

ACTIVITY REPORT: APRIL – JUNE 2014

Overview

The Panel published three briefings on the Tracker Survey (the changing market; confidence and satisfaction; and differences between consumers in England and Wales) plus the raw data. This contained some good news: consumers are happier with the choice available to them, shop around more and are more satisfied with value for money. They also find it less difficult to compare lawyers and are less likely to go back to the lawyer they used for their previous transaction. A new question this year suggests that 1 in 5 transactions involve some degree of unbundling.

There have been lots of substantial consultations to respond to. In particular, along with groups representing lawyers, insurers and lenders, we disagreed with proposals made by the SRA to reduce the compulsory minimum PII cover amount from £2m to £500k. We also opposed SRA proposals to remove regulation of CPD, preferring their second option of regulations requiring solicitors to plan and reflect on their development, which they would have to document in an annual cycle.

Four new Panel members started in April. The Panel met twice over the period. In May, we discussed preferred working styles and the 2020 commission, and received Amanda Finlay CBE as a guest speaker. In June, the Panel considered a draft guide on consumer vulnerability, reviewed the data for the next Consumer Impact Report and received Robin Knowles QC as a guest speaker.

Update on planned projects

Project	Activity
2020 commission	Methodology agreed with LSB team, literature review completed, stakeholder event organised for 22 July
Complaints	Attended 2 nd meeting of steering group on third party complaints
Consumer Impact Report	Data gathering started; publication due Q3
Consumer vulnerability	Guide drafted; publication due Q2
Litigants in person	Submitted written evidence to Justice Select Committee; met with Master of the Rolls and colleagues to discuss McKenzie Friends; launched McKenzie Friends report at Law Society Wales
Open data	CLC published core data set, awaiting responses by other regulators
Self-help tools	Research is still in the field
Unbundling research	Due to start Q3

Update on unplanned work

Our consultation responses over this period:

- SRA – Changes to professional indemnity insurance
- SRA – Multi-Disciplinary Practices
- SRA – Changes to compensation fund eligibility criteria
- SRA – Proposed changes to CPD
- CLC – Publication of disciplinary information
- IPS – Changing the maximum fine amounts
- BIS – Implementing the ADR Directive and call for evidence on future of redress

The CLC became the first regulator to release basic regulatory data in a machine readable format. Responses from the other regulators have been disappointing to date.

Frances Harrison and Steve led a training session on the consumer principles with the IPS Board.

The steering group to inform the Legal Ombudsman's consideration of third party complaints met for the second time. Members include the Law Society and CLC, in addition to the Panel.

Elisabeth Davies blogged on the professional registers issue, Andy Foster blogged on on-line trust marks and Marlene Winfield blogged on the LSB's behavioural economics and legal needs research.

Presentations: Elisabeth presented to the OLC Board and introduced the Panel to fellow members of BEUC at their General Assembly. Elisabeth and Steve co-presented the McKenzie Friends report at the Law Society Wales. Andy Foster spoke at a Legal Futures event on technology and the law. Elisabeth was interviewed on BBC4 Radio You and Yours about McKenzie Friends. Steve presented to the Centre for Social and Legal Studies conference in Oxford on benchmarking ombudsmen.

Events/Meetings: Regulators' Forum; LSB launch of research at UCL; Law Society summer reception; ReInvent Law Conference; National Association of Paralegals stakeholder event; Access to Legal Services Forum (learning disabilities report). Selected meetings: Master of the Rolls; Steve Green; Nicholas Lavender QC; Des Hudson; Malcolm Davies, Welsh Assembly Government

Future activity

We will hold a stakeholder event to support the 2020 commission, chaired by Joshua Rozenberg. The Panel is hosting the inaugural meeting of the Society of Professional McKenzie Friends.

Events: Elisabeth is presenting at the Westminster Forum on the future of regulation.

Consultation responses: no live consultations.

Steve Brooker
June 2014