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CONSUMER PANEL URGES LEGAL OMBUDSMAN TO IDENTIFY LAWYERS WHEN PUBLISHING DECISIONS

In its response to the Legal Ombudsman's consultation on publishing its decisions, the Legal Services Consumer Panel has strongly urged the Legal Ombudsman to name lawyers in all cases leading to a remedy.

Dr Dianne Hayter, chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

"Publishing complaints data about law firms lets the Legal Ombudsman go beyond helping the individual who complained, to enabling all consumers to choose legal services with their eyes open and giving a powerful incentive to all lawyers to maintain high standards.

"Future users have a right to know if lawyers have a history of things going wrong. Making complaints data anonymous would put a brake on competition and unfairly protect the minority of poor lawyers who let consumers down.

"It is important to avoid unintended consequences but none of the objections put forward by the legal profession are convincing or evidence-based."

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For more information, contact Steve Brooker, Consumer Panel Manager, on 020 7271 0077. The consultation response is available on our website: www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk

Notes to editors

1. The Legal Services Consumer Panel was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 to provide independent advice to the Legal Services Board about the interests of consumers of legal services in England and Wales. We investigate issues that affect consumers and use this information to influence decisions about the regulation of legal services.
2. The Legal Ombudsman and the Legal Services Consumer Panel have jointly commissioned consumer research, which will be concluded early next year. The

research findings will inform the Panel's view on the detail of the publication scheme on which the Legal Ombudsman is due to consult in February.

3. The Panel's full response to the consultation can be found on its website:
http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/consultation_responses/documents/2010-12-21_LeO_PublishingDecisions.pdf
4. The Legal Ombudsman's discussion paper on publishing decisions can be found on their website:
http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/downloads/documents/consultations/Publication-Discussion-Paper_Final.pdf