



Community Law & Mediation

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Section 218 Consultation
Legal Services Regulatory Authority
P.O. Box 12906
Dublin 2

28th February 2020

By email

Email: <mailto:publicconsultations@lsra.ie>

Re: Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) prior to the making and issuing of regulations in relation to the advertising of legal services

Dear Sir/Madam,

We the undersigned Independent Law Centres (ILCs) welcome the opportunity to make submissions prior to the making and issuing of regulations in relation to the advertising of legal services. As ILCs, we are governed by S.I. No. 103/2006 - The Solicitors Acts, 1954 to 2002 (Independent Law Centres) Regulations, 2006. Each centre has been granted charitable status by the charities regulator and we provide, amongst other services, free legal advice and, in some circumstances, legal representation. Community Law & Mediation makes this submission on behalf of the undersigned ILCs.

Company Registration No: 69771.
Charity Registration No: CHY 6359.
CEO: Rose Wall, Community Law & Mediation.
Community Directors: Declan Cahill, Gerry Donnelly, Paul Rogers.
Co-opted Directors: Diane Duggan BL, Catherine Ghent, Ronan Farren, Carita McCarthy and Debby Maguire.



We wish to make the following submissions in relation to regulations on the advertising of legal services:

1. Including 'third party websites' into the definition of 'websites' for advertising imposes a disproportionate burden on Independent Law Centres (ILCs). Solicitors should not be held responsible for what is written about them and their services on a third party website. It is too high a standard to impose on solicitors to 'police' the internet for any use of their name. Additionally, the meaning of third party website is left vague and requires clarification. The explanatory note from the Law Society suggests that a claims service with a particular solicitor's name mentioned, would be included in this definition but it does not give further examples. The lack of clarity on this issue could mean that a solicitor would be penalised if their client writes a complimentary review of them on a third party website such as Facebook or Boards.ie. We would welcome clarification on this point.
2. The advertising restrictions are clearly targeted at legal service providers who are competing on the legal services market. As ILCs, we provide our services free of charge and are therefore not competing with other commercial legal providers. Restricting the advertisement of ILCs in the same way as commercial providers could manifest as a barrier to justice in circumstances where particularly vulnerable groups are targeted (advertising of outreach clinics etc).

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above.

Yours faithfully,

Community Law & Mediation Northside
Community Law & Mediation Limerick
Mercy Law Resource Centre
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Ballymun Community Law Centre
Irish Refugee Council