

ACTIVITY REPORT: October – December 2015

Overview

During this period we have focused on the delivery of our 2015-16 work programme and advanced our thinking on the Panel's priorities for 2016 -17.

The Panel published its annual tracker survey in November 2015. The survey examines how consumers are experiencing legal services. The primary research is carried out by YouGov and the survey is now in its fifth year. The findings informs the Panel's deliberations, advocacy and advice to the Legal Services Board and other stakeholders. It also informs the Panel's business planning. The raw data is also available on our website for others to use, and interrogate as they see fit.

Alongside the raw data the Panel publishes briefing notes which focuses on areas of interest or detriment. This year we published briefing notes on the following topics:

- **How consumers use legal services:** face to face-to-face as a mode of service delivery remains the most common method of procuring services. We highlighted a decline in free service and that consumers are increasingly self-funding.
- **How consumers choose legal services:** the research shows clear trends in empowered consumers' behaviour; shopping around more and finding it easier to choose service providers. Fixed fee arrangements remain popular where available, but much of this improvement was confined to more informed consumers.
- **Wales:** We compared the situation in Wales to that in England and found some disparities, for example consumers are less likely to shop around and find it harder to compare lawyer.

The Panel has also made progress on its Open Data Commission from the LSB. The LSB asked the Panel to consider what information should be gathered or published by Approved Regulators to help consumers make informed decisions. The Panel completed its desk research in November and will be submitting its response to the LSB in January 2016.

The Panel met in December for its annual strategy planning meeting. The Panel considered external and internal developments likely to shape or influence the Legal Services sector. It also reflected on the impact its work was having, and discussed the necessity of nuanced and tailored solutions to the problem of Access to Justice. The Panel considered whether and how Consumer Segmentation may help to tailor better solutions to the Access to Justice gap. To this end it invited and heard a presentation from the Financial Conduct Authority's Head of Research who shared the FCA's experience and learnings of embarking on a consumer segmentation exercise. The Panel will finalise its discussions and priorities for 2016-17 at its meeting in January and February 2016.

The Panel has now completed a programme of work to deliver training on consumer vulnerability to the Bar Standards Board's (BSB's) Staff and Board.

Update on planned projects

| Project | Activity |
|------------------------|---|
| Complaints | Funding declined by Nuffield Foundation – Panel to explore other options with QMU |
| Consumer Impact Report | 2015 Tracker Survey briefings published |
| Consumer vulnerability | 5 training sessions on the vulnerability and consumer principles guide delivered to the BSB. Similar training is scheduled for CILEx Regulation |
| Litigants in person | Panel is re-assessing whether it is the best body to lead on this project following its initial findings on data availability |
| Open data | Report in draft |

Update on unplanned work

Consultation responses:

- QC appointments – Panel response to QC Appointments consultation on application fees
- MOJ – Panel response to the MoJ consultation on quality in criminal advocacy
- MoJ and HMT – Panel submission to the joint MoJ and HMT review of the regulation of claims management companies.
- LeO – Panel Response to LeO's consultation on their proposed scheme rules to meet the ADR Directive requirements.
- BSB - Response to the BSB consultation on academic, vocational and professional training requirements.

Selected external events/meetings: presentation and participation in Leeds explain the role and work of the LSB, the Panel, and Legal Ombudsman. Participation at Legal Wales Roundtable hosted by the Welsh Government, Participation (on the Panel) at the Civil Justice Council's Fourth National Forum for Access to Justice for Litigants in Person. Presentation at the Westminster Legal Forum on training.

Future activity

The main focus will be progressing our three year strategy and annual finalising the work plan for 2015-16.

Reports: LSB commission into open data; LSB Commission on priority areas of Law.

Presentations: Professional Paralegal inaugural conference.

Consultation responses: the Panel will continue to respond to consultation reports that fit its prioritisation criteria and is within scope.

Lola Bello
January 2016