

Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel Meeting

Date: 13 September 2012

Time: 13:00 – 17:30hrs

Venue: Victoria House, Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AD

Present:

Elisabeth Davies	Chair
Jeff Bell	Member
Graham Corbett	Member
Emma Harrison	Member
Paul Munden	Member
Neil Wightman	Member
Karin Woodley	Member
Steve Brooker	Consumer Panel Manager
Harriet Gamper	Consumer Panel Associate
Chris Baas	Legal Services Board

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel ('the Panel') and Chris Baas, who is a project manager with the Legal Services Board ('LSB') and was observing the meeting.

Item 2 – Declarations of interests

2. No declarations.

Item 3 – Minutes of the 9 May 2012 meeting

3. The Chair presented the Draft Minutes for 27 June 2012 meeting.

The Panel approved the Minutes of 27 June 2012.

Item 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes

4. Item 8 in the previous minutes (policy on working with providers) has now been published on the Panel website.
5. Regarding Item 10 in the previous minutes (project approaches; *Choosing and using legal services*) the Panel has now received a draft commissioning letter from the LSB for this project. The letter has been reviewed and reworked following Panel feedback.
6. The Panel Manager advised that the Panel's standards for voluntary accreditation schemes were due to be endorsed by the LSB.

The Panel noted the matters arising.

Item 5 – Chair's report

7. The Chair presented her report covering recent meetings, speaking engagements and press coverage.
8. The Chair noted that the new way of working with specific Panel leads on each project has impacted on members' time and capacity and acknowledged that the Panel has been working with seven members rather than eight. The Chair advised that she is in discussions with LSB colleagues about recruitment of a new member.

The Panel noted the Chair's report and the additional items raised.

Item 6 – Members' updates

9. Graham Corbett advised he had a discussion with representatives at the UK Border Agency on 19 July regarding immigration and access to legal advice. He also updated the Panel on the stakeholder session held in this morning on the Consumer Impact Report attended by approved regulators and others.
10. Emma Harrison advised she had attended a meeting with the charity Mind. She also reported that the Panel's report *Legal Choices, Silent Process* is referenced regularly in third sector meetings.
11. Neil Wightman advised that the final consultation paper for the Legal Education and Training Review has been published and he will circulate a briefing note to Panel members on this. He spoke at the LETR symposium on 10 July.
12. Jeff Bell provided feedback on the project on financial protection – the project is currently out to tender and a contractor should be chosen shortly.
13. Paul Munden advised that he will speak at the Westminster Forum on Alternative Business Structures which will take place on 18 October.
14. Karin Woodley attended a meeting with Russell Cooke solicitors, as well as a meeting with the Charities Commission.

The Panel noted the members' update. Neil Wightman to circulate briefing note on the Legal Education and Training Review.

Item 7 – Complaints special

15. The Panel Manager presented statistics on first-tier complaints based on available data and forthcoming research.

16. Key points in the discussion included:

- 42% of dissatisfied consumers do not make a complaint.
- There is evidence from the Legal Ombudsman/Panel's new research that consumers are still being charged to make complaints in some instances.
- The LSB has set out action points for each Approved Regulator on first-tier complaints. These should be kept under review.

The Panel noted the discussion.

Item 8 – Triennial Review

17. The Chair presented an overview of stakeholder submissions during the Triennial Review process and discussed potential learning for the Panel.

18. It was noted that there were some clear factual inaccuracies in some of the responses from stakeholders, e.g. that they all had their own consumer panels. It was pleasing that some comments about the Panel were positive.

19. Key discussion points included:

- The Panel could serve a useful role by facilitating regulators to come together to discuss consumer issues. This had also been suggested at the stakeholder session on the Consumer Impact Report this morning.
- Some stakeholders had raised visibility issues and it was suggested that the Panel should consider ways of addressing this, for example by publishing a regular e-newsletter.
- The discussion clarified that the Consumer Panel does not have the budget or staff resources to do approved regulators' consumer engagement for them, but we should explore how best we can provide advice on this.

The Panel noted the discussion. Panel Secretariat and Chair to review setting up a regulator forum and options to increase visibility.

Item 9 – Consultation responses

20. The Consumer Panel Associate presented a paper on recent and upcoming consultation responses.

The Panel:

- **Noted the live IPReg consultation on amendments to the code of conduct, registered bodies regulations and disciplinary procedure rules;**
- **Noted the live ILEX Professional Standards consultation on continuing professional development;**

- **Noted the live QASA Scheme Fourth Consultation;**
- **Noted the various ILEX Professional Standards consultations;**
- **Noted the LETR consultation on developing the detail;**
- **Noted the submissions made by the Panel to the LSB on will-writing, probate and estate administration services and on the regulation of non-commercial providers; the Bar Standards Board on the new handbook; ILEX Professional Standards on risk-based and outcomes-focused regulation; and to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales on their forthcoming application to become an Approved Regulator.**

Item 10 – Draft agenda for next meeting

21. The Chair suggested items for the next meeting on 17 October. The Panel Manager and Neil Wightman would reflect on whether the Panel should discuss the Legal Education and Training Review consultation at this meeting.

The Panel agreed the proposed Agenda.

Item 11 – Dates for 2013 meetings

22. The Consumer Panel Associate presented possible meeting dates for the 2013 Panel meetings.

23. The Panel noted the dates but agreed that it could be better to use various days of the week for meetings to better fit in with other commitments.

The Panel noted the paper. Panel Associate to distribute alternative dates by email for Panel agreement.

Item 12 – Any other business

24. The Chair noted that the Panel have formally written appointment congratulation letters to the new Minister with responsibility for legal services and the new Minister with responsibility for consumer affairs.

Item 13 – Consumer Impact Report – interactive session with LSB colleagues

25. During this interactive session the Chair presented an overview of the findings of the Consumer Impact Report. Graham Corbett then introduced the main aims of the session which were to discuss the most striking findings, identify what is already being done to address the problems raised, and consider how best use can be made of the report.

26. The main group was divided into mini groups facilitated by Panel members to discuss these questions and feed back. Each group focused on a particular section of the report.

27. The findings from this session will feed in to the overall review of the Consumer Impact Report which is being undertaken by Graham Corbett.