per the agreed template.
			The LSRA to publish information and data related to the initiatives established by legal practitioner training providers and their impacts annually in its existing section 33 "Pathways to the Professions" annual report.	Q2 2025	First report published in 2025 and annually thereafter.

# PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PATHWAYS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, LSI, HSKI	The LSRA will commission an expert research report on the appropriate diversity data to be collected by training providers.	Q1 2025	Expert report prepared and shared with key stakeholders.
			The LSRA will engage with Law Society of Ireland and Honorable Society of King's Inns on lawful basis and methodology for collection of data.	Q1 2025	Agreed template, methodology and basis for data gathering and report.
			The LSRA will seek the input of the section 16 Education and Training Committee.	Q1 2025	Engagement with and input received from the Committee.
			The LSRA will request training providers to collect data and submit in agreed format.	Q2 2025	Data requested.
			The training providers will collect the data for their student/trainee intake in autumn 2025.	Q3 2025	Data collected and received in agreed format.
			The LSRA will publish an update on diversity data annually in its existing section 33 "Pathways to the Professions" annual reports.	Q2 2026	First report published in 2026 and annually thereafter.



# PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PATHWAYS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, HSKI, LSI, Bol	The LSRA will host a stakeholder engagement meeting with the professional bodies to discuss innovative solutions and funding mechanisms to develop financial supports for prospective solicitors and barristers.	Q4 2024	Stakeholder engagement meeting held and brief report on range of supports prepared.
			A range of proposed supports will be the subject of an LSRA consultation with the legal professions and other key stakeholders.	Q2 2025	Consultation on proposed supports conducted.
			The LSRA will bring proposals to the Minister.	Q3 2025	Report to the Minister submitted.

# BARRISTER PUPILLAGE

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
4	<p>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.</p>	LSRA, HSKI	LSRA to engage with Honorable Society of King's Inns on mandatory pupillage requirement.	Q4 2024	Views of Honourable Society of King's Inns on impact of the removal/retention of mandatory pupillage requirement received by LSRA.
			LSRA to engage with Bar of Ireland on mandatory pupillage requirement.	Q4 2024	Views of Bar of Ireland on impact of the removal/retention of mandatory pupillage requirement received by LSRA.
			LSRA to engage with section 16 Education and Training Committee on the requirement of the Honorable Society of King's Inns to demonstrate that the Barrister-at-Law degree meets the competency framework standard for entering practice as a barrister.	Q4 2024	Section 16 Committee will establish processes by which the LPET Committee will assess Barrister-at-Law degree against competency framework.
			LPET Committee to request Honorable Society of King's Inns to report on compliance with recommendations once established.	Within two months of establishment of LPET Committee.	Review of requirement undertaken by the King's Inns and submitted to the LPET Committee.

# BARRISTER PUPILLAGE

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, Bol	LSRA to engage with the Bar of Ireland on the work it has done to date in this area.	Q3 2025	Formal engagement will take place between the LSRA and the Bar of Ireland.
			LSRA to invite Bar of Ireland to consider and report on potential solutions.	Q4 2025	Report from Bar of Ireland to LSRA including an analysis of a minimum payment for barrister within their year of pupillage.
			LSRA and Bar of Ireland to propose a potential range of financial supports and funding mechanisms.	Q1 2026	Timeline for implementation of potential supports.
6	The Bar of Ireland should allow pupils to undertake their pupillages with barristers whose practices are not predominantly Dublin based.	LSRA, Bol	LSRA to invite Bar of Ireland to consider recommendation and bring proposals to the LSRA as to how this can be achieved; or the Bar of Ireland to bring an alternative proposal as to how pupils from outside of Dublin can appropriately be accommodated and the identified barriers removed.	Q4 2025	Recommendation implemented or alternative proposal identified and implemented before start of Michaelmas new law term in 2025.
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.	LSRA, Bol	The LSRA to request submission from Bar of Ireland to consider recommendation and to outline ongoing progress made to introduce quality assurance and more formalised oversight of pupillage.	Q4 2025	Submission to the LSRA by Q4 2025.

