

Legal Ombudsman

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Mr. David Edmonds  
Legal Services Board  
Victoria House  
Southampton Row  
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WC1B4AD

13 March 2012

Dear David


Thank you for your letter and formal confirmation of budget approval for next financial year. I am pleased the process has worked so smoothly this year, and hope we shall continue to use it as a model for future years.

As you will know, we plan to publish our Strategy and Business Plan after I attend the Legal Services Board meeting on 28 March 2012. I decided on that before knowing how smoothly the process might go and, given that the date allows its timely issue, I am more comfortable publishing once your Board has had the opportunity formally to see the final version of the document. It goes to the OLC on 19 March and I have arranged for the version we shall receive to be provided to your Office this week; I do not expect any further substantive changes.

You close on a note of encouraging us to be 'quicker, cheaper and faster' than the systems that went before us. While I do not disagree with the sentiment underlying this statement, I understand Adam has recently written to Chris outlining some of our concerns at how this language might cause problems for both our organisations. Perhaps we could discuss how we describe this in different but equally pithy terms?

I thought I would also respond to the other, additional points you raised in your letter.

I am pleased to see that there is a first meeting in the diary for 30 March 2012 between Adam and David Thomas from the OLC, Chris and Barbara Saunders from the LSB, and Abigail Plenty of the MoJ, to look at the new jurisdictions project. This mechanism should ensure good joint working between our three organisations and give us all increased confidence in the coordination of the work. I look forward to the report from this first meeting, and expect to see good progress before it meets again two months later.

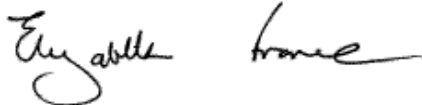
The logo for the Legal Ombudsman, featuring the word "LEGAL" in a stylized, pink, cursive font above the word "OMBUDSMAN" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

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You also noted that, as outlined in our Strategy and Business Plan, we shall shortly be consulting on our scheme rules. You may recall that we made a public commitment (with LSB encouragement at the time) to review both the rules and the structure of the case fee within 18 months of operation. It is to meet that commitment that we are beginning the process. The executive is holding a pre-consultation meeting with key stakeholders on 15 March, which I understand Julie Myers has been invited to attend, this should ensure that the LSB is aware of the general thrust of discussions. The OLC will receive feedback from this on 19 March.

In relation to the specific issue of the case fees, the early view of the OLC is that we wish to continue a system that is administratively simple to operate, so as to keep the cost of any infrastructure to support collection to a minimum. We shall consult on options, but our current preferred approach (which may, of course, change depending on the evidence we see as part of the consultation process) is to keep it similar to the system that currently operates. We shall, of course, keep you informed as the consultation progresses, and I hope Julie or a colleague will attend the pre-consultation event.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth France', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth France CBE  
Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints