

2020

Standing Committee on Member Services



THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF HONG KONG
香 港 律 師 會

STANDING COMMITTEE ON MEMBER SERVICES



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 10 times in 2020.

Measures to assist Law Firms and Members during COVID-19

The COVID-19 epidemic has brought unprecedented challenges to the legal profession as well as the daily lives of our members. The Standing Committee had a busy year working on various measures to help members combat the pandemic.

Distribution of Surgical Masks and Masks Keepers

In early 2020, the supply of surgical masks was extremely limited. The Standing Committee successfully sourced and distributed surgical masks to members for free. Three mask distribution exercises were organised in February, March and June respectively. A total of 718 firms and 2,824 members (including trainee solicitors and registered foreign lawyers) have benefited.

In May, the Member Benefit Committee produced a unique mask keeper for free distribution to members.

Bank Relief Measures

With a view to exploring the types of support measures that may be offered by banks to law firms and legal practitioners, the Standing Committee approached the Hong Kong Association of Banks in February. Relief schemes offered by five major banks including Bank of China (Hong Kong), Bank of Communications, Bank of East Asia, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) and Hang Seng Bank were made available to members. The Standing Committee further arranged webinars with three of them to brief members on their relief measures.

Facilitation Letter to Landlords

The Standing Committee also approached the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong in March for rental concessionary measures. To facilitate law firms to discuss with their landlords individually, the Standing Committee made available a general letter to landlords to urge for support for law firm tenants. To further assist members in the negotiation with their landlords for rent concessions, specific facilitation letters which tailored to the particular circumstances were made available to members upon request in April.

To step up with our assistance to members on rent reduction, the Standing Committee wrote to a number of landlords of buildings in Central, Admiralty, Sheung Wan, Wanchai and Taikoo/Quarry Bay in June urging them to grant rent concessions to their law firm tenants. The President, Chairperson of the Standing Committee and Director of Member Services

also took part in a dialogue with representatives of Swire Properties on 7 August who responded favourably.

Law Society Facebook Page for Anti-epidemic Measures

A new Facebook page of "疫境同行" providing updates on measures conducted by The Law Society to combat the adverse impact of COVID-19 was launched in March.

LawTech Fund

In early April, the Government announced the establishment of a LawTech Fund (the Fund) under the Anti-epidemic Fund to assist some small and medium-size law firms and barristers' chambers in procuring and upgrading information technology systems and arranging for their staff to attend lawtech training courses. The Fund was opened for applications from April 28 to 6 September.

A LawTech Fund Committee was established under the Standing Committee which comprised of 15 panel members to vet and assess the law firms' applications for the Fund. Member Services Department of the Secretariat was responsible for the overall processing and disbursement of the funding. 77% of the eligible law firm applied for and benefited from the Fund with each of them given a reimbursement amount of up to \$50,000.

Remote Hearings

With the introduction of remote hearings by the Judiciary and to help members make informed choices, the InnoTech Committee conducted three testing sessions with the Judiciary to test the compatibility of the hardware or software systems of several IT vendors with the court video conferencing facilities for remote hearings, and created a webpage to provide details of the services of the vendors. A webinar was also organised on 21 July to demonstrate the use of the facilities.

Members' Survey on COVID-19 Pandemic

The Standing Committee conducted a survey in May to gauge views from members on the difficulties that members faced due to the pandemic, and how The Law Society could assist. A total of 60 responses had been received from members.

Most respondents reflected that corporate/commercial and litigation were the two most affected areas of practice during the pandemic due to quarantine measures and the court closure.

Around 88% of the respondents were aware of The Law Society's measures since February 2020 to assist our members, with around 82% finding the measures helpful.

The Standing Committee had also taken on board members suggestions relating to court closures, Legal Aid case assignment, CPD and RME course arrangements, as well as the LawTech Fund and work with the relevant parties on them.

Court Control Outside Court Registries

The Standing Committee reflected to the Judiciary in August concerns over law firm staff queuing outside registries of courts in the absence of proper social distancing, and requested for stricter crowd control and supervision measures in managing the queues.

