

Meeting: Legal Services Board

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Item: Paper (22) 33

Title: Communication and engagement update

Author: Paul Nezandonyi, Head, Communications and Engagement

Status: Official

Introduction

1. This paper updates the Board on the progress made in delivering the Legal Services Board's communications and engagement strategy, focusing on stakeholder engagement.
2. This paper reviews the last twelve months and outlines some of the activity that has taken place to achieve the objectives set out in the communications and engagement strategy. It then looks forward to some of the activities planned for 2022/23.

Recommendation

- The Board is invited to **discuss** the update on stakeholder engagement activity.

Background

3. The Board agreed the LSB's communications and engagement strategy in April 2021. The strategy is critical to the delivery of our vision. Its purpose is to ensure we effectively influence others, and through proactive engagement, collaboration and communication, we will listen, act, and lead. This will help ensure stakeholders:
 - a) Recognise the LSB as a credible, consumer-focused leader.
 - b) Understand the priorities set out in Reshaping Legal Services and:
 - i. the role that the LSB will play in addressing them, and
 - ii. are empowered to play their part in tackling the challenges.
 - c) Understand the impact of our work.

- d) Change their response and behaviour to support the delivery of the ambitions set out in Reshaping Legal Services and promote the regulatory objectives.

Review of the last 12 months by objective

Objective (a): Recognise the LSB as a credible, consumer-focused leader

Participation in external events

4. We have taken part in an increased number of external speaking engagements, with the aim being to help establish the LSB as a credible, consumer-focused leader in the sector.
5. Being on a panel or giving a keynote speech has been a low-cost way for us to address potentially large audiences, including consumer groups and those collaborating on legal technology initiatives. In particular, it has enabled us to talk directly to lawyers and legal services professionals and discuss topics including training, ethics and professionalism. They have been an effective way for us to test ideas, debate with others, and outline our policy direction.
6. As a sign of the increased interest in our work, we are increasingly being invited to participate in events. Earlier this year, we collaborated with Westminster Legal Policy Forum to shape two of their conferences. Our appearances often generate coverage in the trade press and enable us to communicate our message further.

Objective (b): Understand the priorities set out in Reshaping Legal Services

Out-of-London Board engagement events

7. The Covid-19 pandemic meant the Board had to pause its annual face-to-face out-of-London stakeholder events programme. However, thanks to online technology, we have increased the number of external Board events over the last year. The aim has been to set out our strategy to a broader range of stakeholders and encourage them to play their role in addressing the challenges facing the sector. We held virtual meetings in Wales, the West Midlands, and the East of England. They attracted a broad range of people from across the sector, including lawyers and legal services practitioners, academics, consumer bodies, politicians, and members of the judiciary.
8. While these events have exposed the Board to a broader range of views and raised the profile of the LSB and the strategy to new stakeholders, we do not yet know what new work it has resulted in. Understanding this will be a priority as we curate the strategy.
9. A further key challenge is to turn these from listening events where stakeholders come to find out about the LSB into discussion forums where stakeholders come primed to share ideas. They should be a forum where people describe their work and their impact, and together we identify new areas of work to address the challenges facing the legal services sector.

10. As we plan next year's engagement, we will consider whether there would be merit in rebranding these events. We have found that we get a more fruitful discussion when we have a specific topic e.g. Lawtech, rather than a broad theme. We will also look at how we introduce more speakers into the programme so that people hear from a range of people to stimulate conversation.

Objective (c): Understand the impact of our work

A clear golden thread runs through all our work – Reshaping Legal Services

11. A key focus of the last year has been to focus on our messaging to ensure stakeholders understand our ambitious vision. There is now a clear golden thread running through our messaging, which makes our goals meaningful for stakeholders and means they better understand our priorities.

Stakeholder engagement is integrated into all our projects

12. Stakeholder engagement is now built into all our projects from the beginning, and stakeholders can see how they are helping to shape our work. For example, in October 2021, we hosted an online discussion event to inform our work on ongoing competence. We were joined by 60+ people, including lawyers and regulators from other sectors. We also held a practitioners' event in March 2022.
13. The emerging themes paper elsewhere on the agenda includes an analysis of useful feedback gathered at stakeholder events across the ongoing competence consultation window. It also highlights areas of consensus and where we may want to consider changes to the draft statement.

Objective (d): Change their response and behaviour to support the delivery of the ambitions set out in Reshaping Legal Services and promote the regulatory objectives

Segmenting our stakeholders

14. Our communications and engagement strategy identifies our key partners, stakeholders and audiences (Annex A). Over the last 12 months, we have strengthened our relationships with stakeholders, including academics, consumer groups, and in lawtech.
15. Those who attend our events are generally solicitors at small to medium-sized regional law firms. We could do more to increase our direct engagement with different lawyers and legal services professionals. We have good relationships with organisations like the Sole Practitioners' Group, representing one end of the market, but have had limited engagement with larger law firms at the other end. Our engagement with barristers and chambers has also been limited.
16. Given some of the challenges facing the sector and projects in our business plan, there could be merit in increasing the emphasis of our engagement with the sector at the top end and engaging magic circle firms, for example. Particularly with regard to our work on ethics and the rule of law – as this is

where we might see the most significant benefits. Our work on EDI and ongoing competence would also benefit from direct engagement with lawyers and legal services professionals.

