

*Annual Report
of the Law Society
of Northern Ireland
2024 - 2025*



Law Society
of Northern Ireland



Annual Report

2024 - 2025



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President's Review of the Year

Looking back over my term of office as President, it's fair to say that it has been a busy and challenging year. The Society has continued to focus on its strategic priorities, but we've also had to adapt in response to the wider societal context in which we are operating.

Upholding the Rule of Law

There is no doubt that changing attitudes and volatility in the world at large have directly affected the legal profession over the past year.

We have continued to see threats to the Rule of Law and judicial independence at home and across the globe. We have witnessed challenges to democratic institutions, political interference, and threats to lawyers and to law firms.

Last year, the Society developed a Pledge to Uphold the Rule of Law in response to increasing attacks on lawyers in the media and from politicians associating lawyers with the actions or causes of their clients. This has continued to inform our work in this reporting period.

In May, we were pleased to host a major event in Stormont to mark the Opening for Signature of the European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer and to formally promote the Society's Pledge to Uphold the Rule of Law. We were delighted that the Society's Pledge was signed by the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Finance, the Lady Chief Justice, the Attorney General, and many other leaders in the Justice Sector.

Together, the Convention and Pledge form a powerful framework both nationally and internationally and will continue to reinforce the long-term protection of the legal profession and the principles that underpin our justice system as we move forward.

Access to Justice

Access to Justice has remained high on my agenda this year.

We have secured a 23% increase in County Court Scale Costs which were last reviewed in 2018. We presented evidence to the Taxing Master resulting in an increase to the Hourly Rate from £104 per hour to £155 per hour. This success resulted from effective advocacy by the Society supported by a compelling evidence base.

Despite this success, in other areas there have been frustrations. The Minister of Justice committed to a 16% increase in legal aid payments backdated to December 2024, but members have not yet benefited. We will continue to support our members and push for this important change to be implemented.



President's Review of the Year (continued)

Supporting solicitor safety

This year, the Society put significant focus on supporting solicitors whose work has exposed them to harassment, stalking and intimidation.

A new Solicitor Safety Group was set up in response to the growing threats reported by our members, particularly in family, criminal, and Legal Aid work. The Group has already been involved in a number of initiatives designed to promote solicitor safety, including the development of safeguarding resources, lobbying for policy and legislative change and engagement with senior stakeholders.

I would like to sincerely thank our members who have shared their personal and often deeply distressing stories of harassment and intimidation and without whom this work would not be possible.

Modernisation and improvement

Another key focus for the Society in 2025 was modernisation and improvement. We published a major Consultation Report following widespread engagement with the sector on how we can make pathways into the solicitor profession more accessible and inclusive.

The Consultation Report and Action Plan marked a significant milestone in the Society's work to ensure that our qualification and entry pathways support both the current and future needs of the solicitor profession.

The new Client Complaints scheme also came into operation on 1 September. Legal and Lay members of the new Solicitors Complaints Committee have been recruited and will be working under the direction of the new Committee Chair Rick Hill.

We also saw positive developments within the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. The Tribunal sits at the apex of the conduct and discipline system for solicitors and is of critical importance if we are to remain a self-regulating profession. A new panel of Legal and Lay members has been appointed to the Tribunal, and Sir David McFarland has been appointed President of the Tribunal.

Engaging with members

We have also continued to improve engagement with the Local Solicitors Associations throughout Northern Ireland. The Local Association Forum which meets monthly is working well and is a very effective sounding board for the Society with our membership.

What I learned from these meetings is that our members want candour and transparency from the Society. They want to know where we are having success but also where we need to do better. The Membership do not expect perfection, but they need to know that the Society is out there working on their behalf.

The Society has commissioned a review of its communications with members and in future a greater emphasis on telling members what we are doing will be central to our communications strategy.

Under the direction of Brigid Napier, we established a Women's Network for Society members. The Network has been meeting regularly with great numbers and enthusiasm. The Network aims to promote the role of women in the profession, and is already offering invaluable guidance to women solicitors on how to advance their careers.

Sharing best practice

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen links with our sister Law Societies in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales.

On the International stage, Northern Ireland continues to have a strong presence through its engagement with the International Bar Association, the Council of European Bars and the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

Members do not always uncritically support our continued international engagement. Some see it as a distraction, while others doubt whether it represents value for money. We live, however, in a connected world. We must also remember the support that we received from international lawyers in our darkest times. Engagement internationally is today of even greater importance as the Rule of Law is threatened.

My thanks

I am indebted to everyone who has supported me this year.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the Presidential Team – Darren Toombs (Senior Vice President) and Mark Borland (Junior Vice President) - and to David Lavery (Chief Executive). I thank my fellow Council members, and those who sit on Committees and other Working Groups, for their dedication and commitment to the Society.

I would also like to thank Society staff, particularly the Executive team for their support this year.

As I pass on the baton to incoming President, Mark Borland, I am confident he will build on all that we have achieved in the past year.

Colin Mitchell
President
Law Society of Northern Ireland

October 2025

Council of the Law Society of Northern Ireland

President

Colin Mitchell

Senior Vice-President

Darren Toombs

Junior Vice-President

Mark Borland

Treasurer

Brian H Speers

Secretary

David A Lavery CB

Council Members 2024-25

ORDINARY REPRESENTATIVES

Brian Archer

Jennifer Bell

Louise Butler

Eileen Ewing

John Guerin

Lorraine Keown

Christopher Kinney

Andrew Mairs

Eoghan McKenna

Joseph McVeigh

Brigid Napier

Catherine Nixon

William Nugent

Michael Robinson

Janice Spence

Brian Walker

Rowan White

Sarah Wilson

CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Southern Circuit

Brian Charity

Julie-Ann McCaffrey

Millicent Tate

Northern Circuit

Philip Armstrong

Mark Borland (Junior Vice-President)

Karen Cherry

Eastern Circuit

Simon Chambers

John O’Prey

Catherine Heyes

Chief Executive’s Introduction

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Law Society of Northern Ireland for the year November 2024 to November 2025. I hope you will find this report interesting and informative in providing an overview of the work undertaken by the Society’s governing Council and the many Committees that assist Council with its work.



Over the course of the year, the Society’s work has been driven by its Strategic Priorities. You will have seen from the President’s Review of the Year that these priorities are wide-ranging and closely linked to our core pillars of membership, representation, professional development, and regulation.

The Society has also taken forward a comprehensive Governance Review in this reporting period. This review was designed to ensure that the Society’s governance arrangements are in line with best practice and fit for the future.

As part of the Review, the Society launched a consultation on new Solicitor Practice Regulations. The new Regulations will replace approximately 30 sets of existing regulations with a simplified and consolidated single document, making practice requirements more accessible for members. Other work has included developing proposals to strengthen the Society’s connection with Local Associations through an affiliation scheme and modernising the Society’s governance framework and associated policies and procedures.

This year, the Society had the privilege of co-hosting the International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives (IILACE) Annual Conference, held in Belfast for the first time in 27 years. IILACE is the leading international network for Chief Executives of Law Societies and Bar Associations and provides a forum for strategic discussions, collaboration and information sharing on issues affecting justice and the legal professions.

It was very clear to me that colleagues across the globe are facing similar challenges within their organisations: navigating the transformative impact of AI on the legal profession; defending the Rule of Law in challenging global environments and identifying the most impactful ways to promote member and staff wellbeing and positive workplace cultures. Those discussions will help shape the Society’s work going forward.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Society will be developing a new 5 year Strategic Plan setting out the roadmap for the future. This will identify our longer-term strategic priorities for the benefit of our members. We will also be progressing the next phase of our Governance Review.

I hope you will take time to read this Annual Report in order to learn about the work the Society is undertaking on behalf of the Solicitor Profession in Northern Ireland.

David A Lavery CB
Chief Executive
Law Society of Northern Ireland

October 2025





Law Society Committee & Council Reports

Council

Chair

Colin Mitchell
(President)

Secretary

David A Lavery CB
(Chief Executive)

Council members

Darren Toombs
(Senior Vice President)
Mark Borland
(Junior Vice President)
Brian H Speers
(Treasurer)

Brian Archer
Philip Armstrong
Jennifer Bell
Louise Butler
Simon Chambers
Brian Charity
Karen Cherry
Eileen Ewing
John Guerin
Catherine Heyes
Lorraine Keown
Christopher Kinney
Andrew Mairs

Julie-Ann McCaffrey
Eoghan McKenna
Joseph McVeigh
Brigid Napier
Catherine Nixon
William Nugent
John O'Prey
Michael Robinson
Janice Spence
Millicent Tate
Brian Walker
Rowan White
Sarah Wilson

Number of
Meetings
10

The Council is the governing body of the Law Society. Its role is to set strategy, oversee the work of the Society and provide leadership and direction to the Solicitor profession in Northern Ireland.

The Council is made up of 30 members, all of whom are practising solicitors and serve on a voluntary basis.

The current Council was elected in 2022 and will complete its 3 year term in November 2025. In this reporting period, the Society partnered with Civica Election Services to run a fully digital election for the next Council which will serve until November 2028.

The work of Council is supported by a number of Committees and reports on the activities of these Committees appear later in this Annual Report.

Council has in place a Scheme of Delegation under which much routine business is delegated to these Committees. This arrangement means that Council has greater scope to consider matters of strategic importance to the Solicitor profession.



Business Committee

Chair Colin Mitchell (President)	Mark Borland (Junior Vice President) Eileen Ewing Brigid Napier Darren Toombs (Senior Vice President)	Brian Walker Rowan White
Members Brian Archer Brian Speers (Treasurer)		

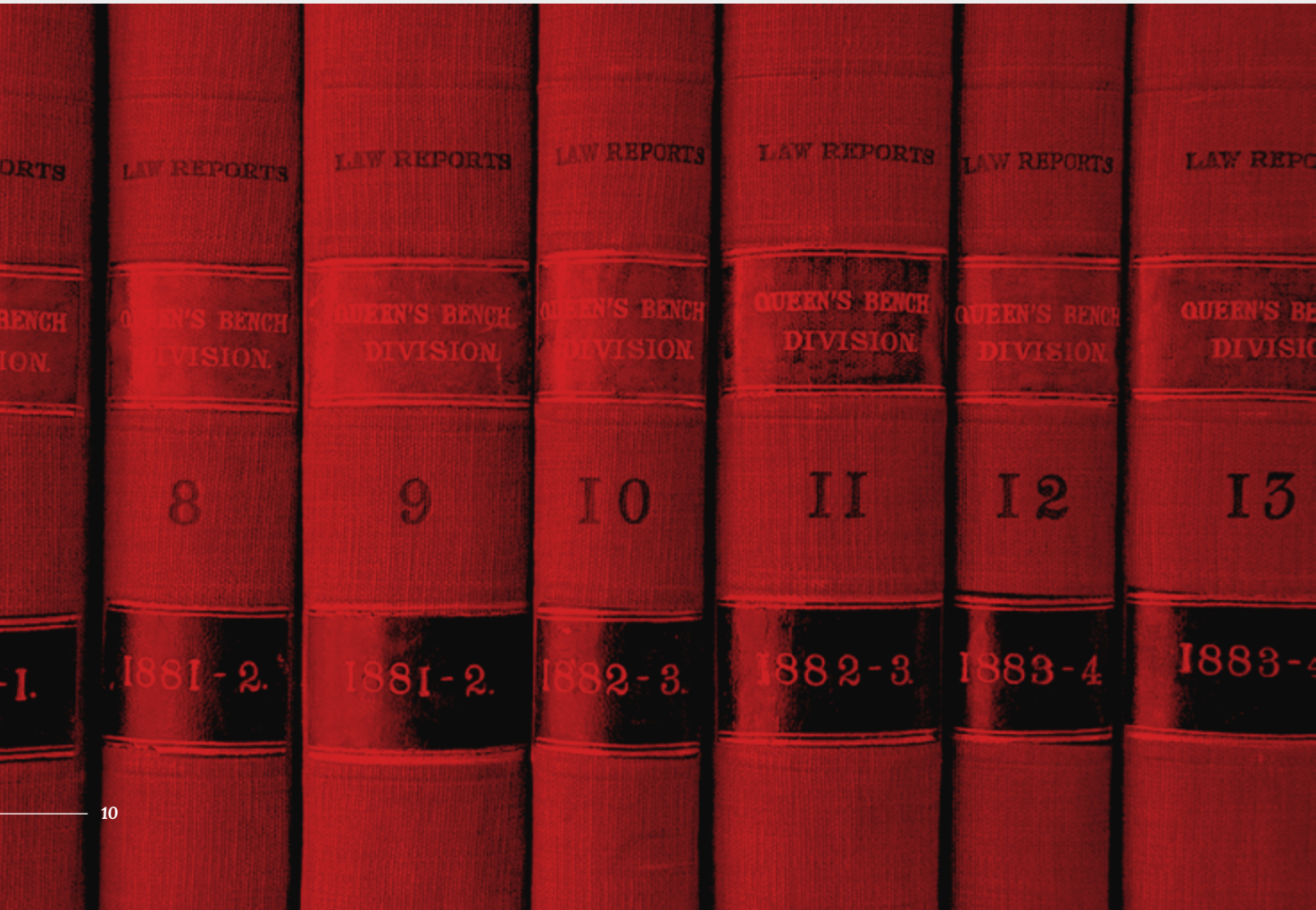
Number of Meetings
8

The Business Committee supports the Council by providing oversight of the day-to-day operations and resources of the Society.

