



LAW SOCIETY
OF IRELAND

STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

2024-2028



The Law Society of Ireland exercises statutory functions under the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2015 in relation to the education, admission, enrolment, discipline, and regulation of the solicitors' profession in the Republic of Ireland. It is the representative and professional body for its solicitor members, to whom it also provides services and support.

INTRODUCTION

Each year brings new challenges and opportunities and so we can expect many for the Law Society and the legal profession over the five-year horizon of this new strategy.

Since the publication of our last strategy, the legal landscape has continued to change. Solicitors are operating in an environment of increasing complexity – interlinked legal, societal and market changes that are directly impacting both the solicitors’ profession and the public.

The profession is growing and diversifying with almost 12,000 practising solicitors in every community in the country. There is increasing demand for legal services in a whole range of new areas such as aviation law and technology as well as in the traditional areas of legal practice. Beyond the traditional legal firms, the role of in-house lawyers, in both the public and private sectors, has grown to be over 25% of the profession. We expect that to grow to over 30% in the next five years.

From the macro perspective, there are lots of positives but there are also challenges. There is a growing concentration of legal practitioners in major urban centres. For example nearly 70% of solicitors are based in Dublin and approximately 90% of the 2023 trainee intake were based in either Dublin or Cork. In 2022, there were 11 counties in Ireland that had only one or no trainee solicitors, and in 2023 this had grown to 13 counties. The justice and court system are under pressure and underfunded creating real consequences for access to justice. Supporting and shaping a just and accessible legal system is core to the purpose and vision of the solicitors’ profession, the Law Society and this strategy statement.

In refreshing this strategy, we took time to deeply engage with the profession, and other stakeholders, and we thank them for giving of their time. The consultation process created powerful conversations and drew consistent themes that have helped inform the development of the Law Society’s strategic direction.

From the Law School to practice to retirement, the Law Society walks with solicitors every step of their legal career path and the five strategic objectives set out here focus on supporting solicitors on that path to career success. The Law Society is committed to ensuring that trainees are well equipped, that standards remain high in the public interest, and that the services and supports available correspond to the excellence and integrity of the solicitors’ profession.

There is also opportunity and strategic need for the Law Society to reconnect and deepen its relationship with the profession. Solicitors bring a unique and valuable contribution to Irish society. Demonstrating that value and expertise is an important aspect of this strategy. We will work to share knowledge and experience to support and shape a just and accessible legal system.

We are pleased to share with you this five-year Statement of Strategy for the Law Society.

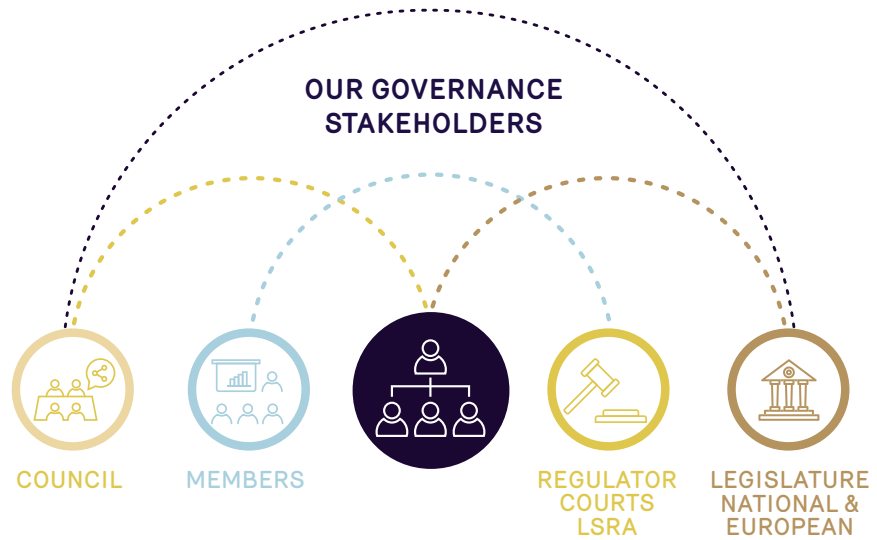
Barry MacCarthy
President
Law Society of Ireland

Mark Garrett
Director General
Law Society of Ireland

WHO WE ARE

COUNCIL

Council is the sovereign governing body, subject to the powers of external regulators. Council is responsible for overseeing and approving the strategy and policy of the Law Society. It has fiduciary responsibilities for the assets and finances (including risk) of the Law Society.

