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REACTION TO LEGAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING REPORT – A ‘MISSED OPPORTUNITY’ FOR CONSUMERS

Reacting to today’s Legal Education and Training Review final research report, Elisabeth Davies, Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

"There's much in this report that the Panel has previously called for and welcomes – for example, that lawyers' training include a greater emphasis on ethics, client care skills and diversity; revamping CPD; making voluntary quality schemes more robust; and ongoing consumer representation as the review is taken forward.

"Overall this is a missed opportunity to redesign legal education and training around the needs of consumers. Introducing periodic reaccreditation in high risk areas of law is the single biggest thing the review could have done to bolster consumer confidence in the quality of legal work, so we're greatly disappointed this is missing from the proposals. After a long fight reaccreditation was introduced in medicine to benefit patients, but sadly it's been rejected in law because surveys of practitioners show they don't want it.

"Today's report is an important staging post in an ongoing process to reform lawyers' training so it is suitable for the modern market. We welcome the recognition that the consumer voice needs to be heard loud and clear as the regulators take this work forward. They must remember that the ultimate purpose of this system is to safeguard quality for consumers and the public – decisions about regulation must put these interests first."

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For more information, contact Steve Brooker, Consumer Panel Manager, on 020 7271 0077.

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 LETR research report can be found here: <http://www.lettr.org.uk>
3. The Panel's submission to the LETR review can be found here http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/consultation_responses/documents/2012-05-21LETRsubmission.pdf
4. A speech by Neil Wightman, Panel Member, on reaccreditation, is here http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research_and_reports/documents/20120315Revalidationspeech.pdf