Many of the business items coming before the Council will have been considered in advance by the Business Committee, with recommendations made by the Committee, as appropriate.

The Business Committee receives regular reports from the Chief Executive on progress against the Society’s Strategic Priorities before presentation to Council. This year, the Committee provided direction on key areas of the Society’s operations and resources.

The Committee also received regular updates on the Society’s Governance Review and considered updates to core policies and procedures, to ensure our governance is in line with best practice. This year, the Committee also reviewed proposals relating to the implementation of the Society’s Sustainability Strategy, including the procurement of renewable energy for Law Society House.



Access to Justice Committee

Chair Brian Archer	Council members Brian Charity Lorraine Keown Eoghan McKenna Joe McVeigh William Nugent	Co-optees Owen Beattie Paul Dougan Julie Knight Pearse MacDermott
Secretary Peter O'Brien		

Number of Meetings
5

The Access to Justice Committee deals primarily with policy and practice matters in relation to the availability and operation of Legal Aid, and wider Access to Justice issues, including matters arising out of the implementation of the Access to Justice (NI) Order 2003 as amended. It is also responsible for the development of rights of audience for solicitors.

The main focus of the Committee in the past year has been on issues relating to legal aid, which has involved extensive engagement with practitioners, the Minister of Justice, senior officials at the Department of Justice (DoJ), senior officials at the Legal Services Agency (LSA), Judge Burgess, and others.

The Minister made a Statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 2 December 2024 in relation to the DoJ’s Enabling Access to Justice Reform Programme and to advise that the 16% interim fee increase recommended by the Burgess Report, would extend to criminal, civil and family cases. This coincided with the publication of the Burgess Report and the outcome Report on the Foundational Review of Civil Legal Aid, which were extensively reviewed by the Committee. The Committee subsequently provided written submissions on the DoJ’s Enabling Access to Justice Reform Programme Delivery Plan and the proposals relating to revised remuneration rates for legal aid providers.

In February 2025, representatives from the Committee gave evidence before the Justice Committee, alongside the Society’s Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, warning that the legal aid system was on the verge of collapse. Several key calls were made to include the immediate application of the 16% legal aid fee increase to all cases currently in the system, a firm commitment to a comprehensive, independently led review of all legal aid fees, and an urgent independent review of legal aid for family cases.

Initially, the proposal was that uplifts would only apply prospectively after the commencement date of the legislation. However following extensive engagement with the Minister of Justice, senior officials in the Department and others, the backdating of the fee increases and updates to travel and mileage claims, were secured to 1 December 2024. Arrangements were also negotiated and secured to enable the automatic receipt of uplifts once the legislation comes into force, including for backdated payments.

The Society welcomed the establishment of a Working Group chaired by Judge Burgess, where extensive work has already been undertaken, resulting in further increases being secured in relation to PACE and Parole Hearings, which will be backdated to May 2025. Further work has commenced in respect of the payment of refresher fees and the interim payment of disbursements and costs.

Uplifts were also secured in relation to immigration and asylum legal aid fees, along with a commitment to backdate these to 8 April 2025.

It has been a major cause of concern that the agreed fee increases have not yet been paid and that the outcome of the consultation on the Delivery Plan in relation to the Department’s consultation on its Enabling Access to Justice Reform Programme has not yet been published at the time of writing. The Committee will continue to press for progress on both these matters through constructive engagement with the Minister, Departmental Officials and others. The Society is indebted to Committee members for the extensive time and support they have provided for engagement and negotiations with the DoJ and others, and hopes progress is secured urgently.

Access to Justice Committee (continued)

The Society, alongside the Bar, continues to attend regular meetings of the LSA’s Operational Forum which provides detailed information by way of a Dashboard on the processing of legal aid applications, payments and related issues. In respect of legal aid funding, the total expenditure by the LSA on legal aid cases in 2024/25 was £120m and substantial progress was also made on reducing the level of unassessed bills.

The Committee has continued to make the case for appropriate funding for the Legal Aid Budget. Through effective lobbying by the Society, the LSA received a budget of £119.5m for the current financial year, which represents its highest ever opening budget. The Committee will continue to press for a longer-term solution on funding, including ensuring that sufficient funding is available for future fee increases.

As a result of the Society and Bar’s Joint Application for Leave to apply for Judicial Review in relation to the prompt payment of legal aid fees, a judgement was obtained in the High Court declaring a statutory duty on the LSA to deliver payments within a reasonable period of time. The Department has subsequently launched an appeal in the case, with matters ongoing.

The Committee also reviews the operation of the Legal Aid Management System (LAMS). Practitioners represent the Committee on the LAMS Change Forum, which has resulted in a number of practical changes being implemented to the LAMS system, which should contribute to a more positive user-friendly experience for solicitors.

Engagement has also continued with the LSA in relation to queries raised by practitioners, and in respect of other matters, such as its Fraud & Error Policies and the Practitioner File Review Programme.

The Committee also monitors the level of criminal, civil and family business at various court tiers, as well as the use of live links and remote hearings in the courts system. It has also raised awareness of the NICTS’ new Justice Video Platform.

The Committee has considered and received updates throughout the year on the Northern Ireland Court and Tribunals Service (NICTS) modernisation programme. This has included several meetings with the modernisation team and Themis project team to facilitate input from practitioners into future systems. Updates have also been provided to the Committee on the NICTS Estate Strategy 2023-2030.

The Committee has worked alongside the Society’s CPD team to deliver a further session of the Advanced Advocacy Course. In its submissions to the Department it has pressed for priority to be given to extending provisions for solicitor advocacy.

The Committee also engaged in other activities during the year, such as responding to consultations, providing oral evidence to the Justice Committee on the Justice Bill, holding a launch event for the Social Value of Legal Aid report, and facilitating input into the All-Party Group on Access to Justice.



Peter O'Brien, Brian Archer, David Lavery CB and Pearse MacDermott presenting to the Justice Committee February 2025

Client Complaints Committee

Chair

John Guerin

Deputy Chair

Michael Robinson

Secretary

Laura McCullough

Council members

Colin Mitchell
(Until 26 November 2024)
Eoghan McKenna
Janice Spence
Andrew Mairs
Lorraine Keown
Millicent Tate
(Joined January 2025)
Sara Wilson

Co-optees

Shane Donnelly
Maeve Fisher

Lay Members

Joe Blake
Seamus Magee
Barbara Stuart

Number of Meetings

9

The Client Complaints Committee deals with service complaints received from clients. It exercises powers conferred upon it by Article 41A of the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 in relation to addressing issues of inadequate professional service, including the reduction or limitation of fees charged where inadequate service is found.

The Committee also has power to set time limits for completion of matters, to direct the solicitor to pay for the rectification of any error and/or specify other action in the interests of the client to be taken at the solicitors’ expense.

Within this reporting period the Committee considered 33 complaints and the outcomes have been as follows:

- There have been no referrals to the Solicitor’s Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT)
- One complaint was upheld
- Five complaints were not upheld
- 16 complaints were partially upheld – not all the identified service deficiencies were upheld.
- Five matters required adjournment to be concluded.
- Six complaints were dismissed following a consideration determining that the complaint was outside the Committee’s remit.

Emerging Trends

The Committee identified several themes and trends, noting that most complaints related to conveyancing services received. The most common headlines of complaint related to:

- Failure to respond to in house complaints
- Failure to keep clients properly informed
- Delay/failure to respond to reasonable enquiries
- Undue delay/inaction
- Failure to provide bills of costs/cash statements; incurring expense without the client’s authority.

These findings inform the Society’s CPD seminar delivery. This year we have held CPD seminars in complaint management in the areas of Conveyancing, Litigation, Family Law and Probate.

Part 2 of the Society’s compulsory Risk Management CPD was delivered in April 2025. This focused on the implementation of the Legal Complaints and Regulation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (‘the 2016 Act’) and what this means for practitioners.

The new Solicitors Complaints Committee provided for in the 2016 Act came into operation on 1 September 2025 and will replace the Society’s Client Complaints Committee. The CPD session was delivered in partnership by the Society’s Head of Professional Conduct Laura McCullough, Client Complaints Manager Shauna Thompson, the Lay Observer, Ms Marian Cree and the new Chair of the Solicitors Complaints Committee, Mr Rick Hill.

Lay Observers Annual Report 2023/24

The work of the Committee is subject to regulatory supervision by Ms. Marian Cree who publishes a Lay Observer’s report into the activities of the Committee annually. The report covering the period 2023/24 includes statistics on the number of cases dealt with by the Committee as well as an outline of referrals received by complainants dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled or the outcome.

The Lay Observer noted the Society’s proactive approach to the issues raised and the enhancements made to the complaints process. Importantly, it is noted that the level of complaints against solicitors in Northern Ireland remains very low, in comparison with other areas of the United Kingdom.

Client Complaints Committee (continued)

The Lay Observer identified the following key issues within her report:

1. Failing to consider in-house complaints

The report noted that “solicitors failing to properly consider the client’s complaint under the solicitor’s own in-house complaints procedure is an all too familiar issue.”

The Committee would urge practitioners to review and ensure that their in-house complaints process meets the regulatory requirements and is robust. It is all too familiar an issue which comes across the Committee’s radar and can in their opinion be avoided with good complaint handling and communication. Particularly considering the new client complaint arrangements which are now in place.

2. Unsigned Terms of Business Letter

The report suggested that “if a complainant has had sight of the Terms of Business Letter and then signed it to clearly state they have accepted them, that potentially several complaints could be addressed at an early stage.”

The Committee recognised that signing of a Terms of Business by a client and the retention of the same on file is not a mandated regulatory requirement as regards client care and costs information under the Solicitors (Client Communication) Practice Regulations 2008.

Practitioners may wish to retain a copy for their own records to validate that the client has been fully informed of same should any complaint arise.

3. Clarity of communication

The report highlighted that “a number of complaints I believe would not have reached my stage in the complaints process if the correspondence from both the solicitor and the law society was clear and written in layman’s terms”.

The Committee recognised the increased requirement for the complaints process to be lay-friendly, particularly in preparation for the changes the 2016 Act will bring. The Society has also reflected on communications issued and has made necessary improvements with a lay focus where necessary.

The Committee would ask practitioners to do likewise to ensure that communications to clients remain clear, unambiguous and understandable to the lay person.

Practitioners should also be aware that the Society has taken the Lay Observer’s observations as regards extension requests from the Society seriously.

The Society has now implemented an Extension Requests Policy to ensure that extensions are only permitted in exceptional circumstances. It is envisaged that the introduction of this policy will ensure progression of complaints to conclusion for the benefit of both the complainant and solicitor. This policy is now published on the Society’s website.

Commenting on the report and addressing the new complaints landscape, Mr John Guerin, Chair of the Client Complaints Committee has commented as follows:

“Over many years as Chair of the Committee I have seen great examples of how firms have effectively managed a client complaint. Unfortunately, I have also seen some very poor examples when the client has been afforded either no response at all or a very basic response which does not address all their concerns. I would encourage everyone within the profession to take their regulatory responsibilities seriously and to review their own internal complaints handling procedures to ensure effective management of the same. Practitioners have been informed of the increased sanctions which are now afforded to the new Solicitors Complaints Committee including the power to award up to £5,000 for loss, inconvenience or distress. In my estimation, simple steps can avoid a complaint reaching this level and can avoid exposure to a regulatory sanction and reputational damage which comes with the same.”

Contentious Business Committee

Chair

Colin Mitchell
(President of LSNI)

Secretary

Ann McMahon

Council members

Jennifer Bell
(until September 2025)
Brian Charity
Chris Kinney
Louise Butler
Simon Chambers

Co-optees

Cormac Fitzpatrick
Martin Hanna
Ian Wimpres
Katharine Kimber
Lois Sullivan
Shauna O'Hara

Number of Meetings

6

The Contentious Business Committee, chaired by Colin Mitchell met throughout the year in hybrid format and focused on adherence to its Terms of Reference by considering law, practice and procedure in area of contentious business.

In addition to Committee work, members contributed to Consultation Working Groups, Court Liaison Groups (County Court and King’s Bench), shadow Civil Justice Council, County Court Rules Committee, Litigant in Person Reference Group and many other groups associated with the civil justice system to ensure that solicitors’ informed views were shared.