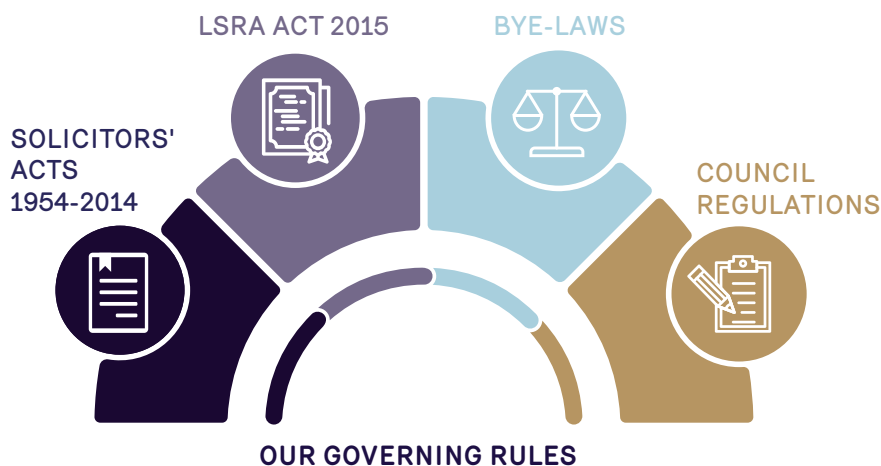


COMMITTEES

Council has appointed several committees to exercise some delegated functions and support solicitors. Seven standing committees have authority to act on behalf of the Law Society – Complaints and Client Relations, Co-ordination, Education, Finance, Money Laundering Reporting, Professional Indemnity Insurance and Regulation of Practice. Many advisory committees cover different areas of policy and legal practice. They monitor and advise on best practice as well as contributing to the development of new legislation in the Oireachtas. The time and expertise provided by committee members is voluntary.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Council appoints the Director General of the Law Society and has delegated to the Director General the appointment of all other staff. The Director General and the six Directors making up the Executive Leadership Team manage the day-to-day running of the Law Society. The Director General works very closely with the Directors, serving as the primary link between Council, to which he is the chief policy adviser, and the staff.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Law Society of Ireland is a people-focused organisation. Our purpose, ambition, and vision will act as touchstones in an ever-changing external environment and within a growing and dynamic profession. As a key source of legal expertise and insight, our strategic direction demonstrates the value add of the Law Society and the solicitors' profession.

PURPOSE

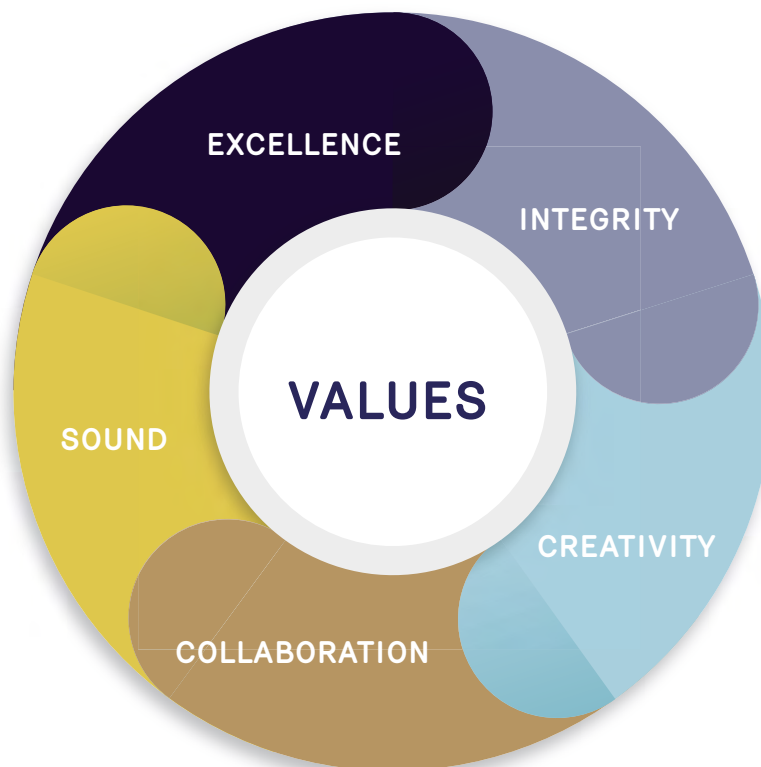
To support and shape a just and accessible legal system that works for all as a foundation for a modern, thriving and progressive society.

