



3 August 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation: CILEx Regulation proposal to extend the Transparency Rules to immigration services.

The Legal Services Consumer Panel (the Panel) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Chartered Legal Executives Regulation (CILEx Regulation) consultation to extend the transparency of information for price and services to immigration services.

Overall, we endorse the decision to extend the transparency rules to immigration services. This will allow consumers shopping around for immigration services to compare prices and make more informed decisions. However, learnings from price transparency in other areas of law show that it is imperative that the information is accessible and assessable. It is therefore helpful to see that the transparency guidance recommends providers use plain English.

The consultation mentions that the prompts for extending the transparency rules to immigration services was based on research that highlighted the vulnerability of individuals using these types of services. The Panel agrees that these are vulnerable groups and we called for an extension to immigration when price transparency was first prescribed in other areas, we therefore support this extension.

The Panel would have welcomed clarity about why asylum services or statelessness applications are not covered by this extension. We know that consumers accessing these types of services are also in a vulnerable situation and would benefit from transparency and predictability of cost.

We note the fast pace CILEx Regulation proposed to implement the Transparency Rules subject to the LSB's approval by January 2021. However, we are slightly sceptical that the suggested timing would be feasible to allow providers to get up to speed and be compliant with the new rules given the current pandemic.

Transparency guidance provided to support firms

Price information

In the transparency guidance there is an example for immigration transaction providing price information for hourly rate fees. However, we would recommend that CILEx Regulation would also provide a pricing example for fixed fee transactions, as our research shows that, in 2020, 52% of immigration services consumers use fixed fee arrangements and only 7% use hourly rates.¹

¹ LSCP, Tracker Survey, 2020, to be published soon.

The way prices are presented is essential for this group of consumers. Our research also shows that 20% of consumers using immigration services say the price advertised was not easily noticeable compared to 7% of overall consumers in 2020. Moreover, twice as many consumers struggle to understand information about the price for immigration services than overall consumers (5% vs 11%).

Service information

In terms of publishing information about aspects of service that are important to consumers, the Panel would recommend that CILEx Regulation consider including information around supporting vulnerabilities if providers offer services that are friendly to consumers with mental health problems, for example. Previous LSB guide highlights the range of individual risk factors that are associated with personal characteristics (including physical and mental ability, language skills and financial constraints) and situational factors, including the situation for which they are getting legal advice.²

We are looking forward to seeing the first review of compliance within six months from implementation.

I hope you find these comments helpful. Please contact Lau Ciocan, Consumer Panel Associate, if you have any enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Chambers

Chair

Legal Services Consumer Panel

² [LSB guidance - Vulnerable consumers – mental health and dementia: scoping paper.](#)