

Lay Observer Annual Report April 2023 – March 2024

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SOLICITORS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1976

SOLICITORS (AMENDMENT) (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1989

Presented to the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, the Permanent Secretary Department of Finance, and the Council of the Law Society Northern Ireland pursuant to Article 42 of the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and Article 17 of the Solicitors (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

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CHAPTER 1: Opening Comments

1.1 This is my seventh report since being appointed on 3rd April 2017 as Northern Ireland's first Legal Services Oversight Commissioner (LSOC). As set out in all my previous reports, the secondary legislation necessary to enact all the LSOC powers has still not been made, however, it is now intended that legislation will be made in September 2025. Consequently, I continue to act in a dual role as both LSOC, carrying out some preliminary work, and, primarily, as the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland. Although the Act provides for an LSOC report, that provision is not yet commenced, therefore this report is provided under the existing Lay Observer legislation, the Solicitors Order (Northern Ireland) 1976. It focuses on my work as Lay Observer but does also include some narrative on my work as LSOC.



Marian Cree

- 1.2 This report reflects my work from April 2023 to March 2024, in the context of the complaints process as it relates to solicitors and the Law Society NI. The Lay Observer role relates only to complaints associated with solicitors and, ultimately, the Law Society. The LSOC role is more embracing in the context that it will, once fully implemented, relate to both solicitors and barristers.
- 1.3 As stated in my previous reports, a key trend in the resolution of complaints for clients is that it does not always result in the outcome the client hopes for. This is due to a number of reasons, not least the fact that the powers of both the Law Society and my office in dealing with this aspect of complaints handling are limited. Consequently, the existing process that is operated within the boundaries of legislation has yet again flagged up the fact that it does not always serve the needs and interests of the client, something which the new process envisaged under the Act would aim to address. This report, however, presents another twelve-month period which has seen a continued positive trend in how complaints are registered and handled by the Law Society.

CHAPTER 2: Role of the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland

- 2.1 The Lay Observer for Northern Ireland is the public official charged with overseeing the complaints handling system in place covering the solicitor profession in Northern Ireland. The work of the Lay Observer is governed by a set of principles clearly laid out on my website (www.layobserverni.com). It is to be noted that I also operate my role to the standards laid down by the Ombudsman Association, of which I am a member. It is from these standards that, in part, I derive my legitimacy as a complaints handler and in the way I carry out my work.
- 2.2 I investigate complaints from clients who have exhausted the complaints process, firstly with their solicitors (Tier 1) and secondly, the solicitors' representative and regulating body – the Law Society of Northern Ireland (Tier 2). Mine is the final stage in the complaints handling process (Tier 3).
- 2.3 My post as the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland is part-time. I employ no staff and all administrative tasks and secretarial work are carried out by me directly, in addition to investigations and auditing. My work is located either at the Law Society or in my own home.
- 2.4 During the year I have had valuable meetings with the President, the Senior Team and with the Chief Executive of the Law Society, representing the Council. I am grateful for these meetings, and for their generally most constructive nature. I value this contact as it enables both parties to consider strategic matters and provide an exchange of views and information appropriate to that level.
- 2.5 My day-to-day links are with the Law Society's Head of Professional Conduct and her staff. I can report that in 2023/24 I found them to be very helpful, accommodating and professional. I am particularly grateful for the efforts they made to provide me with necessary data to assist in the completion of my report.
- 2.6 I maintain helpful and excellent contact with the Department of Finance at all levels. This is my sponsoring Government Department, and appropriate personnel provide support for my function in several ways. In particular, I can be contacted by complainants through their address, as well as a website, which

technical persons in the Department maintain on my behalf. I wish to thank the Permanent Secretary for making all this possible.

- 2.7 On day-to-day matters, I link with Mr Jonathan McNaught and his colleagues. I thank them for their very willing and invaluable facilitation, which is often proactive, and always imaginative, in providing advice and help in solving any problem I may face.
- 2.8 The Lady Chief Justice takes an interest in my work. Her role in our Justice System provides a distinctive overview of the work of the solicitors profession, and I value her advice and observations. She is, of course, a formal recipient of my Annual Report under the legislation.

