

MTCOG – 24 January 2022

The meeting opened with the LSB emphasising 2022 should be the year of delivery.

1. Feedback from empowering consumers consultation

The LSB summarised the themes emerging from the 21 responses it had received to its consultation on a draft statement of policy around empowering consumers. These included general support for the high-level approach including the outcomes and principles. Respondents had raised concerns raised about the logistical challenges of some of the specific expectations, including around regulators' registers and how the LSB would measure progress. A revised final statement of policy is due to be discussed at the LSB's March Board meeting, with a view to publication in April.

2. Evaluation

The LSB led a discussion on how it and the other regulators could evaluate progress on the empowering consumers and market transparency agenda. The LSB set out details of its planned research activities to evaluate its strategy, including plans to publish State of Sector reports at five-yearly intervals and continuing its regular quantitative surveys on legal needs, prices and technology and innovation. The LSB had identified a series of indicators in its State of Legal Services report and would track these to monitor progress in this area, for example figures on legal capability, levels of shopping around and intensity of competition.

There was discussion of the need for regulators to consider how to evaluate specific policies and measures they put in place, with clear opportunities for collaboration. It was noted that new measures could be added to the LSB's evaluation scheme in future as the market changes, for example levels of engagement with DCTs and provision of regulatory information by providers.

The LSB agreed to circulate a note setting out more detail of the indicators it plans to use, taking account of comments from the meeting.

3. Roundtable updates

Prior to the meeting, regulators had provided written updates on their latest relevant work since the previous MTCOG meeting in October 2021.

The SRA provided an update on the regulators' joint pilot on quality indicators, including plans to evaluation, and forthcoming work on a joint pilot on unbundling. There was discussion of how to facilitate collaboration on such pilot schemes, allowing for resourcing constraints from different regulators.

4. Regulatory Information Service

The LSB provided an update of the work of the task and finish group set up to scope work to develop a 'regulatory information service', previously referred to as the 'single digital register' of regulated legal services providers. This working group is made up of colleagues from the LSB, SRA, BSB, CLC, CILEx Regulation, ICAEW and LSCP. The group had discussed various models in legal services and other sectors to determine potential solutions and what the regulatory information service should achieve. The group is preparing a high-level discovery document which would inform the scope of a potential 'proof of concept' style study. The terms of reference for the task and finish group were circulated in advance of the meeting.

5. Public Legal Education

The BSB noted that most of the group's members would be attending a meeting the following week to consider work on PLE in more detail. The discussion would cover market segmentation following relevant work by the SRA and the LSB's Individual Legal Needs survey. The BSB were also considering proposals for specific initiatives around employment law and advice for refugees.

6. AOB

It was noted that the group's terms of reference and summary minutes are now being published on the LSB's website. It was agreed to seek a next meeting in April, once the statement of policy and LSB's 2022/23 business plan and budget had been finalised and published. It was agreed that the group might meet sooner if Government were to announce proposals for regulatory reform that might benefit discussion.