

Appendix 2

ACTIVITY REPORT: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2012

Overview

The Panel's joint research with the Legal Ombudsman on complaints revealed why so many consumers don't complain about poor service by a lawyer – people are confused about what to do, get completely thrown by legal jargon, believe they won't get a fair hearing and fear that upsetting their lawyer could have repercussions for their case.

Good progress has been made on the LSB's two advice requests: on choosing and using legal services, and financial protection regimes – see future activity for imminent outputs. We have worked alongside the LSB to commission new research on: the legal needs and experience of people with learning disabilities (in partnership with Mencap) and qualitative research on the reasons why there are relatively low levels of public trust in lawyers.

We started a quarterly e-newsletter as a means of increasing our visibility among stakeholders.

The Panel met twice over this period. The meeting in October received a presentation from Law for Life and considered a draft background paper on empowering consumers. The Panel held its annual strategy day in December; this included: a debate on how ABS and technology could change the law based on contributions from Rocket Lawyer and Russell Jones & Walker; evaluated our impact to date; considered strategic choices for 2013-14; and received a presentation on the risk research.

Update on planned projects

Project	Activity
Choosing and using legal services	Two background papers completed in draft
Financial protection	Draft focus group research report received; analysis of existing financial protection regimes commenced
Complaints	Joint research with Legal Ombudsman published
Consumer Impact Report	Decision on future of CIR deferred until January meeting
Diversity	Tender issued for learning disabilities research in partnership with LSB and Mencap; exploratory discussions with SRA on research with asylum seekers; met with Mind on possible mental health research
Quality assurance	Short response to final LETR discussion paper
Non-commercial providers	No activity this quarter
Will-writing	No activity this quarter

Update on unplanned work

We organised a successful joint workshop with legal and health regulators on consumer engagement, in a session led by Harry Cayton, Chief Executive of the Professional Standards Authority. A note of the event has been published on our website.

Our consultation responses in this period:

- Trading Standards Institute on successor to the OFT's Consumer Codes Approval Scheme
- LETR final discussion paper
- ILEX Professional Standards on proposed application for reserved activity rights
- JAG consultation on Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates

Elisabeth Davies presented to the International Bar Association conference on the theme of trust. Paul Munden presented to the Westminster Forum on ABS, while Jeff Bell presented to the Westminster Forum on conveyancing.

Future activity

The first phase of the choosing and using legal services project will be completed consisting of two background papers, a stakeholder event and a short publication summarising initial findings. On financial protection, we will publish the research findings on consumers and risk and hold a seminar with stakeholders, while analysis of current financial protection regimes will near completion. New research projects commissioned with the LSB – on people with learning disabilities and trust – will be substantially complete by the end of March.

The Panel's draft work programme for 2013-14 will be submitted to the Board's 20 March meeting.

In January, the Panel will publish its second quarterly e-newsletter. We will hold the first meeting of our Regulators' Forum – an opportunity for the approved regulators to discuss policy thinking at an earlier stage of development and other topical issues.

Steve Brooker is speaking at a Westminster Forum event on the theme of technology and the law.

Steve Brooker
December 2012