CHAPTER 3: Law Society Complaints Statistics 2023/24

Table 1: Circumstances of the Complaint / number of associated Complaints

Circumstance of complaint	Number	Circumstance of complaint	Number
A. Accidents	5	L. Immigration & Asylum	
B. Bankruptcy & Insolvency Debt		M. Land & Property Disputes	3
C. Commercial Work		N. Libel & Slander	
D. Contract Disputes		O. Licensing	1
E. Conveyancing	11	P. Mental Health	
F. Criminal Injuries & Criminal Damage compensation		Q. Planning	
G. Criminal Law	1	R. Personal Injury	1
H. Employment Law, Equality/Discrimination Issues	2	S. Professional Negligence	
I. Enforcement of Judgments		T. Trusts, Tax & Financial Planning	
J. Family Law – Children	4	U. Wills, Probate & Intestacy	14
K. Family Law – General	3		

Note: *In most cases a single complaint may be included under one or more heading.*

Table 2: Category of Complaints / number of associated Complainants

Nature of Complaints		
Code	Category	Number of Complainants
1	Undue delay or inaction	42
2	Failure to keep client properly informed	38
3	Delay/Failure to respond to reasonable enquiries	38
4	Withholding/loss of documents	17
5	Disclosing confidential information	6
6	Acting in conflict of interest situation	6
7	Acting contrary to the client's instructions	9
8	Breach of undertakings	1
9	Failure to provide bills of costs/cash statements; incurring expense without client's authority	14
10	Failure to deal with legal aid issues properly	
11	Failure to provide proper client care information or not complying with agreed client care arrangements	1
12	Failure to provide proper costs information including Legal Aid Rules at the outset of the transaction or not adhering to arrangements made	9
13	Failure to properly consider client's complaints under solicitor's own in-house complaints procedure	30
14	Other factors	1
	All factors (total 1 – 14)	212

CHAPTER 4: Comment on Complaints Statistics

2023/24

Number of Complaints

- 4.1 In the 2023/24 year the Law Society received a total of 43 individual complaints covering 212 categorised areas. These complaints were made in relation to 35 solicitors. 8 solicitors' firms had more than one complaint made against them during the period of this report. It is worth noting that 16 of the 43 complainants related to these 8 solicitors' firms, which equates to approximately 37% of the complaints received by the Law Society.

Not Upheld	9
Upheld	22
Discontinued	7
Resolved	1
Ongoing	4

- 4.2 It is worth noting that 5 of the 22 upheld complaints also resulted in the solicitor being referred to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal, which can have a profound effect on the solicitor's ability to practise. All of the other upheld cases had some degree of sanction against the solicitor, such as a formal warning/reprimand. 2 of the complaints resulted in cost orders being issued against the solicitor and a restriction to the solicitor's practising certificate. I would suggest this reflects that the Law Society continues to take a sterner approach to the area of complaints.

Circumstances of the Complaint

- 4.3 In my 2022/23 report, Conveyancing received the highest number of complaints, accounting for 17 of the 68 complaints, which equates to 25% of the complaints received. In this reporting period, it was the primary circumstance in 11 of the 43 individual complaints, which again equates to 25% of the complaints received. Although this circumstance of complaint area is showing no signs of improvement, Chapter 5 of my report highlights steps the Law Society has taken to address this. Furthermore, complaints under the heading of Accidents, which also featured in last year's report as an area of concern, remains so but has reduced from 18% of the complaints received in 2022/23 to 12% in this reporting period. Wills, Probate and Intestacy had 14 complaints associated with it compared to 8 in 2022/23. This equates to approximately 33% of the complaints received. These 3 areas make up 70% of all complaints received during 2023/24.

- 4.4 I am aware the Law Society uses this data and identifies trends to inform the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for solicitors – I commend this approach. I am also aware of the proactive steps the Law Society continues to take in picking up on these types of trends and addressing them through several strategies. I comment further on this in Chapter 5 of my report.

