



Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel meeting

Date: 30 September 2015

Time: 13:00-16:00

Venue: One Kemble Street, London WC2B 4AN

Present:

Elisabeth Davies	Chair
Andy Foster	Member
Frances Harrison	Member
Philip Marsden	Member
Marlene Winfield	Member
Catherine Wolthuizen	Member
Lola Bello	Consumer Panel Manager
Stephanie Chapman	Consumer Panel Associate
Ramandeep Bhatti	Legal Services Board
Chris Nichols	Legal Services Board (Item 6 only)
Chris Handford	Solicitors Regulation Authority (Item 5 only)
Juliet Oliver	Solicitors Regulation Authority (Item 5 only)

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel ('The Panel'). The Chair advised that Cathy Gallagher, Michelle Goddard and Julie Myers had sent their apologies.

Item 2 – Declaration of interests

2. The Chair advised she attended a farewell dinner for the outgoing President of The Law Society.

Item 3 – Minutes of 1 July 2015 meeting

3. The Chair presented the minutes of 1 July 2015 meeting.

The Panel approved the minutes of 1 July 2015.

Item 4 – Matters arising

4. Item 6 – the Chair advised the Panel held a lunch and learn session with staff at the LSB. The Panel Manager will be circulating a joint working guide to help in relation to working with the LSB.

The Panel noted the matters arising.

Item 5 – SRA work on professional standards

5. The Chair introduced Juliet Oliver, General Counsel of the SRA and Chris Handford, Director of Policy at the SRA.
6. Juliet Oliver gave an overview of the SRA's national campaign 'A Question of trust' which was launched on 30 September 2015. The campaign will give members of the public, charities and consumer representatives a chance to influence what action should be taken against solicitors who fall short of the expected standards.
7. The SRA will be holding a number of interactive voting sessions where those attending will be asked to vote on how seriously they view different situations where solicitors have failed to uphold professional standards at work or in their private lives. Chris Handford presented a voting session where all Panel Members were asked to vote on each of the scenarios. The results from the voting session will be fed into the overall results.
8. The consultation period will run from 30 September 2015 to 31 January 2016.

The Panel noted the presentation.

Item 6 – LSB research on unregulated legal services

9. The Chair introduced Chris Nichols, Regulatory Project Manager at the LSB.
10. Chris Nichols outlined the LSB's project on unregulated legal services. The LSB has now scoped the project and the three main areas are:
 - Mapping the unregulated legal services sector to identify how prevalent unregulated providers are in different areas;
 - In-depth research and analysis of profit making unregulated legal services providers in certain key areas;
 - Legal analysis of section 163 of the Legal Services Act (voluntary arrangements).
11. The Panel discussed the role of not for profit organisations in providing unregulated legal services and raised concerns about excluding them from the scope of this project. Chris Nichols explained that the scope of the project was narrowed and focused to make the project manageable, the outcome tangible and because the LSB had already conducted research into the unregulated services provided by not for profit organisations, in 2011. This previous research could be updated as a separate project in the future.

12. Panel members emphasised the importance of updating the work around not for profit providers and also suggested that the project should consider issues around specifically consumer protection and redress.
13. The Panel advised that lessons should be learnt from past research, in particular the challenge around sampling size and ensuring that research is delivered on time.
14. The LSB project team will keep Panel leads on unregulated providers informed of progress and consult the Panel again at their February 2016 meeting.

The Panel noted and thanked Chris Nichols for the update.

Action Point: Secretariat to organise an update meeting with Chris Nichols in February.

Item 7 – Tracker survey

The Panel Associate presented the paper on early findings of the Tracker Survey.

The Panel discussed:

the format of the briefings on market changes and consumer confidence and suggested some changes;

key messages and points to use in the accompanying press release;

additional thematic reviews;

other ways the data from the Tracker Survey can be used the value of the survey promoted.

Action Point: Panel Associate to reflect on the changes discussed regarding the briefings on market changes and consumer confidence. Following discussions, Andy Foster and Marlene Winfield to help develop key messages for the media.

Item 8 – Mid-year review of work programme

The Panel Manager presented a paper on the progress made against the Panel's work plan.

Overall The Panel is on track for delivering against its agreed outputs.

Action Point: Panel members to email the Panel Manager on any changes they propose to Panel leads. Panel manager to circulate a final paper following the updates.

Item 9 – Chair's report and members' updates

The Chair presented her report on her recent activities.

The Panel Associate advised she is seeking further feedback on the consumer credit consultation from the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Marlene Winfield advised she attended a roundtable to discuss Digital Delivery of Legal Services to People on Low Incomes on 21 September.

Catherine Wolthuizen advised she attended the Legal Ombudsman's Alternative Dispute Resolution consultation event on 23 September.

Frances Harrison advised she attended the Regulators Forum in August.

The Panel noted the Chair's report and updates from Panel Members.

Item 10 – LSB non-financial barriers to access

The Panel Associate presented a paper providing an overview of the LSB's project on Non-Financial Barriers to Accessing Services.

Action Point: Panel members to submit feedback by email to the Secretariat who will compile this for Chris Nichols. Secretariat to organise a teleconference with Panel Leads and Chris Nichols on this issue.

Item 11 – Consultation responses

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

The Panel noted:

Responses have been submitted to the Bar Standards Board's consultation on *Amendment to BSB powers* and the consultation on *Continuing professional development*; the Solicitors Regulation Authority's consultation on *Consumer credit proposals*.

Item 12 – Any other business

The Chair advised that the next Panel meeting will be the away day and Panel Members will be approached to get their thoughts on how the day should be structured.