Recreation and Sports Programme 2021

The Recreation and Sports Committee reduced the entry fee for joining the Recreation and Sports Programme 2021 from \$200 to \$100, and extended the membership of those who have joined the 2020 Programme for one year for free to encourage members to stay fit and healthy during the pandemic.

The Technology Roadmap

The “Future of Law” Programme was inaugurated this year under the Technology Roadmap 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 official launch took place in November with two Discovery Sessions introducing members to system integration, corporate innovation, and new technologies such as AI, Open API and Robotics, and how they could be adopted in the legal profession. The Law Society is now actively searching for the right solution(s) for members.

Specific Sectors

In-house members

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. The Working Party completed the co-option exercise this year with members joining from both the in-house sector as well as private practice. The Department of Justice also delegated a representative to contribute from the perspective of government counsel. The Working Party will have its first meeting in January 2021.

Senior members

The Working Party on Historical Archive launched the Oral History Project where very senior and significant members of The Law Society would be interviewed with the aim to build up an archive of the life stories and insights of these notable figures of the profession for viewing via The Law Society or any other designated channels.

Others

The Standing Committee assisted the Council in 2019 to conduct a Membership Survey to gain a better understanding of the occupational profile of Hong Kong solicitors. The Survey aimed to gather information on different aspects of the profession including career

development, work patterns, demographics and experiences relating to equality and discrimination issues within the legal profession. The response rate was 27.4%. The report summary of the results was released this year and available at The Law Society's website. The full report is accessible at the Member's zone.

The E-Registration and Payment System, which only covers online registration and payment of member services events previously, has been extended in 2020 to cover applications for the Situations Vacant Service by both law firms and non-law firms for advertising in Yellow Pages. The System is accessible via The Law Society's website and the App.

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 three meetings over the year.

In the light of the outbreak of COVID-19, IHLC had regrettably cancel its signature event, the 2020 Annual Conference of In-House Lawyers. The committee did not resume its activities until October 2020 when the COVID-19 situation became more stable, but out of concern of the safety and health of members, IHLC had moved all its seminars online this year. A total of six webinars were held.

Since its establishment, IHLC has been organising seminars under the series entitled "Sweat & Glory" to allow participants to learn from the experience and knowledge of speakers on topics that were pertinent to the daily work and career development of IHLs. A webinar covering the topic "Legal Issues in the Healthcare Industry for In-House Lawyers: Diagnosis and Management Using MAD (Mediation, Apologies & Disciplinary proceedings)" was held on 4 November attracting over 50 members.

Four webinars were held under the "In-House Lawyers Training Programme (in collaboration with law firms)" where IHLC co-organised courses with law firms on different topics which are relevant to the practice of IHLs. The webinars were attended by a total of around 250 members. Topics covered this year included:

- Cybersecurity / Data Privacy Issues Arising from Work From Home Arrangement: Managing confidential information, electronic signatures (hosted by ELLALAN on 14 October)
- Opportunities of Legal Outsourcing (hosted by L & Y Law Office on 23 October)
- Practical Competition Law (hosted by Pinsent Masons on 9 December)
- COVID-19: The Biggest Industry Disruptor and its Legal Ramifications on Employment Law in 2020 (hosted by Lewis Silkin on 10 December)

A webinar was also delivered by the Hong Kong Society of Notaries on 26 November to provide in-house lawyers with an overview of the profession of Notaries Public, the common notarisational services, and the path to get appointed as Notaries Public. Around 70 members attended the online talk.

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, initiated a video conference with technology representatives of The Law Society of England & Wales sharing experiences on lawtech and home offices for lawyers; attended a cross-jurisdictional community roundtable hosted by LawTech Malaysia and Bar Council of Malaysia to exchange views on legaltech regulations and market trends in law firms with representatives from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Mongolia and Hong Kong; and took part in a discussion with Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute (“Astri”) on their electronic signature project with a view to promoting e-signature in Hong Kong.