AMBITION

For the Law Society to be the influential voice on law and justice in Ireland, enabled by a dynamic solicitors' profession, acting in the public interest.

VISION

A solicitors' profession of unparalleled excellence, shaping a legal system that is a model of justice, fairness and accessibility, serving the needs of all.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	When this priority is delivered, we will have achieved this specific outcome.
An Influential Voice	The Law Society is the leading and influential voice shaping the legal system and representing the solicitors' profession.
Providing Leadership	The Law Society provides leadership, analysis, research and new thinking on justice, law reform and legal practice as part of our contribution to shaping the legal system as well as building the reputation of the solicitors' profession as experts and strategic thinkers.
Enabling Solicitors to Thrive	The Law Society is a key enabler of professional success and ensures that legal practice in Ireland is at the highest level and is supported in every community in the country.
Education and Learning Experience	The Law Society leads the development and delivery of legal learning for current and future generations of solicitors and those interested in the law. It is the exemplar of international excellence and innovation in legal education and learning for the solicitors' profession.
Promoting Effective Regulation	The Law Society protects and supports the public interest and the solicitors' profession by ensuring effective regulation. Its role as a regulator is understood and valued as central to sustaining trust in the solicitors' profession and contributing to the Irish legal system, economy and society.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Organisation Development	The Law Society is future-focused, fit-for purpose, sustainable and agile. We have the people, culture, resources and capabilities to collaborate effectively to support solicitors and achieve our ambition.
Technology	The Law Society is a technology empowered organisation that enables the best outcomes for solicitors, its Council and committees, staff teams and the legal system.

AN INFLUENTIAL VOICE

GOAL: The Law Society is the leading and influential voice shaping the legal system and representing the solicitors' profession.

We will add voice to the value of the profession, and we will use new ways to share and shape debate on matters of justice and law reform. In addition to furthering the ongoing representation and reputation agenda of the Law Society, we will:

Establish the Legal Insights Initiative to proactively share the expertise and knowledge of

practitioners with key stakeholders in the legal, governmental, and public sphere to help shape the legal system.

Establish the Law Society Expert Panel to support spokespersons to speak publicly as subject matter experts contributing to public debate on behalf of the Law Society and the solicitors' profession.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP

GOAL: The Law Society provides leadership, analysis, research and new thinking on justice, law reform and legal practice as part of our contribution to shaping the legal system as well as building the reputation of the solicitors' profession as experts and strategic thinkers.

Utilising a breadth of legal knowledge, we will lead thinking and practice on justice and law reform to support a changing legal system and Irish society. We will:

Establish the Law Society Centre for Justice & Law Reform to encourage evidence-based and future-focused debate on justice and law reform in Ireland by developing and sharing quality research and analysis.

Establish a Law Society Legislation & Regulation Advisory Service to enhance the Law Society's system of providing legal expertise and advice to policy makers and civil society groups on current legislative and regulation proposals.

Publish a guide to the future of the legal profession to provide leadership for future challenges and opportunities and to show how to harness them to the benefit of the solicitors' profession.

ENABLING SOLICITORS TO THRIVE

GOAL: The Law Society is a key enabler of professional success and ensures that legal practice in Ireland is at the highest level and is supported in every community in the country.

Central to this strategy is the practitioner. We will anticipate the different support requirements solicitors need as they navigate a changing regulatory landscape in pursuit of business success. Therefore, we will:

Develop more personalised and targeted services to enable solicitors succeed in their practice and career.

Advocate on behalf of the solicitors' profession to aid and shape a positive operating environment and to demonstrate the contribution the profession makes to Irish society.

Enhance career supports for solicitors by improving and expanding the Law Society's professional and personal offering such as new CPD options, and psychological services.

Promote and develop the Information Service and Knowledge Bank for solicitors to continuously produce and disseminate high quality information and documentation to assist legal practice.

Provide effective practice supports to assist practitioners run successful practices through tailored training.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING EXCELLENCE

GOAL: The Law Society of Ireland has a leading role in developing and delivering legal education for current and future generations of lawyers and those interested in the law. It is the exemplar of international excellence and innovation in legal education and learning within the solicitors' profession.

The path to solicitor success starts in the Law School. Pursuing excellence in trainee education and ensuring that the education offering is fit for future need and challenges is core to what we do. We will:

Deliver Professional Practice Courses (PPC) for solicitors to ensure that those who qualify have the required skills and knowledge to meet the high standards expected to practice. We will do so while innovating and continually improving.

