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Regulators must address the persisting inequality for consumers from different ethnic minorities

Five years on from our first paper on the experiences of consumers from different ethnic backgrounds using legal services, not much has changed. There is still a troubling inequality with consumers who do not identify as White British, generally feeling less empowered when using legal services.

Consumers from ethnic minority communities shop around and use online services more and make use of comparison websites more often than White British consumers. However, they feel less satisfied with the choice on offer and experience less positive or satisfactory services than White British consumers.

We encourage regulators to take note and be more proactive in understanding what drives this gap.

It is disappointing that none of the recommendations we made five years ago have been explored or implemented. We are therefore making the same recommendations because they remain relevant today as they did five years ago.

Sarah Chambers, Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

“We have identified a gap that must be addressed. This is a problem that arguably mirrors how people from different ethnic backgrounds experience the criminal justice system. Regulators must not shy away from ensuring that legal services deliver good outcomes for all consumers, including those from Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

We recognise that some of the findings in this report result from societal inequalities that the regulators have little or no influence over. However, there are several areas where the regulators can take action to ensure that providers better serve consumers from different ethnic backgrounds.

We have made the same recommendations we did five years ago. We intend to be more proactive in nudging the regulators to consider these recommendations and identify other ways to address the gap.”

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. The Legal Services Consumer Panel was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 to provide independent advice to the Legal Services Board about the interests of consumers of legal

services in England and Wales. We investigate issues that affect consumers and use this information to influence decisions about the regulation of legal services.

2. The discussion paper is available on our website.