

Standing Committee on Member Services



THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF HONG KONG
香 港 律 師 會

2019

The Standing Committee on Member Services formulates and oversees the implementation of strategies and programmes that enhance members' benefits and interests. It is the Standing Committee's mission to provide the best benefit for our members and to unite them with a common goal of developing the legal communities locally and internationally. The Standing Committee also makes recommendations to other Standing Committees on issues pertaining to members' legal practice. The Standing Committee met 11 times in 2019.

Law Society's Registration and Payment System

To enable members to register and make payments for Law Society functions and events conveniently with a one-stop platform, the Standing Committee and InnoTech Committee launched the Law Society Registration and Payment System ("the System") this year. This marked a big step of the Law Society's commitment in applying technology to serve members better.

The web version of the System was first launched in June, extending to the Law Society's App from September. The platform aims to provide convenient one-stop registration of Member Services events and payment services for members.

Around 1,197 members have registered for the System.

Revamp of E-Circular Cover Page Layout

In May, the Standing Committee rolled out a new, more user-friendly layout of the e-circulars with a new design including weekly photos. The new interface was well received by the members.

SME Firms

This year, the Standing Committee and the Working Party for SME Firms introduced face-to-face discussions with SME law firms, which include sole proprietorship firms and firms with 2 to 5 partners. Two SME Law Firms Sharing Sessions were organised in January which received overwhelming responses from SME partners and sole practitioners. Attendees shared different issues and concerns relating to their practices. Some issues were addressed on the spot by Council members and Standing Committee members attending the Sessions. The Sessions were followed by a series of initiatives:

- In reply to the issues raised at the Sharing Sessions, a briefing session on cyber security for SME law firms was organised on 22 March (repeat session on 16 April).
- The Working Party for SME Firms collaborated with the InnoTech Law Hub ("ILH") to organize a Crossover Community Roundtable in November allowing SME practitioners to exchange ideas and concerns about legal innovation.
- Towards the end of 2019, the Chairman and Vice-Chairlady of the Working Party for SME Firms started a series of SME law firm visits to understand their needs. One SME law firm visit had been conducted in 2019.

Members' Quarterly Lunch Gatherings

The Standing Committee introduced the idea of quarterly gatherings for more interactions with members on topical issues, with the view to assist general members to meet their demands in practice.

To address members' concern on cybersecurity, two Briefing sessions on Cyber Security were successfully organized on 22 March & 16 April (repeat session) with Mr. Michael Gazeley, Mr. Jason Yau & Mr. Grand Chan as speakers. The following topics were covered:

- The overall Cybersecurity risk exposure for SME firms
- Understand emerging cybersecurity risks associated with the dark web
- Identify professional conduct/liability risks associated with cybersecurity issues

67 and 59 members attended the sessions on 22 March and 16 April respectively.

Members' Forum and Dinner Gathering

The Standing Committee organised one large scale Members' Forum and Dinner Gathering on 24 October, when Hong Kong was undergoing social unrests as an aftermath of the "anti-extradition law". Members expressed their views either orally or by written submissions on the topic "*Rebuild Hong Kong & Find Ways Forward – From a Legal Perspective*".

A record breaking number of 121 members attended the Forum. Members had a heated discussion over the few sub-topics identified including (i) prohibition on face covering regulation (or the anti-mask law) & the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, (ii) amnesty and (iii) independent inquiry. The Law Society consolidated and shared the members' suggestions and ideas with relevant stakeholders.

At the "*Dialogue with the President: What Can We Do for You?*" session, members raised questions on the floor and the President, together with Vice-Presidents and other Council members, gave answers on the spot.

Specific Sectors

The Standing Committee was tasked to convene a new Working Party to study the long term strategies to enhance the connections between in-house solicitors and private practitioners, and sought views from all in-house members through a letter from the Chairman on 6 May. The initiative was welcomed by the in-house sector. The Working Party for In-House Lawyers started recruiting members late this year with the view to kick-start its work in the second half of 2020.

A Working Party on YSG (Young Solicitors Group) ("the Working Party") was formed in 2018 under the Council to conduct an overall review of the composition, objectives, and terms of reference of YSG and how YSG's work fits in with the work of the Law Society as a whole, and to make recommendations to the Council. During the year, the Standing

Committee made recommendations to the Working Party on the future strategy of the (YSG). The Working Party released a report in late 2019 and the Chairman of the Standing Committee held meetings with YSG members a few times to explain the recommendations of the Working Party.

Others

In April, the Standing Committee assisted the Council in conducting a Membership Survey to gain a better understanding of the occupational profile of Hong Kong solicitors. This Survey aimed to gather information on career development, work patterns, and demographics of Hong Kong solicitors, as well as their feedback and experiences relating to equality and discrimination issues within the legal profession.

The Standing Committee identified the complications of applicants in manually completing the application forms for registration as a trainee solicitor, and recommended the development of a form-completion software to assist the applicants so as to minimize the common mistakes and hence the time taken for trainee registration. Development of the form is now undertaken by the Compliance Department.

In September, the Standing Committee submitted views to the Department of Justice (“DoJ”) on the Pilot Professional Exchange Programme (PEP), which sought to, inter alia, expose lawyers in the private sector to the work of DoJ, and arrange for DoJ lawyers to gain experience in the private sector to facilitate cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience.

During the year, the Standing Committee also considered issues relating to members’ practice including improving workplace environment in law firms, particularly for women lawyers and verbal harassment.

The Standing Committee also made recommendations to the Standing Committee on External Affairs for ways to improve the participation by members on the various internship programmes with the overseas counterparts.

IN-HOUSE LAWYERS COMMITTEE

In-house lawyers (“IHLs”) are mainly members not in private practice and work in a legal capacity in commerce, trading, industrial, financial, educational, governmental or nonprofit sectors. The In-House Lawyers Committee (“IHLC”) works towards supporting the in-house legal profession in Hong Kong by creating a platform for sharing of experiences and resources, exchanging of views and ideas in relation to the role of IHLs. Another main objective of IHLC is to provide opportunities to facilitate and foster the relationship between IHLs and members in private practice. The Committee convened five meetings over the year.

IHLC organised its signature event, the 2019 Annual Conference of In-House Lawyers, in June. In its eighth year, the conference was held with the theme “Finding the Common

Ground” where distinguished speakers from their respective fields of expertise shared on a variety of topics revolving around the concepts of diversity and inclusion at workplace including gender, race and culture, parenthood and family status, disability, generation and LGBT.

Three panel discussions under the series entitled “Sweat & Glory” were held to allow participants to learn from the experience and knowledge on topics that were pertinent to the daily work and career development of IHLs. Topics covered this year included:

- It isn’t all Glitz & Glamour: An Inside Story of the Media and Entertainment Industry
- Weaving a Luxury Bag or Brand? An Up-close Encounter with the Luxury Retail Industry
- The E-commerce Boom in Hong Kong

IHLC was pleased to launch the “In-House Lawyers Training Programme (in collaboration with law firms)” (the “Programme”) to co-organise courses and seminars with law firms on different topics which are relevant to the practice of IHLs. The inaugural seminar under the Programme was brought by Fangda Partners which discussed the proper management and maintenance of legal advice privilege within Hong Kong companies and international business as a critical part of an in-house legal function. IHLC wrapped up the year with the Programme’s second seminar delivered by Osborne Clarke on the topic of technology where legal issues relating to the use of social media, WeChat, and e-commerce in doing business and possible pitfalls were explored.

INNOTECH COMMITTEE

The Innotech Committee provides technology knowhow and services to members as well as innovative ways of applying ICT to law firms and legal services. It met six times.

During the year, the Committee continued its exchanges with technology-related bodies to establish collaboration with The Law Society, and had a meeting with Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute (“ASTRI”) on the smart city technologies as well as Distributed Ledger Technology and blockchain related research.

The Technology Roadmap

In December 2017, the Committee produced a Roadmap outlining what The Law Society should do to assist the profession to take advantage of the technology, the relevant time frame and the cost. The Roadmap also identified a few product deliverables to be further considered.

To ensure that the Roadmap deliverables will suit the needs of members especially small law firms, the Committee conducted a Law Firm Technology Survey on all law firms in September 2018 (“the Survey”). The Committee received a 6.3% response rate. The Survey results assisted the Committee in identifying tools which law firms considered

relevant and useful for them to adapt to the changing legal landscape.

The Council expressed support for putting in resources to assist members to take advantage of technology.

During the year, the Committee further developed the Technology Roadmap setting out concrete steps which The Law Society could take to assist the profession to take advantage of the technology, the relevant timeframe and the cost.

Based on the findings of the Survey, the needs of members especially that of smaller law firms had been identified, including electronic document retention, introducing digitalization in legal practice, Solicitors Accounting and management software as well as more technology related training seminars for both lawyers and support staff.

The Law Society partnered with Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP) on its Global Acceleration Academy Programme to source start-ups, locally and/or globally, to develop legal solutions for our members. The inaugural programme is 12 months and is designed to enable The Law Society to find technology solutions, or co-create new solutions with innovation start-ups that best fit members' needs and expectations. The Law Society will continue its collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and hire qualified staff, all dedicated to implement the project under the multi-year Roadmap.

Law Society's Registration and Payment System ("the System")

During the year, the Committee made recommendations to the Standing Committee on the System which was launched in June. The System is accessible via the Law Society's webpage and the App.

Seminars

The Committee co-organised a number of seminars with the Academy of Law during the year, all were well received:

- "Cryptocurrency Economics and Bitcoin Imminent Risk of Shutdown" on 28 January
- "What You Should Know About Digital Forensics" on 30 January
- "From Internet Investigation to Digital Forensics" on 1 March
- "RME Elective – Data Privacy, Cybersecurity, the Lawyer" on 25 June
- "Bootcamp: Coding for Lawyers" on 17 & 23 October

Articles

Members of the Committee made regular contributions to the InnoTech section of Hong Kong Lawyer. The following articles have been submitted in 2019:

- "InnoTech Law Hub Launches!" (published in the August issue)
- "Artificial Intelligence For Good" (published in September issue)
- "Re: SFC Statement on Security Token Offerings" (published in October issue)
- "Survey Results: Innovation Priorities of Law Society Members" (published in

December issue)

Others

During the year, the Committee further:

- (a) considered the use of artificial intelligence in e-discovery as well as other areas;
- (b) considered Big Data and its influence on the legal profession; and
- (c) made recommendations for proposed amendments to the Law Society's Guidance (Circular 12-475(PA)) on '*Storage and Destruction of Old Files*'.

