

Quality indicators in legal services

Technical appendices to a research report for the Legal Services Board

v1 | January 2021



Bringing the voices of communities into the heart of organisations



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1. Methodology and research materials

1.1 Overview

This research took place in Autumn 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. The research therefore adopted a remote methodology to reduce risks of transmission to participants and researchers and to enable a diverse group of people to take part.

In outline, the research adopted a qualitative approach involving:

- An online discussion forum with 69 participants over two weeks. The online forum comprised an online discussion forum (written); some polling; and various 'homework' exercises involving participants doing their own online research;
- Five online (Zoom) 90-minute focus groups with 3-5 participants.

1.2 Online discussion forum

Participants were recruited from an online panel via Panelbase (further detail on recruitment is [below](#)) and invited to register for an online forum using the FlexMR platform.

Initially, 92 people consented to take part in the forum, and 69 went on to complete the forum. The numbers of people completing different tasks ranged from 64 to 69.

They were asked to complete a series of 'Tasks' over the course of two weeks. In outline, the flow of the forum was as follows:

Week One	
Day 1	TASK 1: Consent survey
	TASK 2: Introductions • Introductions with screennames, experiences of legal issues. • 3 words to describe how you would feel if you had to find legal support for a legal issue
Day 2	TASK 3: Homework exercise • Participants considered one of the four scenarios (either moving house, going through a divorce, making a will, or being made redundant). • They were tasked to find a 'real life' legal services provider to support them if they were in that scenario. They were encouraged to follow the process they would take in real life, including searching online, asking family and friends, putting a call out on social media (but not contacting any providers).



Day 3	TASK 4: Discussing homework task • 'Bulletin board' style discussions on the homework exercise and ease/difficulty of finding a provider
Day 4	TASK 5: Reviewing mocked up information about fictitious providers • Participants repeated the exercise in Task 3, but this time reviewing mocked-up quality indicator information about fictitious providers instead. • Participants were split into two groups. In the first exercise one group considered website-style information for four firms and the second group considered a comparison chart of 12 fictitious providers. In the second exercise, they switched so that the first group considered the comparison list, and the second group considered the website-style information. • The mocked up materials (which can be found here) were designed to test different types of quality indicators. • For both exercises, participants were asked which firm they would choose to advise in their scenario, and why.
Day 5	TASK 6: Survey ranking exercise • Participants were asked to individually rank different quality indicators in order of helpfulness. The indicators they ranked were: • <i>Information about the firm and solicitors (e.g. date established; Size of firm)</i> • <i>Information about individual solicitors (e.g. biographies/ 'About us')</i> • <i>Quality marks/ kitemarks or accreditations</i> • <i>Customer reviews</i> • <i>Overall ratings from independent review website (e.g. star ratings)</i> • <i>Specific ratings from independent review website (e.g. for value for money, client care, timeliness, communication)</i> • <i>Information on success rates (e.g. number of cases won; Number of Land Registry applications rejected in conveyancing firms)</i> • <i>Complaints information</i>
	TASK 7: About their decision-making • Bulletin board style discussions on: • Comparing choosing real providers (in Task 3) with choosing fictitious providers (in Task 5) • Considering cost and its influence on decision-making • Considering impact of type of legal issue on decision-making



Week Two	
Days 1-2	TASK 8: Detailed discussion of indicators - Bulletin board style discussions on the role and value of the following indicators, and what type of information best helps decision-making: <i>Information about the firm and individual lawyers</i> <i>Quality marks/ accreditations</i> <i>Star ratings?</i> <i>Customer reviews</i> <i>Information on success rates</i> <i>Information on complaints</i>
Day 3	TASK 9: Comparing other sectors and digital comparison tools - Bulletin board style discussions on: - Comparing choosing providers in legal services with choosing providers in other sectors - Judging what is 'good' in legal services, compared with in other sectors - Use of comparison and review websites - The idea of external comparison websites for legal services providers
Day 4	TASK 10: Question board about regulator-provided information - Bulletin board style discussions on: - The idea of legal services regulators providing a single online register of regulated legal services providers - Information participants would like to see in a single online register
Day 5	TASK 11: Question Board: Final message for the Legal Services Board. Participants were invited to leave one message for the Legal Services Board about how to make it easier for people to compare and choose legal services providers.
	FINAL TASK: Evaluation survey Survey on participants' experiences of the online forum.

1.3 Focus groups

Participants from the online forum were invited to take part in online focus groups after the forum finished to explore some of the themes that came out of the forum in more depth.

In total, there were five focus groups, each comprising 3-5 participants recruited as a diverse mix of the total sample (sample breakdown for focus groups is [here](#)).