# SOLICITOR TRAINEESHIPS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	Multiple: LSRA, LPET and others	LSRA to host stakeholder meetings (which includes the National Apprenticeship Office, QQI, SOLAS, the Higher Education Authority, Universities, SUSI, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and law firms) and bring proposals to the Minister.	Q1 2026	Proposals for the introduction of solicitor apprenticeships submitted to the Minister.
9	<p>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.</p> <p>Legislative amendments should be introduced to allow the Law Society to monitor and enforce breaches of the minimum pay threshold for trainees.</p>	LSI, DoJ, LSRA	The Law Society to consider the recommendation and liaise with Department of Justice and other relevant stakeholders.	Q2 2025	Active engagement by the Law Society with firms and organisations on their responsibility in relation to minimum pay.
			LSRA to engage with Law Society in relation to a potential code of practice under section 22 of 2015 Act.	Q2 2025	LSRA to assist with messaging and to draft code of practice if required.
			LSRA and Law Society to engage and collaborate with DoJ on legislative amendment.	Q3 2025	Submission to Department on legislative amendment.

# SOLICITOR TRAINEESHIPS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
10	<p>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.</p> <p>Public sector agencies that routinely recruit solicitors are encouraged to establish direct trainee intake schemes.</p>	<p>Multiple: LSI, relevant State agencies and public sector bodies, local authorities, private corporations</p>	<p>Building on work already undertaken in this area, the Law Society to consider and explore recommendation and to develop a liaison strategy with the public and private sector agencies.</p>	Q1 2025	LSI develops and delivers liaison strategy.
			<p>LSRA to engage with Law Society on viability of establishing a direct trainee intake scheme for the LSRA.</p>	Q4 2025	LSRA to establish direct trainee intake scheme and publicly report on its establishment.
			<p>LSRA also to assist with messaging and engagement to encourage the establishment of direct trainee intake schemes in other appropriate agencies.</p>	Q4 2025	LSRA to deliver targeted messaging engaging with other agencies.
11	<p>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.</p>	LSI	<p>The Law Society to explore this recommendation and engage with the LSRA on potential financial supports.</p>	Q2 2025	LSI engages with the LSRA on progress on this recommendation.

# ACCESS PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
12	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	LPET	LPET Committee to engage with the relevant stakeholders and explore progress on this recommendation as outlined below as being delivered by the section 16 Committee.	Within four months of the establishment of the LPET Committee.	Impact of existing access initiatives evaluated and additional measures identified.
			The LSRA Section 16 Education and Training Committee to commission an expert report in advance of the establishment of the LPET Committee to build the necessary frameworks that will allow for delivery of this recommendation.	Q4 2025	Delivery Framework established by section 16 Committee.
			LSRA to commence programme of engagement to prepare a shared vision of how to improve diversity and monitor initiatives.	Q4 2025	Engagement commenced by the LSRA and “Shared Vision” roadmap prepared.

# ACCESS PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
13	<p>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.</p>	Multiple: LSI, HSKI, Bol, LSRA	<p>The Law Society, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland to consider this recommendation and report the findings of the evaluations undertaken of existing access initiatives and new potential initiatives being considered to the LSRA as part of their submissions to the LSRA's annual <i>Pathways to the Professions</i> admissions reports.</p>	Q2 2025 and review annually thereafter.	LSRA to include update and assessment of impact of initiatives in annual <i>Pathways</i> reports.
			<p>LSRA to engage with the Law Society, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland on initiatives and to share findings and best practise. LSRA to commence programme of engagement to prepare a shared vision of how to improve diversity and monitor initiatives.</p>	Q2 2025 and review annually thereafter.	LSRA to include update and assessment of impact of initiatives including empirical data in annual <i>Pathways</i> reports.
14	<p>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).</p>	Multiple: LSI, HSKI, Bol	<p>The LSRA to invite the Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns to submit their evaluation of their funded access programmes as part of its data gathering for its annual <i>Pathways to the Professions</i> admissions report.</p>	Q2 2026	<p>First report published in 2026 and annually thereafter.</p> <p>LSRA to include updates and assessment of impact of initiatives including empirical data in its annual <i>Pathways</i> reports.</p>

## 2.

# BARRIERS TO ENTRY

## Information



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.

