



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Practising Certificate Renewals for 2021 (Practising Year - ending 5th January 2022)

The Law Society of Northern Ireland is taking this opportunity to provide you with advance notification in respect of how to apply for your **Practising Certificate for 2021** (Practising Year beginning 5th January 2021).

Over the last number of months, the Society has been developing a new online platform to enable solicitors to apply for their Practising Certificate through the Members' Section of the Society's website - **www.lawsoc-ni.org**.

The Society is currently finalising this new process and it will launch next month. This will replace the previous paper-based process.

In the coming weeks the Society will be updating Members about the new platform through a series of e-communications.

It is therefore important that an up-to-date email address for each Solicitor within your office is provided to the Society.

Please note that if you already receive the Society's e-zines (such as e-former) then you need take no further action.

The Society would ask that you please check that you can access the **Members' Section**

(Please click here).

If you **cannot access** the Members' Section then you must immediately email **records@lawsoc-ni.org**

OPTION 1

Submission of an online Practising Certificate Application Form

- * Solicitors wishing to renew their Practising Certificate will be encouraged to complete and submit an online form to the Society.
- * The new online method will be easy to complete and members will be supported with an instructional guide.
- * If a Solicitor on the Roll is required to renew their PC they will be presented with a link in the members section which will allow them to submit their application for renewal online.
- * Those solicitors wishing to renew their PC application online will be required to login to the members section.
- * This will require an email address (supplied and registered with the Society) and a password to allow access to the members area.

All members who are required to renew their Practising Certificate must now:

- * **Test** that they can access the Members' section using the email address they supplied to the Society and their password.

(Please click here)

If you are unable to access the members section you must email records@lawsoc-ni.org providing your full name, name of firm or organisation and a chosen password.

OPTION 2

Alternative means applying for Practising Certificate

The Society is aware that some solicitors and firms may not wish to renew their Solicitor's Practising Certificates using the new online application method.

The Society will continue to provide a hard copy option to those wishing to submit a hard copy form.

This can be requested directly from the Society and details will be provided in the coming weeks on this matter.

The Society will also make available an electronic (PDF) form available.

This will **NOT** be required to be printed and returned but can be filled in electronically and returned in email to PractisingCertificate@lawsoc-ni.org. Again, this option must be requested.

Please note the following

1. Professional Indemnity Insurance (Solicitors in Private Practice only)

For Solicitors in Private Practice, where the Society would have requested evidence of Professional Indemnity Insurance to be submitted with their hard-copy application, the Society will now receive such information directly from the brokers, Willis Towers Watson.

There will be no obligation for Solicitors to submit documentary evidence to the Society when applying for renewal of their 2021 Practising Certificate.

2. Payment of Fees

There will be **NO** option for Solicitors to pay for their Practising Certificate within the online application form.

The online application form will request the applicant to select one of three options as notification to the Society for how payment will be made regarding their fees

- **Bank Transfer**
- **via the Direct Debit Scheme***
- **Credit Card**

The fees due for each Solicitor (**PC Fee/Compensation Fund Contribution both being mandatory and the Benevolent Fund being optional**) will be displayed on the online application form for the applicant's reference and the applicable fees will also be communicated in an email receipt, which is forwarded to the applicant upon successful completion of their online application form.

The Society is aware that some solicitor offices with multiple solicitors may have a preference to provide payment in bulk and not on an individual basis.

The Society is happy to liaise with these offices directly and can provide an invoice regarding what the Society would deem as the correct total of the Practising Certificate Fees due for all Solicitors within their office.

3. NEW - Direct Debit Scheme

The Society will be introducing a new payment method for Solicitors in Private Practices **ONLY**, where Practising Certificate fees may be paid in **four quarterly instalments**.

The first instalment would include:

- * **The full Compensation Fund Contribution** and donation to the **Benevolent Fund** (if contributing).
- * The criteria for release of the Solicitor's Practising Certificate is dependent on receipt of the first instalment.

- * The Solicitors office may arrange for a Direct Debit to be set up as a payment option for all Solicitors.
- * There will be regulatory consequences for solicitors/practices who may avail of the scheme and cancel or terminate their Direct Debit arrangement through the practising year.
- * The Society is still finalising how this scheme will be administered, but it will be a separate application process which must be made to our Finance Dept (Accounts@lawsoc-ni.org).

Further details of how to avail of this proposed scheme will be communicated in due course.

Deadline for Direct Debit - 11th December 2020.

4. Roll out and deadline

- * The usual **6th January** deadline will still apply for submission of Solicitors Practising Certificate applications.
- * It is anticipated that the online process for Solicitors to renew their Practising Certificates via the Members Login will be available from the beginning of November 2020.
- * Communications will be issued in advance of its roll out, with further information of how to apply for renewal online as well as how to avail of the Direct Debit Scheme expected to be issued over the coming weeks.
- * Those members with any questions should email PractisingCertificate@lawsoc-ni.org at any stage.

Deadline for submission of PC applications - 6th January 2021.

Please note

- * The Society's e-zines will continue to be sent to members and it is therefore important that **all Solicitors** within your office are able to receive such e-communications from the Society.
- * The supplied email address and password will also allow access to the Members Section of the Society's website, which is where the online Practising Certificate application will be available.

It is therefore imperative that an up to date email address for each Solicitor within your office is recorded with the Society.

If you or your colleagues need to update their email address with the Society please email records@lawsoc-ni.org