Use of Technology for Court Hearings

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, the Chief Justice directed that all proceedings were generally adjourned between 29 January 2020 and 13 April 2020. During the General Adjourned Period (the “GAP”), the Judiciary introduced the use of hardware-based video-conferencing facilities (“VCF”) for remote hearings for suitable civil cases of the High Court in April, and subsequently expanded the use of VCF for civil business in the Court of Appeal, the Court of First Instance of the High Court (Judges and Masters), the Competition Tribunal (Judges and Masters), and the District Court (including Family Court).

In April and immediately after the GPA, the Committee had a discussion with the Judiciary Administrator concerning remote hearings, Integrated Court Case Management System (e-submission and e-filing), use of cloud, and more generally, the use of technology relating to court proceedings or communication with the court.

Pursuant to the discussion, the Committee arranged three testing sessions with the Judiciary between May and July on the use of the hardware-based and software-based VCF to test the compatibility of common VCF, and organised a webinar on 21 July for members to observe an actual testing session conducted by the Judiciary. Tested systems which are compatible with the court video conferencing facilities for remote hearings have been published in the dedicated webpage in The Law Society's website.

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. An inaugural programme named “Future of Law” has been 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. Following the Information Day held in November 2019 which celebrated the official launch of the partnership, two Discovery Sessions, were conducted under the Project on 3 and 17 September 2020, whereby members were introduced with knowledge on system integration and corporate innovation, as well as new technologies such as AI, Open API and Robotics, and how they could be adopted in the legal profession. With the aid of HKSTP, The Law Society is actively searching for suitable technology service providers to develop solutions for members.

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.

Webinar

The Committee co-organised webinar named “*Bootcamp: Coding for Lawyers*” on 3 & 7 April with the Academy of Law, which was well received.

Articles

Members of the Committee made regular contributions to the InnoTech section of Hong Kong Lawyer. The following articles have been submitted in 2020:

- “Artificial Intelligence - Have we Really Arrived or are we Deluding Ourselves?” (published in February issue)
- “‘Why, Then the World's my Oyster', Shakespeare” (published in July issue)

Others

During the year, the Committee further:

- reviewed several practice management software with particular focus on the use of cloud technology in management of law firms;
- consulted the Working Party on Practice in Service Centres, at Home, in Domestic Premises or by Virtual Offices on the progress of virtual law firms and made suggestions on how to speed up the process;
- made suggestions from IT aspect on revising the Storage of Files Circular 12/475 in particular on storage on cloud;
- considered technical issues in relation to the witnessing process by video means when a lawyer is unable to sign a document with physical presence due to unforeseeable and uncontrollable circumstances;
- made recommendations on the IT aspect of The Law Society's Disaster Recovery Plan which was issued in 2004;
- made recommendations on the 'Scheme for Online Payment of Costs and Disbursements on Account and Settlement of Fees'; and
- made recommendations on the checklists on cloud computing risk for the RME programme.

The Law Society's App

Are you one of the 12,456 active users who have already downloaded The Law Society's App (“the App”) on your iOS or Android device? Are you one of regular users who together interacted with the App 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? The Law Society's App has cumulated 12,456 downloads on iOS and Android devices since its release in 2013. In 2020, the “hit rate” of instances of members clicking within the App has reached 1.7 million.

The Committee has listened to your suggestions and will continue to improve the functionality of the App.

LAWTECH FUND COMMITTEE

The LawTech Fund (the “LTF”) was established by the Government under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund to assist small and medium-size law firms and barristers' chambers in procuring and upgrading information technology systems and arranging for their staff to attend lawtech training courses. A Joint Committee established by The Law Society and the Hong Kong Bar Association was responsible for receiving applications under the LTF, processing and deciding whether to approve the received applications and

arranging for the disbursement of the reimbursed amount for successful applications.

A LawTech Fund Committee was set up under the Standing Committee to assist the Joint Committee in approving applications by law firms. A number of panels were formed thereunder and vetted over 500 applications from the eligible law firms which was submitted during the application period from 28 April to 6 September 2020.

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 events this year:

- In celebration of Chinese New Year, a Chinese art workshop on Fai Chun writing was held on 16 January.
- Amidst the outbreak of COVID-19, two online health talks entitled "The Foundation of Mindfulness Practice: Attitudes & Commitment" and "Skincare and eczema treatment tips under COVID-19" were held on 16 July and 24 November respectively for members to alleviate stress and to learn more about the common skin health issues arising from wearing mask on a daily basis under the pandemic.