Focus groups lasted 90 minutes and were conducted via Zoom.

In outline, the focus groups covered the following topics:



Quality

- How participants would tell if a law firm will do a good job for them.
- Decision-making process, and indicators and tools used at different points.
- Role of 'gut feel' in choosing a legal services provider.

Costs/ Value for money

- How participants judge value for money and the interplay between cost and quality.

Location/ Age of firm

- Impact of age of a firm, whether it matters and why.
- Role of location of a firm, whether it matters and why.
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on importance of location (given move to remote services in many sectors).

Reality check

- Discussion on the impact of emotional, social and material influences that go into decision making, and reflection on the stress and anxiety of having a legal issue (as described by participants in the forum).
- Impact of stress and emotion on what people look for, and how.
- Reflection of the likely differences between choosing a legal services provider in a research exercises compared with choosing a provider in a real-life situation.

Digital comparison tools and external review sites

- Role of digital comparison tools and views of cross-sector brands vs. brands specific to legal services.
- Role of customer reviews:
 - Difference between external sites offering reviews/ ratings, reviews embedded in providers' websites, and reviews/ testimonials collected by providers themselves.
 - Likelihood of leaving reviews of experiences of legal services providers.
- Role of star ratings.

Single online register

- Views on idea of single online register and expectations of the information it would include.
- Discussions on how to ensure consumers can trust a register.

Pulling it all together

- Final reflections on the best ways of ensuring easily accessible information that helps people compare and decide on the best firm for them.



1.4 Materials

Name	Independent consumer rating	Date established & number of lawyers	Membership of Legal Regulators' Quality Schemes	Previous clients' ratings (average out of 10)					Complaints information from 2019		
				Likely to recommend	Value for money	Timeliness	Client care	Communication	Complaints made to firm	Complaints made to Legal Ombudsman	Complaints upheld by Ombudsman
Acorn Solicitors	4.9 ★★★★★ 520 reviews	1987 37 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Divorce Law	7.5	8	7	6	7.5	9	2	1
Birch Law	4.1 ★★★★★ 340 reviews	2013 57 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence	7.5	7.5	7	6.5	7	6	1	1
Chestnut Legal LLP	4.7 ★★★★★ 26 reviews	1967 26 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence ✓ Will and Trusts	8	6.5	8	8	7.5	12	2	1
Elm Family Law LLP	3.7 ★★★★★ 35 reviews	1982 13 lawyers	✓ Legal regulator's quality scheme ✓ Conveyancing	7	7	6.5	7	6.5	12	0	0
Douglas Fir Associates	3 ★★★★★ 1 review	2019 2 lawyers		-	-	-	-	-	1	0	0
Ginkgo & Partners	4.5 ★★★★★ 2322 reviews	1979 403 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence ✓ Divorce Law ✓ Wills & Trusts ✓ Conveyancing ✓ Employment Law	8.5	7	7	7	7	1	1	0
Hawthorn Law	4.0 ★★★★★ 15 reviews	2019 32 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence	7.5	7.5	8	7.5	7.5	0	0	0
Juniper Legal	3.5 ★★★★★ 202 reviews	1998 138 lawyers		6	7	6	6.5	6	10	2	2

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Figure 1: Fictitious provider comparison chart (Page 1)



Name	Independent consumer rating	Date established & number of lawyers	Membership of Legal Regulators' Quality Schemes	Previous clients' ratings (average out of 10)					Complaints information from 2019		
				Likely to recommend	Value for money	Timeliness	Client care	Communication	Complaints made to firm	Complaints made to Legal Ombudsman	Complaints upheld by Ombudsman
Laurel Shrub Solicitors	4.8 ★★★★★ 150 reviews	1994 6 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence ✓ Wills & Trusts ✓ Employment	8	7	9	9	8	0	0	0
Maple Solicitors	4.1 ★★★★★ 88 reviews	2010 5 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme	9	6.5	8	8	7.5	2	2	1
Neem Family Law	4.3 ★★★★★ 276 reviews	1989 84 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme ✓ Customer service excellence ✓ Conveyancing	7	7	6.5	7	6.5	11	1	0
Olive & Partners	3.9 ★★★★★ 27 reviews	2017 4 lawyers	✓ Quality scheme	7	8	6	6.5	6.5	3	0	0

Client Scores explained:

Based on surveys clients complete after they have used the firm's services

All scores are out of 10

Net Promoter Score:
 0 = not at all likely to recommend
 10 = extremely likely to recommend

Value for Money:
 0 = not at all worth how much they paid
 10 = entirely worth how much they paid

