

Becoming a
Solicitor
in Northern Ireland



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NORTHERN IRELAND



100
YEARS

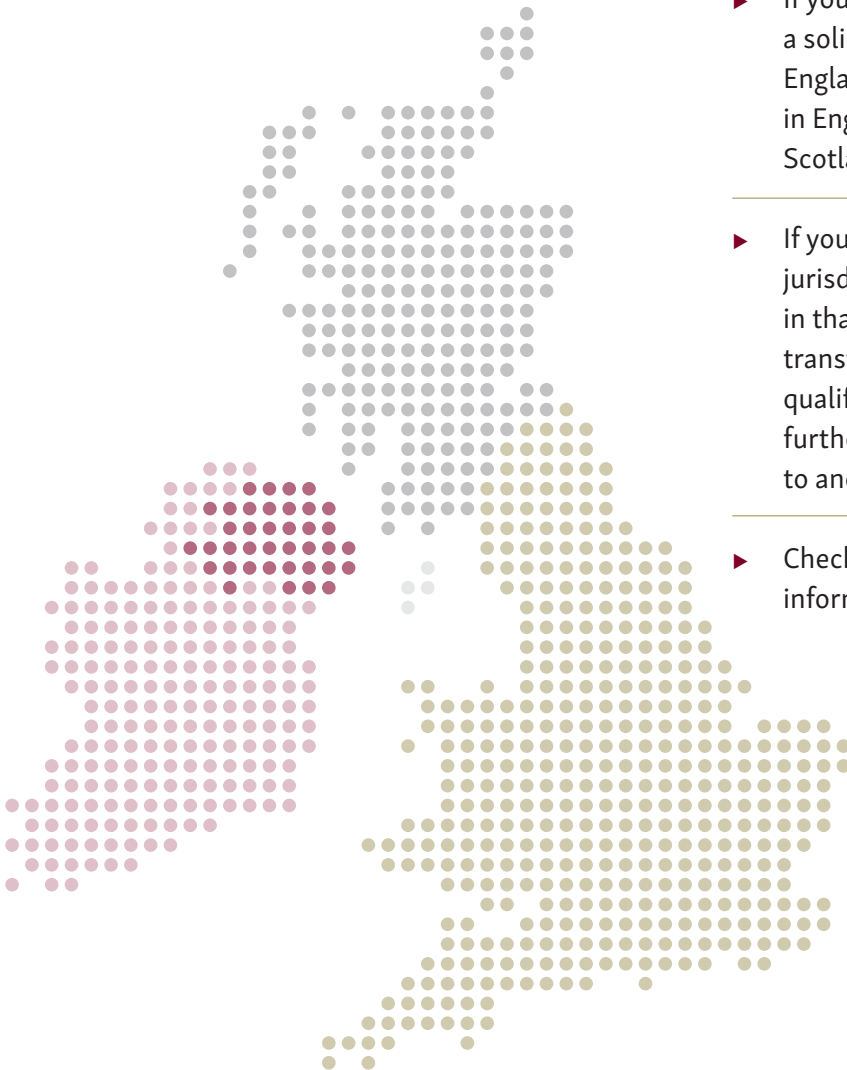
Becoming a solicitor in the United Kingdom or Ireland - key facts:

- ▶ Each part of the United Kingdom and Ireland has its own separate legal system with its own rules of entry to the legal profession.
-
- ▶ There are three separate legal systems in the UK: one each for Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland. There are differences between the law in each area/jurisdiction. Each has its own training system to become a solicitor.
-

- ▶ If you train in Northern Ireland, you qualify as a solicitor in Northern Ireland. If you train in England and Wales, you qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales. The same applies to Scotland and Republic of Ireland.
-

- ▶ If you wish to work in one of the other jurisdictions, you have to qualify as a solicitor in that jurisdiction. Alternatively, you can transfer between jurisdictions, once you qualify. Sometimes you will need to complete further training or exams before transferring to another jurisdiction.
-

- ▶ Check with the Law Society for further information: education@lawsoc-ni.org

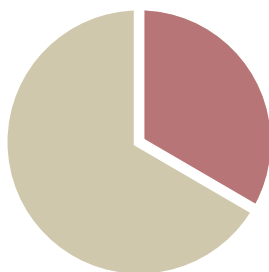


A brief overview of the solicitor profession in Northern Ireland



- There are **over 3,000 practising solicitors** in Northern Ireland.

- **Over 2/3** of solicitors work in private firms (also known as **private practice**).



- **Just under 1/3** of solicitors work in the public sector, in government departments or as in-house solicitors in companies and other organisations or in the **third sector** (non-governmental and non-profit-making organizations including charities).



- **There are over 450 solicitors' firms throughout Northern Ireland.** Most work in small or medium-sized firms. A number of firms have a significant international presence.