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 are available on Law Society's website and Law Society's App for members' easy reference.

In celebration of the Chinese New Year, the Committee arranged free distribution of "Lai See" packets in January. The Committee also produced mask keepers with The Law Society's logo for members' free collection in May.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Practice Management Committee is dedicated to educating members on best-practices in managing and operating a law firm. 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 held one formal meeting 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.

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

The Committee reviewed the feedback of participants on the Course, and made recommendations to the Council on the further conduct of the Course.

In September, the Committee initiated a meeting with some RME tutors on the Course to understand more on how the Course was being conducted and hear their suggestions on improvement from the tutors’ perspective.

Helping Members to Manage and Grow their Businesses

The Committee commissioned the writing of five articles, four of which were published during the year in the following issues of *Hong Kong Lawyer*:

- “*Growth Strategies for Small and Medium Sized Law Firms*” published in January.
- “*Using Legal Technology to Deliver More to Clients*” published in February.
- “*Managing the Risks of Working from Home and Flexible Working Hours*” published in October.
- “*The New Law Firm Model*” published in November.

The fifth article “*New Solicitor Business Models*” will be published in 2021.

To keep members apprised with the global development of the legal industry, the Committee organised a webinar on 17 November. Mr. Tony Williams of a leading UK based

international legal management consultancy spoke to members on the topic “Legal Business Models – The New Normal?”. The webinar was attended by 74 members and very positive feedback was received. The Standards & Development Department will follow up on some of the questions raised by participants of the webinar.

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, non-governmental organisations, international organisations and universities relating to Islamic finance. The Working Party also meets with lawyers from local firms and overseas to discuss developments in Islamic finance and identifies and reports on local Islamic product initiatives.

Owing to COVID-19, the Working Party had turned its annual networking reception into a webinar on 25 November where representative of Huawei Technologies shared with the audience on the advent and development of 5G technology and artificial intelligence, mainly from the privacy perspective, and participants took 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 law firms (“SME Firms”); 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 help SME Firms tide over the challenging economic environment, the Working Party held one seminar in January and one webinar in October on Funding Schemes for SME Firms. Representatives from various Government departments shared with members on updates of Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), major funding schemes for SME Firms, loan schemes and their respective application requirements.

WORKING PARTY ON CLIENT ENGAGEMENT LETTERS

Towards the end of the year, the Committee formed the Working Party on Client Engagement Letters with the primary aims of identifying practice areas where a signed client engagement letter would be considered an essential tool for managing the risks of a law firm, and developing proforma client engagement letters and explanatory and/or guidance notes for the use of the same.

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, the "Three-Year Pilot Free Outreach Legal Advice Service on Building Management", and various programmes for social enterprises and non-governmental organisations ("NGOs").

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 engages 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 2020, over 9,000 calls had been handled through the Helpline.

