

Country Report for Scotland 2025

The Law Society of Scotland is the professional body for over 13000 Scottish solicitors and was established in 1949. [Our Strategy commits us to lead legal excellence](#), and aim to be a world-class professional body, understanding and serving the needs of our members and the public. As part of our regulatory duties, we set and uphold standards to ensure the provision of excellent legal services and ensure the public can have confidence in Scotland's legal profession.

The Law Society also has a statutory duty to work in the public interest. We are strongly committed to working in the interests of the public and the profession and to protecting and promoting the rule of law. We promote a strong, varied and effective legal profession. We seek to influence the creation of a fairer and more just society through active engagement with the Scottish and United Kingdom governments, parliaments, wider stakeholders and our membership.

There have been three key events over the past year:

- The ongoing engagement of the Society Regulation of Legal Services (Scotland) Bill as it has made its way through parliament
- The Law Society of Scotland's 75th Anniversary
- The UK General Election.

For more information about our work, visit: <https://www.lawscot.org.uk/>

1. Regulation of Legal Services (Scotland) Bill

The Bill represents the biggest shake up of the regulation of solicitors in well over a decade. It would introduce new forms of regulation over legal businesses, changes to the way complaints are handled, and new restrictions over who can and cannot call themselves a lawyer.

Much of the legislation covering legal regulation in Scotland is well over 40 years old. It's why the Law Society went to the Scottish Government back in 2015 to argue for reforms to modernise the regulatory framework. Scottish Ministers set up an independent review of legal services regulation in 2017 (the Robertson review) and consulted on the report recommendations in 2021. The Bill is the culmination of this work.

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The Bill would introduce:

- new regulation over legal businesses
- changes to complaints handling
- restrictions over who can call themselves a lawyer

We welcome many of the reforms, not least because we requested many of them. New proposals for business (entity) regulation and restrictions around who can call themselves a lawyer are positive. There are also some process improvements which should help speed up elements of our work to take regulatory action when we need to. However, many of the suggestions we made for system improvements are absent from the Bill, particularly around complaints handling. We hope this can be addressed as the Bill progresses through parliament.

For instance, we agree that the system for dealing with legal complaints is not working. The current set up is too slow, too rigid, too complex and increasingly expensive. The Bill includes positive changes which should help the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission (SLCC) deal with the eligibility stage of complaints more quickly. We also welcome new provisions allowing the Law Society to start our own complaints investigations when we want to, without having to go through the SLCC. However, we want the Bill to go further and have sought new powers which would allow us to dispose of conduct cases early in limited circumstances. We also want to widen our limited powers to suspend a solicitor on an interim basis when possible serious wrongdoing is uncovered or to restrict a solicitor's practising certificate when necessary.

We have also long argued for new controls over who can call themselves a 'lawyer'. It is concerning that anyone, including those without any legal education, qualification or accreditation, can legitimately call themselves a 'lawyer' and offer legal services for profit. We believe the current unrestricted use of the title 'lawyer' poses a significant risk to consumers who do not differentiate between a 'solicitor' and a 'lawyer' and are therefore potentially being misled. We think the provision in the Bill could be even stronger and will make this argument.

The Law Society has now completed a full review of over 500 amendments which the Scottish Government lodged to its first presentation. Crucially when these amendments were unveiled we were delighted that government proposals for extensive new levels of direct government control and involvement in how Scottish solicitors work are to be removed from the Legal Services Regulation Bill, preserving supremacy of the rule of law. The proposals were met with widespread criticism by the legal world, with the Scottish Judiciary warning that Scotland would "be viewed internationally as a country whose legal system is open to political abuse" and the International Bar Association describing the proposed political interference as "disturbing" and "shocking".



Despite this welcome news. We do however still have a number of concerns that we hope will be addressed. In particular we have questions regarding the bills current proposed text for the following areas:

- Registered Foreign Lawyers
- Powers to require information before a complaint is lodged
- SLCC directions on minimum standards
- Membership and role of the Regulatory Committee
- Consultation on annual reports
- Licensed legal services providers

You can read more in our latest letter to the Scottish Government's Justice minister here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/equalities-human-rights-and-civil-justice-committee/correspondence/2025/regulation-of-legal-services-scotland-bill-3-february-2025.pdf>

And you can find out more in general about our work on the bill here:

<https://www.lawscot.org.uk/research-and-policy/legal-services-review/>

2. Law Society of Scotland's 75th anniversary

The 31 July 2024 was an important date. It was the Society's 75th birthday and there is so much to celebrate in Scotland's legal profession, and the Law Society of Scotland's 75th anniversary provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on the many changes and achievements within the profession and the wider legal sector.

Since 1949, the Scottish legal profession has more than quadrupled in size, from just over 3,000 solicitors to around 13,300, and is increasingly diverse, better reflecting the society it serves.

The Law Society itself was established in the same Act that introduced legal aid for those unable to pay for the advice and representation they needed – so that commitment to access to justice has been woven into everything that the Society does since its creation.

Every day our members help individuals solve complex legal issues; they represent some of the most vulnerable in our society. Solicitors also support successful businesses and play key roles in public bodies right across the country, and the sector itself contributes around £1.5bn to the Scottish economy.

However, amid all the changes we have seen and the challenges faced over the past 75 years, some things remain constant for Scottish solicitors: the deep-



rooted commitment, integrity, depth of knowledge and skills that our members bring to the important work that they do.

You can view a timeline of the history of the Society here:

https://www.lawscot.org.uk/media/gballwy1/Iss-75th-timeline_header-v2.png

3. The UK General Election

Every election matters. Elections are times of great national debate where ideas and visions for the country are shared, argued and challenged. Whether a government is returned or replaced, this is also a time of political renewal where our political leaders govern with a fresh mandate from the people. At the last election were pushed all parties to commit not just deliver for justice, they must actively champion it.

A fair and democratic society relies on justice. Our nation operates on the basis of the rule of law and the separation of powers. A just society has equality at its core, where each individual's rights are not just respected, but cherished.

The success of our economy relies too on a thriving legal sector as a commercial engine in its own right, and to support the many other sectors on which the UK's economic success depends.

This is why we believe this must be a justice election.

In a pre election document, we set out our key asks of the next House of Commons and the next UK Government, whatever its political make up. With so many issues affecting justice devolved to the Scottish Parliament, we have focused our priorities for this election on those matters still reserved by law to the UK Parliament. In particular, we are arguing for a strong political commitment to human rights, renewed administrative justice to help protect the public interest, improved decision making, support for education and diversity, financial crime reform, and improved international trading arrangements.

Prioritising these areas will have real benefits for the legal sector and the wider public. We hope this document enhances the debate now ongoing and widens engagement as we strive to strengthen our justice system, improve our economy and protect society's most vulnerable.

You can read more about our goals here:

<https://www.lawscot.org.uk/research-and-policy/influencing-the-law-and-policy/2024-uk-election-priorities/>