The Committee’s appointed members to a judicial working group concluded its efforts to seek a review and increase of the solicitor’s hourly rate for taxation. Following the engagement of BDO to assist with data gathering from Society members, robust and verifiable calculations were produced and offered to the Chair of the group, Mr Justice McAlinden. In April 2025, the Taxing Master announced that a new rate had been set at £155 per hour effective from 1 June 2025, representing an increase in excess of 50%. This new rate is more reflective of the actual cost of operating a practice.

The Committee representative on the Litigant in Person Reference Group, Mr Chambers, assisted Ulster University to develop a Charter to aid litigants in person, lawyers, judiciary and court staff to communicate more effectively and build relationships. The Charter was successfully launched in Law Society House and welcomed by all in attendance as an essential tool to encourage effective engagement and participation in the court process.

Committee members participated in the County Court Liaison and County Court Rules Committees and advocated for solicitors regarding county court processes including an ebundling pilot in Omagh, and importantly an advancement on the commencement of the 23% increase in Scale Fees, which the Rules Committee consulted and agreed upon. The Committee was extremely concerned that the new scale has not been signed off by the Department of Justice despite engagement directly with officials and the Minister. Although the indication was that a decision would be taken sooner rather than later, the Committee would consider taking matters further as the delay was unacceptable.

The Management Board of the Society’s Clinical Negligence Practitioners Group continued to deliver focused expert CPD sessions for members including Strokes and Vascular Disease, Back to Basics for Clinical Negligence practitioners and end of year conference which will have a focus on birth defects. The Board looked at the effectiveness of the Clinical Negligence Protocol as compliance with its requirements was considered poor by some members. The Board considered how letters of claim and response were being used in practice and whether further clarification was required. The Board will keep the operation of the Protocol in its sights as it is an important tool to assist with clinical negligence practice, and requires to be fit for purpose, and adhered to by practitioners.

The Committee responded to public and focused consultation papers throughout the year calling on the expertise within the Committee and beyond. Papers responded to, and contributed to included:

- Review of Licensing and Registration of Clubs in NI.
- Amendments to Legal Aid Remuneration.
- DoJ Draft Delivery Plan.
- NICTS Consultation on Proposed Court Fee Increase.
- OLCJ Consultation on Protocol for the Participation of Vulnerable Parties and Witnesses in Civil Proceedings.
- OLCJ Consultation on Practice Direction for Personal Injury and Damage Only Civil Litigation Actions.

Conveyancing And Property Committee

Chair
Philip Armstrong

Secretary
Claire McNamee

Council members
Mark Borland (JVP)
Brian Speers (Treasurer)

Catherine Heyes
Karen Cherry
Brigid Napier
Catherine Nixon
William Nugent
John O’Prey
Michael Robinson
Brian Walker
Millicent Tate

Co-optees
Maeve Corrigan
Stuart Harper
Ellen Hartles
Darren Rainey
Dawson McConkey
Simon Murray
Arthur Moir

Number of Meetings
10

The Conveyancing and Property Committee deals primarily with residential conveyancing issues. It seeks to engage with the challenges faced by members working in conveyancing practice. This year, the Committee continued to focus on the conveyancing process and engage with stakeholders in relation to matters impacting members.

The Committee monitored political developments, engaged with local politicians to discuss issues and responded to consultations in relation to unfair letting fees, as part of the consultation on the Draft Programme for Government, and unadopted developments.

The Committee organised the third annual Conveyancing Week in October 2025. The annual Conveyancing Conference took place at Titanic Belfast trialling a paperless format with polling features to seek the views of all attendees on current issues. Engagement with stakeholders continued, including an event held with estate agents and surveyors in Ranfurly House, Dungannon and with the student population to advocate the benefits of a career in residential conveyancing in private practice with events held at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Queens University Belfast and Ulster University. The Committee has continued to build this engagement and secured, in May 2025 a place on the Queens University Spotlight on Law Tour to promote a career in high street practice, with volunteers from across the jurisdiction.

The Committee continues to keep the implementation of the revised Home Charter Scheme under review publishing revised Practice Directions in January 2025. Implementation of the Scheme has also been supported through Committee input to CPD events. Commercial conveyancing CPD was also delivered by Alan Riley.

The New Build Sub-Group continued to meet to review the suite of new build documentation. The Committee has also been involved with the New Homes Quality Code to consider how the documentation will work with any revised consumer codes.

The Committee has engaged extensively with the Land Registry in relation to the new digital solution for Land Registers and has engaged Mr Arthur Moir to consider revised legislation which will form part of the digitisation. The Committee also continues to raise with Land Registry ongoing operational and service issues encountered by members.

Conveyancing And Property Committee (continued)

The Committee met with statutory body consultees, including appearing before the Committee for Infrastructure to discuss the content of Regional/Mid Ulster Property Certificates and unadopted developments. In relation to the Regional/Mid Ulster Property Certificates, the Committee is continuing to engage with NI Water to secure a guidance note to accompany the Property Certificates. Another change that members will see in relation to properties built since 2013 is whether NI Water’s records will indicate connection on this Property Certificate.

The Committee continues to address issues encountered by members with lenders’ conveyancing panels and has engaged with UK Finance, individual lenders and their panel managers in this regard, particularly in relation to issues experienced by members concerning their panel membership. The Committee has also agreed a protocol with Lender Exchange regarding PI renewal.

The Committee has overseen publication of Folio, and thanks guest editors Sheena Grattan and Heather Conway for their work in relation to this.

The Committee also liaises with other stakeholders and organisations such as RICS, NAEA Propertymark, NI Co-ownership Housing Association, and the New Homes Quality Board on a range of matters as they arise. It also continues to issue relevant communications to members and contribute to the development of CPD programme, keeping members informed and up to date. The Committee is well aware of the daily challenges faced by conveyancing solicitors across Northern Ireland and will continue to advocate for members’ interests in this essential area of law.



Criminal Law Committee

Chair

Eoghan McKenna

Secretary

Ann McMahon

Council members

Brian Archer

Brian Charity

Eileen Ewing

Andrew Mairs

Joe McVeigh

Co-optees

Pearse MacDermott

Patricia Coyle

Keith Gamble

Bronach Kelly

Feargal MacElhatton

Number of Meetings

5

The Criminal Law Committee met in hybrid format throughout year and focused on adherence to its Terms of Reference by considering law, practice and procedure in areas of criminal law.

Engagement with other participants in the criminal justice system was a key feature for the Committee, with some Committee members joining stakeholder working groups to contribute to different initiatives and work streams within criminal justice. Similar engagement took place with internal Society Practitioner Committees - Access to Justice, Family Law, Education Committee and Committee Chairs Legal Aid Group - to work collaboratively to obtain better outcomes for members.

Committee members participated in meetings associated with the Fundamental Review of Criminal Legal Aid led by Judge Burgess, which took considerable Committee time on behalf of the membership. Unambiguous views were offered on current levels of remuneration as well as how fee structures might be revised. The Committee continued its commitment to assisting with additional work to progress discussions to increase fees to more realistic levels appropriate to modern day practice.

Engagement continued with Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) involving regular meetings with Committee members to offer views and comments on scheduled inspections of various criminal justice organisations to assess and improve efficiency and effectiveness within the system for all. This included discussions on Special Measures in NI Criminal Courts, Review of NI Multi Agency Review Arrangements and Child Criminal Exploitation.

The Committee Chair and another senior criminal law practitioners are assisting in the development of an Early Engagement project with a focus on the Crown Court but also how Magistrates' Court practice could assist, as charge cases spend considerable time in that court before the defendant is returned for trial. There are significant opportunities to reduce delay through earlier, more effective engagement between the parties during this period and that engagement will continue between committal and arraignment, supporting robust and consistent judicial case management in the Crown Court.

CPD events planned by the Committee this year included:

- Enhanced Combination Order roll out [Ballymena, Antrim and Coleraine].
- A Vulnerable Person Practitioner Course consisting of up to six modules to upskill solicitors in engaging, acting for and speaking with vulnerable persons in all legal settings. Representatives from various organisations assisted in delivering this high-level, certified course which allowed successful attendees to hold themselves out as a Vulnerable Person Practitioner.

- Restorative Justice – a new way of working through Adult Offending.
- Advising vulnerable adults in an office setting.

The Chair and a senior member of the Committee appeared before the Justice Committee to give evidence on members' concerns and recommendations regarding the Justice Bill. The main areas focused on were biometrics, provisions relating to children, live links and taxation of legal costs. Engagement will continue to ensure concerns are taken on board to strengthen the provisions and remit of the draft legislation. Follow up discussions included a conversation around appropriate adults in custody suites.

PSNI engagement continued throughout the year to raise custody suite issues and seek effective resolutions for remote interviews, confidential consultation facilities, sharing of important papers with defence representatives. The Chair delivered a CPD training event for custody officers, 'Collaborative interaction between Custody staff and defence practitioners and the role/impact of Custody'.

The Committee engaged with other agencies in the criminal justice system including PPS and Prison Service as issues arise which impact on members effectively interacting with their clients. Currently work is ongoing in relation to a new system for solicitors to exchange communications with their clients detained in prison. The new system aims to deliver greater security and efficiency.

The Department of Justice published several consultation papers which the Committee assisted in responding to, which included:

- Court Ordered Community Sentences for Children.
- Increasing the maximum sentence for causing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer harm or death.
- Proposed expansion of Out of Court Disposals.
- List of Qualifying Offences as specified under Article 53A PACE (NI) Order 1989
- Sentence Reduction for Guilty Pleas.
- Using a mobile phone whilst driving.
- Public Consultation on proposed expansion of Out of Court Disposals.

Education Committee

Chair

Darren Toombs
(Senior Vice President)

Deputy Chair

Catherine Nixon

Secretary

Darren Patterson

Council members

Jennifer Bell

Christopher Kinney

Julie-Ann McCaffrey

Eoghan McKenna

Joseph McVeigh

Janice Spence

Rowan White

Co-optees

Kevin Brown

Ann Kinder

Stephen McCourt

Gavin Patterson

Number of Meetings

10

The Education Committee oversees the vocational education, admission, and training of solicitors in Northern Ireland, including pre-qualification (trainees) and post-qualification (continuing professional development).

At the outset of the year, the Society hosted the annual Admission Ceremony at Assembly Buildings, Belfast, marking the admission of 155 newly qualified solicitors to the Roll. The ceremony was attended by the Lady Chief Justice for Northern Ireland and was among the largest to date.

Throughout 2025, the Committee continued its work to modernise and enhance access to the solicitor profession. A major milestone was the publication of the Enhancing Access to the Profession Consultation, which engaged members, trainees, legal educators, and government bodies to gather views on how to make qualification pathways more flexible, accessible, and sustainable.

Respondents endorsed reform and the exploration of new routes such as:

- A Solicitor Modern Apprenticeship Scheme.
- Part-time and hybrid qualification routes.
- A Returners Programme to support qualified solicitors re-entering practice.

The Committee remained focused on monitoring training developments across England & Wales, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland and strengthening engagement with counterparts from these jurisdictions.

The Committee also continued to prioritise closer engagement with member firms to ensure the sustainability of training opportunities. This work supported a record 169 trainee solicitor registrations for the 2025 intake - the highest to date.

The Centenary Bursary Scheme continued to play a vital role in widening access to the profession. Now in its third year, the scheme awarded a further two bursaries covering the cost of the Diploma in Professional Legal Studies at the IPLS.

“ A record 169 trainee solicitor registrations for the 2025 intake ”



The Committee also endorsed new initiatives to enhance engagement with aspiring solicitors. These included participation in school and university outreach events, as well as the Client Consultation Competition and the Connecting Trainees networking event for prospective trainees. These initiatives reflect the Committee’s continued focus on early engagement with the aim of supporting the next generation of solicitors.

The Law Society Module is designed to develop professional standards and ethical awareness for trainee solicitors. In 2025 a total of 150 trainees passed the examinable unit relating to Professional Conduct and 159 trainees passed the Solicitor Accounts exam.

The Committee oversaw a total of 62 admissions from other jurisdictions, including England and Wales, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland. It also considered a range of other admissions matters, such as applications to register as a student of the Society from qualified barristers, foreign-qualified lawyers, and applicants under Regulation 8(5), as well as applications for restricted practice waivers.

Members of the Committee represented the Society on the Council of Legal Education.



Family Law Committee

Chair

Janice Spence
Suzanne Rice Deputy Chair
(November 2024 to Summer 2025)

Secretary

Ann McMahon

Council members

Andrew Mairs
Eileen Ewing
Lorraine Keown
Simon Chambers.

Co-optees

Anne Caldwell
Kelly Breen
Lisa Melarkey
Catherine Dixon
Jonathan Killen

Number of Meetings

6

The Committee met throughout the year in hybrid format and focused on adherence to its Terms of Reference by considering and monitoring the operation of family law, promoting improvements, engaging with stakeholders on behalf of the profession and the promotion of solicitors as providers of quality legal services.

