

Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel Meeting

Date: 17 October 2012

Time: 13:00 – 17:00hrs

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
Steve Brooker	Consumer Panel Manager
Harriet Gamper	Consumer Panel Associate
Julie Myers	Legal Services Board
Paul Greening	Legal Services Board
Ramandeep Bhatti	Legal Services Board
Martin Jones	Law for Life (Item 7)

Item 1 – Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel (“the Panel”). The Chair advised that Karin Woodley had sent apologies.

Item 2 – Declarations of interests

2. None.

Item 3 – Minutes of 13 September 2012

3. The Chair presented the Draft Minutes for the 13 September 2012 meeting.
The Panel approved the Minutes of 13 September 2012.

Item 4 – Matters arising from the minutes

4. Item 5 – The Chair thanked the Panel for their feedback on the desirability of recruiting a new Panel Member, which had now been agreed with the LSB. She advised the recruitment process would start shortly.

Item 5 – Chair’s report

5. The Chair presented her report covering recent meetings, speaking engagements and press coverage.
6. In addition to the written report the Chair advised:
 - the LSB had proposed funding joint research on ‘why consumers don’t trust lawyers’ and a separate project on learning disabilities, both of which would need to be completed in this financial year
 - the Council for Licensed Conveyancers (CLC) had proposed to amend its Handbook to incorporate the BSI standard on consumer vulnerability. The Faculty Office had also advised that it would formally consider using the standard at a Board meeting later this year
 - there have not been any developments to report on the Red Tape Challenge as engagement with the website had been limited to date.

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

Item 6 – Members’ updates

7. Paul Munden advised he would be speaking at the *Westminster Legal Policy Forum Keynote Seminar: Alternative business structures and the future of the legal services market - assessing the impacts of reform*, on 18 October 2012.

The Panel noted the members’ update.

Item 7 – Law for Life

8. The Chair welcomed Martin Jones, Director of Law for Life: the Foundation for Public Legal Education. Martin presented some background information on Law for Life, described its work on legal capability and provided an outline of current projects.
9. Subsequent discussion raised a number of points, including:
 - the importance of using public legal education to equip people with the knowledge and skills to deal with legal problems
 - research has suggested that existing information provision is often weak;
 - challenges in delivering the objectives of the programme
 - the implications of market changes, such as the internet and the emerging ‘big brands’, in relation to accessing trustworthy and independent advice
 - the appropriate role of regulation in relation to public legal education is unresolved but needs to be addressed.

The Panel noted the presentation and would consider public legal education further within the choosing and using legal services project.

Item 8 – Projects update

10. Emma Harrison advised the Immigration and Asylum Services research note was published on 15 October. She also advised a scoping note was being prepared on mental health and there has been early contact with potential partners on this.
11. Neil Wightman advised the LSB had endorsed the Panel's criteria for credible schemes and that it had encouraged us to undertake a progress review at an appropriate future point.
12. Graham Corbett advised he had started work on the Consumer Impact Report review exercise and would make recommendations to the December meeting.
13. The Consumer Panel Associate advised that Vanilla Research had been appointed to conduct qualitative research on risk and regulation and would be presenting the findings at the December meeting.
14. Jeff Bell advised that he and Emma Harrison had met before the Panel meeting to discuss future complaints priorities and to take forward action points in relation to the Legal Ombudsman. The Chair advised we may hold a joint meeting with the Office for Legal Complaints in early 2013.
15. Neil Wightman advised he and the Panel Manager would be meeting Julian Webb on 23 October. It was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to the LETR in response to the second discussion paper highlighting some key strategic points.
The Panel noted the project update.

Item 9 – Choosing and using legal services

16. The Consumer Panel Manager presented a draft background paper on consumer empowerment as part of the choosing and using legal services project.
17. Following discussion the Panel suggested that the paper should pose some questions for regulators to consider, including:
 - Is consumer empowerment important?
 - Where have consumer empowerment initiatives worked in the past in legal services and elsewhere? What lessons can be learnt?
 - How can we better help consumers shop around?
 - What's the relationship between competition and empowerment?
 - How important is consumer protection and regulatory performance (e.g. making the market more safe) in relation to consumer confidence?**The Panel noted the choosing and using legal services paper.**

Item 10 – Consultation responses

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

The Panel:

- **Noted the live ILEX Professional Standards consultation on *Various proposals***
- **Noted the live LETR consultation on *Developing the detail***
- **Noted the submissions made by the Panel to IPReg on Review of regulatory arrangements and approach to regulating licensed bodies;**

**ILEX Professional Standards on Continuing Professional Development;
SRA, BSB, IPS on QASA Scheme Fourth Consultation.**

Item 11 – Planning for all day meeting in December

19. The Chair sought views from Panel Members on the agenda for the all day meeting scheduled for 12 December. Panel Members discussed ideas for possible guest speakers in relation to the impact of ABS and technology.

Item 12 – Any other business

20. None.

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