

SRA response

Legal Ombudsman 2019/20 business plan and budget

Published on 17 January 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your 2019/20 Business Plan. We agree that your strategic objectives and annual priorities are the right ones. We welcome, and share, your focus on the improvement of customer service and performance.

As noted in the strategic issues section of the consultation, several aspects of our reform programme will affect the way LeO undertakes its work, including our new Standards and Regulations and transparency rules. We acknowledge this and emphasise the usefulness of our joint discussions in informing our approach. We look forward to continuing these discussions as we implement our new arrangements.

You also reference the introduction of AI driven processes as a strategic issue. We were recently awarded £700,000 from the Government's Regulators Pioneer Fund to support business innovations that will use AI to transform the legal services market for small businesses and consumers. We are working with NESTA on developing our proposal and we would be happy to update you on progress in due course.

Your business plan also highlights the greater focus on public legal education. The major redevelopment of the Legal Choices website is a key contribution in this area and we welcome the Ombudsman's continued involvement in the Legal Choices Steering Group.

As you will be aware, we have also worked together to produce a joint leaflet helping people to understand the different services our organisations provide, and the different types of issues we deal with. People have told us this is a helpful resource and we will continue to monitor how it is received as more leaflets are distributed this year to members of the public, advice agencies and the offices of Members of Parliament and Welsh Assembly Members.

Our 2018 collaboration on the research project "Better information in the legal services market" helped to provide evidence for what are landmark reforms. We welcome your support for our forthcoming research into how law firms serve clients with disabilities, sharing best practice and helping to make sure this important group can access the legal services they need. We are planning to publish this research in Summer 2019 and look forward to continuing our collaboration on research projects in the future.

I note that you will be undertaking more analytical themed reports this year and sharing your insights so that service providers can improve first tier complaints handling. We welcome this approach, which we believe will help the customers of law firms to secure the service quality they need and increase customer satisfaction.

I hope that you find this short submission helpful and I look forward to continuing to work together.

Yours sincerely, Paul Philip

Chief Executive, Solicitors Regulation Authority