The Chair circulated messages to Society members regarding general family law practice and is developing a series of blogs from senior family practitioners on various aspects of family practice.

The Committee contributed to several Consultation Papers including:

- NICTS Proposed Increase of Court Fees
- Broadcasting of Court Proceedings
- Review of Divorce and Civil Partnerships

The Committee Chair continues to represent the Society on the shadow Family Justice Board which considers various issues within family justice which required attention including developing local guidance on alienating behaviour; delays in public law Children Order Proceedings; disclosure issues; Litigants in Person; divorce and dissolution legislation.

Throughout the year liaison meetings were arranged with the Matrimonial Office officials to raise members’ concerns regarding continuing delays in processing and listing of cases and applications. With little improvement in service the issue was also raised with the Office of the Lady Chief Justice and is kept under review.

Committee members met with regional practitioners to consider the Department of Justice’s proposals in relation to Family Legal Aid Fees and consider a strategy going forward. Group members met with Judge Burgess who is engaging with Departmental representatives on the issue of reviewing legal aid fees. The Committee welcomed the 16% uplift for all fees as a starting point while an overall review of rates is planned.

CPD advanced by the Committee included the annual Ancillary Relief presentation by Master Sweeney as well as a Legal Aid/LAMS series to assist members to effectively engage with the Agency to minimise delays in applications for funding. ‘Advocacy skills in family cases’ was a well-attended session and received very positive feedback. Arrangements for this jurisdiction to host the Five Jurisdictions Family Law Conference are well developed with colleagues from the Bar of NI. The Conference will be held in Derry City at the end of January 2026 with Sir Andrew McFarland and Lady Hale invited as well as leading judiciary and senior colleagues from the local and sister jurisdictions. The Committee are working on a CPD event focusing on Solicitor Disclaimers as a need has been identified for such training.

The Children’s Court Guardian Agency Northern Ireland (CCGANI) met with the Committee to discuss issues of mutual concern relating to public law cases. As a result, the Committee agreed to develop a symposium involving all interested stakeholders to look at issues in the system that cause and result in delay, and how they might be overcome.

The Committee continues its representation on the Belfast Family Care Centre Court Users Group raising issues including lack of consultation facilities, listings, court user safety and lack of appropriate waiting areas. Lack of security in the Family court was raised with recent incidents causing concern for all court attendees. Suitable arrangements for the attendance of a party known for aggressive behaviour are to be addressed by the Group. The Committee Chair has been proactive in generally raising safety issues for all solicitors and seeking engagement with PSNI and the Justice Minister.

Future of the Profession Committee

Chair Louise Butler	Council members Darren Toombs (SVP) Simon Chambers Julie-Ann McCaffrey Brigid Napier John O'Prey Michael Robinson Rowan White Sarah Wilson	Co-optees Angela Brady Jude Copeland Arleen Elliott Shannon Gawley Matthew Howse Kerry McCloy Olivia O'Kane	Number of Meetings 3
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The Future of the Profession Committee is tasked with considering strategic issues of interest to the profession and identifying challenges and opportunities to support the development of the solicitor profession in the future.

This year, the Committee continued to deliver on its objectives through its two established Special Interest Groups - Law Tech and Climate Justice. These groups include expertise from private practice, in-house, government, academic and third sector legal advisors.

Law Tech Group

The Law Tech Group continued its work to position solicitors in Northern Ireland at the forefront of technological innovation within the profession. Chaired by Angela Brady, the Group's primary objectives over this period has been to influence policy on legal technology, provide practical guidance to members, and deliver CPD opportunities on emerging tech trends.

A key strand of activity began in early November 2024 with the launch of a survey in collaboration with Baskerville Drummond, aimed at mapping IT and technology usage among small and micro firms across Northern Ireland. This initiative targeted firms with fewer than 50 employees, with the intention of using the results to create a benchmark comparison report, develop a recommended technology package guide and provide one-to-one technology clinics. Mid-November 2024 also saw the launch of a broader law tech survey designed to inform our technology adoption strategy.

Later that month, the Group co-hosted a major LawtechUK event in Belfast which showcased innovation in legal technology. The event featured contributions from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and local technology providers.

In July 2025, the Group strengthened its knowledge on cybersecurity, data protection, and emerging technologies by establishing subgroups dedicated to supporting the profession in these areas. This development has marked a step change in the Group's capacity to develop targeted resources, as well as guidance and awareness campaigns that directly address emerging technological challenges within legal practice.

Looking ahead, the group's priorities include publishing the results of the 2024 IT and law tech surveys, rolling out resources, CPD programmes and advice clinics, and launching new campaigns around cybersecurity and AI ethics.

The Group is also exploring opportunities to host specialist workshops and networking events with law-tech innovators, both locally and nationally, to promote knowledge sharing and best practice.

The Group has built a strong foundation to help advance the profession's engagement with technology, strengthened its governance, and prepared a clear roadmap to deliver support to its members in the year ahead.

Future of the Profession Committee (continued)

Climate Justice Group

The Climate Justice Group has made significant strides in embedding sustainability into the Society's operations and strategy. Built upon a compelling mission—to reduce the legal profession's environmental footprint while promoting equitable access to environmental justice—the Group partnered with Carbonfit to develop a clear and credible roadmap toward net-zero emissions.

Carbonfit provided a comprehensive baseline assessment detailing LSNI's current greenhouse gas emissions. This assessment has empowered the Group to set evidence-based net-zero targets, signalling a bold organisational commitment to sustainability. With these targets now in place, the Climate Justice Group has transitioned to the implementation phase which involves focusing on strategic interventions such as moving to renewable energy.

As part of its engagement efforts, the Group has also begun designing targeted CPD sessions and webinars to raise awareness among LSNI members about the legal and ethical implications of climate change, as well as sustainable practices within legal practice. The goal is to support members not only in managing their own environmental impact but also in advising clients on the growing field of climate and environmental law. This offering was launched in July 2025 with an in-person event hosted by Simon Chambers, Chair of the Group, who engaged the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Minister, Andrew Muir, in a candid conversation about climate justice and the future of sustainability from a legislator's perspective.

This work has been complimented by the launch of a new CPD offering in partnership with Business in the Community. This training focused on enhancing the carbon literacy of the profession. Further awareness raising efforts were deployed via the delivery of a two-week social media campaign focused on promoting clean air day and sustainable practices related to staff commuting, energy efficient resources and practices.

Looking ahead, the Group's priorities include implementing our action plan to achieve our net-zero commitments with the support of our Green Team.

Women's Network

The Committee also oversees the work of our Women's Network, which acts as a supportive and inclusive community for women across the legal profession in Northern Ireland. The Network is designed to promote gender equality, amplify female voices and champion career development. It offers a space for connection, inspiration and leadership.

Informed by both the Diversity and Equality Report (2022) and qualitative research with women who left private practice, we are committed to prioritising the improvement of women's experiences within the solicitor profession. Among the key findings was a strong desire from women across all career stages for greater peer support, flexible working structures, and meaningful career development pathways.

The Women's Network is a direct response to these needs. It serves as a platform for peer-to-peer connection, collaboration, and professional development. Aligned with the Society's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2024–28, the network exists to:

- Foster retention and progression of women solicitors.
- Support a more equitable and inclusive profession.
- Act as a forum for co-creating positive change.

Over 10 events were held across Northern Ireland this past year. This included sessions on how to run for Council, building a brand, the art of public speaking and developing a corporate image. The Network will continue to build upon its success, securing over 400 members this year alone.

The Committee receives regular updates from the above three sub-groups and retains an overarching role in co-ordinating the consideration of current and developing issues facing the profession.



Human Rights and Equality Committee

Chair	John Guerin	Laura Dawson
Lorraine Keown	Andrew Mairs	Mary Kitson
Secretary	Julie-Ann McCaffrey	Maria McCloskey
Nuala McMahon	Joe McVeigh	Conor McCormick
	Sarah Wilson	Sheila McGivern
Council members	Co-optees	Gemma McKeown
Eileen Ewing	Les Allamby	Tutu Ogle

Number of Meetings
6

The Human Rights and Equality Committee (HREC) plays a central role in advancing the rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights, championing diversity and equality, and safeguarding the independence of the legal profession.

During the year, the Committee continued to provide oversight of the Society's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy 2024-28, which sets out clear priority areas for action. Some notable progress under this Strategy this year includes:

- Launch of the Women's Network on International Women's Day 2025, creating a platform for peer-to-peer connection, collaboration, and profession development through its programme of events.
- Development of additional workplace policies and guidance for inclusion within the Society's DEI Toolkit to support member firms to embed inclusive practices.
- Retention of the Diversity Mark Accreditation, with planning underway towards achieving Silver Level Accreditation, focusing on under-represented groups across the profession.

A core function of the Committee's work is to ensure that human rights and equality are embedded in law and policy making at all levels. Over the past year, the Committee has continued to monitor key pieces of legislation at a local, national and international level, such as the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023.

The Committee engaged directly with the legislative passage of Bills in the Northern Ireland Assembly, including submitting written and oral evidence before the Justice Committee on the Justice Bill raising relevant human rights concerns. It also provided submissions on the development of relevant Private Members Bills including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Obligations on Public Authorities) Bill and Addressing Age Discrimination in Goods, Facilities and Services Bill.

The Committee submitted responses to a wide range of consultations and inquiries at an organisational, departmental and parliamentary level, including:

- Race and Ethnicity Action Plan – PSNI
- Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations - Department for Communities
- Repeal of the Vagrancy Acts - Department of Justice

- Inquiry on the Government's new approach to legacy - NI Affairs Committee)
- Non-Jury Trials under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 – Northern Ireland Office
- Inquiry into the Rule of Law - House of Lords Constitution Committee
- Qualifying offences for DNA and Fingerprint Retention – Department of Justice
- Criminalisation of deepfakes – Department of Justice

Through this work, the Committee consistently highlighted the importance of human rights and equality protections, raising critical concerns and ensuring that these principles remain central in the development of policy and legislation.

The Committee also addressed several emerging issues during the year. This included jointly developing a policy on the use of NDAs with the Profession Conduct Committee and issuing a public statement on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, linked to international human rights concerns.

The Committee has continued to strengthen its profile and engagement with members, stakeholders and the public through organising and delivering events. Some highlights include:

- Hosting a well-attended event for International Human Rights Day in December 2024, entitled 'From Behind Closed Doors to Online Spaces: Confronting Gender-Based Violence'.
- Collaboration with JUSTICE on an event exploring the intersection between AI and Human Rights.
- Strong participation in the Belfast Pride Parade, including a successful brunch event and boosting our visibility in the parade with new materials.
- Marking the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of the Human Rights Act in Northern Ireland.

Library and Publications Committee

Chair	Council members	Co-optees
Chris Kinney	Brian Speers (Treasurer)	Jordan Hanna (Until July 2025)
Secretary	John Guerin	Mr Justice Kinney
Katrina Gambold	Lorraine Keown	Alan McAlister
		Alexander Redpath

Number of Meetings
3

Library and Information Service

The Library and Information Service reports to the Library and Publications Committee. The small but efficient Library team continued to provide a valuable and consistent service. During the past year the level of service has remained extremely high with 98% of queries responded to within one day. At the time of writing, 62% of firms across the jurisdiction had utilised the service at least once during the year.

In our last annual report we announced the creation of a feedback form, which has yielded responses all year. We have received 147 feedback submissions, 38% of which came from partners in a firm. The service has been described by users as "prompt" and "helpful". The feedback form also indicated an average rating of 9.83 out of 10 when users were asked how likely they were to recommend the service to a colleague.

Feedback has also shown that Legal Research is the most valued of services provided, but the Library offers a range of other services, including: precedents supply, maintenance of an Expert Witness database of experts based in Northern Ireland, Legal Research skills training and a physical library collection at Law Society House comprising key textbooks, journals and law reports in a range of practice areas. All of these services are available to members who may access the Library space themselves or contact Library staff to carry out work remotely on their behalf.

During 2025 the Committee and Library team added to the Expert Witness database, further increasing its relevance and value. Many members avail of this service, and we welcome suggestions of local experts who may be added to the database.

The KnowAll Library Catalogue remains a significant database for the profession and is constantly updated by the team with the latest cases, legislation, Practice Directions and books. Throughout the past year this involved adding a further 336 entries. Relaunching an updated Current Awareness provision and improving the accessibility of this catalogue will be a key priority for the next year.

Book and journal publications

The Law Society of Northern Ireland is the only dedicated legal publisher in Northern Ireland, offering a unique opportunity for solicitors to be authors and editors, as well as access content specific to the jurisdiction.

Since the last annual report, the sale of Society publications has moved to an online Bookshop on the Society's new website. This has not only improved the efficiency of the transaction process but has also helped to raise the profile of the full LSNI / SLS portfolio to a wider audience. It is much easier for those outside of the membership to find and purchase texts, and we will be looking to capitalise on this with more options for book bundles. From January to September 2025 there were 187 individual titles sold across the whole portfolio.

