



Minutes – Legal Services Consumer Panel meeting

Date: 24 March 2022

Time: 13:00 – 16:30

Venue: hybrid meeting (in person and online)

Present:

Sarah Chambers	Chair
Dan Newman	Member
Lisa Davis	Member
Liz Owen	Member
Mark McLaren	Member
Paul Crook	Member
Lola Bello	Consumer Panel Manager
Heidi Evelyn	Consumer Panel Associate
Paul Nezandonyi	LSB (Item 8)

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present and online.
2. Apologies were received from Adam Cooper and David Abbott.
3. The Panel introduced themselves to and welcomed the new Panel Member, Dan Newman.

Item 2 – Declaration of Interests

4. None

Item 3 – Minutes of March meeting

5. The Chair presented the minutes from the 16 February 2022 meeting which had been agreed via electronic correspondence.

Item 4 - Matter arising

6. All matters arising were acknowledged.

Item 5 – Chair’s report and members’ updates

7. The Panel discussed the Chair’s report including a meeting held with the LSB about developing a new MOU. The secretariat advised that the LSB Legal Department was drafting a revised document which it was still waiting to see.

Action: Secretariat to circulate draft MOU once it has been received from the LSB

Item 6 – Project updates and consultation responses

8. The Panel noted the consultation responses that were submitted and progress on the Panel's projects.

Item 7 – 2022/23 Work Programme

9. Panel members commented that they were generally happy with the Work Programme as drafted including the tone. There were some syntax suggestions from individual Panel members which would be incorporated into the final version.
10. There was a discussion regarding the suggestion that the Chair had received that it may be a good idea for the Consumer Panel to look at the split between the solicitor and barrister professions, as well as other types of lawyers. Specifically, Panel members noted that the Panel could look at the effect this split has on consumers, especially with regard to the cost of legal services and how consumers navigated the process. It was felt that research was needed and this would fit squarely within the Panel's remit. The Panel felt that the separations between the various legal professions seemed outdated considering most other Commonwealth jurisdictions have a unified legal profession. While this year's Work Programme does not include funding for research into this area, the Panel may want to start discussions on the topic and a broad theme that would encompass these conversations should be included in the 2022/23 Work Programme. This issue may also be addressed in a blog.
11. It was also noted that the Panel always wanted to keep the focus on those consumers who do not manage to procure any legal services at all. Panel members felt there was very little academic research in this area and that this perspective was therefore lacking.
12. The Panel's position that diversity has to apply beyond the profession to making legal services inclusive and effective for all consumers was covered well in the document but might be highlighted better by a title such as "Meeting the Diverse Needs of Consumers".
13. The Panel's goals also have to be stated in a realistic way to take into account what can be achieved within the one-year time frame of this workplan. For instance, it may be better to think about the goal for consumer redress to target progress towards better access to redress including better resolution of complaints.
14. The Panel decided it was best to give comprehensive information about its budget in the Work Programme.
15. A Panel member also noted that work on transparency should continue including work on price but most importantly on reliable quality indicators that would make it easier for consumers to choose the most appropriate service. While it is implicit in the Work Programme at this point, it should also be explicitly clear.
16. The Work Programme should also energise the conversation around consumer-focused regulation of legal services and influence public debate in the areas on which the Panel wants to focus.

Action: Secretariat to finalise the Work Programme for presentation to the LSB Board on 26 April 2022

Item 8 – Communications and Engagement Discussion

17. The Chair welcomed Paul Nezandonyi, LSB Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, for an open discussion of how the Panel can improve its efforts in these areas.

