

## Solicitor

Solicitors give legal advice to clients on issues such as conveyancing (buying and selling property), civil and criminal court actions, drawing up wills, family law (divorce, child custody and support) and some financial matters. Clients may be individuals or organisations.

### The Work

You could be:

- giving clients advice on law and legal procedures
- drawing up legal documents such as wills, title deeds or contracts and writing letters about legal issues
- accompanying clients in order to advise them in confrontational situations, for example when they are interviewed by the police
- visiting clients in their homes, at their business premises, in police stations or in prison
- collecting evidence for use in your client's defence, for example photos from the scene of crime
- preparing paperwork for court
- researching documents and case histories
- representing your client's interests and speaking on their behalf in the lower courts, or instructing an Advocate\* to do so
- keeping up to date with changes in the law.

\* Solicitor-Advocates may speak on behalf of clients in the higher courts – see the **Getting On** section below.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- what kind of work you do
- whether you work with a private firm, a public company, or a local authority.

The Law Society of Scotland sets the minimum rates for trainees. From June 2025, the recommended starting salary for trainees is £24,840 for the first year of training and in year 2 this will rise to £28,850.

Newly qualified solicitors may earn around £30,000 to £38,000 a year, rising to around £60,000 with experience. Salaries for higher earners are sometimes over £100,000 a year. For criminal solicitors much of the income comes from Legal Aid.

### Conditions

- You work from an office but you may have to travel to visit clients.
- You may also spend time in the law courts where you must wear a gown and dark, formal clothes.
- You may have to work long hours when you are preparing an important case.
- It can be a pressurised job that is mentally demanding.

## Getting In

### Foundation Stage

- Complete a qualifying four-year LLB (Foundation Programme) law degree (SCQF Level 10) at a Scottish university.
- For entry to the LLB degree, you need 4 or 5 Highers at A and B, preferably passed at a single sitting. (Check university prospectuses for the entry requirements for individual LLB courses). You normally need Higher English. Some universities also specify Maths or a science subject, or a social studies subject, or a modern language other than English at National 5.
- If you apply to the University of Glasgow to study Law you have to sit the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT). You must register with [LNAT](#) to sit the test.
- Students studying the LLB law degree at the University of Dundee can take enough English law modules to achieve a dual-qualified degree, allowing them to qualify to practise in England, Wales or Scotland.
- Graduates with a minimum of a 2:1 degree in a subject other than law can study for an accelerated degree in law at several institutions.
- Robert Gordon University offers an online LLB course for graduates unable to attend a course on campus. It is available on a part time and full time basis. Applicants usually need a degree (or equivalent) in a relevant discipline such as law, business, management, history, modern studies, journalism or other similar subject. Places will be limited. The course can be studied over two, three or four years.
- An alternative way to qualify is to do a 3-year pre-Diploma training contract while working full time with a qualified solicitor and studying for the Law Society of Scotland's own examinations. Visit their website for more information.
- Pre-Diploma training places are very limited and entry is extremely competitive.

### First Stage

- Complete a Diploma in Professional Legal Practice. The Diploma is the first stage of Professional Education and Training or PEAT, the term used to describe the postgraduate stages of becoming a solicitor.

### Second Stage

- Complete a two-year training contract with a practising solicitor in Scotland and at least 60 hours of Trainee Continuing Professional Development (TCPD). This post-Diploma training is known as PEAT 2.
- Traineeships can be difficult to find and entry is very competitive.

Many Solicitors work in private practice. Some practices are large, with specialised departments. Others are small and individual solicitors may deal with a wider range of cases. There is often a division between solicitors who do court-related cases (matrimonial, criminal and civil) and those who deal with non-disputed cases (conveyancing, tax, trust work, company work).

Outside private practice, solicitors work in business, commercial and public bodies. Others work in non-profit-making Law Centres based in disadvantaged areas. They offer free legal advice on issues such as welfare rights, tenants' rights, homelessness, juvenile crime and equal opportunities.

## What Does It Take

You need to be:

- able to communicate with people from all backgrounds
- good at speaking in public
- logical
- honest and trustworthy
- patient
- able to read and understand large amounts of information
- able to work well under pressure and meet deadlines
- able to deal with several cases at the same time.

You need to have:

- a good memory
- sound judgement
- the ability to pay attention to detail
- skill with figures for carrying out financial work.

## Training

- After completing the first year of training, you can apply to be a solicitor holding a restricted practising certificate to gain court experience. This must be supported by your employer.
- At the end of the traineeship, the training firm is asked to certify to the Law Society that you are a fit and proper person to become a solicitor. You can then apply for a full practising certificate.
- The Law Society of Scotland runs a series of courses to help your continuing professional development.

## Getting On

- You may get a salaried partnership and would be more involved in running the firm. If you are a full partner you would be expected to invest in the firm and would then share fully in making decisions and in profits.
- Experienced solicitors may qualify as Solicitor-Advocates. To do so, you must take a training course run by the Law Society of Scotland and pass the advocacy exams. If successful, you can then practice as a Solicitor-Advocate, presenting cases in the higher courts – the Court of Session, the High Court of Justiciary and the House of Lords.
- You may train to become a procurator fiscal, which is a qualified solicitor who investigates and prosecutes all crime in Scotland.

## More Information

[The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service](#) (COPFS) is a publicly funded organisation that is responsible for assessing if there is enough evidence to take legal action against someone who is suspected of committing a crime. They then present the case against those who are taken to court. They also investigate all sudden and unexpected deaths. They employ around 2,300 staff, with almost 700 of those being qualified solicitors. See the

job profile for [Procurator Fiscal](#).

Another potential source of employment for law graduates is the [Government Legal Service for Scotland \(GLSS\)](#). GLSS is a community of lawyers working in Scottish Government. They usually recruit around six to eight trainees each year.

## Contacts

### **Government Legal Service for Scotland (GLSS)**

Tel: 0300 244 4000

Email: [GLSSResourcing@gov.scot](mailto:GLSSResourcing@gov.scot)

Website: [www.gov.scot/publications/legal-traineeships](http://www.gov.scot/publications/legal-traineeships)

### **Law Society of Scotland**

Tel: 0131 226 7411

Email: [lawscot@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:lawscot@lawscot.org.uk)

Website: [www.lawscot.org.uk](http://www.lawscot.org.uk)

Website (2): [www.lawscotjobs.co.uk](http://www.lawscotjobs.co.uk)

X: @Lawscot

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TheLawSocietyofScotland](http://www.facebook.com/TheLawSocietyofScotland)

## Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

### Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.