Category of Complaints

- 4.5 On review of the overall categorised complaints figures outlined in table 2, the key issue was poor communication on behalf of the solicitor – this has been the key issue in all my reports since I took up office. Categories 1, 2, 3, 7, 11 and 12 above, all of which relate to communicating with the client, were the basis for 137 of the 212 categories associated with the 43 complaints the Law Society received – in essence, approximately 65% compared to 60% in 2022/23. So often, my role in dealing with complaints is explaining to the complainant what the solicitor, and in some instances the Law Society, seems to have been unable to communicate when they have attempted to resolve a complaint. It could be surmised that many of the complaints would not have got to the second tier of the complaints process if the solicitors who had complaints made against them had adopted a more proactive and regular communication approach with their client. I have made this statement in every report that I have produced since taking up office, yet the trend continues.
- 4.6 A more concerning issue is the fact that 30 (14%) of the categorised complaints related to the solicitor failing to properly consider the client's complaints under the solicitor's own in-house complaints procedure. Whilst the Law Society has continued to take significant steps to address this issue and remind solicitors of their obligations regarding complaints, it is unacceptable that a solicitor would believe that not dealing appropriately with a complaint from a client who has paid for their services is acceptable. Estimated costs was also an area that was the basis for a number of the complaints as set out in categories 9 and 12 in table 2. 23 of the 212 categorised complaints related to costs which equates to 11%. Overall, these three areas - communication, solicitors own in-house complaints procedure and costs made up 90% of the categorised complaints.
- 4.7 Finally, it is most important to note that the level of complaints against solicitors in Northern Ireland remains very low, unlike in the legal professions elsewhere in the United Kingdom and, in comparison, with many other fields of professional activity. This should be seen, as I have emphasised before, in the light of the enormous volume of transactions that solicitors here must undertake for clients every year. No-one knows how many this must be but given there were 441 firms (excluding sub offices) practising within private practice on January 2024, then I would assume the volumes of transactions are in the thousands.

CHAPTER 5: Work of the Lay Observer 2023/24

Review Requests/Outcomes

- 5.1 During this reporting period I received 42 (34 last year) requests from individuals requesting that I investigate their complaints relating to the legal profession. I formally reviewed 9 of these complaints, which had already been reviewed by the Law Society's Client Complaints Committee (Tier 2). This equates to 21% of the complaints that I received that had been subject to the Tier 2 process. This compares to the 22% that I reviewed last year. I upheld 2 and partially upheld 2 of the 9 complaints that I reviewed.
- 5.2 I also dealt with 33 other queries from complainants where the nature of their query was either outside of my remit, or I carried out some remedial investigation to enable me to signpost them to other organisations/bodies who could provide assistance. These queries can be equally as complicated or time consuming, e.g. one complainant sent me 37 separate emails with attachments over a 4 month period. The frustration for both me and the complainant is the fact that, in many of the complaints I received, there has been the basis for a complaint but the current legislation does not permit me, or the Law Society, to accept their complaint. In other cases, the complainants were wishing to complain about legal fees, conduct issues, Barristers or they were outside the 6 month time limit for making a complaint.
- 5.3 I also received correspondence from Members of the Local Assembly. Their queries related mainly to the lack of powers associated with the Lay Observer and queries regarding the implementation of the full powers associated with the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner.
- 5.4 As with previous reports by the Lay Observer, the cases I received during the period of this report were mainly complex in nature. The complexity derives mainly from the fact that many complaints have multiple categories associated with them, as outlined in the above statistics. The increase in categorised complaints has contributed to the length of time it takes for me to review a case, as I have to satisfy myself that I have reviewed every aspect of the complaint. On average it takes 6 weeks to investigate a complaint from the time I receive it until I issue my final report.

Key Issues

Ignoring the Client Complaint Process

- 5.5 Solicitors failing to properly consider the client's complaint under the solicitor's own in-house complaints procedures is an all too familiar issue in the complaints I reviewed. This issue has appeared every year in my Annual Report as an area of concern, yet it is still a dominant feature of the complaints analysis. In many of the complaints that I reviewed, the Client Complaints Committee just reminded the solicitor of their obligations under Practice Regulations 2008, Schedule 5 (v). I restate my comments from my 2022/23 Annual Report that I would strongly suggest that the Law Society consider taking a much sterner approach on this issue when deciding on sanctions against a solicitor.
- 5.6 I also noted the significant number of times a solicitor asked for extensions to the deadlines for responding to the Law Society during the investigation process. Whilst I acknowledge that the reasons for the extensions in a few of the requests appeared genuine, in some of the cases I reviewed, the requests were (in my opinion) unjustified as I surmised that the solicitor was just not prioritising the complaint process over other demands on their time. For the complainant this just drags out the process and leaves them in 'limbo'.

