



PSRA Newsletter December 2015



Maeve Hogan
CEO

Message from the new Regulator

I am delighted to take this opportunity to engage with you as the new Property Services Regulator. Having worked for many years as a career civil servant with the Department of Justice and Equality and as Chief Inspector with the Private Security Authority, Tipperary it was a great personal honour to be appointed as Regulator. I take over this post from my former colleague Tom Lynch who in establishing the Authority, put in place a strong foundation of standards, professionalism and consumer protection within the sector. It is my goal to build on this foundation and to drive compliance across the property services sector. I together with the Board and the staff of the Authority wish Tom well in his retirement.

Over the next number of months I plan to meet with representatives of the sector, to work collaboratively in addressing your issues and concerns. I have already met with representatives of IPAV, SCSi and ICOS and recently attended an information meeting with a group of property services providers in Portlaoise, which provided an opportunity to hear first hand matters of concern. I look forward to attending similar events.

As Regulator, I will be introducing some positive changes in the coming months and will communicate with you on a regular basis. Key among these changes will be the introduction of an on-line licence renewal application and payments system. This issue is addressed later in this newsletter. It is important that there is a level playing field for all in this sector and as Regulator detection of unlicensed property service providers is a high priority. I am keenly aware of the impact which such operators are having on you the legally licensed provider and on the industry more generally. The recruitment of additional staff of the Authority to supplement current staffing levels with the opportunity to avail of additional inspectors on an outsourced basis will drive the detection of unlicensed operators. The additional resources will assist in addressing the complaint arrears of the Authority. Consumer protection is always an overriding priority and will be at the core of any decisions and actions which I as Regulator will take.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) provides professional development opportunities within any sector and the property services sector is no different. It maintains, develops and increases knowledge and professional performance standards all with the goal that you the service provider continue to deliver an effective service. During 2016 the Authority will be addressing CPD and will engage with the representative bodies on this matter and will communicate further with you on this issue.

The Authority is in the process of redesigning its website which will be available in early 2016. You should regularly log on to www.psr.ie for updates across a range of issues.

May I now take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Nollaig shona agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh.

Maeve Hogan
Chief Executive Officer

Meet the Members of the Property Services Regulatory Authority



Ms. Geraldine Clarke (Chairperson)



Ms. Carol Boate, Mr. Edward Carey, Mr. Patrick Davitt,
Mr. James Doorley, Ms. Deirdre Fox.



Mr. Martin Hanratty, Ms. Josephine Henry, Mr. Paul Mooney,
Mr. Myles O'Reilly, Ms. Regina Terry.

The Board of the Property Services Regulatory Authority is appointed by the Minister for Justice and Equality. It consists of eleven members and is chaired by Ms Geraldine Clarke who is a prominent lawyer. Members of the Board include representatives of the property services sector, consumer interests, business and the education sectors. The wide experience of the membership of the Board significantly enhances the strategic direction of the sector.

Annual Report

The Minister for Justice and Equality recently presented the Authority's Annual Report to Government. The report outlines amongst other things the Authority's progress in relation to licensing, audits and complaints. The full report is available on the Authority's website at www.psr.ie

On-line Licence Renewal and Payments System

The Authority is currently working to develop an on-line licence renewal and payments system.

Commencement of the development of this project begins in December 2015. The aim is to have the on-line system available for licence renewal applications in summer 2016. The first phase will only apply to renewal licence applications with new licence applications accommodated some time thereafter. The aim of this project is to eliminate all manual processes and paperwork and have all documentary evidence (Accountants Report, PI Insurance) scanned as part of your renewal application. All processes related to renewal of both employer and employee licenses will be completed on-line.

When the on-line system is operational, renewal applications will only be accepted on-line, likewise payments must be made on-line using credit or debit cards (the possibility of having Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) is being explored. Paper based payments (cheques, cash etc) will no longer be accepted. This is a significant project for the Authority and change for you the property service provider, however, together with the representative bodies and your cooperation, the project will reap benefits for all. The Authority will be providing you with regular updates and advising you of any necessary actions throughout the development of the project.

Crack Down on Unlicensed Operators

To date the PSRA has successfully prosecuted five property service providers for operating without a licence and in the new year further prosecutions by the PSRA will be undertaken. Unlicensed operators have no place in this sector and will not be permitted to masquerade as legitimate property service providers. The PSRA welcomes your assistance in reporting unlicensed operators. Further, the Authority will act on anonymous reports of unlicensed operators.

Outsourcing

The PSRA will shortly outsource part of its complaint and audit inspections to a company who hold the necessary expertise to undertake this function. Outsourcing of this function will provide additional resources to manage complaint arrears including complaints relating to unlicensed operators and assist in undertaking audit inspections nationwide.

Anti-Money Laundering

It is expected that the Minister for Justice and Equality in 2016 will under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 appoint the PSRA as being responsible for monitoring compliance with that Act for the property services sector. The Authority will work with the representative bodies and publish guidelines in relation to this function. Monitoring of compliance of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act, 2010 will form part of the PSRA's audit compliance inspection. The Authority will keep you advised of progress in this matter. You should also visit the Authority's website for updates on this and a range of additional issues at www.psr.ie

Qualifications

The Minister for Justice and Equality in October, 2015 signed S.I. No. 456 of 2015 Property Services (Regulation) Act, 2011 (Qualifications) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. These Regulations amend the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011 (Qualification) Regulation 2012 (S.I No. 182 of 2012). The amendments provide for greater flexibility in the weight applied (the number of ECTS accumulated) to the subjects to be undertaken. The amended qualification acknowledges a person with a Masters or Doctorate, with completed prior studies and enables a reduction in the required number of ECTS in these circumstances. The amended qualifications are available on the Authority's website www.psr.ie.