The Law Society's App

The Law Society's App has cumulated 10,821 downloads on iOS and Android devices since its release in 2013. In 2019, the "hit rate" of instances of members clicking within the App reached 1.5 million.

WORKING GROUP ON THE LAW SOCIETY'S APP

Are you one of the 10,821 active users who have already downloaded The Law Society's mobile App ("the mobile App") on your iOS or Android device? Are you one of regular users who together interacted with the App over 1.5 million times to read *Hong Kong Lawyer*, see the President's Message, search the members database, download event photos, keep track of and sign up for numerous recreation, sports, members' benefit events and CPD courses and add to your calendar with a simple click? Thank you for contributing to the success of the mobile App --- the first of its kind introduced by law societies around the world. We have listened to your suggestions and continued to improve its functionality since its first release in 2013.

The System was developed as an enhanced feature in the mobile App. App users could register and make payments online via the App which is hyperlinked to the Platform. The first phase covered events organised or arranged by Member Services Department. The Working Group will continue to expand the usage of the Platform to cover more Law Society functions and events, and consider other features for future enhancement.

To encourage increased use of the mobile App, the Working Group has been actively promoting the mobile App as an effective platform for various Committees/working parties/working groups to promote their events, collect views/suggestions/comments on specific issues and accept event registration. The Members & Family Fun Day and Swimming Gala continued to adopt the mobile App registration form as the sole enrollment method.

WORKING GROUP ON INNOTECH LAW HUB

Following the Council's endorsement on the Technology Roadmap, the Committee formed the Working Group on InnoTech Law Hub ("ILH") in 2019 to enhance delivery of legal services and access to justice by discovering and nurturing technology-based solutions for

members' adoption.

Innovation is a community effort to ensure proper strategies are developed and can be highly challenging to implement. A series of initiatives were organised by the Committee and ILH, including conducting the “Innovation Value Chain Survey” between August and October 2019. Over 130 responses were received from members.

Community Roundtables

During the year, ILH organized six Community Roundtables inviting stakeholder groups such as local, overseas lawyers and practitioners of SME firms to exchange their ideas on exploring and embracing legal innovation through small focus group-style discussion. The one held alongside with the LawAsia Conference in November attracted 20 representatives/attendees from various legal jurisdictions.

Product Workshops

ILH also collaborated with various external parties to showcase how their products could benefit the legal practitioners via product workshops.

In September, ILH organized a product workshop “How Law Firms and Lawyers Leverage Technologies to Operate More Efficiently” with Microsoft and Sanuker. The next one entitled “Practical Guidance and Workflow Automation: Maximizing your Legal Resources” by Thomson Reuters will be held in 2020.

LAW FIRM TECHNICAL SUPPORT INTEREST GROUP

The Committee formed a Law Firm Technical Support Interest Group for members, trainee members and law firm technical support staff. Its main function is to provide a forum for sharing of experience and resources and exchange of views relating to technological issues in legal practice.

MEMBER BENEFIT COMMITTEE

The Committee works towards identifying services and benefits for Law Society members. The Committee’s work ranges from improving personal well-being of members to business promotion and development for the profession. The Committee also makes recommendations on promotion items received by The Law Society from time to time. The Committee also promotes the overall wellness of members via creating and implementing various types of wellness programmes and activities.

Seminars, workshops and visits

The Committee organised the following workshops, seminars and visits on a variety of topics, a number of which were newly introduced this year:

- In celebration of Chinese New Year, two Chinese art workshops on Chinese painting calendar and Fai Chun writing were held on 16 January and 21 January respectively.
- A chocolate cake baking workshop was held on 13 February for members to celebrate Valentine’s Day.
- A health talk on “*Conquering Sports Injuries and the Seven Summits*” by Mr. Elton Ng, physiotherapist, elite mountain race athlete, writer and one of the Ten Outstanding Young Persons in 2018, was held on 11 April.
- In celebration of Mother’s Day, a baking workshop was held on 1 May for members and their mothers.
- In celebration of Father’s Day, a LED light bulb with preserved flower workshop was held on 13 June for members and their fathers or children.
- A visit to the Court of Final Appeal was held on 11 September.
- A luncheon talk on “*Master your Stress and Anxiety*” was held on 20 November.
- A book fair by Thomson Reuters was held on 27 November.
- A laughter yoga workshop was held on 13 December.

The Law Society’s Credit Card

The Committee continued its collaboration with American Express on the “The Law Society American Express Platinum Card”.

Other Benefits/Events offered by the Committee

The Committee continued to source and/or offer an exclusive range of products and services for the benefit of members throughout the year. The year round benefits under the six categories, namely Culture & Lifestyle; Dine & Wine; Education & Learning; Health & Leisure; Household & Living and IT products & services were available on Law Society’s website and Law Society’s App for members’ easy reference. Other benefits included exclusive guided tour to the Electoral Information Centre, ticketing discounts to Affordable Art Fair and complimentary tickets to travel expo.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Practice Management Committee is dedicated to serving members in best-practice endeavours. The scope of its work includes providing guidance to members on the opportunities and risks arising from the business of operating a law practice, and on formulating strategies to expand law practice, manage risks in practice, enhance services to clients, motivate staff and manage finance and information. It aims to help law firms to achieve practice management excellence. It formulates guidelines and practice manuals and organises training programmes, seminars and conferences on practice management. The Committee met four times this year.

