

Tsunami of new solicitors added to the Roll in 2016

A massive 1,347 new names will be added to the Roll of Solicitors in Ireland by the end of 2016, according to projections made by the Law Society's Admissions Office (see table).

The previous largest total number of new solicitors coming on the Roll in a single year was 777 in the calendar year 2008 – the year that the great recession slammed into the economy in Ireland and throughout the world.

The projected figure of 1,347 new solicitors for 2016 represents a staggering 275% increase compared with 2015. That was an anomalously low year but, compared with the more normal year of 2014, the projected uplift in 2016 is still a huge 141%.

The tsunami of new solicitors has been caused by the Brexit-driven transfer decisions of some 810 England and Wales-qualified solicitors to take out a second jurisdictional qualification, in Ireland. This they have been perfectly entitled to do since the mutual-recognition regime between the two jurisdictions was first put in place in 1991.

Change of direction

Many hundreds of Irish qualified solicitors have transferred to the Roll in England and Wales over the 25-year period since, and have pursued very successful careers in the giant legal jurisdiction next door. It was a particularly appreciated outlet for Irish solicitors when their prospects in Ireland were bleak during the depths of the recent recession. Now the phenomenon of Brexit has changed the direction of transfers across the Irish Sea, from east to west.

How many, if any, of those who have taken out a qualification in Ireland – in addition to their England and Wales qualification, which they use to practise either in that jurisdiction or elsewhere – will ever establish here remains to be seen. The single word that dominates all assessments of the potential impact of Brexit



Ken Murphy: 'Staggering 275% increase compared with 2015'

is 'uncertainty'. So far, the Law Society of Ireland has no knowledge that any of the firms listed on this page intends to open an office in this jurisdiction.

There has been no real boost to Law Society of Ireland finances from this. The €300 per solicitor fee charged for admission to the Roll simply covers the administration cost. Very few of the new solicitors to date have taken out practising certificates here.

Perhaps this may change if a significant number of businesses, in the financial services sector for example, transfer some or all of their operations from Britain to Ireland as a result of Brexit. But at this stage, that can be no more than speculation.

The two firms that have been the source of by far the highest number of new solicitors on the Roll in this jurisdiction this year are Eversheds LLP with 86 and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP (117). Eversheds are the only firm (see panel) that has an



Freshfields' Edward Braham: 'No plans to open an office in Ireland'

office in Ireland. Alan Murphy is Eversheds' managing partner here. The firm O'Donnell Sweeney became O'Donnell Sweeney Eversheds in 2007, and simply Eversheds in 2011.

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP is one of the ten largest law firms in the world – and one of the five elite City-of-London-based firms known as 'the Magic Circle'.

In mid-July 2016, while on other Law Society business in London, the then Law Society president Simon Murphy and director general Ken Murphy called in, by appointment, to meet with the most senior leaders of Freshfields in their office in Fleet Street.

Ken Murphy says: "We were very cordially greeted by what I would call 'the top brass' of Freshfields, including Senior Partner Edward Braham, together with the global managing partner and the firm's general counsel. They expressed appreciation for the helpful and efficient way in which the relevant staff of the Law

Society of Ireland had facilitated their colleagues with their transfers.

"They went on to inform us that the Freshfields' solicitors who were taking out an additional Roll qualification in Ireland were primarily their anti-trust, competition and trade law practitioners based in their London and Brussels offices. They were doing it to allay any conceivable concerns in the future about the status of their solicitors in dealing with EU institutions, including in relation to legal privilege in EU investigations. They told us, unambiguously, that Freshfields had no plans to open an office in Ireland."

FIRMS WITH FOUR OR MORE TRANSFERRING ENGLAND AND WALES SOLICITORS

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP	117
Eversheds LLP	86
Slaughter & May	40
Hogan Lovells LLP	34
Bristows LLP	27
Herbert Smith Freehills LLP	25
Allen & Overy LLP	24
Linklaters LLP	20
Clifford Chance LLP	12
Shearman & Sterling LLP	11
Bird & Bird LLP	10
Covington & Burling LLP	10
Fieldfishers LLP	7
Ashurst LLP	7
Arnold & Porter LLP	6
Gibson Dunne & Crutcher LLP	6
Taylor Wessing LLP	6
Osborne Clarke LLP	6
Baker & McKenzie LLP (member of Baker & McKenzie International, a Swiss 'Verein')	5
Simmons & Simmons LLP	5
King & Wood Mallesons LLP	5
Redd LLP	5
Shepherd & Wedderburn LLP	5
Norton Rose Fulbright LLP	5
D Young & Co LLP	4
Powell Gilbert LLP	4
Olswang LLP	4
Cooley LLP	4
Norton Rose Fulbright LLP	5
CMS Cameron McKenna LLP	4
HGF LLP	4

ADMISSIONS (COMPARING 2014, 2015, AND PROJECTED FOR END OF 2016)

Category	2014	2015	2016 (Projected)
Irish trainees	475	233	462
Irish barristers	15	15	34
English solicitors	36	70	810
Northern Irish solicitors	15	30	25
Non-EU lawyers	11	7	15
EU lawyers	5	4	4
Totals	557	359	1,347