

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER:

NEW LEGAL SERVICES REGULATORY REGIME PREPARES TO GO LIVE

DRAFT SECOND YEAR PROGRAMME RELEASED FOR CONSULTATION

The Legal Service Board today releases its [draft business plan](#) for 2010/11. The document sets out the next steps in the reform programme for the legal services sector. It is subject to a consultation period giving opportunity to comment on the contents and shape the final programme.

The new regulatory regime for legal services is expected to become fully activated by statute on 1 January 2010, when the LSB will receive the remainder of its regulatory powers.

The programme of work outlined provides continuity with the LSB's stated early priorities, including:

- assuring the public about the rigour and independence of legal regulation;
- giving consumers more choice and lawyers new business opportunities by opening up the market and increasing competition to allow new types of legal business to emerge;
- better consumer redress when things go wrong through improvements to lawyers' own processes for resolving complaints and the new Legal Ombudsman to ensure fair, effective and rapid dispute resolution for everybody concerned.

The plan reinforces the LSB's ambition to deliver real improvements on diversity in the legal workforce and to address issues around access to justice. Running throughout the plan is a continuing new emphasis on developing research priorities. This will be the first year when the work of the new Consumer Panel will be a major influence on the work of the Board.

The first year of the LSB's operation has been about building the organisation and modernising regulatory structures so that they are fit-for-purpose. Great progress has been made and the

second year programme is based around the next steps in delivering on the vision for legal services set out by the 2007 Act.

The business plan is accompanied by the LSB's Equality Scheme, published for consultation pursuant to duties under the Equality Bill.

Consultation on the draft plan will close on 5 March, with responses invited to consultations@legalservicesboard.org.uk

Chairman of the Legal Services Board, David Edmonds, said:

“This programme of work reinforces our intention to reform and modernise the legal services market place in the interests of consumer - enhancing quality, ensuring value for money and improving access to justice across England and Wales.

The Plan underlines our commitment to challenging, informing and encouraging action to maintain and develop standards of regulation, education and training and service provision. Learning from the experiences of our early work, we will continue to work in partnership with approved regulators and others to stay focused on the issues that really matter.”

Notes for editors:

1. The Legal Services Act ('The Act') provides for the creation of the Legal Services Board as the oversight regulator for legal services in England and Wales.
2. The LSB oversees eight "Approved Regulators", which in turn regulate individual lawyers and organisations. The eight approved regulators, designated under Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the 2007 Act, are the Law Society, the Bar Council, the Master of the Faculties, the Institute of Legal Executives, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents, the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys and the Association of Law Costs Draftsmen.
3. In addition, the Lord Chancellor has laid an Order that will, subject to the necessary Parliamentary procedures, see two further professional bodies from outside the traditional legal services sector designated formally as approved regulators from 1 January 2010. Those bodies, which will both be listed as approved regulators in relation only to reserved probate activities, are:
 - Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland (ICAS);
 - Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).
4. Section one of the Act defines the following regulatory objectives:
 - Protecting and promoting the public interest;
 - Supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law;

- Improving access to justice;
- Protecting and promoting the interests of consumers of legal services;
- Promoting competition in the provision of legal services;
- Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
- Increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties;
- Promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles;

5. The previous LSB business plan (which was published on 9 April 2009) can be found at http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/news_publications/publications/pdf/business_plan_2009_10.pdf
6. The legal profession currently consists of some 16,455 barristers, 112,246 solicitors and 12,200 individuals authorised to operate in other aspects of the legal profession such as conveyancing. The sector has been valued at £25.97 billion per annum. In total the legal sector employed 323,000 individuals in 2008. [ONS]
7. For more information or interview requests please contact Craig Jones, Media and Public Affairs Manager at the LSB on craig.jones@legalservicesboard.org.uk or by calling 020 7271 0068 / 07956 226562