RME Practice Management Course

Section 6(6B) of the *LPO* has been amended to include a requirement that solicitors who intend to apply for an unconditional practising certificate must satisfy the Council, in addition to compliance with the two-year employment requirement, that they have successfully completed a practice management course provided or approved by The Law Society (“the Course”). The Committee had finalised the Course materials in 2016.

In 2017, the Council resolved conducting the Course on a trial basis as an RME elective and reviewing the feedback before determining whether the Course should be made mandatory (“2017 Resolution”).

The Course has been up and running as an RME elective since February 2019.

The Committee reviewed the feedback on the Course in December 2019, and will make recommendations to the Council on the further conduct of the Course.

LawAsia Conference

The Chairlady of the Committee attended the LawAsia Conference in November and moderated the Law Firm Management session entitled “*Managing a Law Firm in an Era of Increased Competition*”.

Helping Members to Manage and Grow their Businesses

The Committee commissioned the writing of three articles, one of which was published during the year in the following issue of *Hong Kong Lawyer*:

- “*Why Succession Planning is a Key to Success*” published in November 2019.

The other two articles “*Growth Strategies for Small and Medium Sized Law Firms*” and “*Using Legal Technology to Deliver More to Clients*” will be published in 2020.

To keep members apprised with the global development of the legal industry, the Committee organised two seminars during the period from October to November. Mr. Tony Williams of a leading UK based international legal management consultancy was invited by the Committee to present a seminar on “*Increased Competition brought on by the Big 4 in the Legal Market*” on 20 September. The Committee also organised a seminar on “*The race for artificial intelligence and smart contracts: can the law keep up?*” by Mr. Ben Yates on 29 October.

During the year, the Committee also considered a proposed Roadmap to promote Islamic Finance, Fintech and Arbitration in Islamic Finance for Belt and Road Countries prepared by the Islamic Finance Working Party.

ISLAMIC FINANCE WORKING PARTY

The Working Party makes recommendations on the legal development of Islamic financial products and services in Hong Kong and aims to equip members with updated knowledge

and insights in the rapidly growing Islamic Finance market in the world. It aims to facilitate the development of Islamic Finance in Hong Kong and works closely with financial institutions, government and non-governmental organisations, multilateral credit agencies and universities relating to Islamic finance. The Working Party also meets with lawyers from local and international firms to discuss developments in Islamic finance. It also identifies and reports on local Islamic product initiatives such as the issue of halal certificates and the launch of the third sukuk by the Hong Kong SAR Government, being a one billion dollar issuance based on a Wakala (Agency) structure.

The Working Party's annual networking reception for 2019 has been postponed to early 2020. Representative of Huawei Technologies has been invited to share with the audience on the advent and development of 5G technology and artificial intelligence, mainly from the privacy perspective. Participants will have the opportunity to explore how the latest technological breakthrough impacts the Islamic finance industry.

WORKING PARTY FOR SME FIRMS

The Working Party was established under the Practice Management Committee to make recommendations to the Committee on any support and guidance which the Working Party may consider desirable for small and medium-sized enterprise ("SME") law firm practice management; to provide a forum for networking, sharing of experience, exchange of views and discussion of common problems of sole practitioners and small partnership firms on practice management; and to provide a channel of communications between such firms and The Law Society.

To understand more about the needs of SME firms, the Working Party held two "SME Law Firms Sharing Sessions" (the "Sharing Sessions") in late January. Over 140 sole proprietors and partners from approximately 120 SME firms attended. Attendees shared different issues concerning their practices. To address the issues raised at the Sharing Sessions, a session on cyber security for SME firms was organised on 22 March with Mr. Michael Gazeley, Managing Director of Network Box, Mr. Jason Yau, Partner, Technology and Management Consulting of RSM Hong Kong and Mr. Grand Chan, General Counsel of Guardforce Group as speakers. Mr. Nick Chan, Council Member and Vice-Chairman of InnoTech Committee was the moderator.

During the year, the Working Party recommended the development/adoption of different tech tools for the benefit of SME firms including electronic documentation system and digital execution of documents.

The Working Party jointly organised a Crossover Community Roundtable ("Community Roundtable") with the Working Group on InnoTech Law Hub on 26 November. The Community Roundtable afforded a useful platform for SME practitioners to exchange ideas and concerns about legal innovation.

Towards the end of the year, the Working Party Chairman and Vice-Chairlady started a series of SME law firms visits to understand their needs. One visit was conducted in 2019.

INTEREST GROUP ON MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

The Group was formed with the primary aims of setting up a platform for sharing information on mergers and acquisitions; to have in place an effective mechanism to collate relevant information on the needs of potential investors from the Mainland and understanding their investment objectives; formulating how Hong Kong solicitors can assist in the process of advising Mainland enterprises in relation to their diversification of investments abroad pursuant to the national "going out" policy; and inviting those with the relevant expertise to express their interest to be involved.

PRO BONO COMMITTEE

The Committee is formed to review the types of pro bono work undertaken by the profession, promote public awareness of pro bono services of The Law Society and encourage participation by the profession in pro bono work.

Throughout the year, the Committee reviewed various pro bono schemes which The Law Society has organised and/or coordinated participation by its members, including the Free Legal Helpline; 45 minutes Free Legal Consultation, Free Legal Advice on Building Management and various programmes for social enterprises, non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") and secondary school students.

The Law Society was invited by the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") to collaborate on a new scheme, the "Three-Year Pilot Free Outreach Legal Advice Service on Building Management", which was launched during the year.

Free Legal Helpline

The Free Legal Helpline ("the Helpline") was established in late August 2013 with an aim to offer pro bono legal advice to the public in need on three areas of law, namely personal injury, matrimonial law and criminal law.

The Pilot Scheme on Mediation under the Helpline has been extended to provide free telephone sessions on mediation.

To effectively assist the general public seeking legal consultation, the Helpline also remains the Interactive Voice Response System ("IVRS") (a technology that automates interactions with telephone callers) alongside with its in-person call pick-up and case vetting services. The Committee will continue to monitor the services provided under the Helpline.

Up to 31 December 2019, over 8,500 calls had been handled through the Helpline.

Figure 1: Number of cases received in 2019

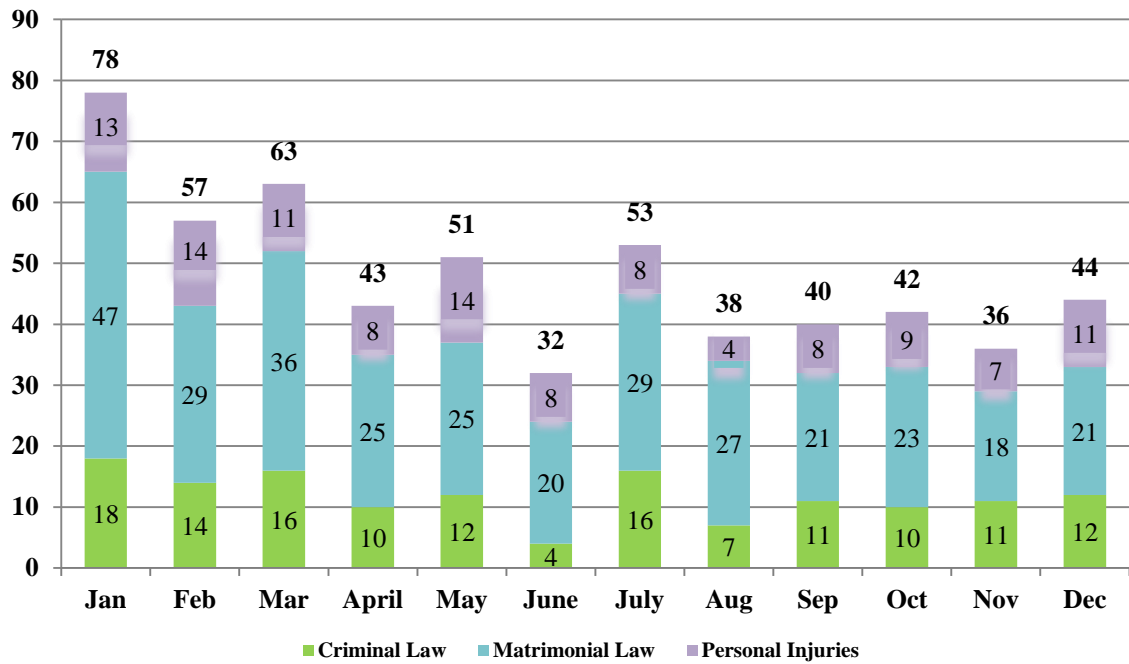
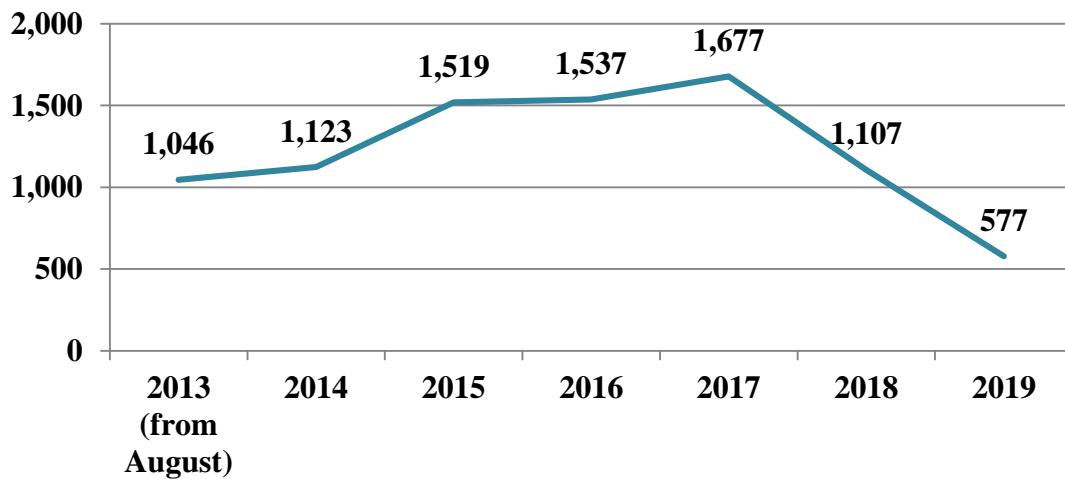


Figure 2 : Number of cases received during 2013 – 2019



Collaboration with Hong Kong Council of Social Service (“HKCSS”)

NGO Corporate Governance Platform

The Law Society has, since 2015, partnered with HKCSS on their “NGOs Governance Platform Project” to promote best practice and experience sharing on NGO governance among board members of their NGO members.

