



Minutes – Legal Services Consumer Panel meeting

Date: 8th July 2026

Time: 13:00 – 17:00

Venue: hybrid meeting (in person and online)

Present:

Tom Hayhoe	Chair
Adhir Ramdarshan	Member
Dan Newman	Member
Mike Mack	Member
Elizabeth Coll	Member
Ayub Khan	Member
Sabrina Basran	Member
Richard Spencer	Member
Lola Bello	Head, Consumer Panel
Heidi Evelyn	Consumer Panel Manager
Caroline Clayton	Consumer Panel Associate
Jay Parmar	IPReg, Chief Executive Officer
Dr John Sorabji	UCL, Associate Professor of Law
Dian West	LSB, Senior Legal Advisor
Ahmed Khan	LSB, Senior Legal Advisor
Richard Orpin	LSB, Chief Executive Officer

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present and online.
2. No apologies received.

Item 2 – Declaration of Interests

3. None

Item 3 – Minutes of last meeting

4. The Chair presented the minutes from the 13 May 2026 meeting which had been agreed via electronic correspondence.

Item 4 - Matters arising

5. All matters arising were acknowledged.

Item 5 – Chair’s report and members’ updates

6. The Chair noted his attendance at the Nuffield Foundation conference 'A New Vision for Civil Justice' and the Fair Civil Justice Conference. He also noted the recent Legal Services Consumer Panel consumer-focused workshop which was attended by regulators and Panel members.

Item 6 – Project updates and consultation responses

7. The Consumer Panel Manager provided updates on ongoing projects, including the tracker survey, compensation fund research, consumer-focused regulation workshops, and responses to consultations.

Item 7 – Frontline Updates

8. A Panel member raised the ongoing local government reorganisations happening across several different counties. There is concern that where there are delays in this reorganisation, there is a risk that core advice services may need temporary funding arrangements to keep them running.
9. Panel members also discussed the access to justice challenges in rural areas where stigma often prevents people from seeking help for family breakdowns issues and noted the need for further discussion about potential research or statements regarding these concerns. The impact of local government reorganisation in rural communities was also noted as a potential concern for access to justice.

Action: Panel members to discuss the potential impacts of local government reorganisation with potential to develop into a further policy piece.

Item 8 – Jay Parmar

10. The Chair welcomed Jay Parmar, the Chief Executive of IPReg. Jay introduced himself to the Panel, summarising his background in regulated sectors. He discussed the IPReg's role in overseeing patent and trademark attorneys and the broad customer base they serve, which is predominantly business to business.
11. Jay highlighted emerging challenges, including the increasing use of AI tools and the existence of an unregulated market in intellectual property services. He noted that copyright infringement and broader consumer protection issues can arise in this space, although these often sit outside IPReg's regulatory jurisdiction. Jay also noted the lack of data demonstrating consumer harm can result in pushback from professional bodies when they are being asked to be more consumer focused; for example, last year, there were no complaints to the Legal Ombudsman which involved IPReg's remit. Jay sought the Panel's insights on identifying consumer risks and the consumer voice, improving consumer awareness of IPReg's role and enhancing the regulator's visibility to better protect public confidence.
12. The Chair observed that although IPReg is predominantly business to business, there are still consumers within that that may be at risk of harm. Furthermore, those seeking services under IPReg's remits such as individual entrepreneurs or small limited companies, may feel the impact of price transparency more acutely.
13. Several Panel members noted the difficulty in drawing out what the exact consumer harms were, noting that it may be appropriate to explore what the consumer issues are relating to intellectual property and which are the more broader consumer issues. Jay

responded that this could be an area of collaboration with other regulators for some established collective priority.

14. Another Panel member asked whether IPReg had consumer standards or publications for people to understand what the costs are or technical aspects. Jay responded that price transparency and quality is an area of focus, but the sector is already hugely competitive in how they deliver their services and protect their business models to be commercially and reputationally viable. Jay noted that despite this working well, IPReg plans to do further work on ethical behaviour, including building psychological safety for whistleblowing and creating a more diverse profession.
15. A Panel member highlighted the IPReg's 2026 Business Plan and the mention of improving understanding of the risk faced by individual consumers and small businesses. They asked what support the LSCP can provide IPReg. Jay responded that the ability to road test ideas on their guidance or developments would be helpful.
16. The Panel member also asked whether IPReg had a consumer-tested, practical, journey for an entrepreneur or SME to understand. Jay responded that these types of toolkits are exactly what is needed to help crystalise IPReg's brand and assurance.
17. Another Panel member asked about the practical benefits as to why someone might choose regulated advice as to opposed to unregulated advice, and whether the protection available were sufficiently clear to make this distinction. Jay responded that those with smaller budgets, are increasingly leaning into AI tools, which is proving to be a real risk. He noted the importance of improving public awareness of the potential harms associated with the use of AI tools, including risks relating to intellectual property rights, so consumers can make more informed decisions. Jay welcomed discussion about how the Panel's reach and influence, might help promote greater public understanding in this space.
18. A Panel member highlighted that the fact there are no complaints should not be relied on too heavily as a signal of positive consumer outcomes. The LSCP's recent tracker survey demonstrated that there is a high level of silent suffering in the sector, with dissatisfied consumers not always making a complaint. It could also be a signal that consumers do not know how to complain, or that the process is perceived as too complicated. Jay asked whether Panel members were aware of examples of initiatives or approaches adopted by other regulators that had successfully improved consumer awareness of complaints processes and encouraged engagement.