Timeliness:
 0 = responded very slowly
 10 = responded very quickly

Client Care:
 0 = did not at all understand your concerns and worries in a way that made you feel that they cared about you and your situation
 10 = entirely understood your concerns and worries in a way that made you feel that they cared about you and your situation

Communication:
 0 = did not at all communicate with me in a way that was convenient, helpful and easy to understand
 10 = always communicated with me in a way that was convenient, helpful and easy to understand

Page 2 of 2

Figure 2: Fictitious provider comparison chart (Page 2)





The mock-up features a header with the Acorn Solicitors logo (an acorn icon and the text 'ACORN SOLICITORS') and a background image of a wooden gavel on a desk. Below the header is an 'About us' section, followed by a dark blue box highlighting a success rate. The 'Our Client Scores' section contains a table with five rows of metrics. To the right of the table are two circular 'LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME' badges, one red and one green, both labeled 'Divorce Law'. Below these is a 4.9 star rating and a note about 520 reviews.

About us
We at Acorn Solicitors have been providing high-quality legal advice since 1987. We offer services in family law and advise on all issues surrounding divorce and separation. We have recently completed a range of complex divorce cases, including contested cases with high-value assets. We can also support people on wills and trusts, employment law issues and we have a specialist conveyancing team.

Success rate: 58% of contested divorces in 2019

Our Client Scores

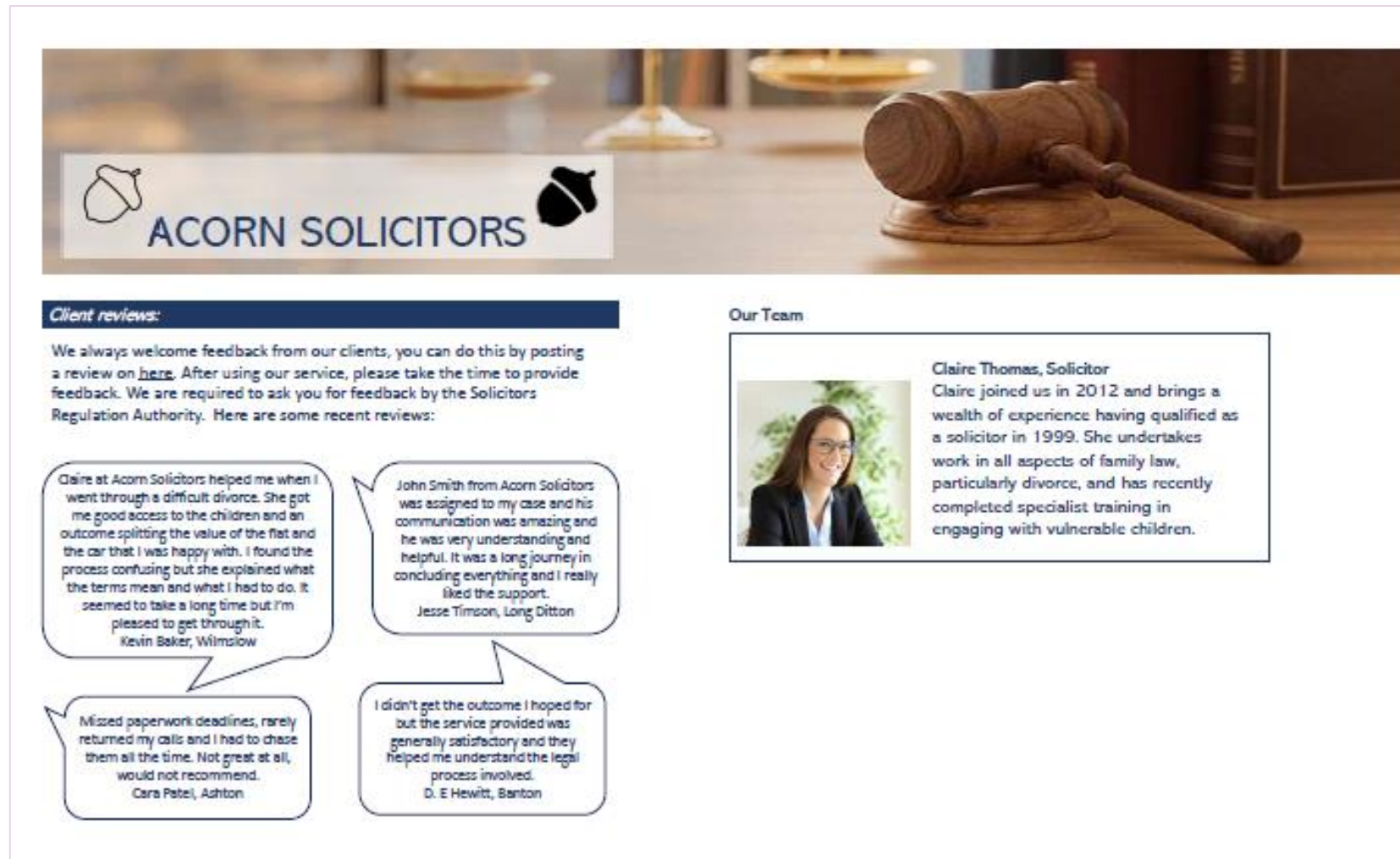
Net Promoter Score	7.5 (247 client scores, where 0 is not at all likely and 10 is extremely recommend)
Value for Money	8 (87 client scores, where 0 is not at all worth it and 10 is entirely worth how much they paid)
Timeliness	7 (32 client scores, where 0 is very slowly and 10 is very quickly).
Client Care	6 (17 client scores, where 0 was not at all and 10 was entirely understand your concerns and worries in a way that made you feel that they cared about you and your situation).
Communication	7.5 (17 client scores, where 0 was not at all and 10 was entirely in a convenient, helpful and easy to understand way).