Following the success of the seminar entitled “*Fiduciary Duties and Legal Liabilities of*

NGO Directors” held in Cantonese in 2018, the English session of the seminar on the same topic was jointly organised by the Committee and HKCSS on 19 June. Committee member Ms. Michelle Chow again served as the speaker to explain fiduciary duties and legal liabilities of NGO directors. Further, she made suggestions on some protective strategies to be adopted against potential risks and liabilities of taking up directorship. The seminar was well received with attendance of 33 NGO representatives.

Governance Connect Program

With a view to further assisting NGOs to strengthen their governance capacity, The Law Society also partnered with HKCSS on their “Governance Connect Program”. The Program has successfully matched volunteer lawyers as honorary legal advisors to eight small to medium- sized NGOs which provide assistance to target groups including chronic patients, people with mental health problem / intellectual disabilities and women / children from grass-root families.

The “Governance Engagement Day” connecting volunteering Law Society members and board members of participating NGOs was successfully held on 11 July.

Collaboration with Education Bureau

The Committee continued its collaboration with the Education Bureau in its “Business-School Partnership Programme” (“BSPP”) with the aim of promoting better co-operation and closer alliances between the legal sector and the schools, to lead students out of the classroom to gain a wider perspective of the world and to get them better prepared for life in the society.

A law firm guided visit with sharing sessions was conducted on 3 January.

The visit started with an introduction to legal related careers by Committee members Mr. Arthur Chan. Solicitors and trainee solicitors from the law firm then gave an overview of their firm’s daily operation and shared their own career journey. The sharing sessions were followed by a guided tour of the law firm.

Through the visit, students were able to understand more about legal related careers and law firm operations.

WORKING GROUP ON INSURANCE FOR PRO BONO WORK

The Working Group is tasked to review the regulatory framework relating to professional indemnity and insurance arrangement and coverage to ensure that members are sufficiently covered when they perform pro bono services.

The Committee and Working Group will continue to facilitate the understanding of the relevant stakeholders on The Law Society’s stance on pro bono services and will keep track of feedbacks and development surrounding this matter.

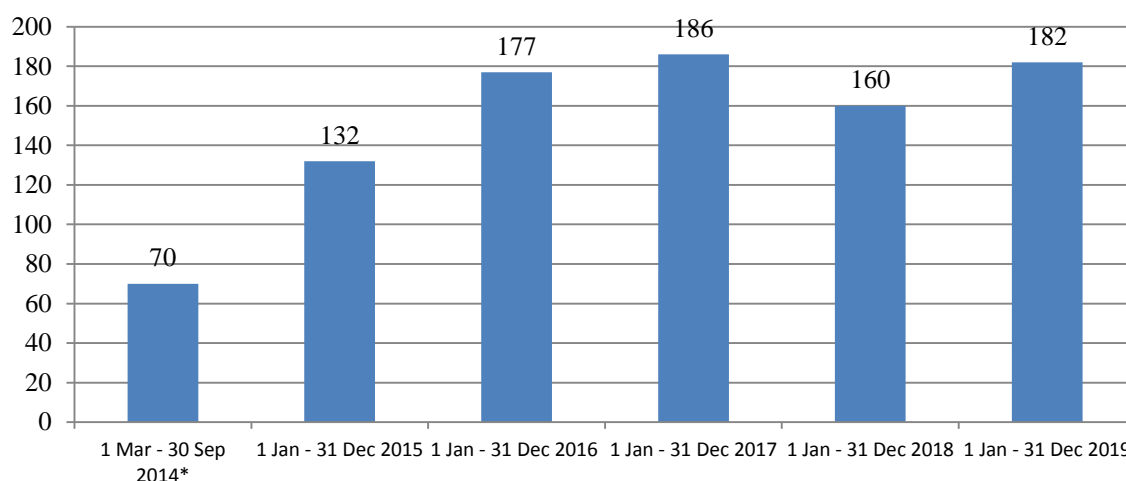
WORKING GROUP ON PRO BONO PROJECTS ON BUILDING MANAGEMENT WORK

The Working Group administers the pro bono projects in relation to building management. It updates panel members on new developments, cases and legislations in the building management spectrum from time to time.

Free Legal Advice Service on Building Management

Since early 2015, the Working Group has been working with HAD on the Free Legal Advice Service on Building Management (“the Scheme”). In 2019, 182 cases had been processed.

Figure 3 : Number of cases processed from 1 March 2014 to 31 December 2019



Note:

* Cases were handled by the Property Management Advisory Centres of Hong Kong Housing Society.

A Basic Course on Property Management (comprising 5 sessions) and a Refresher Course on Property Management were held in October to provide potential and existing panel members a better understanding of the relevant topics on property management. 32 members completed the Basic Course while 79 panel members completed the Refresher Course.

Three-Year Pilot Free Outreach Legal Advice Service on Building Management

In collaboration with The Law Society, HAD launched “Three-Year Pilot Free Outreach Legal Advice Service on Building Management” (“FOLAS”) in September with a view to enhance legal support to Owners’ Corporations (OCs) in conducting general meetings. A case has been processed in 2019 with 6 other cases in progress.

