



## Consumer Panel Briefing – Open data

### What is the issue?

Survey data shows that people find it hard to compare legal services providers. Much of the information consumers need to compare in order to make informed choices is scattered and not easily accessible. For example, the Legal Ombudsman has complaints data, the regulators hold information on who is regulated, while individual websites may hold information such as reviews or prices.

### What is the Consumer Panel's view?

Opening up data is an essential step in providing consumers with the information they need so they can more easily compare providers and make informed decisions. The Legal Services Consumer Panel (the Panel) pursued this since 2011. We want regulatory and conduct data to be made freely available in a reusable format so that consumers and or their representatives can use this information. This data may also encourage intermediaries to develop services to help consumers make informed choices.

### What is the Consumer Panel doing about it?

The Panel has set out the type of regulatory and non-regulatory data that would be useful for consumers in its 'Opening up data in legal services' report published in February 2016.<sup>1</sup> This includes the publication of first-tier complaints data, information on price, information on the quality, full findings of Ombudsman's decisions and enforcement data. The Panel made 15 recommendations to all the Frontline Regulators and the Legal Services Board aimed at improving consumers' decision making and competition. The Panel has also emphasised the need to ensure that information is accessible and assessable.

In 2016, the Panel supported the Competition and Market Authority's (CMA) review<sup>2</sup> of the legal services market by providing the CMA with evidence from its annual Tracker Survey as well as research reports and analysis of market wide problems. The Panel successfully

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<sup>1</sup> [The Legal Services Consumer Panel, Opening up data in legal services, February 2016](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Legal Services Consumer Panel, Response to CMA's consultation on Legal Services Market Study Interim Report, August 2016.](#)

advocated for regulatory intervention on transparency measures, and fully supports the transparency measures recommended by the CMA. We will continue to work with legal service regulators, as they implement these recommendations.

**November 2017**

### **About the Legal Services Consumer Panel**

The Panel is a central feature of a regulatory framework in England and Wales, which is designed to transform the legal services market around the needs of its users. Created by the Legal Services Act 2007 we are an independent arm of the Legal Services Board. As a permanent, discrete champion for consumers we have an essential responsibility to ensure that regulators are able to consider and act on the user perspective.