Complaints data (2019)

Complaints to firm	9
Complaints to Legal Ombudsman	2
Upheld complaints by legal Ombudsman	1

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME
Divorce Law
4.9 ★★★★★
520 reviews from independent review sites

Figure 3: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Acorn Solicitors (Page 1)



The mock-up features a header with the Acorn Solicitors logo (two acorns) and the text 'ACORN SOLICITORS' on a light background. To the right is a large image of a wooden gavel on a desk. Below the header, the 'Client reviews' section has a dark blue title bar. It contains a paragraph about feedback and four speech bubble testimonials. The 'Our Team' section includes a photo of Claire Thomas and a text box describing her experience.

ACORN SOLICITORS

Client reviews:

We always welcome feedback from our clients, you can do this by posting a review on [here](#). After using our service, please take the time to provide feedback. We are required to ask you for feedback by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Here are some recent reviews:

Claire at Acorn Solicitors helped me when I went through a difficult divorce. She got me good access to the children and an outcome splitting the value of the flat and the car that I was happy with. I found the process confusing but she explained what the terms mean and what I had to do. It seemed to take a long time but I'm pleased to get through it.
Kevin Baker, Wilmslow

John Smith from Acorn Solicitors was assigned to my case and his communication was amazing and he was very understanding and helpful. It was a long journey in concluding everything and I really liked the support.
Jesse Timson, Long Ditton

Missed paperwork deadlines, rarely returned my calls and I had to chase them all the time. Not great at all, would not recommend.
Cara Patel, Ashton

I didn't get the outcome I hoped for but the service provided was generally satisfactory and they helped me understand the legal process involved.
D. E Hewitt, Banton

Our Team

 Claire Thomas, Solicitor
Claire joined us in 2012 and brings a wealth of experience having qualified as a solicitor in 1999. She undertakes work in all aspects of family law, particularly divorce, and has recently completed specialist training in engaging with vulnerable children.

Figure 4: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Acorn Solicitors (Page 2)



Gingko & Partners
Supporting people in life since 1979

One of the North West's largest and longest established law firms, we support people from all over the UK with everything from buying and selling property, to divorce, to wills and estate management. You can trust our friendly team to help you with whatever life throws your way – just give us a call!

	LOCALLY	NATIONALLY
Housing & Property	1st / 69	7th / 5043 law firms
Family Law	1st / 76	7th / 4457 law firms
Wills, Trusts & Probate	1st / 54	7th / 4256 law firms
Employment	1st / 36	7th / 3807 law firms

[Show more](#)

Data shown above is based on the reviews and client feedback collected by ReviewSolicitors over the last 12 months.

Don't just take our word for it. Look at what our clients say:

Likely to recommend	★★★★★★★★★ 8.5/10
Value for money	★★★★★★ 7/10
Timeliness	★★★★★★ 7/10
Client care	★★★★★★ 7/10
Communication	★★★★★★ 7/10

These are reviews from independent consumer review websites. Based on 2322 reviews

We want to give you the best possible service. However, if at any point you become unhappy with the service we have provided to you or you have concerns about your bill then you should inform us immediately so that we can do our best to resolve the problem for you.

We have a procedure in place which details how we handle complaints which is available by email to: client.care@gingko.co.uk. We have eight weeks to consider your complaint. If we are unable to help you, then you can have the complaint independently looked at by the Legal Ombudsman.

In 2019 we received 1 complaint from a client. This complaint was referred to the Legal Ombudsman, and was not upheld.

