



Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel meeting

Date: 16 September 2020

Time: 13:00-16:00

Venue: Online due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Present:

Sarah Chambers	Chair
David Abbott	Member
Lisa Davis	Member
Owen Derbyshire	Member
Paul Crook	Member
Liz Owen	Member
Mark McLaren	Member
Adam Cooper	Member
Lola Bello	Consumer Panel Manager
Laurentiu Ciocan	Consumer Panel Associate
Chloe Clynshaw	Legal Services Board (minutes)
Matthew Hill	Legal Services Board (Item 5)

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair opened the third online meeting of the Legal Services Consumer Panel ('The Panel') and welcomed those present to the meeting.
2. There were no apologies.

Item 2 – Declaration of interests

3. None.

Item 3 – Minutes of 24 June meeting

4. The Chair presented the minutes from the 24 June 2020 meeting that had been agreed via electronic correspondence.

The Panel noted the minutes from 24 June 2020.

Item 4 – Matters arising

5. All matters arising were acknowledged.

Actions: The Panel agreed that it would be useful to have an introductory meeting with the newly appointed Customer Director at HMCTS.

Item 5 – LSB discussion

6. The Chair welcomed Matthew Hill, Chief Executive of the Legal Services Board (LSB).

ACCA de-designation

7. The Panel opened the discussion with Matthew by asking for clarification about the de-designation of ACCA. Matthew said de-designation had never happened before and the LSB was in close dialogue with ACCA about the process and legal obligations.
8. Matthew also said that he was aware of talks between the ACCA and CILEx Regulation about a seamless transfer which may suit some providers. However, he emphasised that such a transfer was not compulsory and providers would always have a choice of regulator.
9. The Panel asked about potential risks to consumers. Matthew said he did not foresee any significant issues. Matthew said that the LSB would act in relation to any concerns as they emerged.
10. The Panel expressed surprise that it had learned of ACCA de-designation through the press and correspondence with the Council of Licensed Conveyancers, rather than from the LSB directly. The Chair suggested that it would be helpful for the LSB to let all regulators know the LSB's process for de-designation and where possible to involve them in the dialogue early.

LSB's price research

11. The Panel invited Matthew to give a short update on the LSB's recent prices research. Matthew said that the LSB's work was intended to run alongside the work of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in this area. The key points made in his presentation were:
 - The approach taken by the LSB concerning the CMA and consumer transparency was one of 'mutual reinforcing'.
 - The LSB planned to offer a policy statement as a means of addressing the gaps around transparency, including deficiencies around quality indicators.
 - That the LSB was also drafting an evidence compendium as part of their *State of the Legal Services Sector Report*.
 - Matthew noted that there had been some defensive reactions to the prices research.

Impact of COVID-19

12. Matthew updated the Panel on recent activity by the Bar Standards Board (BSB) and the Bar Council in relation to COVID-19. He said that the Bar Council continued to be very worried about the impact of COVID-19 on the Bar and barristers.
13. Matthew said that some of the regulatory bodies were less anxious about the integrity of the sub-sectors being regulated, acknowledging that COVID-19 had resulted in some unplanned changes to the sector including greater use of technology.
14. One Panel member said that Citizens Advice has seen large reductions in demand in many of its advice areas. This was because of governmental protections in place, consumers addressing more immediate concerns and the inability to access the service. Specifically, in the legal sector, this reduction is as high as 40%. The concern is that there is a risk that people are not getting the advice and help they need. In future while there is new demand,

we may see some or all of this suppressed demand returning. Matthew suggested that the Panel may want to look at the measures in place versus the envisioned state of the sector post-COVID-19. The Panel mentioned the importance of ensuring that positive outcomes were captured during this period.

Work on quality indicators

15. The Chair raised the importance of the work surrounding quality indicators and how critical it was to carry out the work in the right way. Matthew shared an overview of the planned work and course of action.
16. The Panel made the case for close involvement in the LSB's thinking and approach.
17. The Panel and the LSB agreed that there is more to be done to ensure that Legal Choices is a success.
18. The Chair thanked Matthew for his time.

The Panel noted the update from the LSB and thanked Matthew for his time.

Actions:

- **The Secretariat to organise a policy working level meeting to help with the quality indicators work.**
- **Following further discussion by the Panel, Adam to feed back to the CMA the Panel's view that it should take an active role in shaping the upcoming market review.**

Item 6 – Priority discussion

19. The Panel discussed projects that will be delivered by the end of March 2021. On the work project on advice deserts, the Secretariat agree to contact the Law Society on this, and Owen will make an introduction to Shelter Cymru to find possible experts on housing.
20. The Panel Associate provided an update on the Panel's work on diversity. He is updating the report on BAME consumers' experience of legal services and will also produce an infographic on this. Adam recommended that BAME consumers' experiences of the legal market is reflected in the Panel's response to the CMA's call for input, and that the Panel share the report on diversity with the CMA once it has been finalised.
21. David told the Panel that he had joined the BSB's code of conduct review group to feed in the consumers' experience.

Actions: Owen to set up an introductory meeting between Shelter and the Panel.

Item 7 – Chair's report and members' update

22. The Chair and the Secretariat updated the Panel on their recent engagements. Owen said he had had an interview with ACSO (Association of Consumer Support Organisations) on LawTech that went well. Mark said that he met with ACSO as well to discuss about potential consumer collective actions.
23. The Chair reminded the Panel to send brief written reports on any meetings to the Panel Associate ahead of the Panel meeting.

Actions: The Panel Associate to send a reminder to Panel Members about sharing their notes from their meetings ahead of the Panel meeting.

Item 8 – Projects update and consultation responses

24. The Panel Associate presented the projects update and the upcoming consultations. The Panel noted that the CMA's call for input would be circulated by the end of September 2020.

The Panel noted the projects update and the future consultations.

Item 9 – Draft agenda for 28 October meeting

25. The Chair mentioned that Stephen Mayson will be joining the October meeting and that the Panel is meeting separately the Chair of Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) in mid-October.

26. The Panel's strategy to be discussed at the Panel's Away Day in December.

Actions: To invite Helen Philips to attend the October meeting to discuss the Mayson review.

Item 10 - Any other Business

25. None.