

ACTIVITY REPORT: JULY – September 2014

Overview

Over the summer period the primary focus has been on preparing two major reports: our advice in response to the LSB's commission on legal services in 2020; and the third edition of our flagship Consumer Impact Report. Both will be published during the next quarter, in particular the 2020 advice will be a key element of the Legal Futures conference on 18 November.

We have finalised a practical guide to help regulators identify, understand and respond effectively to consumer vulnerability based on a British Standard (BS18477) in this area. The draft was tested with staff at the Bar Standards Board in a well attended workshop facilitated by Catherine Wolthuizen and Harriet Gamper.

A notable success was our part in preventing a reduction in the SRA's minimum professional indemnity insurance cover from £2m to £500,000. The Panel was one of many voices which had strongly opposed the SRA's proposals and we welcomed the LSB's warning notice.

The Panel met once over the period. In September, following our joint session with the board on the 2020 advice, the Panel's main business was to consider the draft Consumer Impact Report.

Update on planned projects

Project	Activity
2020 commission	Stakeholder event held, draft report completed, joint session with the Board and Panel on 29 September. Report to be launched 18/11
Complaints	Legal Ombudsman has prepared a report on third party complaints which the OLC is due to consider in November
Consumer Impact Report	Report text finalised; publication due Q3
Consumer vulnerability	Guide finalised following workshop with BSB; publication in October
Litigants in person	Hosted meeting of Society of Professional McKenzie Friends
Open data	CLC, CLSB and LeO published core data set, written commitments achieved from SRA, ICAEW, IPReg and SDT
Self-help tools	Research is still in the field
Unbundling research	Project green-lighted; due to start Q3

Update on unplanned work

Our consultation responses over this period:

- SRA – Call for evidence on client protection
- BSB – Entity regulation

Joint working with LSB colleagues is making good progress on our open data initiative. In addition to the CLC, the Legal Ombudsman and the Costs Lawyer Standards Board have both released basic regulatory data in a machine readable format. The SRA, IPReg and ICAEW have all committed in writing to do so, while the SDT has also undertaken to publish its judgments in a reusable format.

Frances Harrison and Steve led a training session on the consumer principles with BSB staff and the regulator has committed to integrate this within its internal policy making processes. Board or staff members at the SRA, BSB, CLC and IPS have now all been trained on use of the toolkit.

The steering group to inform the Legal Ombudsman's consideration of third party complaints has concluded its work. The OLC is due to consider a report prepared by the Legal Ombudsman staff in November. Any proposed changes to the scheme rules would be consulted on during 2015 as part of wider changes required in response to the ADR Directive.

Elisabeth Davies blogged on the open data initiative and the legal services ecosystem.

Presentations: Elisabeth to the Westminster Forum on the future of legal services regulation.

Selected external events/meetings: Regulators' Forum; President of the Law Society; introductory meeting with Paul Philip, SRA; participation in SRA focus group to support Training for Tomorrow; short-listing for Law Society Excellence Awards; BSB on entity regulation; Susan Humble, SDT; consultant advising Legal Ombudsman on voluntary scheme; meeting of Consumer Panel Chairs; SRA International Regulators Conference; National Association of Licensed Paralegals

Future activity

Reports: 2020 Legal Services; Consumer Impact Report III; consumer vulnerability guide.

Presentations: Legal Wales Conference; Legal Futures conference.

Consultation responses: no live consultations at time of writing.

Other: We are due to meet with Shailesh Vara MP on 22 October.

Steve Brooker
October 2014