Unsigned Terms of Business Letter

- 5.7 I also noted the number of times a complainant raised the issue of an unsigned Terms of Business Letter. This practice appears to be acceptable to the Law Society as no reprimand was issued to any solicitor for adapting this practice in the complaints that I reviewed. However, for the complainant it was, in many instances, a key issue in their complaint to me as they argued that they were not aware of certain costs and processes that would be applied during their association with the solicitor. I would suggest 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. Instead, the complainant and solicitor debate throughout the complaints process whether or not the client did have sight of the Letter but just didn't sign it. I would like to see the Law Society address this issue of unsigned Letters as, in essence, it is the contract between the client and the solicitor and therefore it should not be acceptable to allow it to be unsigned.

Lack of Clarity in Solicitor and Law Society Responses

5.8 Most of the complaints that I reviewed were not upheld. However, a number of those 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. I have mentioned the issue of communication a number of times in this report as it is probably the main reason why most complainants write to me. In this reporting period I have written to the Chairperson of the Client Complaints Committee on a range of communication issues including:

- Queries raised by a complainant in their correspondence to both the solicitor and the Law Society, neither of whom addressed the issues in their responses to the complainant. The complainant wrote to me to see if I could get the answers to the issues they had raised.
- A timeline of 7 months from the complainant submitting their complaint to the Law Society issuing a decision letter, which advised that the complaint could not be registered. The explanation on the decision letter as to why was short and used legal terms. The complainant wrote to me asking if I could explain the reasons for the delay and the decision.

5.9 However, I am aware of the steps the Law Society have continued to take during this reporting period to ensure their processes are open, fair and transparent for both the complainant and the solicitor

Law Society Enhancements 2023 -24

5.10 In all my Annual Reports I have referenced steps that the Law Society has taken during the reporting period to further enhance their complaints process. During this reporting period the Law Society has:

- adapted their initial correspondence sent to a complainant to help clarify various aspects of the complaints process, including explaining the definition of a "client", and clearly setting out the timeframes and different ways within which the Society can assist, whether it be a client complaint, conduct complaint or remuneration certificate.
- They have further increased their signposting to independent legal advice, the Taxing Master's Office, or other third-party services where they are unable to assist by clearly setting out where the complaint has fallen outside or beyond the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and associated Regulations. This includes for matters such as:
 - where the complaint has been raised beyond the 6 month time-frame,

- allegations of negligence where they cannot extricate the negligent allegations from the service or conduct allegations,
- complaints solely regarding a bill which has already been discharged or where the business was contentious, and
- complaints from a beneficiary where the solicitor is acting on the instruction of a lay personal representative.

5.11 The Law Society have also continued with their bespoke client complaint CPD series to the profession. This bespoke series has been tailored to target the main subject areas where the Law Society sees complaints arising, which has remained consistent over the last number of years, including sessions on:

- Engaging with the Lay Complainant
- Litigation
- Probate
- Family Law
- Dealing with Conveyancing complaints
- Dealing effectively with in-house complaints – knowing your regulatory requirements

5.12 The content of this series has been designed to place emphasis on clear, consistent and effective communication with the client throughout the solicitor's conduct of a matter to help manage expectations, explain processes and maintain understanding in order to reduce the possibility of a client becoming dissatisfied with the service being provided.

5.13 They have also continued to promote my Annual Report and the key themes arising therefrom in order to signpost the above CPD offerings both through our E-nformers and Writ articles. For example, in July 2023 they issued a bespoke E-nformer focusing on the key areas of improvement as identified in my Annual Report to remind the membership of their obligations on effective communication, particularly regarding costs and responding to in-house complaints.

5.14 The staff within the Professional Conduct Department have also received updated training on essential helpline skills and managing challenging scenarios to ensure a lay focused approach is taken when engaging with members of the public.

5.15 All of the above demonstrates a willingness within the Law Society to continue to improve their complaints process for all concerned. It shows their desire to make the process more transparent and customer focused, whilst still working within the legislative and regulatory framework which governs them and all solicitors in Northern Ireland.

5.16 The Law Society's response to my last report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

CHAPTER 6: Work of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner

- 6.1 As noted earlier in this report, I am still operating in a dual role, albeit the greater percentage of my time has been devoted to the Lay Observer functions. The Lay Observer role relates only to complaints associated with solicitors and ultimately the Law Society. The LSOC role is more embracing in the context that it will, once fully implemented, relate to both solicitors and barristers. Whilst this report reflects the work of the Lay Observer from April 2023 to March 2024, I will use this chapter of the report to outline the significant developments regarding the implementation of the Legal Complaints and Regulation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the 'Act') (at the time of writing - December 2024).
- 6.2 In the past 12 months the Department of Finance has advanced the work necessary for the secondary legislation to be brought before the NI Assembly. Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Minister of Finance, has advised both the Law Society and the Bar Council that she intends to implement the Act in September 2025.
- 6.3 I have been working closely with the Department of Finance, the Law Society, Bar Council and the Lady Chief Justice in the development and finalisation of the new processes envisaged under the Act. Issues such as unrestricted right of appeal to the High Court have been agreed with both the Minister and the Lady Chief Justice. Recruitment is currently under way to appoint the Shadow Chairpersons for the two new Complaints Committees. Work on the development of plans associated with the implementation of the new processes, as well as guidance for complainants, is also at an advanced stage.
- 6.4 In my previous reports I have repeatedly referenced complaints that I have received from individuals that I have been unable to assist, as their complaints did not fall within the legislation associated with the Lay Observer and the current Law Society complaints process. The inability to award compensation to those complainants whose complaints have been upheld is another issue that has consistently been an area of complaint for a number of individuals who wrote to me. I am delighted that a key element of the new complaints process will be the inclusion of compensation where the complainant has suggested that there may have been an element of negligence by the solicitor or Barrister. This inclusion will make it possible for the new Complaints Committees to award compensation to the complainant for loss, inconvenience or distress under the powers contained in the Act. This is a significant change to the current complaints processes currently operated by the Law Society and Bar Council. Discussions between the

Law Society, Bar Council, the Department of Finance and me on how this element of the new process will operate are at an advanced stage.

- 6.5 I am also working to establish the processes that my office needs to introduce to carry out the full functions of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner as set out in the Act. Functions such as imposing penalties for the submission of an inadequate complaints handling plan or for the non-submission of a complaints handling plan are all elements of the new Legal Services Oversight Commissioner's office.

CHAPTER 7: Closing Comments

- 7.1 The positive issues I have outlined in my report demonstrate the willingness and commitment by the Law Society to continue to improve the existing complaints process. The improvements that the Law Society has made to their complaints process has, over the 8 years that I have carried out the functions of the Lay Observer, brought the Society closer to the type of complaints service envisaged under the new Act.
- 7.2 Whilst it has been a frustrating journey trying to assist with the introduction of the new complaints process, I am delighted that it will become a reality in 2025. However, the current Lay Observer role will continue to operate until the new process is fully functional.
- 7.3 This Annual Report is presented to the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, the Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance and the Council of the Law Society Northern Ireland, pursuant to Article 42 of the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and Article 17 of the Solicitors (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. It is also laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly pursuant to Article 42(8) of the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976.
- 7.4 I understand the Law Society will take steps to ensure that every solicitor on the Northern Ireland register receives a copy electronically. **I hope that solicitors will make it their business to review the content of the report and to determine its relevance to the work of their own firms.**



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Appendix 1: Law Society response to the Lay Observer 2022/23 Annual Report

Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Law Society of Northern Ireland's formal response to the Lay Observer's Report for 2022/23.
- 1.2 The Society welcomes the Lay Observer's Report, which is the sixth report published by Ms Marian Cree since her appointment as Legal Services Oversight Commissioner in April 2017.
- 1.3 The Lay Observer's report will be made available to all Society members.
- 1.4 The Society is committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of the client complaint handling process. The Lay Observer continues to play an important role in assisting the Society to improve its effectiveness when handling client complaints. All reports provided by the Lay Observer are reviewed by the Client Complaint's Committee.
- 1.5 The Society notes the Lay Observer's comment that the level of complaints against solicitors in Northern Ireland remains low. This is testament to those within the profession who are involved in large volumes of client transactions each year. Improvement Initiatives and Continued Professional Development (CPD).
- 1.6 The Lay Observer commends the Society's proactive approach to addressing the issues raised in her Annual Report and appreciates the sterner approach being taken to the area of complaints.
- 1.7 Specifically, the Lay Observer acknowledges within her report that the Society demonstrates a willingness to continue to improve the complaints process for all concerned. Steps have been taken by the Society to review internal procedures alongside external communication to the profession and the public through the website content and CPD.
- 1.8 The Law Society's CPD offerings have been extended to include more bespoke sessions on the most prevalent areas of complaint. The Society appreciates the Lay Observer commendation of the "proactive steps the Law Society continues to take". Complaints Statistics 2022/23
- 1.9 This year the Lay Observer has noted that 2 of the 19 upheld complaints resulted in the solicitor being referred to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. Furthermore, it is noted that all other upheld cases resulted in sanctions against the solicitor. The Society will continue to robustly address cases of inadequate service to ensure high standards are maintained.

- 1.10 The most frequent complaints continue to relate to Family, Conveyancing, Probate and Litigation. The Society will continue to address common themes arising via its CPD programme.
- 1.11 In 2022/23 the Lay Observer formally viewed 15 referrals from complainants compared with 17 in 2021/22. However, the Lay Observer notes that she dealt with a further 19 queries which she was unable to progress with as they were beyond her remit. The Lay Observer stated that “the frustration for both me and the complainant is the fact that, in many of the complaints I received, there has been the basis for a complaint, but the current legislation does not permit me or the Law Society to accept their complaint”. Whilst the Society appreciates this frustration, it is mindful that it must work within the confines of the current legislative and regulatory framework. Key issues
- 1.12 The Lay Observer has identified the following key issues within her report:
- Use of Inappropriate Statements - The Lay Observer has raised concern about the litigious language used by some solicitors in their responses to complaints and expressed concern that the Client Complaints Committee did not sufficiently reprimand the solicitors for such statements. The Society will continue to engage with both complainants and practitioners to ensure that the evidence put to the Society remains fact based rather than steering into opinionated or potentially litigious territory. The Society will reinforce this message through its CPD and at the forthcoming session on ‘Engaging with the Lay Complainant.’
 - Ignoring the Client Complaints Process - The Lay Observer noted that this is “an all too familiar issue” and has strongly suggested a much sterner approach when deciding on sanctions. The Society will continue to stress the necessity to address complaints promptly. The Society has recently delivered a standalone CPD webinar on ‘Client Complaints – Knowing your regulatory requirements’ and used this as a forum to reiterate the importance of responding to a client complaint and the standards that are expected when responding to the same.
 - Costs - The Lay Observer identified an issue with solicitors failing to provide upfront costs information “set out in layman’s terms with clear English explanations” and viewed little progress in this area. The Lay Observer would “strongly suggest that a more serious penalty would be adopted for solicitors not providing this type of clarity”. The Society will issue a clear regulatory reminder for all practitioners and continues to target this area via CPD. The Society are again conscious of the limitations on any “penalty” that can be administered within the current legislative framework.

- Standing to Make a Complaint - The Lay Observer highlighted that “legal standing...is not something we as laypeople understand”. The Lay Observer suggested that the Society take steps to address this issue for future complainants. The Client Complaints Department of the Society have recently reviewed all early stage communication to complainants which aims to provide a clearer understanding of what can and cannot be investigated by the Client Complaints Committee and sets out the requirement for the legal definition of ‘client’ to be fulfilled before a complaint can progress. Concluding Remarks
- 1.13 The Law Society welcomes the report of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner in her capacity as Lay Observer for Northern Ireland.
- 1.14 The Law Society appreciates that the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner acknowledges the Society’s willingness and commitment to continue to improve the complaints process.
- 1.15 The Society looks forward to working in collaboration with the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner as the complaints landscape changes in preparation for the implementation of the Legal Complaints and Regulation Act (NI) 2016.