The Society celebrated the publication of *Youth Court Practice in Northern Ireland* in February 2025 with a successful launch. Sales have been steady and the Committee is pleased to have contributed such a worthwhile resource to the legal community and to see the text being utilised across the legal sector.

During the year we continued to work on our publishing strategy for the Society's two journals – *Folio* and the *Journal of Elder Law and Capacity*. There has been an attempt to raise awareness of the journals, including a Call to Members to generate interest in joining an Editorial Panel and this will continue to be a focus for the coming year.

With the support of the Committee, the team has also been strengthening procedures around submitting proposals for potential publications and exploring options to make it easier for practitioners to contribute to our books and journals.

" 98% of queries responded to within one day "

Non Contentious Business Committee

Chair Catherine Nixon	Mark Borland (JVP) Karren Cherry Catherine Heyes William Nugent John O'Prey Millicent Tate Brian Walker	Co-optees Richard Craig Kate Ervine Michael Graham Julie Ann Osborne Aimee Millar Jade O'Kane
Secretary Claire McNamee		
Council members Philip Armstrong		

Number of Meetings

6

The Non Contentious Business Committee handles matters relating to probate and the administration of estates, enduring powers of attorney, issues affecting vulnerable adults, charities, law reform, taxation and commercial law.

Throughout the year it responds to numerous practitioner queries in these areas.

The Committee monitors political developments and has engaged with local politicians to discuss issues and continues to advocate for the complete implementation of the Mental Capacity (Northern Ireland) Act 2016.

The Committee continues to review the operation of the online Probate Portal, which enables standard Grant of Probate/Grant of Letters of Administration applications to be made online by solicitors and also by members of the public. The Committee arranged for training on the Portal and its increased functionality to be included as part of the Society's CPD programme.

This year the Committee has responded to various consultations, including:

- The Draft Programme for Government.
- The Department for the Economy's Proposals to Amend the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 etc.
- The Department of Health's consultation on 'Acts of Restraint'
- The Department of Health's Consultation on Hospitals – Creating a Network for Better Outcomes
- HMRC's consultation on Reforms to Inheritance Tax, Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief
- A Private Member's Bill on Age Discrimination in relation to goods, facilities and services
- Consultation on section 167 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

The Committee continues to liaise with relevant stakeholders including Masters Hardstaff and Wells, the Probate Office, the Office of Care & Protection (OCP), the Office of the Lady Chief Justice (OLCJ) and Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service (NICTS) on an ongoing basis. Relevant information and updates from these engagements are communicated to members as appropriate. These communications have included a reminder of the requirements for making an application to admit a copy will, and operational updates received from the OCP via the Non-Contentious Business updater or the E-nformer.

The Committee has continued to engage with HMRC, as part of the Trust Advisory Group. The direct line of communication with HMRC has been effective in resolving IHT421 form issues experienced by members. The Committee is also discussing with HMRC how digitisation may assist Northern Irish firms and continues to monitor NICTS digitisation.

The Committee continues to be updated on the work of the Elder Law Group and the Editorial Panel of the Journal of Elder Law and Capacity which published an [issue](#) in Spring 2025.

Through the Committee, the Commercial Practice Group has met regularly and CPD is being developed by its members.

The Committee also considered and updated Larke v Nugus Guidance and published this on the website with kind assistance from Sheena Grattan.

The Committee continues to keep members informed and up to date with latest developments through appropriate communications and contributions to the development of the CPD programme. Events for members included sessions delivered by Master Hardstaff on less common probate applications and a Private Client Work Conference organised in conjunction with STEP and held at the MAC, featuring speakers on the topics of proprietary estoppel, digital assets, reasonable provision, capacity, child trusts and international assets. The possibility of future similar events is being explored.

Professional Conduct Committee

Chair Mark Borland	Chris Kinney Eileen Ewing Brigid Napier Simon Chambers Catherine Heyes (Joined January 2025)	Alastair Rankin (Until December 2024) Reg Rankin (Joined February 2025)
Deputy Chair Rowan White		
Secretary Laura McCullough	Co-optees Colin Gowdy (Until January 2025) Graeme King Martin McCallion	Lay Michael Cole Tom McGrath Denise McIlwaine (Joined September 2025) Paul Corrigan (Joined September 2025)
Council members Jennifer Bell Karen Cherry		

Number of Meetings

15

The Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) operates under delegated authority from the Society's Council. The PCC is the Society's main regulatory committee and is responsible for professional practice, conduct and discipline of solicitors and recognised bodies.

Monitoring/Inspections

The Committee oversees the monitoring and inspection of firms through a hybrid approach of desk-based review and on-site. The PCC received outcomes from 328 Accounts, AML and Financial Services desk based and on-site accounts inspections. The PCC reviewed inspection reports from 77 desk based and on-site accounts inspections and considered 18 Home Charter inspection reports.

The PCC also oversee desk-based reviews of every firm's Statutory Accountant's Report. Within this period 388 reports were considered with follow-up queries raised as required.

The main themes arising from the inspections noted above are as follows:

- Books of accounts/quarterly bank reconciliations not kept up to date or prepared timely.
- Bookkeeper – loss/absence and failure to adequately replace.
- Change of accounting systems – lack of training and/or migration issues. In particular Leap/Xero.
- Client deficits – failure to rectify timely from personal funds if necessary.
- Office cheques unpresented more than six months, equivalent sum not transferred to client account.
- Bank accounts opened in a branch outside the NI jurisdiction.
- Paid cheques not retained or provided by Bank.

- Cessation reports showing firms leaving loose ends open regarding residual balances etc.
- An increase in extension requests including instances where proper systems, controls and foresight by the solicitor could have negated the need for the same.
- Non-compliance concerning inadequate source of funds/source of wealth checks, client due diligence checks, AML/CTF firm wide risk assessments and record keeping. The PCC have however noted improved compliance from firms on directed follow up discrete AML/CTF inspections.
- Increased use of Electronic ID and Verification Tools.

With regards to Reporting Accountants there has been a theme of under reporting and lack of information. The PCC have approved an initiative in conjunction with Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) to provide CPD training and to prepare a Toolkit for use by their membership.

With regards to Home Charter the main concerns noted were:

- Lack of or delay in obtaining required Home Charter searches - priority searches, registry of deeds closing searches, EJO and bankruptcy searches.
- Lack of written records or other evidence of matters agreed, or advice provided to clients.

Professional Conduct Committee (continued)

Conduct complaints

The PCC managed a broad range of other regulatory matters. There has been a general upward trend in the number of complaints received reflecting public awareness of the ability to make a complaint. Within the reporting period 174 complaints were received. After careful assessment 113 complaints were assessed as not meeting the threshold for further investigation. The majority related to legal matters or falling under the remit of judicial oversight due to the presence of ongoing court proceedings.

In the last twelve months the PCC reviewed 22 professional conduct complaints with 39 remaining under investigation.

The main themes arising from the above are as follows:

- Persistent failures to respond which often indicates deeper compliance lapses.
- Breaches of undertakings, sole or combined with non-response remaining a core concern which undermines the trust in professional commitments.
- Fee-related issues, unpaid fees which is often intertwined with non-response, and failure to pay interest on client funds.
- Unprofessional behaviour encompassing conduct such as using inappropriate and intimidating language. Such behaviour undermines public confidence in the profession.

The PCC resolved to make 10 referrals to the Solicitors’ Disciplinary Tribunal. These referrals involved breaches of the Solicitors Accounts Regulations and Money Laundering Regulations, where there have been systemic failures notably due to misuse of client funds and inadequate client due diligence. Criminal convictions have triggered referrals to the Tribunal.

The PCC:

- Applied Schedule 1, Solicitors (NI) Order 1976 on one occasion to authorise intervention into a solicitor practice.
- Assessed six Compensation Fund Applications. Payments totalled £220,300.72. Additionally, the Committee have overseen the implementation of the new Solicitors Compensation Fund (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2025.
- Approved six PI Reserve Account Applications. Payments totalled £27,949.90. The Committee have obtained agreement that the PI Insurers will cover the excesses in the next insurance period. This is subject to review of the policy wording and is only applicable to the reserve applications that would have been made to the Society.
- Approved 11 applications for Certificates of Recognition pursuant to the requirements of the Solicitors (Incorporated Practice) Regulations 2007.

Regulatory policy is crucial for establishing clear, outcomes-focused standards that uphold professional integrity, protect the public from misconduct, and maintain trust in the legal profession by enabling proportionate enforcement actions against breaches. Some policies approved by the PCC in the relevant period include an Extension Request Policy, Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Standard of Acceptance Policy defining the Society’s statutory remit with regards to professional conduct investigations. All can be accessed via the Society’s website.

Anti -Money Laundering

The PCC provides governance for the Society’s exercise of its supervisory functions as the professional body supervisor and sole supervisory authority of solicitors in Northern Ireland under the Money Laundering Regulations 2017 (the MLRs).

The PCC receives reports on relevant solicitor firms’ compliance with their Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing (AML/CTF) obligations under the MLRs, considers reporting officers’ recommendations and decides on enforcement actions as appropriate. Enforcement actions can range from informal, such as reminding members of their regulatory obligations, to formal, including directing revisits or follow up discrete AML/CTF inspections or referral to the Solicitors’ Disciplinary Tribunal.

The PCC continues to adopt an educative approach to help members understand their responsibilities, supervisory expectations and to support them in their compliance. The PCC has been pleased to note this year that a number of firms previously found to be in breach of their AML/CTF obligations, having been provided with guidance, assistance and resources by the Society, were found to have significantly improved compliance on follow-up inspections.

During the year the PCC was pleased to approve new guidance for members on the use of Electronic ID & Verification in accordance with the MLRs which was published by the Society. The PCC has also overseen the Society’s project work on AML/CTF firm wide risk assessments, commenced in response to a rise in the number of non-compliant cases reported to the PCC concerning such assessments. The PCC welcomed the Society’s development of appropriate guidance resources including a template risk assessment for members’ benefit.

The PCC further inputs into targeted regulatory AML/CTF notices, guidance and CPD for members’ support as appropriate.

The PCC oversees the Society’s AML/CTF policy work which has included this year, the Society’s contributions to:

- The updated Legal Sector Affinity Group AML Guidance for the Legal Sector and approved by HM Treasury (April 2025)
- The UK’s fourth National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (July 2025)
- The National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) and Office for Professional Body AML Supervision (OPBAS) - UK Cross-System Professional Enablers Strategy 2024-26 (ongoing)
- Addressing HM Treasury’s response to the Consultation on Improving the Effectiveness of the MLRs.

The PCC is mindful of the increasing asks of professional body supervisors by government amidst uncertainty while government’s response to its 2023 consultation on Reform of the AML/CTF Supervisory Regime is awaited.

The PCC also oversees the Department’s reporting on the Society’s AML/CTF exercise of its AML/CTF supervisory functions including to OPBAS and HM Treasury and publication of the Society’s AML Supervisor’s Annual Report published under Regulation 46 of the Money Laundering Regulations 2017.

The Society’s latest AML Supervisor’s Annual Report (October 2025) is available on the Society’s website and provides further information and case studies on the Society’s AML/CTF supervisory work.

Professional Liability Committee

Chair

Rowan White
Brigid Napier Deputy Chair

Secretary

Laura McClintock

Council members

Colin Mitchell (President)
Philip Armstrong
Louise Butler
Simon Chambers

Co-optees

James Cooper
Emma Hunt
Declan Magee
Alan Reid
Seamus Reid

Number of Meetings

8

The Professional Liability Committee is responsible for the administration and operation of the Society’s Professional Indemnity Insurance Master Policy.

In 2025, the Committee continued to work closely with the Society’s brokers Willis Towers Watson, and local partner Brown & Brown, to secure a saving on the Master Policy premium once again – a reduction for the third consecutive year.

Since 2022, the Master Policy premium has reduced by over 25% (from £13.7m), despite inflationary pressures. This year, the Society’s brokers worked hard to successfully negotiate an 8% reduction on the 2024 premium.

Our ability to negotiate favourable premium rates is not only down to PI market conditions, but also the ongoing hard work and professionalism of members in keeping the claims rate to an acceptable level and, where claims do arise, working closely with Brown and Brown to manage these.

Alongside Master Policy renewal, the Committee has continued to review and discuss professional indemnity claim trends at each meeting, with a clear focus on risk management. The Committee acknowledges members’ work in this area and commends them for their efforts in actively managing risk within their caseloads.

The Committee has also paid close attention to cyber-crime this year. This continues to represent an ongoing significant and serious threat to members. The dynamic and creative nature of cyber-attacks makes it increasingly difficult to warn against them.

In 2025, we have seen increased reports of firms receiving or falling victims to phishing attacks. The Society continues to work with the NI Cyber Security Centre and PSNI to highlight threats, publish resources for members and provide training. The Committee is supporting the Society’s work in this area and will be developing further guidance to members about the interplay between cyber-attacks and insurance going forward.