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME

- CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE**
- LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME** (Divorce Law)
- LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME** (Wills & Trusts)
- LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME** (Conveyancing)
- LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME** (Employment Law)

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

Figure 5: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Gingko & Partners (Page 1)

Gingko & Partners
Supporting people in life since 1979

What our clients say...

Toni Teak was superb, helpful as well as talented
★★★★★
Toni Teak was superb, totally recommend - she was patient, made me feel at ease over a complex matter with her lovely helpful manner as well as her clear talent. I sincerely thank you.

Speedy + helpful
★★★★★
We used Gingko solicitors for a property purchase. The team were brilliant-SO quick and efficient in replying to every phone call or email, nothing was too much trouble. Would highly recommend to anyone!

Plz, do not trust this firm and thier reviews
★
They will find something to charge you extra, very rude indeed and not helpful at all, plz try to aviod this firm, specially the Sycamore office at all cost.

Family solicitors
★★★★★
Went through a bitter divorce and financial dispute with my ex. Instructed Angie Crabtree to deal with everything on my behalf. Wasn't cheap but worth every pound. Found the team at Gingko & Partners responsive and approachable. Really had that feeling I was in safe hands and the advice was sensible. Can't thank them all enough.

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME
Divorce Law

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME
Wills & Trusts

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME
Conveyancing

LEGAL REGULATORS' QUALITY SCHEME
Employment Law

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

Figure 6: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Gingko & Partners (Page 2)



HAWTHORN LAW

REQUEST A FREE, NO
OBLIGATION CONSULTATION
WITH A SOLICITOR TODAY

At Hawthorn Law, we offer a range of law services. Our solicitors can assist you with: residential property conveyancing, wills and probate, lasting powers of attorney, divorce and separation, employment issues, conflicts and disputes, immigration and personal injury.

Our success rates:

Conveyancing	Number of Land Registry applications rejected in 2019	2
Divorce	Cases with outcome in client's favour	56%
Employment	Cases with outcome in client's favour	76%
Wills	Client satisfaction with service	8/10

Star service!



Rating independent consumer review websites.
Based on 15 reviews

ACCREDITATIONS



Figure 7: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Hawthorn Law (Page 1)



HAWTHORN LAW

REQUEST A FREE, NO OBLIGATION CONSULTATION WITH A FAMILY OR COMMERCIAL SOLICITOR TODAY

Our Team

We have a team of 36 qualified solicitors across our six departments.

Meet Lynn!
Lynn qualified in 2002 in Birmingham. She specialises in divorce law and has extra qualifications in complex family dispute resolution. Lynn has two young children of her own, and when she gets a moment, she enjoys running and crafting.

Meet Asif!
Asif heads up our conveyancing team. He qualified in 1992. He brings years of experience in complex commercial and private conveyancing processes. He leads a team of 6 solicitors who deal with around 280 transactions each year. Asif has three teenagers, and when he's not tidying up after them, he enjoys squash and travel.

Meet Afua!
Afua specialises in wills, trusts and probate and estate management. She qualified in 1994 in London where she specialised complex tax and estate planning. Since moving to our more peaceful part of the country, she helps people with setting up wills and trusts. At the weekend, she enjoys countryside walks with her two border terriers Vic and Bob.