Figure 1: Number of cases received in 2020

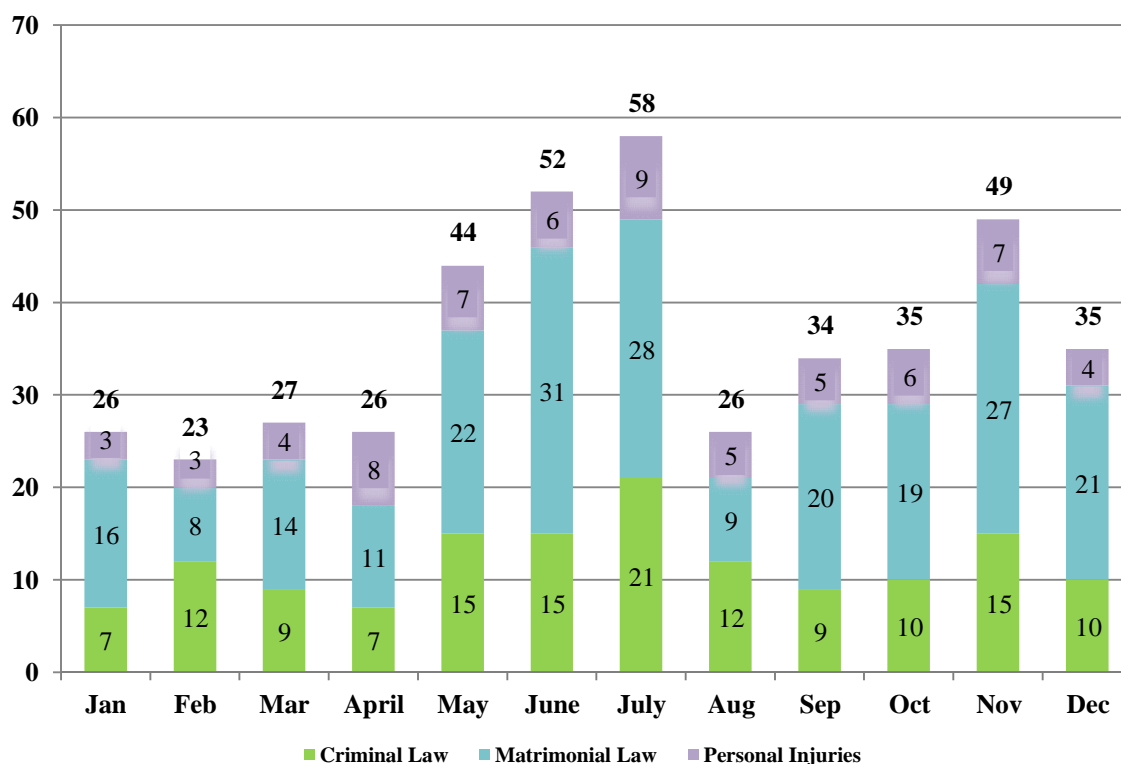
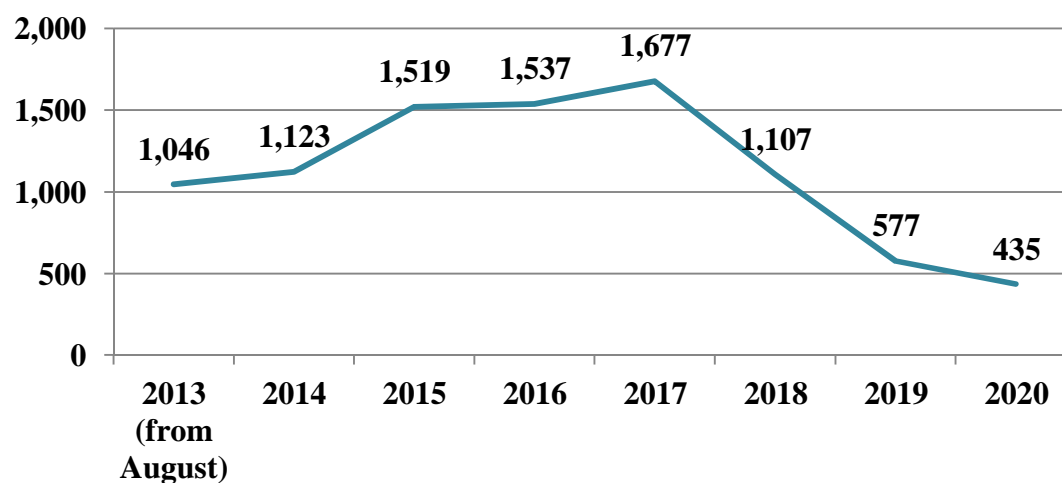


Figure 2 : Number of cases received during 2013 – 2020



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

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.

Collaboration with The 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.

Insurance for Pro Bono Work

The Committee reviews regularly the regulatory framework relating to professional indemnity and insurance arrangement and coverage to ensure that members are sufficiently covered when they perform pro bono work.