While the Master Policy has many benefits for members, the Committee recognises there may be different ways to allocate the premium in the future.

We know that risk profiles within firms are changing and a model based on headcount and seniority may not be what’s required in the future. Alternative options might include a revenue-based allocation model.

Like any major change, this will require careful consideration. As a first step, we need to build our dataset and ensure the quality of that data, so that we can scope out viable options and understand the short and long term impact of any change. This is something the Committee has been working on in conjunction with our brokers and will continue to do in 2026.

Finally, and more widely, the Committee has contributed to various policy developments across the Society, including the Task & Finish Group on the requirement for all assistant solicitors to hold professional indemnity insurance whilst employed in any capacity in private practice and the consultation on revised Solicitor Practice Regulations 2025.

“ Since 2022, the Master Policy premium has reduced by over 25% ”



International Reports



Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

Report By Michael Robinson
Member of the UK CCBE Delegation

Introduction

The solicitors' branch of the Legal Profession in Northern Ireland occupies a distinctive place within both the UK and European legal landscape. While Brexit altered the legal and institutional frameworks through which solicitors engage with the European Union, Northern Ireland remains deeply connected to EU law and practice. This is a consequence of its unique constitutional position under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and the Windsor Framework, as well as its land border with the Republic of Ireland.

Against this backdrop, the Law Society of Northern Ireland (LSNI), as part of the UK's unique affiliate membership of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), continues to benefit from involvement in European legal debates. Although affiliate membership does not confer the same voting rights as full membership, it ensures Northern Ireland solicitors retain a voice in shaping discussions that directly affect their practice.

This relevance is heightened by the fact that many Northern Ireland solicitors' practices are small or medium-sized firms, often serving communities along the border or working in areas where cross-jurisdictional cooperation is routine — such as family law, insolvency, and criminal matters. For such solicitors, CCBE engagement is not an abstract international exercise but a direct safeguard for day-to-day practice.

This report examines five key areas of CCBE activity and explains their importance to Northern Ireland solicitors:

1. Cross-border practice and recognition of qualifications.
2. Trade in legal services and the EU–UK relationship.
3. Digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and innovation.
4. Human rights and the protection of lawyers.
5. The new European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer.

Each section is framed around the realities of practice in Northern Ireland, illustrating how CCBE engagement provides both practical solutions and strategic protections for solicitors.



CCBE Report (continued)

1. Cross-Border Practice and Recognition of Qualifications

Why it matters in Northern Ireland

No other UK jurisdiction faces the same intensity of cross-border legal practice as Northern Ireland. Thousands of people live on one side of the border and work or study on the other. Legal problems frequently span both systems, whether in divorce, child custody, probate, insolvency, or criminal defence.

For solicitors in Newry, Armagh, Derry/Londonderry, Strabane and indeed province wide it is routine to advise clients with assets or interests in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Before Brexit, EU law (particularly Directive 98/5/EC on establishment of lawyers) made such cross-border practice smoother. Since Brexit, Northern Ireland solicitors are treated as third-country lawyers, complicating recognition of qualifications and rights of establishment.

Bilateral instruments: LSNI–LSI cooperation

To address these challenges, the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the Law Society of Ireland signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) in 2022. These instruments support cooperation on admissions and disciplinary matters, allowing solicitors to demonstrate good standing more easily when applying for admission in the other jurisdiction.

The MoU and DSA build on earlier frameworks such as the Solicitors’ Admission and Training (Mutual Recognition) Regulations 1990 and the Cross-Border Code of Conduct (2006). Together, they provide a patchwork of safeguards ensuring that professional mobility on the island continues, despite Brexit.

CCBE action

- At the European level, the CCBE has pursued:
- Recognition of certificates under Directive 98/5.
 - Examination of foreign legal consultant regimes and potential mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for third-country lawyers.
 - Direct engagement with the European Commission’s DG TRADE and DG GROW on recognition of third-country qualifications.

Relevance for Northern Ireland solicitors

- Advocacy: Through CCBE forums, the Law Society of Northern Ireland can press the case for smoother recognition of NI solicitors in EU states, particularly in Ireland where day-to-day needs are greatest. One such practical example of co-operation through CCEB is the recent signing by our President of the updated practice MoU with Belgium which has a significant number of UK qualified lawyers working within the jurisdiction.
- Awareness: CCBЕ monitoring provides early intelligence on EU-level reforms to mobility rules, giving NI solicitors time to adapt.
- Complementarity: The bilateral MoU and DSA handle practical admissions data sharing, while CCBE ensures NI solicitors’ interests are defended in wider European debates.

Example: A solicitor in Derry acting for a divorcing couple where one spouse relocates to Donegal will need clarity on recognition of their practice rights. The MoU helps at an operational level, while CCBE lobbying keeps the broader EU frameworks responsive to such needs.

2. Trade in Legal Services and the EU–UK Relationship

Why it matters in Northern Ireland

Legal services form part of Northern Ireland’s broader professional services economy. While smaller than London’s international legal hub, Northern Ireland firms are increasingly involved in cross-border corporate, commercial, and financial transactions. International companies investing in Northern Ireland often require advice that spans UK and EU law.

The UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides some continuity, but its provisions for legal services are limited. For Northern Ireland solicitors — particularly those advising businesses that straddle the border — the stakes are high. Market access barriers or lack of regulatory clarity could deter clients or limit growth opportunities. UK representation in CCBE also brings to the European table particular interests and issues arising from our Common Law jurisdiction which are unique (apart from Ireland) in an essentially Civil Law environment.

CCBE action

During the reporting period, CCBE:

- Monitored EU negotiations of free trade agreements (FTAs).
- Examined how legal services were treated in the EU–UK TCA’s implementation.
- Raised issues relating to joint practice between EU and non-EU lawyers, regulatory cooperation, and cross-border services.

Relevance for Northern Ireland solicitors

- Visibility: The Law Society of Northern Ireland gains insight into EU trade policy directions that might otherwise bypass Belfast.
- Input: By feeding Northern Ireland’s unique border and Common Law concerns into CCBE debates, LSNI ensures the region is not overlooked in wider UK–EU negotiations.
- Alignment: Engagement with CCBE allows LSNI to coordinate with the Law Society of Ireland, creating a united voice on cross-border legal trade.

Example: If an EU trade deal with Canada provides extensive market access for Canadian lawyers, NI solicitors need to ensure that equivalent opportunities are preserved for them. CCBE tracking of FTAs provides early warning and advocacy channels.

CCBE Report (continued)

3. Digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence, and Innovation

Why it matters in Northern Ireland

Most solicitors’ practices in Northern Ireland are small or medium-sized firms, often with limited budgets for technology investment. Yet clients will increasingly expect digital tools such as secure online communication, e-discovery, and AI-assisted drafting.

At the same time, the EU is setting global benchmarks through instruments like the AI Act, while the UK is developing its own approach. Solicitors in Northern Ireland who act for EU-based clients, or who collaborate with Irish colleagues, must understand how these frameworks interact.

CCBE action

- The IT Law Committee monitored the AI Act and highlighted implications for the justice system.
- Updated cloud computing guidelines helping lawyers adopt digital tools without compromising professional secrecy.
- The Future of the Profession Committee surveyed innovation trends across Europe, exploring career pathways, retention, and professional attractiveness.

Relevance for Northern Ireland solicitors

- Benchmarking: CCBE outputs provide guidance for LSNI in advising its members on safe adoption of digital tools.
- Cross-border alignment: NI solicitors working with Irish firms can demonstrate awareness of EU rules, reassuring clients.
- Support for small firms: Insights from other Bars’ digitalisation strategies help smaller Northern Ireland firms innovate without excessive cost.

Example: A Belfast solicitor using AI tools for due diligence in a corporate transaction involving Dublin clients must align with EU AI transparency obligations. CCBE guidance helps ensure compliance.

4. Human Rights and the Protection of Lawyers

Why it matters in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a unique human rights tradition, rooted in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and shaped by decades of conflict and peacebuilding. Many solicitors continue to practise in sensitive areas, including legacy cases, judicial reviews of government decisions, and asylum or immigration law. In such contexts, protecting solicitors’ independence is essential.

CCBE action

- Sent 63 letters in support of 97 endangered lawyers in 34 countries.
- Coordinated the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2024 (focused on Iran).
- Issued statements on persecution of lawyers in Turkey, Russia, China, Sudan, and Tunisia.
- Awarded the Human Rights Award to the Panzi Foundation Legal Clinic in the DRC.

Relevance for Northern Ireland solicitors

- Solidarity: NI solicitors join a collective European voice supporting colleagues worldwide.
- Reputation: Engagement enhances the international reputation of NI solicitors as defenders of the rule of law as evidenced by the European Human Rights award made to Law Society of Northern Ireland last year.
- Local resonance: Solicitors working on contentious legacy or rights cases benefit from being part of a Europe-wide network committed to protecting lawyers from harassment or interference.

Example: If a Northern Ireland solicitor is criticised or threatened for representing clients in controversial legacy litigation, CCBE advocacy reinforces the principle that lawyers must be free to act without intimidation.



CCBE Report (continued)

5. The European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer

Why it matters in Northern Ireland

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, finalised in 2024 and opened for signature in 2025, is the first binding international treaty guaranteeing the independence and safety of lawyers.

For Northern Ireland solicitors, this is highly relevant. Many work in politically sensitive or high-risk areas, including legacy cases, human rights litigation, and immigration. The Convention provides treaty-level obligations for states to protect lawyers from harassment, threats, or improper interference.

CCBE action

- CCBE and its UK experts, in particular played a central role in drafting the Convention.
- Secured provisions on monitoring, enforcement, and independence of Bars.
- Mobilised member Bars to advocate for swift signature and ratification.

Relevance for Northern Ireland solicitors

- Ratification: The UK signing and ratification extends protections to NI solicitors.
- Cross-border practice: Safeguards apply across Europe, benefiting NI solicitors with Irish or EU clients.
- Legacy work: Provides international backing for NI solicitors engaged in sensitive cases.

Example: An NI solicitor facing intimidation over a judicial review of state actions could rely on the Convention's provisions to demand protection and accountability.

Conclusion and Outlook

The CCBE remains strategically important for the solicitors' profession in Northern Ireland. It provides:

- A platform to resolve cross-border qualification issues with Ireland.
- Early visibility of EU trade and services negotiations.
- Guidance on AI and digitalisation that helps smaller firms adapt.
- A collective voice for human rights advocacy.
- Treaty-level protections through the European Convention on Lawyers.

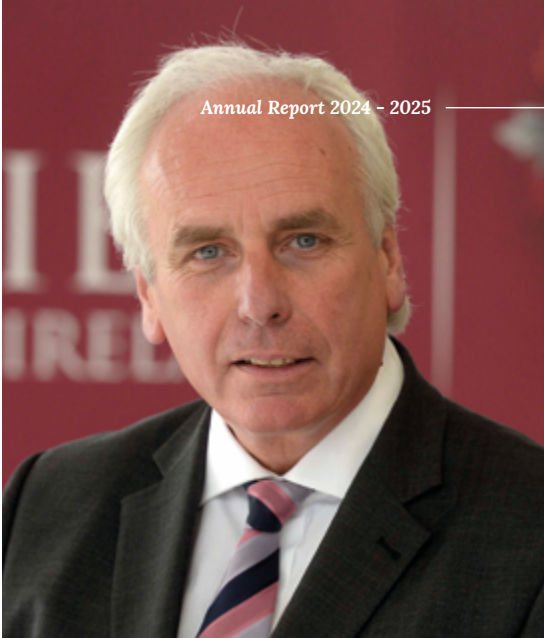
The bilateral MoU and DSA between LSNI and the Law Society of Ireland address practical data-sharing and admissions issues on the island, while CCBE engagement ensures that Northern Ireland solicitors' interests are defended in broader European debates.

During the reporting period Europe entered a new political cycle, and as Northern Ireland continues to navigate its dual role within the UK and alongside the EU, active participation in CCBE will remain critical. For solicitors, it safeguards mobility, strengthens professional independence, and reinforces their role as guardians of the rule of law at both local and international levels.

In the last few weeks my successor Head of CCBE UK Delegation, Hugh Mercer KC was appointed as UK Judge to European Court of Human Rights. I am sure you will all join with me in celebrating his appointment which is a recognition of the quality of representation, given willingly and, at no cost, from which we benefit from our CCBE membership of CCBE.



Commonwealth Lawyers Association



Report By Brian H Speers
Council Member and immediate Past President of the CLA

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is a representative body of Law Societies, Bar Counsels and individual lawyers and law firms across the Commonwealth. There are 56 members of the Commonwealth and all jurisdictions together with some crown protectorates and former Commonwealth countries such as Zimbabwe and Hong Kong are eligible to have a seat on the CLA Council.

