

## Minutes

### Legal Services Consumer Panel Meeting

**Date:** 9 May 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
Karin Woodley	Member
Steve Brooker	Consumer Panel Manager
Julie Myers	Legal Services Board
Ramandeep Bhatti	Legal Services Board
Vincent McGovern	Legal Services Board

#### Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel ('the Panel') and Vincent McGovern, who is the new Communications Manager of the Legal Services Board (LSB).

#### Item 2 – Declarations of interests

2. No declarations.

#### Item 3 – Minutes of the 27 February 2012 meeting

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

**The Panel approved the Minutes of 27 February 2012.**

#### **Item 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes**

4. Item 7 - The Chair reminded Panel members of their allocated project areas as agreed at the last Panel meeting.

**The Panel noted the matters arising.**

#### **Item 5 – Chair’s report**

5. The Chair presented her report covering recent meetings, speaking engagements and press coverage.
6. The Consumer Panel Manager advised that he had received a letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission signalling their agreement to provide legal advice on who pays for sign language interpreters. The EHRC had also said they would potentially be interested in joint research on vulnerable consumers.
7. Panel members suggested the need for a more targeted communications approach, following some of the submissions made to the Ministry of Justice’s Triennial Review consultation.

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

#### **Item 6 – Members’ updates**

8. Jeff Bell advised that he attended the Legal Ombudsman Stakeholder Advisory Panel meeting.
9. Paul Munden advised that he provided input to the LSB’s research on *Developing a framework to benchmark small business consumer use of legal services* late last year.
10. Graham Corbett advised that he attended a briefing session at the Solicitors Regulation Authority offices in Leamington Spa with Karin Woodley.
11. Emma Harrison advised that the Association of Sign Language Interpreters recently approached the Ministry of Justice on the issue of access to redress and law for the deaf, and in particular using qualified interpreters and the issue of who pays for the interpreter. Emma also advised that the British Sign Language video is near completion.
12. Neil Wightman advised that he was a panellist at the LSB and University of Westminster seminar on 15 March: *Demonstrating competence, identifying incompetence*.

**The Panel noted the members’ update.**

#### **Item 7 – Annual Report**

13. The Consumer Panel Manager presented the draft Annual Report for 2012-13.
14. The Panel approved the draft Report, subject to a number of minor presentational changes.

**The Panel approved the draft Report, subject to changes in line with comments made.**

#### **Item 8 - Legal Ombudsman scheme rules and third party complaints**

15. Jeff Bell presented the paper outlining the Panel's skeleton response to the Legal Ombudsman's review of its Scheme rules and case fee structure; and a draft paper on third party complaints.
16. The Panel members approved the draft scheme rules policy response subject to some amendments as discussed in the meeting. Key points raised in the discussion include:
  - The Panel agreed with the proposal around time limits but highlighted the need to be aware of the statute limitations.
  - The Panel agreed there is a need to further clarify the definition of Trust and Charity income/assets.
  - The Panel agreed that the Legal Ombudsman's two free cases policy should be ended, but the case fee structure should be otherwise unchanged.
  - The Panel suggested there should be some transparency around financial awards to help manage consumer expectations, such as guidelines or bands which illustrate the different levels of awards.

**The Panel approved the draft scheme rules response, subject to changes in line with comments made.**

**The Panel approved the draft Report on third party complaints.**

#### **Item 9 - Education and training and quality assurance**

17. Neil Wightman presented a draft discussion paper recommending the Panel's policy position on education and training, along with a draft response to the LSB consultation on quality assurance. The Panel were asked to provide feedback on the key elements of the Panel's proposed approach.
18. Panel members agreed the paper but suggested a few changes to the discussion paper to strengthen the core messages and recommendations.

**The Panel approved the draft discussion paper, subject to changes in line with comments made.**

**The Panel approved the draft response to the LSB's consultation on quality assurance.**

### **Item 10 - Consultation responses**

19. The Consumer Panel Manager presented a paper on consultation responses.

#### **The Panel:**

- **approved the draft response to the LSB's consultation on regulating immigration advice and services subject to a one minor amendment**
- **noted the Bar Standards Board's live consultation on the New BSB Handbook and the LSB's live consultations on will-writing, probate and estate administration, and Regulation of non-commercial bodies**
- **noted the Department for Business Innovation and Skills: Enhancing consumer confidence through effective enforcement consultation and The Law Society's consultation on Criminal Litigation Accreditation Scheme**
- **noted submissions made to the Solicitors Regulation Authority's consultation on regulating international practice, to the Bar Standards Board's consultation on public access rules, to the LSB's call for evidence on will-writing and to the Ministry of Justice's triennial review consultation.**

### **Item 11 - Draft agenda for next meeting – 27 June**

20. The Consumer Panel Manager presented the proposed agenda for the 27 June meeting.

**The Panel agreed the proposed Agenda.**

### **Item 12 - Any other business**

21. None.