Provide continuing professional development and further learning for solicitors and those interested in the law to increase knowledge and to continuously diversify the offering to meet the evolving needs of participants.

Optimise the education and student experience by reviewing and strengthening the student experience at every stage of the education cycle.

Publish and implement the Law Society Access Strategy to ensure the widest possible access to qualification as a solicitor and to identify and develop new routes to qualification.

Expand the Law Society Public Legal Education programme to reach the widest possible audience of those interested in the law and beyond.

Develop an Alumni Strategy to build connection with students and graduates and to reinforce the educational and student experience.

PROMOTING EFFECTIVE REGULATION

GOAL: The Law Society protects and supports the public interest and the solicitors' profession by ensuring effective regulation. Its role as a regulator is understood and valued as central to sustaining trust in the solicitors' profession and contributing to the Irish legal system, economy and society.

Solicitors make a unique and valuable contribution to Irish Society. Regulation of the legal profession assures public trust and high standards of professionalism through the delivery of:

A Financial Regulation programme that ensures effective financial regulation of practicing solicitors.

A Practice Regulation programme that ensures effective practice regulation of practicing solicitors.

A Regulatory Legal Service programme that ensures appropriate legal advice and action on regulatory matters and drafting advice on regulation reform.

An effective operation of the Law Society Compensation Fund and its financial management.

Lead best practice in the implementation of Anti-Money Laundering (AML) measures by liaising with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate and clearly understood legal frameworks and associated responsibilities for AML.

Establish feasibility requirements for a dedicated AML Business Unit by conducting a needs analysis to establish feasibility and resourcing requirements.

Demonstrate the value proposition of regulation and the role of the Law Society as a regulator so that it is clearly understood and valued by all stakeholders by developing the concept of 'Regulation as a Service' and a business intelligence capability.

Increase recognition of the Law Society as a leader in regulation that contributes to the Irish legal system, economy and society through thought leadership on regulatory concepts.



Cybercrime and Electronic evidence course co-organised by The Law Society of Ireland and the Council of Europe October 2023

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: The Law Society is future-focussed, fit-for purpose, sustainable and agile. We have the people, culture, resources and capabilities to collaborate effectively to support solicitors and achieve our ambition.

We are proud of the talent and skillset at the Law Society. We will continue to support a high-performance organisation by:

Developing a performance culture to deliver on the Law Society's strategic priorities through a new leadership development strategy, enabling high performance and aligning Learning and Development provision.

Establishing and operating a clear, robust, and comprehensive governance system by reviewing existing systems and practices to ensure rigorous risk management, regulatory compliance and internal control.

Devising and implementing an ESG strategy to operate the Law Society in a sustainable and responsible way supported by best practice governance.

Developing a financial strategy that aligns with the long-term strategic objectives of the Law Society by embedding Finance as a service partner supporting all parts of the Law Society.

Developing and implementing a Campus and Property Masterplan to set out long-term objectives and to provide the best-in-class facilities to solicitors, trainees and students.

TECHNOLOGY

GOAL: The Law Society is a technology empowered organisation that enables the best outcomes for solicitors, its Council and committees, staff teams and the legal system.

Technological acceleration is creating challenges and opportunities in all sectors, including the legal sector. We will keep pace with solicitors' need and expectations by:

Building a service Portal for solicitors to optimise solicitor service experience and improve productivity.

Developing a five-year IT roadmap to anticipate the needs and objectives of the Law Society over the medium term.

Using technology to enable the evolving ways of working digital plan which will empower our stakeholders to work digitally and seamlessly.

Identifying new tools and areas to automate to ensure the Law Society is an agile technology empowered organisation that can deliver quickly on solutions.

Developing a change management programme and standardising methodology to enable the Law Society implement new processes, systems and strategies.

Developing an IT Governance Framework to manage IT risks and ensure that the activities are aligned with their overall business objectives.

Developing a data and knowledge framework to enhance solicitor and staff experience and support business processes.

THE SOLICITORS' PROFESSION IN NUMBERS

At 31 December 2023



12,347

Count of Practising solicitors
at year end (incl PC & SOS)

68%



Dublin

32%

Outside Dublin

46%



Male

54%



Female



2,688

In-house Private



476

In-house Public



25.6%

In-house as a percentage
of Overall



36.2%

Female Partners



2,584

PC Holders Under 35



548

PPC trainees

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