18. Paul described how the LSB's communications and engagement strategy helps inform how the LSB uses its limited resources to have the greatest impact possible. The LSB has decided to focus on stakeholder engagement as a way to influence people and is therefore holding more events, including going outside London to meet people. He suggested the Panel focus on what it wants to achieve and who it wants to influence.
19. The LSB has made a real effort to be transparent, posting the Chair's blog about Board meetings within 24 to 48 hours of the meeting and ensuring Board papers are written in an accessible way and posting them on the website. The Chair thought the Panel could do something similar with a version of the Chair's report because it gives a good idea of what the Panel is working on.
20. It would make sense for the Panel to be able to tap into the LSB's budget process for extra funding that may become available during the financial year.
21. Paul felt it is important to think about who knows and supports the Panel, who the Panel wants to influence but does not know the Panel and those who the Panel cannot affect because they have no interest in our aims; these people should just be ignored. Then the Panel needs to think about how communications and engagement can help influence those it wants to influence, whether it is via certain communication methods, from the press to social media or actually meeting with people through different types of engagement activities. Pinpointing specific goals will make it clear what resources, tools and strategy are required.
22. Because the Panel often needs to influence the LSB itself, it may want to think about how to influence the LSB's Board and also about how to influence others who are able to affect what the LSB does. The secretariat has quite a lot of engagement with the LSB at a working level, but there has been less at the executive level in recent times. The Panel would also want to influence what providers are doing and may want to consider how this can best be accomplished. Considering the influence the Panel wants to have will help inform stakeholder mapping.
23. There was a discussion about whether engaging relevant Parliamentary groups, MPs or government was worthwhile. It was agreed that it would only be useful if there was a pertinent issue linking back to the Panel's Work Programme and overall strategy where the voice of the legal services consumer was needed or where the Panel had pertinent research to publish and draw attention to.
24. The LSB sees the Panel as a key partner to deliver work as well as an expert group that it can use to reinforce its views on consumer issues. Panel members felt that what the Panel wants to achieve at least this year is to be able to influence the approved regulators in multiple areas even more so than the LSB. This aim means having to think about stakeholder mapping, identifying empowered individuals and connecting with them in order to make things happen. The LSB policy team could be helpful in identifying these empowered individuals on specific issues. Being more strategic, still issue based, but less random in approach could help improve impact.
25. Panel members asked Paul's advice on how to help create the right environment to be able to influence the approved regulators and whether making noise in the trade press, or on social media may be able to help put pressure on them to act. Paul felt that there are different ways to do that including pointing out best practice, as well as bad practice or getting momentum with some regulators so that others feel the pressure to not be left behind. It is also important to get everything possible out of any research the Panel has commissioned.

26. Identifying partners who share the same view on a particular issue may also boost the Panel's impact. This could also form part of the Panel's communications and engagement strategy which would then dictate trying to identify these partners for different issues. Thinking about partners is also important because the Panel is a very small organisation which cannot do everything so it could be helpful to amplify the Panel's voice or access more resources.
27. The first step, however, is for the Panel to decide on its priorities and what problems it wants to focus on. Panel members felt it could be very useful to proactively identify problem areas or prioritise the issues facing consumers.
28. Paul also advised that the Panel may want to think about what headlines it wants when issuing press releases or commissioning research. It is also possible to break research into smaller portions and discuss different issues at different times to maintain a presence in the press over time. Case studies or having a person a journalist can talk to are particularly important in order to humanise the issues facing legal services consumers. Working closely with charities can be helpful as they may be able to provide the individual consumer voice. Highlighting case studies is also an effective way of showcasing the impact the Panel wants to see. The only impediment to case studies is the LSB's cautious view of handling private information due to its status as a public body. The Director of Enabling Services, Holly Perry, is the appropriate person for the Panel to consult on matters which might entail reputational risk.
29. All Panel members agreed that it would be a good idea to increase the Panel's communication and engagement efforts in a more strategic and focused way. Therefore, it would be useful to develop a mini strategy on communications and engagement with expert input, whether that is from a consultant or the LSB team, who is already aware of the legal services landscape. The LSB/LSCP MOU could also address how the Panel taps into the LSB Communications and Engagement team.

Action: Secretariat to present options regarding how to develop a mini strategy for communications and engagement

Item 10 - Draft Agenda for 24 March 2022 meeting

30. As there are no guests scheduled for the May meeting yet, Panel members made some suggestions including following up with Citizens Advice, Sir Christopher Bellamy, the Legal Aid Parliamentary Group, the Consumer Affairs Minister from BEIS or LSB staff to update the Panel on the ongoing competence or consumer vulnerability workstreams.
31. The May meeting will also be a hybrid meeting. Members can update the secretariat individually as to whether they will attend in person.

Item 11 – Any Other Business

32. A possible date for the Board to Board meeting with the LSB is 12 July 2022 from 2 to 4pm. All Panel members present said they should be free and would hold this time.
33. There was a discussion about the two MOJ consultations on civil and criminal legal aid that were recently released. The Panel will do a brief response to the one concerning civil legal aid showing any relevant information from the Tracker Survey. The secretariat and Dan will review the criminal legal aid consultation and decide whether the Panel should respond to this consultation.
34. Future Panel meetings will be opened 15 minutes before the start time to allow Panel members to have a "coffee & chat" informally. The secretariat will also flag when Panel

members are unable to make Panel meeting dates at the time of booking as opposed to things coming up just before a meeting.

Action: Secretariat to ask Adam, David and Mark to hold the 12 July 2022 date

Action: Secretariat to arrange a meeting with Dan to discuss the MOJ criminal legal aid consultation

Action: Secretariat to resend Panel meeting invitations with Zoom