Action: LSCP to share with IPReg relevant resources, examples of collaboration between regulators, and any existing examples of initiatives that have improved consumer awareness of complaints processes.

Item 9 – Dr John Sorabji

19. The Chair welcomed Dr John Sorabji, Associate Professor of Law at University College London. Dr Sorabji began by summarising his report 'Improving civil justice reform – an analysis of major reviews in England and Wales' published in early June. This was commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation as part of a series of evidence reviews and briefing papers.
20. The report reviewed the most recent four major civil justice reviews and concludes that despite each of the Reviews intending to reduce procedural, temporal and financial barriers to access to justice, they cannot seem to have done so. The weaknesses in the

civil justice reform process exemplified by the Reviews are definitional; constitutional; institutional; and empirical. The report advocates for the adoption of eight recommendations to overcome these weaknesses. They are intended to replace the current ad hoc, evidence-light and short-term approach to reform. The core proposal is a new, permanent institutional capacity operating within a framework that understands access to justice.

21. The Chair asked what kind of institute Dr Sorabji envisages taking this role. He responded that it would be one that is independent of government but accountable to government, because recommendations are going to have to be implemented by government. It would also need to be permanent, to be standalone, and therefore be funded and staffed. A Panel member also noted that the significance of creating such a body and asked whether there was an example of one. A Panel member responded that there are some similarities in the further education skills sector where there are independent bodies.
22. Several Panel members highlighted the challenge in demonstrating societal and government cost savings when it doesn't directly save the sector money, and the huge political capital required to get buy-in from government. Dr Sorabji acknowledged the challenge and responded that it is to make a case that this will have a ripple effect across society and across the economy.
23. The Consumer Panel Manager highlighted the system in Australia whereby regulators have an evaluation body monitoring and evaluating access to justice and then using the data to inform how they award grants.
24. The Chair also asked what feedback Dr Sorabji has had in response to the paper and what the next steps are. He responded that he is waiting for views from the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Select Committee. He added that he hopes the Justice Minister will pick this up in due course.
25. A Panel member asked how the sector gets out of the dichotomy between wanting regulated actors to be playing an important role in protecting the public, while also understanding when their power is being used to the detriment of the consumer. Dr Sorabji responded that one of the problematic areas is that reforms such as the Family Procedure Rules are carried out by committees that predominantly include judges and lawyers. They are not necessarily the most appropriate to carry out policy changes, taken a procedural view rather than that wider one.
26. Another Panel member asked whether Dr Sorabji was aware of any other sectors which have a similar problem in terms of who is making the policy calls and which experts should be involved. A Panel member drew parallels with mental health, and the strong clinical steers which have driven the sector.
27. A Panel member questioned why there is not an access to justice select committee that pulls research from the sector and takes an independent view tie to a legislative process. Another Panel member also asked whether the problem of data availability (particularly in the unregulated sector) or data not being used by the right people.
28. The Chair reflected on the LSCP's function and track record in advocating for access to justice and defining it, and the link with access to solutions and unmet legal need.

Item 10 – The Legal Services Board Legal teach-in

- 29. The Chair welcomed Dian West (Senior Legal Advisor) and Ahmed Khan (Senior Legal Advisor) to present their teach-in on the Legal Services Act 2007, the powers the LSB has under the Act and those it does not.
- 30. Panel members raised questions around the LSB's informal engagement role with regulators, such as setting timelines within directions and the preventative functions the LSB may have in detecting market weaknesses and areas of consumer harm. Ahmed responded that some directions would include provisions for better preventative measures, such as horizon scanning.

Item 11 – Engagement with LSB CEO

- 31. Richard Orpin (CEO, LSB) provided an update to Panel members on the LSB's new 3-year strategy which will prioritise consumer protection and enabling innovation in the interests of consumers. Panel members also discussed the Public Bodies Review of the LSB with Richard.

Item 12 – Topics for Newsletter/Blog

- 32. As discussed, Panel members to discuss a potential blog or policy piece on local government reorganisation and access to justice. Additional blog following Dr Sorabji's paper on consumer focused regulation.

Item 13 – Draft agenda for next meeting

- 33. Agenda items and potential guest presenters for the 21 October meeting is still to be confirmed.

Item 14 – Any other business

- 34. N/A