The current system for qualifying barristers to identify and secure a master for their mandatory pupillage year at the Law Library is opaque and ad hoc, with scant information available online. For solicitors, there is considerably more information available on securing training contracts, although this is not all in one place and the pathway to traineeships with large law firms are most visible due to their significant recruitment drives targeting certain undergraduates. The professional bodies all have information on their websites as well as outreach programmes and initiatives with schools and universities.



# INFORMATION ON CAREER PATHWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
15	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Law Society should consider the introduction of a centralised portal or online resource for prospective trainee solicitors.</p>	LSI, law firms	The Law Society to engage with law firms, training firms and organisations to explore and implement this recommendation.	Q1 2026	Publication by the LSI of an outreach, information and supports project plan to address the information gaps and barriers identified in the LSRA research.
			The impact of the improved information, outreach and supports should be reviewed and improved where necessary through an annual sample survey by the LSI of trainee solicitors who engage with the new system.	Q4 2026	Outreach actions from law firms and organisations taking on solicitor trainees to address the information gaps and barriers identified in the LSRA research.
			The Law Society to examine collaborating with industry partners to establish a dedicated online portal or “one-stop-shop” for aspiring solicitors who are seeking to learn how training contracts work or where to find one.	Q4 2026	Online portal or resource developed.

# INFORMATION ON CAREER PATHWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
16	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Bol, HSKI	The Bar of Ireland and King's Inns together to collaborate to explore this recommendation.	Q3 2025	The introduction of improved, information, outreach and supports for prospective barristers to identify masters with whom to undertake their mandatory pupillage year.
			The reformed system for the selection of masters with enhanced systems for support and supervision of pupillages to be introduced.	Q4 2025	Introduction of an improved system for the selection of masters.
			The impact of the improved supports should be reviewed and improved where necessary through an annual sample survey of prospective barristers who engage with the new system.	Q4 2026	Survey data collected to inform the user experience and allow the new system to identify and address any information gaps.
17	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Multiple: LSRA, LPET, LSI, HSKI	The LSRA in advance of the establishment of the LPET Committee to begin engagement with Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society and public and private sector employers to highlight different career pathways for barristers and solicitors.	Q1 2025	Engagement commenced and documented.
			LSRA to produce a roadmap for use by the LPET Committee once established as how to best highlight different career pathways in law.	Q1 2026	Roadmap produced.
			The LSRA in advance of the establishment of the LPET Committee to engage with the Honorable Society of King's Inns and Law Society to collaborate on an information campaign on legal partnerships with enhanced outreach and additional supports for solicitors and barristers interested in this new business model.	Q1 2025	Information campaign launched by LSRA. Periodic review of legal partnership model conducted by the LSRA at intervals required by statute.

### 3.

## EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES

### Solicitors



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.

The key challenges in the early career years (years 1 to 7) for solicitors relate to the time-consuming nature of their work, with a prevailing culture of long working hours which results in poor work-life balance. These challenges may impact on diversity as those with significant commitments outside work, including caring responsibilities, may find it difficult to devote the necessary hours to their employers.

# SOLICITORS WORKPLACE CULTURE

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
18	<p>The LSRA should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing.</p> <p>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 well-being. These reports will be published on the websites of the LSRA and Law Society and by the firms themselves.</p>	LSRA, LSI	<p>The LSRA to engage with the Law Society and other key stakeholders to develop a self-assessment template on employee wellbeing for law firms to complete.</p>	Q3 2025	Development of self-assessment template.
			<p>The LSRA to host event with relevant stakeholders on positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing with a view to agreeing a charter of measures that can be introduced to promote this.</p>	Q1 2026	National event held on positive workplace culture in the legal profession.
			<p>The LSRA and LSI to oversee the collection and publication of the self-assessments to measure activity undertaken to ensure a positive workplace culture, dignity in the workplace, a reasonable work-life balance for staff, and employee well-being.</p>	Q2 2026	Publication of first annual self-assessments.

## 4.

# EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES

## Barristers

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.