Looking forward to the next 12 months

Inaugural LSB conference 2022: A diverse public deserves a strong, ethical and diverse profession

17. The Board agreed to host a conference and summit event in 2022/23, with the overall aims being to:
 - Maintain momentum in the sector-wide mission to deliver the ambitions set out in the strategy.
 - Promote collaboration and leadership and promote positive examples of good practice to encourage others to play their part in tackling the sector's challenges.
18. The full-day conference is on 13 October 2022 at Kings Place, London. We have begun issuing invitations to in-person attendees and promoting the opportunity to live-stream the event.
19. A programme for the day has been produced, and further details will be made public as speakers and panellists are confirmed. The event is open to stakeholders across the legal services sector.
20. We aim to bring together a wide range of people across the sector with a role to play in reshaping legal services to better meet society's needs. That includes regulators, lawyers and legal service professionals, the judiciary, politicians, consumer groups and the third sector and academics.
21. The longer-term aspiration is for the conference to become an annual event, and we will use subsequent ones to track and showcase progress against the ten-year strategy. The theme will evolve each year to reflect the ten-year journey and the critical issues of the time.
22. A key measure of success will be that attendees leave with clear ideas for what they will do to address the challenges facing the legal services sector. It should lead to new projects and collaborations.

Microsite

23. In May 2022, we launched the Reshaping Legal Services platform – Reshapinglegalservices.org.uk. We hope this will support our communications and engagement strategy by helping stakeholders understand the impact of both our work and others and encourage them to support the delivery of the ambitions set out in Reshaping Legal Services.
24. The site will track the progress being made to address the challenges set out in the strategy. It includes examples of collaboration and identifies areas where more work is needed. Themes covered include EDI, lawtech, and

consumer empowerment. Various organisations have provided Blogs, including some of the regulators, Advice UK, ACSO, and the Institute of Paralegals.

25. We will continue to work with stakeholders to develop the site over the coming months. We expect that the microsite and the conference will indicate the impact of our communications and engagement strategy.

Programme of senior external bilateral meetings

26. An extensive engagement programme informed the Reshaping Legal Services strategy, including senior-level bilateral meetings between the LSB Chair/CEO and equivalents across the sector. This helped to establish the LSB as a credible leader in the sector.
27. Many of those meetings led to working-level relationships being formed. However, there could be value in following up on the senior-level conversations we started as part of our efforts to maintain momentum, track progress, foster collaboration, and curate the strategy.

Parliamentary engagement

28. We have effective relationships with MoJ, and we update Ministers on our work, but our broader parliamentary engagement has been limited. We have not held a parliamentary reception about our strategy, for example, or sent parliamentarians updates on our work and the role they may play in supporting delivering the strategy.
29. There may also be parliamentarians we could invite to be Board speakers. Sir Robert Neill was the last MP to address the Board in April 2019, in his role as Chair of the Justice Select Committee.

Wales

30. The recent engagement event in Wales highlighted the need to strengthen our engagement with the sector there. We plan to do more to understand the progress in addressing the challenges facing the sector following the Thomas Commission and the role we might play in ensuring the legal services market in Wales works better for people who need legal services.
31. We will dedicate a policy manager to focus on Wales as part of their work, and we plan to hold an in-person Board engagement event there in April 2023.

Budget

32. The agreed budget for communications and engagement activity for 2022/23 is £277k, including the pay costs of the current complement of Comms and engagement colleagues and non-pay costs such as the 2022 inaugural sector-wide conference and the stakeholder management system.

Risks and mitigations	
Financial:	All communications and engagement activities will be managed within the agreed budget and deliver value for money
Legal:	
Comms and engagement:	Communications and engagement issues are discussed within the paper
Equality and diversity:	Equality and diversity issues are addressed in the communications and engagement strategy
Resource:	The strategy reflects current resources

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol)		
Para ref	Fol exemption and summary	Expires
N/a	N/a	N/a

Annex A

Our stakeholders

1. The LSB has a wide range of stakeholders and partners, and this will vary for specific projects and topics of communication and engagement.
2. The following is a general list of LSB stakeholders and partners, which will be refined depending on the subject for communication and engagement.

e) Key partners

- Approved regulators and regulatory bodies
- Ministry of Justice
- Welsh Parliament
- Legal Services Consumer Panel
- Office for Legal Complaints
- Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal
- Competitions and Markets Authority

Stakeholders

- Consumer groups
- Legal services providers
- Representative groups
- Third sector bodies and charities
- Academics and education providers
- Other oversight regulators
- Other government departments – e.g., BEIS, education
- Judiciary

Audiences

- The public
- Legal services consumers
- Lawyers
- The media