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Dear Vanessa

The Legal Choices website

Thank you for writing on 4 October to update me about your Board's position regarding the funding of the Legal Choices website following their recent meeting. It is a significant concern that the Board decided to maintain its position to withdraw funding from the Legal Choices website despite the efforts of various organisations to help find a constructive solution.

As we have discussed over recent weeks, we see the provision to consumers of good quality information about legal services as a key element of improving access to justice. Equally we see a demonstrable commitment to this objective by legal services regulators as a key element of their performance. We have little option but to regard BSB's decision to withdraw funding from Legal Choices as a diminution of its commitment, and therefore performance, in this area. I should add that in the context of the LSB's responsibility for monitoring the CMA's 2016 recommendations, the BSB's action is likely to absent it from the positive assessment we would like to make of the sector's overall progress.

While we acknowledge – although do not agree with – BSB's views about the effectiveness and therefore value for money of Legal Choices, that rationale is unconvincing without a clear commitment to investing in alternatives.

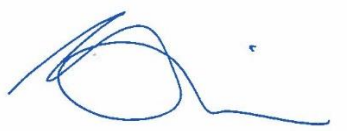
Our focus will now turn to the substitutes that the BSB puts in place to deliver on the underlying objective, including the ongoing financial commitment underpinning these. While the redesign of the BSB's own website may make a helpful contribution, on its own it seems unlikely to make a significant difference. In order to give us the assurance we need, I would be grateful if you could set out the BSB's plans in detail with associated funding. This is likely to be a key focus of our Board-to-Board discussions on 28 November.

Finally, I should let you know that we do not agree with BSB's position that because services are delivered primarily through other providers that it has a limited role in providing good quality information to the public. Clearly, it is important not to miss the opportunity to expand public access work. However, we also see barristers as being part of an important value chain delivering services to an end user, whether that is an individual, a business or other organisation. We consider it important for regulators and

those whom they regulate to see that value chain primarily from the point of view of that end user and not that of the profession being regulated.

I am copying this letter to Sharon Horwitz at the Competition and Markets Authority.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

Matthew Hill
Chief Executive

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