A lunch briefing was arranged on 17 September for members who were interested in joining as panel solicitors to understand more about FOLAS. Chairman of the Workshop Group Mr. Alexander Leung was the speaker for the briefing session and representatives of HAD answered members' questions at the Q&A session.

WORKING GROUP ON PRO BONO WEBPAGE

The Working Group shall continue to review the Pro Bono webpage of The Law Society's website, so as to encourage members' active participation in pro bono work and to promote public awareness.

WORKING GROUP ON SEMINARS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The Law Society has been running the "Social Enterprise Legal Seminar Series" in collaboration with HKCSS for eight consecutive years. The aim is to help social enterprises better understand the legal aspects of their operations.

The Working Group and HKCSS jointly organised a seminar titled "*Social Enterprise Seminar: The Legal Forms and Corporate Governance of Social Enterprises*" on 22 February. Committee member Ms. Michelle Chow and member Mr. Albert So were the speakers who introduced to the audience different legal forms of social enterprises and shared practical cases on corporate governance including how to deal with conflict of interests and tax issues. Over 50 representatives from various social enterprises attended the seminar.

PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY WORK RECOGNITION COMMITTEE

The Committee is tasked to promote and encourage active participation of individual members and law firms in pro bono and community work by showing appreciation for and recognition of their outstanding commitment to volunteering at the Award Ceremony.

Since its inception in 2011, the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Programme ("the Programme") has been highly regarded by The Law Society and has established itself as one of flagship events. 2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the Programme and the Programme continued to gain recognition among the legal profession with a record-breaking 282 applications.

The Award Presentation Ceremony took place on 19 December at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The Law Society was very honoured to have the presence of Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma and Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng, as well as other distinguished guests.

A total of 35 law firms and 179 lawyers received awards. Apart from the Individual and Law Firm awards (Gold, Silver and Bronze), a number of Distinguished Awards were presented. The “Pro Bono and Community Service 10-Year Achievement Award” was also newly introduced and presented to the eight lawyers who have been awarded every year over the past decade.

The awardees of the Distinguished Awards were selected by the members of the Judging Panel representing various sectors. Panel members for the Distinguished Pro Bono Awards included Mr. Thomas Kwong, Director of Legal Aid; The Hon. Elsie Leung, Former Secretary for Justice; Mr. Kenneth Ng, Chairman of The Duty Lawyer; Ms. Clara Wong, Assistant Legal Counsel of The Privacy Commissioner for Personal; Mr. Huen Wong, Past President of The Law Society; Ms. Heidi Chu, Secretary General of The Law Society; and Mr. Alan Schiffman, Chairman of the Pro Bono Committee of The Law Society. Panel members for the Distinguished Community Service Awards included Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive of The Hong Kong Council of Social Service; Mr. Andy Ho, Executive Director of The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups; Dr. Shum Chi Wang, Chairman of Agency for Volunteer Service; Mr. Stephen Yau, Chief Executive of International Social Service Hong Kong Branch and Mr. Ip Shing Hing, Past President and member of the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Committee of The Law Society.

RECREATION AND SPORTS COMMITTEE

The Recreation and Sports Committee (“RSC”) aims at providing a whole range of recreational activities and sports with the view to assist and encourage members to lead a balanced life within demanding work routines and to foster friendship with their fellow members and other professionals. Six meetings were convened over the year. Captains and convenors of the 14 sports teams and nine recreational interest groups also met bi-monthly to report on their activities.

The 14 sports teams include badminton, basketball, cycling, distance running, hiking, dragon boat, football, golf, snooker, swimming, table tennis, tennis, tenpin bowling, and volleyball. The nine recreational interest groups include bridge, Chinese calligraphy and painting, cooking, food and wine appreciation, dancing, live band, martial arts, photography, singing, and yoga. The teams and interest groups provided year-round training sessions and classes to around 800 members who have signed up for the Recreation and Sports Programme 2019.

The RSC teams and groups were also invited to take part in external competitions including various invitational matches with other professionals, public bodies, industry association and charitable organisations, some being held overseas, and continued to make marvellous achievements this year.

Apart from trainings and competitions, the RSC has also organised a few mega annual events over the year including the 9th Legal Professional Cup Dragon Boat Race, Members and Family Fun Day, Swimming Gala, and the Cooking and Tasting Competition.

As an initiative and tradition in fostering relationships with counterparts from Guangdong and Macau, the Law Society took part in the 8th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Lawyers Sports Meet, which was held in and hosted by Macau this year. The Hong Kong team sent a team of over 100 lawyer athletes to take part in this bi-annual mega sporting event gathering legal practitioners from the three regions.

The Law Society is a member of the Recreation and Sports Club for Hong Kong Professional Bodies (“RSCP”) and takes part in inter-professional sports and recreational tournaments regularly held by RSCP. RSCP forms a networking platform enabling members to bond with members of other major professional bodies in Hong Kong.

Altogether, the RSC had organised and participated in around 750 activities including recreational and sporting classes and training sessions this year, attracting and serving about 8,000 participants.