The mission of the CLA is to uphold the rule of law and to support the independence of the legal profession and the Judiciary. In addition, the CLA provides training and education events and holds conferences, seminars, and webinars, and issues Statements.

The CLA is an accredited member of the Commonwealth Secretariat and has participated in drafting such declarations and principles as the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers and the Three Branches of Government, the Commonwealth Media Freedom Declaration, and in child marriage and birth registration initiatives.

As an accredited organisation the CLA is invited to observe, and occasionally contribute, to the annual meeting of Law Ministers of Commonwealth jurisdictions. This is an important opportunity to observe policy recommendations being formed across the justice sector which are then taken up by the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. The CLA contributed to a policy paper on development of mediation in civil justice and was asked to assist in forming a pro-bono unit of senior law firms across the Commonwealth which would be able to provide advice and support to least developed countries in the Commonwealth. These countries do not have the capacity to deal with such matters as constitutional reform, environment impacts, and other legislative and policy requirements.

The Council of the CLA meets four times annually by video meeting. The business of the CLA is entrusted to the Executive Committee which meets monthly. In recent years special interest committees have been established, where practitioners from across the Commonwealth can contribute ideas and share experience and knowledge. The most active committees are the ADR Committee, Climate Justice Committee, Human Rights and Access to Justice Committee and there are other committees dealing with Commercial Law and Law-Tech. Regular webinars delivered by prominent practitioners are arranged by the committees.

There is a Commonwealth Law Conference arranged by the CLA every other year. The CLA also co-promotes and facilitates other conferences. In 2025 the Commonwealth Law Conference was held in Malta. The Lady Chief Justice, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, the Chief Executive and the President of the Law Society of Northern Ireland, and others from this jurisdiction contributed to keynote sessions and presentations. The President spoke at the Bar Leaders meeting. This provides an invaluable opportunity for the sharing of knowledge from the leaders of Bar Associations and Law Societies across the Commonwealth.

The CLA issues regular Statements on matters pertaining to the Rule of Law and independence of the legal profession and judiciary. Most recently, the CLA has issued statements in support of the ousted Lady Chief Justice of Ghana and worked with the Ghana Bar Association in support of their own statements to deal with this important constitutional and legal controversy. The CLA has also recently issued statements in support of the Law Society of Samoa which courageously voiced concerns about the Prime Minister of Samoa who was the subject of a criminal charge, being the Chief Minister of the Police.

In these issues and others, the CLA provides an excellent opportunity for the Law Society of Northern Ireland to continue its leadership role within the Commonwealth, to secure speaking slots and invitations for the Law Society of Northern Ireland to contribute, to learn from other jurisdictions and to bring the benefit of the experience of others into considerations for the Law Society of Northern Ireland.





International Bar Association (IBA)



Report By John Guerin

Law Society of Northern Ireland representative to the IBA

The IBA describes itself as the global voice of the legal profession and is the largest organisation for legal practitioners, Bar Associations and Law Societies in the world. Established in 1947 (shortly after the creation of the United Nations) it was born out of a conviction that it could contribute to global stability and peace through the promotion and indeed the protection of the rule of law.

The IBA's current membership comprises some 190 Bar Associations and Law Societies from more than 170 countries. The IBA has a simple mantra. It holds itself out as the global voice of the profession and it believes strongly in the importance of a collective voice.

In recent years that aspiration has been challenged from many quarters. The world order is clearly changing at a rapid pace and challenges to the rule of law are emanating from countries that were previously strong advocates.

Attacks on Bar Associations and Law Societies

Whilst attacks on individual lawyers are not new there has been a trend to attack Bar Associations and Law Societies. We have seen this previously in Afghanistan, but this is becoming a feature in countries that would consider themselves democracies. The Turkish Government has initiated criminal and civil proceedings against the individual board members of the Istanbul Bar Association who had issued a public statement following the deaths of two journalists allegedly killed in a drone strike in Northern Syria.

Baroness Helena Kennedy, who is a Director of the IBA's Human Rights Institute, commented that the Istanbul Bar's statement was well within its statutory duties and its internationally protected role and to criminalise such a statement is both legally indefensible and politically alarming. A number of organisations including the IBA, the CCBE and the Law Society of England and Wales intervened as amicus curiae in the court proceedings in Istanbul. They all held the belief that the charges and actions against the Istanbul Bar's board contravened the standards on the independence of lawyers and bar associations and the rights to freedom of expression and association, and therefore there was an ulterior political purpose. The move risked setting a dangerous precedent for legal professionals and institutions engaged in rights-based advocacy. The IBA believes a collective voice is essential in combatting such attacks.

International Bar Association (IBA) (continued)

Attacks on the Judiciary

There has been an increase in attacks against the Judiciary and again this is happening in countries that consider themselves to be democratic and who traditionally upheld the rule of law. Within the EU there have, over the years, been political attacks on the Judiciary in former eastern bloc countries. Within the UK there have been attacks on the Judiciary from the Press and also from elected representatives but recently these attacks are becoming more focused on the individual people who hold a judicial position.

The IBA has condemned the United States government's decision to impose sanctions against the International Criminal Court and its officials, including visa bans against staff and their immediate family members.

IBA Executive Director Dr Mark Ellis (who himself faces sanctions from Russia because of his work in Ukraine) has stated that the ICC is the cornerstone of the international justice architecture which was created to realise the promise of "never again". The attacks by the US on the ICC undo decades of progress for victims and weaken the rule of law globally and, by doing so, the US is aligning itself with the worst of oppressive regimes around the world.

Other attacks against the US Judiciary and lawyers who have previously been involved in upholding the rule of law are also a concern to the IBA but the IBA believes that a collective voice calling out the mistreatment of the Judiciary and lawyers is required and that the US Administration should respect the independence of international judicial institutions.

Ukraine

The IBA's Executive Director and many Committees within the IBA have provided invaluable support to the legal profession within Ukraine. Bar Associations and political representatives from Ukraine regularly attend IBA meetings to canvass additional support but also to offer their thanks for the support that lawyers from around the world have provided, from things as mundane as providing IT equipment or offices in foreign countries enabling lawyers to work remotely, to sharing legal knowledge to improve the judicial process in Ukraine.

More work needs to be done and there is specific work going on at the minute to support President Zelensky who is advocating for the establishment of a dedicated mechanism to prosecute Russia's political and military leadership for the crime of oppression against Ukraine. Much work has been done on the establishment of a special tribunal by the Council of Europe and the IBA has hosted a series of events in Washington, Geneva, Kiev and The Hague in support.

The IBA believes that whilst the tribunal may be built on a series of compromises and the process for establishing it is protracted there is a need to begin to fill this accountability gap and that it will be a benchmark for international justice.

Regulation of the Profession

I sit on one of the Regulation Committees within the IBA and it is a useful forum to glean what is happening with the regulation of the profession in other jurisdictions. Matters discussed on a regular basis include member services, regulation, representation, ethics and disciplinary and complaints procedures. The Committee regularly assists the IBA which is providing support to new Bar Associations, especially in developing countries, many of whom are emerging from conflict.

An issue which is being addressed by the committee at present is in relation to access to the profession and the application of the "Fit and proper" character test which many Bar Associations and Law Societies have for the admission to the profession. Some only apply it at admission stage but others require compliance throughout the career and the Committee is looking at the appropriateness of the test and what factors countries take into consideration.

In other parts of the world we are seeing an increase in the numbers of what we might call "non lawyers" being allowed to carry out work in areas previously deemed to be the work of legally qualified lawyers. Ironically, as regulation of the actual profession appears to be increasing, governments are allowing non legally-qualified people who might give themselves a "lawyer" title to carry out legal work. The rationale for this varies from country to country but it is happening with greater regularity. The challenge for the profession is to ensure that legal standards are not watered down and that governments appreciate the importance of having a properly regulated and valued profession. The profession should also understand the need for a Regulator.

Conferences and Networking

The scope of the IBA is vast and the work it does around the world is multi-factorial. However, it also provides a forum for lawyers from around the world to meet up, to network and to grow their businesses. Firms from Northern Ireland regularly attend the annual conference and I would encourage you all to peruse the IBA website to see if there are matters of interest to you and your firm and to then reach out to colleagues in other countries.

Departmental Reports

Professional Development Department

Darren Patterson

Head of Professional Development

Darren.Patterson@lawsoc-ni.org

The Professional Development Department is responsible for the education and training, both pre and post-qualification, of solicitors. It is also responsible for the process of admission to the Roll of Solicitors (in conjunction with the Registrar). The Department supports the work of the Society's Education Committee.

Admissions & Legal Education

The Admissions & Legal Education function deals with all matters relating to the process of entry to the profession, from registering as a Student of the Society, and the Solicitor Traineeship through to admission to the Roll of Solicitors.

Registering as a Student of the Society

The Department has responsibility for all matters relating to the registration of Students of the Society to undertake the two-year programme of vocational training.

Registering as a Student of the Society requires prospective trainees to pass the IPLS Admission Test and to lodge specified documents - including Indentures of Apprenticeship (training contract) - with the Society's Admissions Office.

This year 169 trainee solicitors commenced their training in September 2025. This is the highest number of trainee solicitors since the Institute of Professional Legal Studies first opened its doors in 1977.

The Trainee Solicitor Programme

Training to be a solicitor consists of a two-year traineeship combining in-office training alongside a vocational course at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies. The Admissions & Legal Education team is responsible for the coordination of a Law Society Module which is a compulsory part of the traineeship. This includes the examinable elements of Solicitors Accounts and Professional Conduct as well as units covering Client Complaints and a solicitor's Regulatory Obligations.

Admission to the Roll of Solicitors

The Admissions Office has responsibility for admission of newly qualified solicitors to the Roll of Solicitors.

As at 31st December 2024 the overall number of Solicitors on the Roll was 6454 of whom 219 were admitted in 2024.

The 2025 Admission Ceremony took place in February at Assembly Buildings in Belfast. The event marked the admission of 155 newly qualified solicitors to the Roll of Solicitors in the presence of the Lady Chief Justice.

Registrar Support

Registrar Support is responsible for maintaining the Roll of Solicitors and recording changes to the practising status of members. Registrar Support also oversees the application process for Practising Certificates. A total of 3,174 Practising Certificates were issued in 2024.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Society's CPD team is responsible for in-career learning for solicitors. This includes monitoring compliance with the CPD Scheme requirements and providing guidance and support for solicitors on these requirements.

The CPD team continued to provide a wide variety of learning and development opportunities for members during 2025, including in-person seminars, virtual webinars, on-demand video content and large-scale conferences. Notable events included two Risk Management sessions held in January and new content such as Advocacy Skills in Family Cases, AI and E-Bundles which received positive participant feedback.

The Society's member-to-member Mentoring Scheme continued with 38 participants completing the programme in 2024 and 58 participants taking part in 2025, which is a record number for the programme. In addition, the team launched a new intake of the Society's Advanced Advocacy Course, the second intake since the programme re-launched after COVID, with 24 members successfully completing the course in September 2025. This year also saw the inaugural launch of the Vulnerable Person Practitioner Course, which is part of the Society's response to the recommendations of the Gillen Review. A total of 23 members completed the course.

The team continues to liaise closely with other Society Departments, Committees and working groups to ensure the Society's CPD offering remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the membership.

Professional Conduct Department

Laura McCullough
Head of Professional Conduct
Laura.McCullough@lawsoc-ni.org

This is the third time I have written an overview for the Annual Report, and I am pleased to report that in this 2025 instalment significant progress has been madetowards achieving our statutory and strategic priorities in several important areas.

We aim to:

- Maintain and uphold high standards of professional conduct
- Protect clients and the public
- Uphold public confidence in the provision of legal services
- Apply regulatory powers in a manner guided by the public interest

Regulation of the Professional Conduct of Solicitors

In September 2025, the Solicitors’ Disciplinary Tribunal consulted on new Rules with several new features which will provide clarity and ensure that proceedings are conducted in a more open and transparent manner.

For too long, the Society has had limited options when considering cases of professional misconduct. There was a significant gap between the Society issuing a letter of advice to fully referring a matter to the Tribunal for adjudication. For this reason, it is particularly welcome that a Consensual Disposal procedure has been developed. This will mean that admitted cases with an agreed suitable remedy can be disposed of without the need for a contested hearing. This will result in quicker disposal and undoubtedly cause less stress and anxiety for those subject to the proceedings.

In the past, the Society’s model of regulation was seen as punitive and hostile. Whilst action will always be taken to ensure that serious cases of professional misconduct are addressed, there are cases where a more educative approach should be taken. This usually occurs following an assessment of the seriousness of the allegations having regard to factors including the solicitor’s level of culpability, the harm caused, the existence of any aggravating factors and mitigating factors alongside any relevant regulatory history.

Anti-Money Laundering (AML) is an area in which firms struggle to meet their regulatory obligations. We have taken a more proactive and educative approach to ensure that resources are in place to help firms meet full compliance. Examples include the ‘Firm Wide Risk Assessment’ template launched in October 2025 and the published guidance on the use of Electronic ID & Verification. The Society has also employed a dedicated AML Compliance Officer, who has been working with firms adopting a more educative approach.