The early career years (years 1 to 7) for barristers at the self-employed bar involve personal expense, generally low and erratic earnings and persistent career uncertainty and risk. This inhibits diversity at the bar, as it excludes those who do not have an independent source of income or support to self-sustain a career for an extended period.



# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, Bol	The LSRA to regularly consult with the entire barrister profession, and to commission research where necessary, to identify and to bring forward recommendations for new initiatives to increase career sustainability.	Q1 2025	Regular structured consultations which capture the views of the entire profession resulting in continued recommendations made for further reform based.
			LSRA to invite the Bar of Ireland to provide information on work already undertaken and progress made in this area which may inform further recommendations.	Q1 2025	Input from Bol received and analysed by LSRA.
			On foot of recommendations, the LSRA and the Bar of Ireland to consider/explore the development of the initiatives.	Q4 2025	The introduction of further tangible and meaningful supports.

# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
20	<p>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.</p> <p>The LSRA to engage with the profession and develop and provide guidance where necessary on the receipt of direct instructions in non-contentious matters.</p>	LSRA, DOJ	Section 101 was commenced on 25 September 2024	Complete.	Barristers now permitted to provide legal services in non-contentious matters 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 professional bodies and the business community to develop guidance for the legal profession on application of section 101.	Q1 2025	Guidance on the application of section 101 issued by the LSRA.
			Bar of Ireland to publish guidance on section 101 for its members.	Q4 2024	Guidance published by Bol.

# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
21	<p>The LSRA should progress work on a scheme for expanded direct access to barristers.</p> <p>The LSRA previously recommended that direct access to barristers be permitted to organisational clients in contentious matters in certain circumstances.</p>	LSRA	LSRA to revisit recommendations 4-11 from its <i>"Certain Issues Relating to Barristers Report"</i> from 2017 which sought to permit direct access in contentious matters in respect of specific categories of cases and with the prior approval of the Authority.	Q4 2024	LSRA to revisit recommendations and produce a plan as to how they can be progressed.
			The LSRA to conduct a public consultation on recommendations 4-11.	Q2 2025	Public consultation completed.
			LSRA to engage with professional bodies and wider legal profession on recommendations 4-11.	Q3 2025	Engagement with professional bodies completed and documented.
			LSRA to report to Minister on legislative changes and other framework required to expand direct access to barristers.	Q2 2026	Report to Minister submitted.



# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
22	<p>The LSRA should revisit the introduction of multi-disciplinary practices (MDPs).</p> <p>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.</p>	LSRA	LSRA to engage with legal practitioners and other relevant stakeholders to gauge the interest in multi-disciplinary partnerships.	Q2 2025	Engagement completed and documented.
			LSRA to conduct a further public consultation on the introduction of multi-disciplinary partnerships.	Q4 2025	Public consultation completed and documented.
			The LSRA to monitor the uptake of legal partnerships in the first year of their introduction and host a seminar " <i>Legal Partnerships- One Year On</i> " inviting key stakeholders to attend and provide their views on the new model.	Q4 2026	LP uptake monitored and relevant data collected. Seminar on LPs hosted.
			LSRA to submit report to the Minister on introduction of MDP's including a proposed framework for the operation and regulation of MDPs.	Q2 2027	Report with recommendations completed.
23	<p>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.</p>	LSRA	Following a suitable consultation process, the LSRA to develop guidance notes for employed practising barristers and employers on the application of section 212 and also distribute via email to all barristers on the Roll.	Q2 2025	Guidance notes published on the LSRA website.
			LSRA to monitor the application of section 212.	Q2 2026	LSRA to report on application of section 212 and the need for legislative amendment where necessary to be submitted to the Minister.

# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
24	Relevant stakeholders should collaborate on measures to ensure that barristers are paid fees in a timely manner.	BoI, LSI, DoJ	The Bar of Ireland in collaboration with the Law Society to explore this recommendation and submit proposal of measures to the LSRA.	Q2 2025	Proposed measures agreed by Bar of Ireland and the Law Society.
			LSRA to consult with legal profession on proposed measures.	Q3 2025	Consultation with legal profession held.
			LSRA to engage with Department of Justice on any legislative amendments required.	Q4 2025	Legislative amendments introduced where required.
			LSRA to monitor effectiveness of measures.	Q4 2026	LSRA to monitor and report on effectiveness of measures to ensure that barristers are paid in a timely manner.
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.	LSRA, BOI	The LSRA to consult with relevant stakeholders on allowing barristers to sue for their fees.	Q4 2024	Consultation completed.
			LSRA to report to the Minister with recommendations.	Q1 2025	Report with recommendations submitted to Minister.

# SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF EMPLOYED BARRISTERS' EARLY CAREERS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	BOI, DoJ, DPENDPDR	LSRA to engage with relevant stakeholders to explore recommendation with the purpose of developing a roadmap addressing concerns in a timely manner.	Q4 2024	Concerns of all parties documented and a roadmap in place as to how they can be addressed.
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.	DOJ, LSI, DPP, LAB, CSSO/AG, SCA	LSRA to engage with Department of Justice on potential mechanisms to ensure transparency across departments and State agencies.	Q1 2025	Engagement with Department documented in a report to the Minister.
			LSRA to consult with all government departments and state agencies on the introduction of transparency measures and the potential introduction of equitable briefing policies and standards.	Q4 2025	Consultation report submitted by LSRA to the Minister with recommendation.

## 5. BARRIERS TO ENTRY

### Diversity and Connections



There is a perception that the legal profession lacks diversity and is heavily reliant on prior connections and networks, which may discourage candidates from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds from considering the profession as a career.

There is a growing focus on diversity within the Irish legal profession, with specific attention to protected characteristics under equality legislation, such as gender and ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic background. The LSRA survey found that only 14% of solicitors, 23% of barristers and 28% of law undergraduates agree that the professions are diverse (representative of the population).

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	HSKI, LSI, Bol, CSI	The relevant stakeholders to engage and create a joint disability action plan to address issues facing members of the legal profession with disabilities.	Q4 2025	Disability Action Plan for Legal Professionals to be introduced.
			A consultation on the plan with members of the legal profession to be undertaken by the LSRA prior to implementation.	Q4 2025	Consultation on the plan completed.
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.	Multiple: LSRA, LSI, Bol, HSKI	The LSRA to invite the Law Society, Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland to introduce a Diversity Charter setting out their commitment to take the necessary steps to address any shortcomings in diversity of the professions.	Q2 2025	Introduction of Diversity Charter for the Legal Profession.
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.	LSRA, LPET, HSKI, LSI, Bol	The LSRA and LPET Committee to establish a method, in consultation with key stakeholders, for publishing a diversity profile of the legal profession and to monitor and inform future actions that would encourage greater diversity in the legal profession.	Q3 2025	Annual reporting on demographic data collected by the professional bodies in LSRA's Pathways report.

# OVERSEAS STUDENTS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
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.	LSRA, LPET, HSKI, LSI, DoJ	The LSRA to invite the relevant stakeholders to review the existing arrangements and make recommendations for the removal of barriers to entry for non-EEA students.	Q4 2025	Recommendations for any legislative changes submitted to the Minister.

# TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS

NO	RECOMMENDATION	OWNERS	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINES	PROGRESS INDICATORS
32	<p>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.</p> <p>This should be done once appropriate Competence Frameworks and standards have been established for solicitors and barristers.</p> <p>The LPET Committee, once established, should regularly review transfer arrangements.</p>	Bol, LSI, HSKI, LPET	<p>The professional bodies to consider the recommendation and work towards an agreed reciprocal basis for transfers and a mutual recognition framework for solicitors and barristers with less than three years post-qualification experience.</p> <p>The LPET Committee once established to approve competency frameworks as a priority and to review and agree the proposed transfer arrangements where appropriate.</p>	<p>Q4 2025</p> <p>Within three months of establishment of LPET Committee.</p>	<p>Reciprocal basis for transfers and mutual recognition framework agreed and implemented.</p> <p>LPET approval of proposed transfer arrangements. Regular transparent review by LPET of transfer arrangements.</p>



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Seirbhísí Dlí**

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