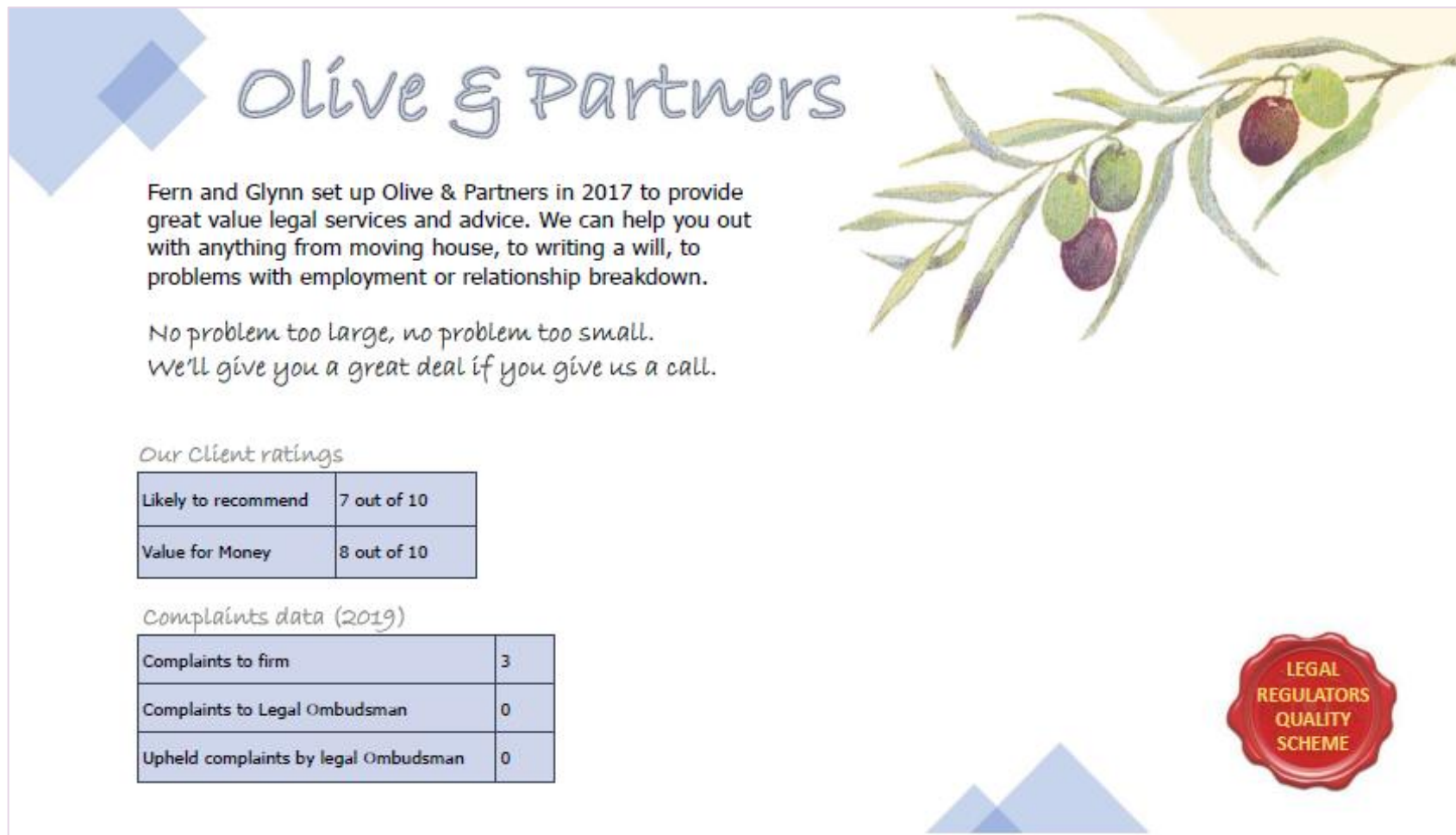
Meet Graham!
Graham is our employment law specialist. He has many employment tribunals under his belt, having qualified as a solicitor in 1992. He has further qualifications in discrimination law and mediation. In his spare time, Graham enjoys the theatre and he is a member of CAMRA – he's our real ale fanatic!

I can't thank Lynn enough for all her help in getting me alot more than I expected and for shown patience with everything we had to go through to get what I was owed. Thanks again Lynn you've been amazing

A Happy Client

Figure 8: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Hawthorn Law (Page 2)





Olive & Partners

Fern and Glynn set up Olive & Partners in 2017 to provide great value legal services and advice. We can help you out with anything from moving house, to writing a will, to problems with employment or relationship breakdown.

No problem too large, no problem too small.
We'll give you a great deal if you give us a call.

Our Client ratings

Likely to recommend	7 out of 10
Value for Money	8 out of 10

Complaints data (2019)

Complaints to firm	3
Complaints to Legal Ombudsman	0
Upheld complaints by legal Ombudsman	0

LEGAL REGULATORS QUALITY SCHEME

Figure 9: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Olive & Partners (Page 1)





Figure 10: Fictitious legal services provider webpages mock-up: Olive & Partners (Page 2)

2. Recruitment and sample

2.1 Recruitment method

Participants were recruited via the Legal Services Board Public Panel. The public panel comes from a national online market research panel run by Panelbase. All participants lived in England and Wales. The sample selected for this exercise excluded anyone who said that they never shop around when buying something; or that they simply rely on recommendations. Participants were also screened to ensure a diverse mix of demographics (in terms of age, location, ethnicity and socio-economic group), legal confidence and experience of legal issues.

Quotas were set to ensure a diverse mix of participants. These were 'soft' quotas as there is always the likelihood of some drop-out from this method of recruitment. Because of this, over-recruitment is standard practice. The aim was for at least 60 participants to be recruited in total. In reality 69 completed the forum.

Participants who completed the online forum element were asked to express interest in taking part in the subsequent focus groups. Amongst those who expressed interest, a diverse mix of people (in terms of demographics, legal confidence and experience of legal issues) was selected. A separate focus group amongst people with lower literacy levels was also held.