The Society continues to be subject to oversight in the exercise of its AML/CTF supervisory function by the Office of Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering Supervision (OPBAS) and HM Treasury who continue to monitor the effectiveness of all AML supervisors, including the Society.

Legal Complaints and Regulation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 implementation

In September 2025 we welcomed a milestone, in the establishment of the new Solicitors Complaints Committee (SCC). This Committee represents an independent decision-making body responsible for considering and determining complaints raised against solicitors for legal services provided to the public. The Society has ensured that all members are fully aware of the changes through a series of dedicated communications and delivery of Part 2 of the Society’s compulsory Risk Management CPD focusing on this area.

Over the past three years as Secretary to the Society’s Client Complaints Committee, I have seen some examples of how practitioners choose not to engage with their clients when a complaint is made and furthermore ignore the Society’s regulatory enquiries. This is not representative of behaviour across the board, but there are undoubtedly areas of improvement to be made. Early resolution of complaints should be at the forefront of every practitioner’s mind. This could avoid a referral to the SCC, the cost and stress this may bring, the exposure to increased sanctions and ultimately reputational damage to a firm.

Looking forward

Looking forward, 2026 will be another important year to ensure that the Society continues to review, reflect and ensure we are a modern and effective regulator into the future. We will continue with our CPD offerings, proactive engagement with firms and supportive approach. We intend to review the Solicitors Accounts Regulations 2014 which have held us in good stead over the past 11 years and look forward to engaging with the profession as this is taken forward.

Policy and Engagement Department

The Policy and Engagement Department aims to act as an authoritative voice for the Northern Ireland solicitor profession through engaging and advocating effectively with politicians, government and wider stakeholders.

Policy and Law Reform

During the year, the Department has provided substantive responses to around 60 consultations on policy and law reform proposals. Most consultations related to proposals by the Department of Justice but have included submissions to seven of the nine Government Departments in Northern Ireland.

Written submissions were provided on three Executive Bills, five Private Member Bills and other wider policy issues at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Oral evidence was also presented to a number of the Committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly in respect of Bills and other matters, including the Committee for Justice, The Executive Office, Economy and Infrastructure.

At a UK level, the Department submitted written evidence to a number of Westminster Parliamentary Committees, including the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the House of Lords Constitution Committee and the House of Lords International Agreements Committee. These submissions addressed issues such as the Funding and Delivery of Public Services in Northern Ireland, the Legacy of the Past and the Rule of Law.

Further submissions were made to other organisations and agencies, including the Office of the Lady Chief Justice on various pilot schemes, Protocols and Practice Directions.

Political Engagement

The Department continues to support the All Party Group (APG) on Access to Justice at the Northern Ireland Assembly, alongside the Bar of Northern Ireland. The APG brings together MLAs from across the political spectrum and aims to ensure that they are better informed and educated on issues relating to Access to Justice. Topics considered by the APG this year have included Legal Aid reform, the Department of Justice’s Access to Justice Reform Programme, the Department of Justice’s wider legislative programme, safer communities, and Court broadcasting proposals. The APG also facilitated visits for MLAs to local courthouses to observe court proceedings and gain an understanding of the role of solicitors in the court process.

As part of our broader programme of political engagement, members of the Department attend the Political Party Conferences. This has presented an important opportunity to highlight issues affecting practitioners and share updates on ongoing priorities in Northern Ireland.

A further key initiative advanced by the Department this year was to commence a series of Legal Townhalls, bringing together local solicitors and elected representatives for open and constructive discussions on the challenges and opportunities facing the legal profession in their local constituencies. The first Townhall was held in Fermanagh, where a number of issues were shared such as the impact of the closure of the local court and custody suite on access to justice in a rural community. The Department intends to continue this programme in other constituencies in conjunction with the Local Solicitor Associations.

The Townhall event held in Fermanagh subsequently led to an Adjournment Debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly, highlighting growing concerns in relation to access to justice and legal services in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. During the debate, calls were made on the Minister of Justice to review and restore justice infrastructure in the area, including local court hearings and police facilities to ensure fair and effective access to justice.

Other Engagement and Activities

Beyond political engagement, the Department continues to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders at a local, national and international level, including Government Ministers, Departmental officials and sister Law Societies.

The Department has also hosted a number of events throughout the year. Highlights include the launch of the Social Value of Legal Aid Report, which focussed on the economic, social and personal benefits delivered by legal aid services across the region, and the Signing Ceremony held in the old Senate Chamber at Stormont to mark the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer.

The Department has also continued to progress actions on a number of long-term initiatives such as the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, and the Society’s Sustainability Strategy.

Finally, the Department provides important support to seven of the Society’s Practitioner and Policy Committees. The Department also supports several established and ad-hoc working groups such as the Climate Justice Group, LawTech Group, Women’s Network and Solicitor Safety Group. The Department hopes to build further awareness on the work delivered through these Committees and Groups via dedicated pages on our new website.

Member Services Department

Over the course of the year, the Department continued to evolve our services to support members to thrive within an increasingly complex and fast-changing legal landscape.

Member engagement remained a central priority for the Department. The Local Association Forum, chaired by the Junior Vice President, together with the President's visits to the Local Associations, played a vital role in ensuring that the Society stays closely connected to the profession. Through these mechanisms, we listened to concerns, shared priorities, and strengthened visibility of our ongoing work.

In addition the Forum has strengthened the connection between Council, Committees, and the wider membership. A new standing agenda item was introduced, giving Chairs of Practice Committees the opportunity to outline their Committee's remit and key priorities. This has proven to be a valuable addition, helping to raise awareness of the significant work undertaken to represent both members' needs and the interests of the solicitor profession as a whole.

Cyber risk continued to be a pressing challenge for legal firms this year. To support resilience, we strengthened our partnerships with the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Cyber Security Centre, delivering both online and in-person regional training. Through these relationships, 15 conveyancing firms were able to access the fully funded Cyber Essentials Training Programme for 2024/25. To support firms, we also secured a new risk management and cyber insurance offering for members via a partnership with Gallagher Insurance and Coalition.

The Member Benefits portfolio was enhanced through new collaborations with Dell Technologies and local digital verification company SureCert. By leveraging the Society's collective purchasing power, members now have access to Dell Premier, with preferential pricing and enhanced services. To support firms in adopting innovative digital tools for client vetting and onboarding, we partnered with SureCert to pilot an AI-powered identity verification solution at a discounted rate, reducing fraud risk while enabling firms to deliver more efficient, client-focused services.

In June, we were delighted to host the Member Services Four Jurisdictions Meeting, which brought together colleagues from Law Societies across the UK and Ireland to exchange insights and best practice. These cross-jurisdictional connections remain vital to the strength of our profession and will help inform our work going forward.

The research service provided by the Library team remains a consistent component of Member Services, with the expert team providing support to members and firms throughout this period.

Communication with our members was highlighted as a strategic priority for 2025 and in addition to the engagement work carried out through our Forum, a full review of the Society's Communications function has now been conducted. Input from members who participated in the survey and user group workshops earlier in the year provided invaluable insight into the flow of information. The review highlighted many opportunities for improvement and there is ongoing work to resource a communications team adequate to meet the changing needs of the Society. Throughout this period the current Member Services team has continued to support the general communication needs across the Society, including providing editorial and logistical support for the varied publications produced. *The Writ* has resumed a quarterly publishing schedule in 2025, and an issue of the *Journal of Elder Law and Capacity* was published earlier this year. In January the Society published *Youth Court Practice in Northern Ireland* and in November the Society will host the launch of the 5th edition of *Rights in Progress* in conjunction with Law Centre NI.

The Department thanks our long-standing designer Paul Shaw who retired mid-way through the year. Paul was a supportive and adaptable colleague who provided invaluable and often support with conference materials and publications. Members may notice a different look as we move on to working with a new team of designers in the future.

This year also marked the departure of the Society's very first Head of Member Services, Alison Grundle. Alison joined us in 2021 and with her leadership and guidance the Society's relationship with our membership has been strengthened. We wish Alison every success in the next stage of her career.



Additional Reports

Law Society Mediation Service



Chair

Brian Speers

Vice Chair

Gareth Jones

Secretary

Ann McMahon

Board members

Therese Johnston
(to January 2025)

Kevin Neary

Michael Wilson

Joe Rice

Emma Fox
(from January 2025)

John Fox
(from December 2024)

Number of
Meetings

3

LSMS Board continued to focus on awareness raising with outside agencies of the importance of mediation, as well as the service that LSMS Panel members can offer in many areas of dispute resolution.

The Chair and Law Society CEO met early in the year with Department of Justice representatives from the Enabling Access to Justice Programme to open discussions on a proposal to develop a mediation pilot as set out in the Access to Justice Delivery Plan. As the Justice Minister has an interest in alternatives to litigation to result in speeding up justice there was a desire within the current mandate to consult on the sequencing and delivery of a mediation pilot. The Board considered and agreed steps to take forward a proposal that could be advanced by the Department to test the efficiency of mediation in a business area within the County Court. Board members met with Enabling Access to Justice representatives to emphasise the unique strengths of LSMS and agreed to formalise their ideas to advance mediation as part of the justice system. A Response to the proposal to run a mediation pilot within the DoJ Consultation on Enabling Access to Justice Programme, was agreed by the Board and submitted for consideration. The Board continue to develop proposals and engage with the Department on this initiative and aspire to bring it to fruition.

LSMS held a General Meeting in January 2025, opened by the President Colin Mitchell and then addressed by Mr Justice Huddleston who delivered a session on recent developments in mediation. Thereafter the AGM received a joint presentation from Mr John Fox and Mr Cormac Fitzpatrick on Mediation in Personal Injury Claims. A Board Chair and Vice Chair was elected, Mr Brian Speers and Mr Gareth Jones, as well as extending an invitation to LSMS member, Emma Fox to join the Board.

Children Order Panel Accreditation Board



Chair

Fiona Donnelly

Secretary

Ann McMahon

Board members

Caroline Boston
(to March 2025)

Arleen Elliott

HHJ Brian Sherrard

Catherine Cassidy

Ursula Crickard
(from March 2025)

Enda Lavery
(from March 2025)

Number of
Meetings

3

This year the Board undertook a review of the 2016 Children Order Panel Regulations as part of the Society's overall review of its Regulations. Considerable time has been spent on updating the content of the Regulations to make them compatible with current day practice.

This process is ongoing as the content must align with any overlapping Regulations and the Board will have the exercise completed at the earliest juncture.

The Board lost one of its most long serving members this year, Caroline Boston, who contributed greatly to the running of the Panel during her tenure. Two new Board members were welcomed, Ms Ursula Crickard, CCGANI and Mr Enda Lavery Solicitor. Both new members will bring considerable experience and expertise to the Board and help with its delivery of business to come.

The annual Children Order Panel Conference took place in June with 170 members and guests attending. Senior Family Judge Mr Justice Kinney opened the day, followed by a presentation from Teresa Thornhill, retired barrister and author, on her experiences dealing with public law cases and the issues she saw as outstanding before improvements could be made.

An AI dual presentation from a practising solicitor, Karen Battersby and Dr Ciaran Kelly QUB gave delegates food for thought on aspects and issues they need to be alert to as AI becomes more common place in practice. Professor Aoife O'Donoghue provided a paper on the Supreme Court decision of Scotland FWS Limited v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16 and issues arising for this jurisdiction regarding the interpretation of Equality legislation and its relation to Gender Recognition legislation. Guidance from the Equality Commission is awaited.

As the Board had taken the decision to extend re-accreditation periods for Panel members from two years to three, only accreditation of solicitors seeking to join the Panel for the first time took place this year. The Board assisted in planning the two-day compulsory training programme, entrance examination and interviewing of applicants. As usual the front loading for the process took considerable Board time, not only in planning the steps for accreditation, but also careful consideration of each application to ensure that potential Panel members met the high standards required to seek accreditation.



In Memoriam

*It is with regret we record the following members’ deaths during the year.
We remember fondly our colleagues who passed away this year and we
extend to their families the sincere condolences of the Law Society.*

Name	Date of Death	Admission Year
Patrick H Donnelly	17/10/2024	1965
Ronald A Malpas	01/12/2024	1954
James E McGovern	30/12/2024	1982
Ronald A Robinson	07/01/2025	1975
Gerard M Lee	18/01/2025	1988
Timothy P Donnelly	12/03/2025	1977
John J Doherty	10/04/2025	1976
Victor A Thompson	23/05/2025	1992
Fred J B O'Connor	19/06/2025	1973
Edward F McAllister	11/07/2025	1978
T D John Cross	11/08/2025	1970
James T Johnston	22/08/2025	1964
Jonathan D McCombe	28/08/2025	1979
A Peter Martin	03/10/2025	1973



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