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

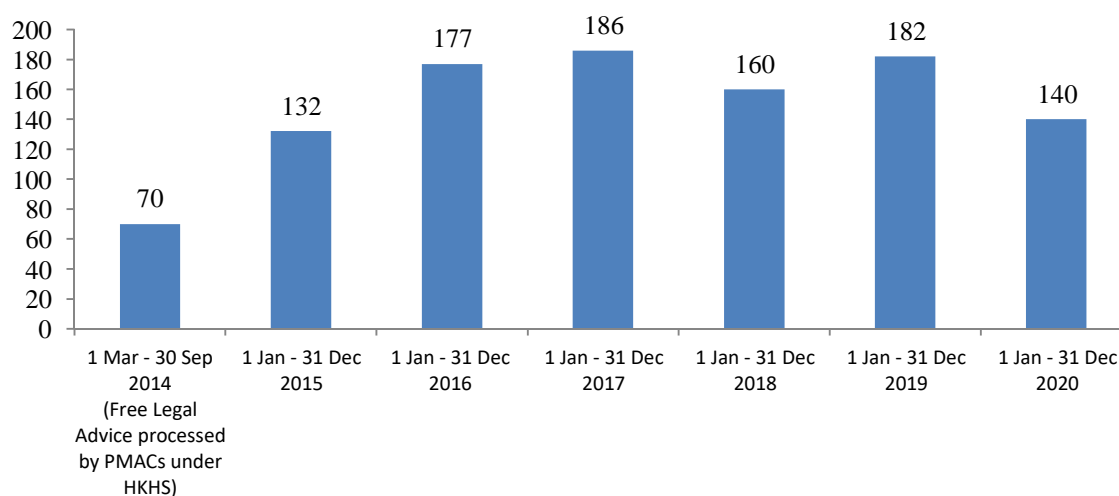
Pro Bono Projects on Building Management Work

The Committee updates panel members from time to time on new developments, cases and legislations in the building management spectrum.

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 2020, 140 cases had been processed.

Figure 3 : Number of cases processed from 1 March 2014 to 31 December 2020



Note:

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

A Refresher Course on Property Management was held online in October to provide existing panel members a better understanding of the relevant topics on property management. 92 members completed the Refresher Course.

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

In collaboration with The Law Society, HAD launched a “Three-Year Pilot Free Outreach Legal Advice Service on Building Management” (“FOLAS”) in 2019 with a view to enhance legal support to Owners’ Corporations (OCs) in conducting general meetings. 11 cases have been processed in 2020 with 5 other cases in progress.

Seminar for Social Enterprises

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

The Committee and HKCSS jointly organised an online seminar titled “*How to Select or Change for a Suitable Legal Form for Your Social Enterprise*” on 30 October. Dr. Teresa Chu was the speaker who introduced to the participants different legal forms of a social enterprise, factors to be considered in choosing a suitable legal form, as well as the basic steps, common doubts and practical issues of adopting such legal forms. The webinar was well received by over 50 NGO and social enterprise representatives.

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 and has established itself as one of The Law Society’s flagship events. In 2020, the Programme continued to gain recognition among the legal profession with a record-breaking 329 applications.

The award winners of the 2020 Programme were announced in a video Award Ceremony. The Law Society was very honoured to have the online presence of Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma and Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng.

A total of 43 law firms and 227 lawyers received awards. Apart from the Individual and Law Firm awards (Gold, Silver and Bronze), a number of Distinguished Awards and special

awards were presented.

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. Ricky Chu, Chairperson of Equal Opportunities Commission; Ms. Winnie Chiu, The Ombudsman; Ms. Ada Chung, Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data; Mr. Thomas Kwong, Director of Legal Aid; Mr. Paul Lam, Chairman of Consumer Council; Mr. C.M. Chan, Vice-President and member of Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Committee of The Law Society; Mr. Ip Shing Hing, Past President and member of the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Committee 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; Ms. Melissa Pang, President of The Law Society and Mr. Philip Wong, member of 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 which assists and encourages members to lead a balanced life within demanding work routines and to foster friendship with their fellow members and other professionals. The Committee convened eight meetings over the year.

The 14 sports teams and nine recreational groups under the RSC listed below provide year-round activities including training sessions and classes to those members and trainee solicitors who have joined the Recreation and Sports Programme, which is an annual programme under the RSC.