2.2 Sample matrix

The final mix of participants was as follows (definitions of terms underlined and highlighted in blue are below):

Characteristic	Participants completing the online forum	Focus group participants
Total	69	19
Gender		
Male	15	5
Female	54	14
Age group		
18 to 24	5	3
25 to 34	19	4
35 to 44	30	7
55 to 74	9	2
75+	6	3
Region		
North of England	14	4
Midlands	14	4
South of England	29	8
Wales	12	3



Characteristic	Participants completing the online forum	Focus group participants
Vulnerability measures		
English is not first language	6	1
Has a disability or long-term condition...	13	2
...of whom have poor mental health	8	-
Low legal confidence (score of 0-39)	16	4
People with lower literacy levels	5	2
People with low or no qualifications	18	4
Social grade		
AB	16	5
C1C2	27	7
DE	26	7
Legal services experienced in last 5 years		
Any legal services experienced in last 5 years	27	7
Of whom, have experience in...		
Conveyancing	9	1
Divorce	7	2
Wills / probate	8	4
Employment issue	4	-
Ethnic background		
Bangladeshi	1	-
Eastern European	2	-
Indian	3	3
Iranian	1	-
Italian	2	-
Mixed heritage (Persian and Indian)	1	-
Mixed heritage (White and Black Caribbean)	3	1
Pakistani	2	1
White British	54	14
Approach to shopping around/ decision-making		
'Maximiser'	40	9
'Satisficer'	29	10

2.3 Definitions

Legal confidence was determined using Pleasence & Balmer's General Legal Confidence scale. This involves asking how confident respondents would feel of a fair outcome in a significant legal disputes and experienced various scenarios. The tool and scoring are explained in detail [here](#).

Literacy was defined through a set of statements establishing respondents' confidence in reading, writing, and understanding written information. It should be noted that the aim was to include people with lower literacy, but not low literacy. This



approach (given it was online and required written responses) was not suitable for those with low literacy, and people taking part were naturally more confident in reading and writing given that they had signed up to part of the Panelbase online market research panel.

Lower level qualifications were defined as: NVQ or SVQ level 1, GNVQ Foundation level, GSVQ level 1, GCSE or O level below grade C, SCE Standard or Ordinary below grade 3, CSE below grade 1, BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general certificate, SCOTVEC , RSA Stage I, II, or III, City and Guilds part 1, Junior certificate.

Approach to shopping around/ decision-making was defined as those who agreed that - when they need to buy an expensive item or pay for an expensive service – they either:

- a) Either narrow it down to a few options and read a few reviews, but don't go overboard ('Satisficer');
- b) Or make sure they've considered all the options and will read around a lot to make sure they are getting the best option or deal ('Maximiser').

3. Evaluation survey

Overall, participants rated their experience of taking part in this research highly. When asked to rate their experience, the average score was 9.2 out of 10.

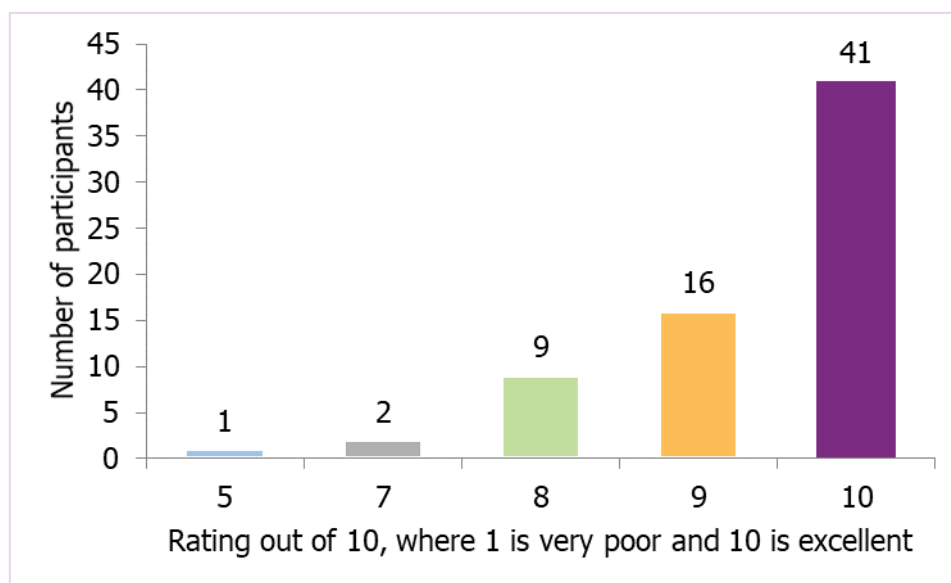


Figure 11: Q: Overall, how would you rate your experience of taking part in this research on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent? (Base = 73 participants)

In more detail, participants rated all aspects of the research well, including using the platform, understanding the content and having their say. All except one participant felt able to have their say, and 89% said the research was 'very good' at enabling them to have their say.