- Solicitors from Northern Ireland continue to influence and contribute to the Administration of Justice in many jurisdictions around the world and to leading legal bodies including the **International Bar Association** and the **Commonwealth Lawyers Association**.



- Many solicitor firms maintain a **strong global presence**, providing legal services and support to international companies and clients.

What role and function do solicitors provide?

Solicitors **provide legal advice, negotiate and represent clients** in tribunals and court.

Their work covers **all aspects of life**: personal matters such as making a will, buying a house, separation and family matters, starting a business.

Other areas of work include **education, healthcare, business, sport, voluntary sector & charities, environmental issues, immigration, procurement, welfare rights and human rights**.

There is a **wide variety of legal roles** - from a general practice to positions which will focus on a particular area of law.

How do you train, qualify and become a solicitor in Northern Ireland?

STEP 1.

You need:

Recognised Law Degree

OR

Degree in another subject plus a Recognised Conversion Course



STEP 2.

Apply for and secure a place at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (QUB)

Find an office in which to complete your training

Apply to register and be accepted as a student of the Law Society of Northern Ireland



STEP 3.

Begin your professional training/traineeship (2 years)

Office Based as a Trainee Solicitor + Institute of Professional Legal Studies



STEP 4.

Apply to be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors



STEP 5.

SOLICITOR



Recognised Law Degree or Degree plus Conversion Course

If you want to qualify as a solicitor in Northern Ireland, you need to have:

1. a Recognised Law Degree

or

2. a degree in another subject plus complete a Recognised Conversion Course e.g. Masters in Law at Queen's University Belfast (QUB).

Ulster University, QUB and the Open University offer Recognised Law Degrees. Most universities in England and Wales and Ireland also offer Recognised Law Degrees. **If you want to train as a solicitor or barrister, it is important to check before you apply for university and certainly before accepting an offer, whether or not the degree you are thinking of studying is a "Recognised Law Degree".** Degrees in Scots law are not recognised outside Scotland. Some Scots law degrees which include an element of English Law subjects may be recognised.

For specific information on Recognised Law Degrees, please see the "[Information Booklet for Applicants](#)" on The Institute's website:

www.qub.ac.uk/schools/InstituteofProfessionalLegalStudies/Admissions/

Professional Training/ Traineeship

This is a **two-year integrated period of vocational training** which combines a one-year postgraduate course at the **Institute of Professional Legal Studies (QUB)** with working in a **solicitors' office** or **in house or public sector legal department** under the supervision of a solicitor.

The integrated system of training gives a greater understanding of the practical working environment and the demands of working as a solicitor and also of clients' needs.

Training usually starts in September each year. The first four months are spent in-office followed by a year at the Institute during which Easter and Summer holidays are spent in the office. The final eight months are spent in the office.

During your traineeship, you will cover the **practice and procedure in the main areas of law** which you are likely to need as a solicitor in your first 3 years of practice. You will also be taught skills including **advocacy, negotiation and drafting documents**.

You will learn about **professional conduct, ethics and risk management**.



On **successful completion of the two-year traineeship**, you can then apply to be admitted to the **Roll of Solicitors** and become a **fully-qualified solicitor** and member of the **Law Society of Northern Ireland**.

The solicitor's skillset

Those training to become a solicitor will build on a number of important and transferable skillsets, including:

- ✓ Good **listening** skills
- ✓ Good **communication** skills, both oral & written
- ✓ Ability to undertake **research**
- ✓ Ability to **analyse** and **problem solve**
- ✓ **Critical thinking**
- ✓ **Attention to detail**
- ✓ **Organisational** skills
- ✓ Self-motivated
- ✓ Willingness to help others with **empathy** while remaining **professional**
- ✓ Understanding of **commercial awareness**
- ✓ Understanding of **conflict resolution**
- ✓ **Team-working**



What is the Law Society of Northern Ireland?

The Law Society of Northern Ireland is the **professional body for the solicitors' profession in Northern Ireland**.

The Law Society acts as the **regulatory authority** overseeing the education and professional conduct of solicitors, in order to maintain the independence, ethical standards, professional competence and quality of services offered to the public.

Should I consider becoming a solicitor in Northern Ireland?

If you feel **passionate** about the law, want to **make a difference** in people's lives, want to **contribute to the justice system**, want to meet the **challenges** of a demanding job and the **rewards and opportunities** which it also brings, if you want to be part of the next generation of solicitors, then you should consider becoming a solicitor.

The future is yours to define.



For further information
visit: www.lawsoc-ni.org
or email: education@lawsoc-ni.org



THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF NORTHERN IRELAND

100
YEARS

The Law Society of Northern Ireland,
Law Society House,
96 Victoria Street, Belfast BT1 3GN
Tel: 028 9023 1614
Web: www.lawsoc-ni.org
Email: education@lawsoc-ni.org