Sports teams: badminton, basketball, cycling, distance running, dragon boat, hiking, football, golf, snooker, swimming, table tennis, tennis, tenpin bowling, and volleyball

Recreational groups: bridge, Chinese calligraphy, cookery, food and wine appreciation, dancing, live band, martial arts, photography, singing, and yoga

Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19 and restrictions in group gatherings, RSC had regrettably suspended most of its activities over the year but encouraged members to remain active during the pandemic to stay fit and healthy.

For the first time, the Members and Family Fun Day was moved online with the theme “Health and Wellbeing” where over 100 members and their children submitted videos of them completing different fitness challenges and talent performance as well as images of their drawings echoing the event slogan “We Care, We Share”. Star athletes including snooker master Mr Marco Fu, fencing queen Ms Vivian Kong and badminton Olympian Ms Yip Pui-yin were also invited to share with members their tips to maintain physical and

mental health during this difficult time at the Main Activity on 11 July.

RSC was also proud to learn that Ms Eliza Chang, Mr Allen Che and Mr Eugene Wong made history by swimming across the English Channel from Dover, England to Calais, France, being the first all Hong Kong relay team to complete the feat. By naming the swim the “2020 Rule of Law Swimming Marathon”, the team of three sought to promote rule of law through their exceptional sportsmanship. They also swam for a meaningful cause to raise fund for a charitable organisation which helps giving free swimming lessons to underprivileged children and children with disabilities in Hong Kong. The three lawyer-athletes are members of The Law Society Swimming Team.

To align with the various measures The Law Society had put in place for members in these difficult times, and to encourage members to stay active and healthy through participation in recreational and sporting activities, the RSC reduced the annual fee for the Recreation and Sports Programme 2021 by 50%. For those members who have joined the 2020 Programme, their membership for 2021 will be automatically renewed for free.

The Law Society is a member of the Recreation and Sports Club for Hong Kong Professional Bodies (“RSCP”) which forms a networking platform enabling members to bond with members of other major professional bodies in Hong Kong. All RSCP activities were also unfortunately suspended in 2020 in the light of COVID-19 outbreak.

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. YSG convened four meetings this year.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has prompted the implementation of various social distancing measures which have prevented the organisation of many YSG’s networking activities where physical presence of participants was expected.

While it was not possible to have physical gatherings for most of the year, the YSG had continued with its flagship initiative, the CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Scheme, in 2020 to provide the opportunity for trainee solicitors to establish long term friendship and mentoring relationships with members of different seniority in the profession. The CONNECTED 2020 programme successfully recruited over 200 participants including mentors (senior members), buddies (junior members) and mentees (trainee solicitors), who were assigned to different family sub-groups. Each family sub-group were encouraged to connect with each other safely by electronic means.

Following the cancellation of the physical Hong Kong Law Fair as a result of the pandemic,

The Law Society took part in a virtual law fair hosted by a UK legal news website in September. The virtual event attracted over 1,600 participants including law students and graduates who were considering kicking off their legal careers in Hong Kong. Members of the YSG attended the fair to promote The Law Society student membership among the delegates, introduce the function and structure of The Law Society and address enquiries. They were joined by members of the Recreation and Sports Committee who promoted the Recreation and Sports Programme.

WORKING PARTY FOR IN-HOUSE LAWYERS

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. The Working Party completed the co-option exercise this year with members joining from both the in-house sector as well as private practice. The Department of Justice also delegated a representative to contribute from the perspective of government counsel. The Working Party will have its first meeting in January 2021.

WORKING PARTY ON HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

The Working Party is tasked to recommend a policy for the establishment of an 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. The Working Party met once this year.

The Working Party is pleased to launch the Oral History Project (the “Project”) where very senior and significant members of The Law Society, including members who have been admitted to The Law Society’s Roll of Honour, Past Presidents and the 30 most senior members of The Law Society (in terms of their respective admission dates), have been invited to be interviewed. Videos and/or transcripts of the interviews will be created and made public via The Law Society or any other designated channels with the consent of the interviewees.

The Working Party managed to conduct one video interview (with Immediate Past President Thomas So) within the year in November before the fourth wave of COVID-19. The Project is an ongoing initiative with the aim to build up an archive of the life stories and insights of these notable figures of our profession.