YOUNG SOLICITORS’ GROUP (“YSG”)

The YSG was established to serve the needs and interests of members with less than five year’s post-qualification experience and trainee solicitors. Its mission is to facilitate and assist the career and personal development of the younger generation in the legal profession by offering diversified services and activities that are of interest to, and to the benefit of, its members and trainee solicitors. YSG also serves as a platform for interaction between trainee solicitors, junior and senior members of the profession, and law students.

Welcome Newcomers

CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Scheme

As the flagship initiative of the YSG, the “CONNECTED” Mentorship and Buddy Scheme provides opportunities for trainee solicitors to establish long term friendship and mentoring relationships with members of different seniority in the profession. The “CONNECTED” 2019 programme successfully recruited over 250 participants including mentors (senior members), buddies (junior members) and mentees (trainee solicitors).

The kick-off event of the 2019 programme was held on 29 March where mentors, buddies and mentees met for the first time. On 10 August, around 70 participants joined the second official event of the 2019 programme and learnt how to blend their bespoke fragrance at a perfume workshop. Mentors and buddies also organised different social gatherings to meet their mentees throughout the year. The closing event will take place in January 2020.

Meet & Greet – Trainees & New Members Friday Lunch / Drinks

Newly qualified solicitors and trainee solicitors were invited to meet with Council Members, SCMS Members and YSG Members at lunch gatherings held on various Fridays in 2019. A total of seven gatherings were attended by over 100 newly admitted solicitors and trainee solicitors in 2019.

Welcome Cocktail Reception for Trainee Solicitors

To welcome trainee solicitors to The Law Society, YSG organised a welcome cocktail reception on 1 November hosting over 100 first-year and second-year trainee solicitors at the Law Society Function Room. Participants were introduced to the YSG's initiatives and a wide range of other Law Society activities including recreational and sporting events, member benefit programmes, and cross-jurisdictional visits. Trainee solicitors also had the opportunity to learn from the experience and practical career advice of more senior legal practitioners at the event.

Provide Opportunity for Professional Development

Distinguished Speakers' Luncheon

The YSG had the honour to be graced by the presence of Ms. Connie Lau, Former Ombudsman, at the Distinguished Speakers' Luncheon on 20 July, where Ms. Lau shared her insight on the topic "Fairness in the Eyes of the Ombudsman". The session covered discussion on different concepts of fairness, case studies and past examples of the Ombudsman's work, sharing of experience and advice on leadership skills and more.

Subsidising young lawyers and trainee solicitors on a Visit to the Hainan Free Trade Zone

To broaden the horizons of the younger generation, YSG obtained budget to subsidise a young member and a trainee solicitor proposed by YSG to participate in the Visit to Hainan Free Trade Zone organised by the Greater China Legal Affairs Committee from 28 to 30 August, where participants were invited to a seminar gathering local enterprises and lawyers, and were given the opportunity to explore collaborations and exchange updates of respective legal markets with local legal organisations.

Facilitate Cross-Professional Collaboration

Joint Professional Networking Event

On 21 September, the YSG organised the Joint Professional Networking Event entitled "Exploring the World of Wines" with the young groups of other professional bodies including Hong Kong Bar Association, The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (Hong Kong Branch), Hong Kong Dental Association, The Hong Kong Institute of Architects, The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, The Hong Kong Institute of Planners and The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors.

Over 80 participants joined the wine tasting event where a professional sommelier shared basic wine knowledge. Participants were given the opportunity to taste a selection of six different wines, interact with the sommelier and meet new friends from different professions.

Connect with the Next Generation

The YSG assumes the task of enhancing communications with and among law students, and to promote Law Society's student membership. Application forms were distributed at the law schools' orientation camps and the Law Fair.

Law School Career Talks

On 5 November, Council Members, SCMS Members and Members of the Standing Committee on Standards and Development attended a career talk at the University of Hong Kong ("HKU") and shared with HKU law students advice about the legal profession which law students were about to enter, some regulatory requirements concerning trainee solicitors, the various initiatives of The Law Society and personal experience on career development and legal practice.

Participation in the Law Fair

The YSG took part in the Hong Kong Law Fair 2019 on 7 September held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Council, SCMS and YSG Members introduced to delegates the function and structure of The Law Society and answered enquiries about student membership and general questions in relation to the legal profession at The Law Society's booth.

Meet the Practitioners Drinks Reception for Law Students

Over 80 participants comprising legal practitioners and law students from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong and HKU attended this annual event on 25 October at the Law Society Function Room. This event provided a platform for experienced legal practitioners and YSG Members to share their personal experience with law students, who were also introduced to the work of The Law Society and various YSG activities.

Raise Social Awareness

Social Awareness and Outreach Training Programme

The YSG organised a panel discussion on 13 July inviting distinguished speakers from their respective fields of expertise to share their insights and experience on animal welfare rights. The seminar was attended by over 30 participants and covered an overview of the current animal protection laws, suggestions on remedial measures to overcome deficiencies of the laws, cases of animal cruelty and in particular struggles for wild boars to survive in its dwindling natural habitat.

WORKING PARTY ON HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

The Working Party is tasked to recommend a policy for the establishment of an archive

(the “Archive”) for The Law Society so that materials and information of historical value can be preserved and made accessible systematically. It will also make further recommendations on the compliance and implementation of the archival policy whenever necessary. Recommendations for a policy for the establishment of the Archive were made. The Working Party met once this year to further review its approach to conserving the important heritage assets of The Law Society.