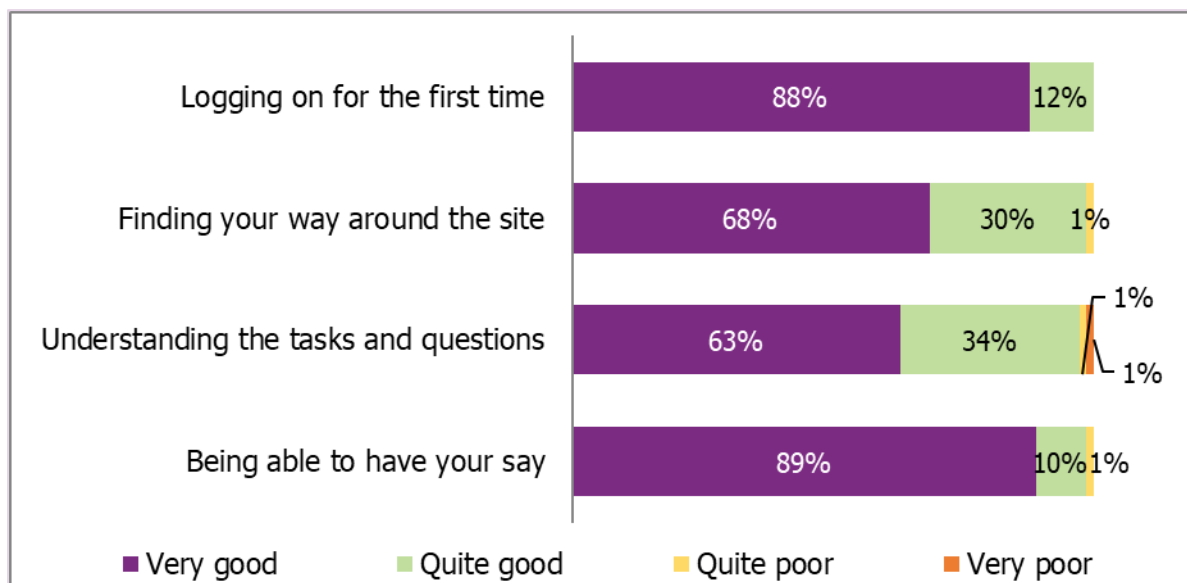


Figure 12: Q: How was your experience of... (Base = 73 participants)

Finally, almost all participants felt that their contribution would make a difference:

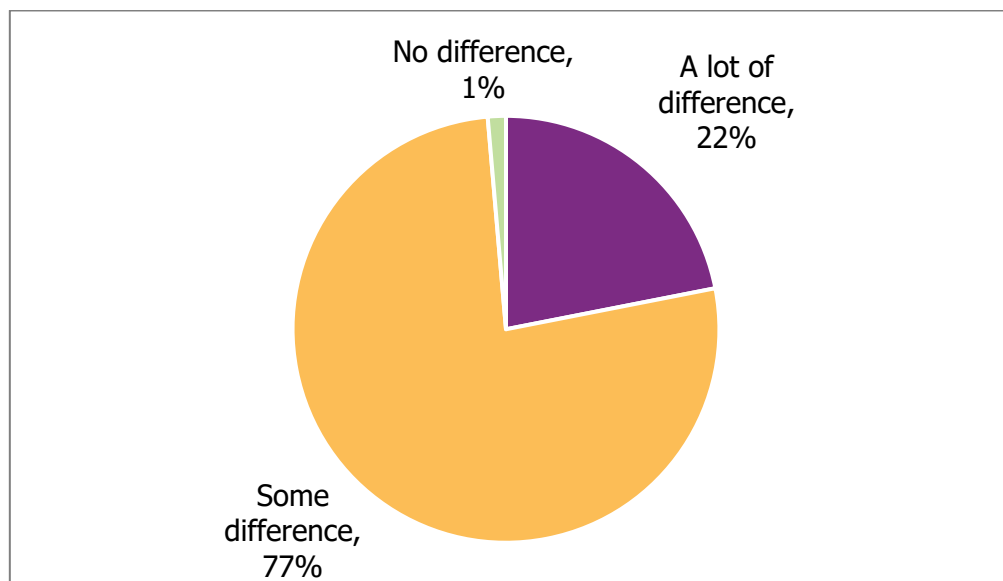


Figure 13: Q: What difference - if any - do you think your contribution will make? (Base = 73 participants)

