



Response from ReviewSolicitors

LSB discussion paper - Quality indicators in the legal services market

Introduction

ReviewSolicitors is the UK's largest legal review platform. Established 7 years ago, our platform has been built with the input of law firms to create a fair and transparent community for clients to leave reviews.

We are an open platform and provide a free-to-use website with resources for consumers which enables them to read reviews about the experience that past clients have had when using law firms. We provide clients with genuine reviews and insights into the potential level of service they are likely to receive from a law firm (and even an individual solicitor) they are looking to instruct. This gives clients the ability to make an informed decision.

We have integrations with most major case management providers, allowing law firms to automate their review collection and ensure all clients are given the opportunity to leave feedback, without an additional administration cost or burden.

Every year, there are over 4.5 million people using the ReviewSolicitors site and forming their decisions about which law firm is right for them. We are currently engaged with just under 2,000 law firms who are collecting reviews through us. Law firms have access to the reviews that are left about them and have a free 'right to reply' should they wish to provide public responses.

As we are dedicated solely to the legal market, the ReviewSolicitors platform has been tailored to support law firms. We offer both free and paid membership options. As part of the free membership, firms can collect client reviews, respond to reviews, receive notifications of new reviews, challenge reviews, authenticate client details and display the reviews they collect on their own website.

Law firms using our platform can take advantage of integrations with Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Perfect Portal to assist with their review collection. This convenient 'all-in-one' solution enables clients to readily access feedback about a law firm in one place.

Our position in the market will hopefully give a thorough understanding of some of the challenges that we have faced in seeking engagement from both consumers and law firms. As a credible and established provider in the market, we are seeking to help the LSB in its call for responses to its discussion paper, 'Quality Indicators in the Legal Services Market'.

We further encourage the LSB to engage with law firms taking part in the current SRA pilot for reviews, of which over 60% of law firms are using ReviewSolicitors as their review collection partner. This pilot will provide a unique opportunity to discuss some of the challenges faced by law firms and we think that the LSB could gain further insight into how ReviewSolicitors is working alongside firms to increase transparency and access to comparative data for clients.

ReviewSolicitors provides a platform which increases transparency for clients looking to find and compare legal service providers and we welcome input and collaboration from the LSB and other regulators in helping facilitate this.

LSB Question 1: We are proposing to think about quality in terms of these dimensions: technical quality, customer service and outcomes. What do you think about these elements and are there others we should consider?

- *Technical quality:* This is a very difficult area for clients to accurately judge - the client may not know how good the advice actually was. When a client instructs a solicitor, there is an expectation that the solicitor has at least a minimum level of competence, expertise and knowledge necessary for this matter. What is perhaps more easily understandable for the client is whether previous clients felt they received a desirable outcome. This may mean that solicitors clearly define to the prospective client what a 'successful outcome' is likely to look like, from the outset.

This should, of course, be set against the type of matter in question - the success rate of conveyancing or will writing should be approaching 100%, whereas it may be lower for criminal law, for example.

- *Customer service:* Very few complaints from clients on ReviewSolicitors are about technical quality - the vast majority are about service levels, e.g. how the staff communicated with them, whether they felt they were kept 'in the loop', the care they felt they received and an assessment of the overall experience. This is the main thing prospective clients look for, as demonstrated by the Public Panel research. Reviews enable the client to whittle down dozens of potential firms to a handful that appear to meet his/her requirements.
- *Outcomes:* This data could be very useful for clients in that they will feel more reassured and confident that the law firm has had successful outcomes for clients in a similar situation. This type of comparison (as a percentage) across firms can form crucial data for potential clients to use when comparing between firms.

This is an area likely to cause concern for firms depending on the area of law they may specialise in, since outcomes can vary dramatically based on what work is being done. This is something that a specialised legal feedback platform can achieve in a way that generic ones cannot.

We believe transparency over cost is one of the most important elements clients are looking for, and this is not included here. ReviewSolicitors collects data on how much a client was originally quoted for a piece of work and how much they eventually paid. We also ask them whether they feel the work was overpriced, underpriced or about right - this populates our 'value for money' index.

LSB Question 2: We are proposing to encourage use of these types of information: objective data, consumer feedback and general information about providers. What do you think about these types of information and are there others we should consider?

These different types of information are all useful to consumers - we actually display the vast majority of this for firms, on ReviewSolicitors.

- *Objective data:* We display firm locations, age, numbers of solicitors, number of reviews, as well as SRA disciplinary records and sanctions, and LeO decisions. For many clients, they would not otherwise be aware of these decisions which may impact their choice of firm. Few prospective clients would think to go to the SRA website or LeO to look for this information.
- *Consumer feedback:* Our core service is predicated on showing verified feedback from past clients of firms. Through our integrations with case management systems, we endeavour to ensure that all clients are asked for feedback so that it is gathered without selection bias on the part of firms, helping to ensure a balanced, representative portfolio of feedback.

An important thing that we do, being legal specific, is asking questions specific to the area of law being used - for example, a conveyancing transaction is very different to a family law issue. We have an algorithm that ranks firms, both locally and nationally, for different areas of law depending on the reviews that have been left, helping consumers to find and understand firms based on the relevant area of law to them rather than just a general feedback score. Uniquely, we also provide information about the individuals at each firm so the consumer is able to make a better informed choice, and we feel that in a service that is inevitably very personal, this level of granularity helps to inform choice for clients who are otherwise uninformed.

- *General information about providers:* The Public Panel research showed this was the least important element for consumers when choosing a law firm. However, ReviewSolicitors provides information around size of firm, age of firm, etc.

LSB Question 3: Which groups of consumers and/or types of provider should action in this area focus on?

We agree that regulatory interventions should be targeted at legal services providers delivering services to individual consumers and SMEs. Both of these groups are likely to be one-off customers and unfamiliar with the legal services market, unlike frequent commercial purchasers. If there is a staged approach to this, it makes sense to start with priority services areas where there are higher volumes of transactions.

***LSB Question 4:** Should there be a base level of transparency on quality across the market and enhanced transparency in priority service areas? What should a base level of transparency on quality consist of?*

We think transparency should incorporate both objective data (disciplinary records, LeO decisions) and consumer feedback (reviews from past clients, scoring systems) across the whole market. The Public Panel research showed that consumer feedback is what consumers found most important when choosing which firm to use.

It's important for the feedback to be granular so that those looking at it can see feedback related to the area of law they are interested in, rather than a generic score - in the case of very large firms, an overall score may mean little.

Feedback should also be more than just a "star rating" - there should be separate feedback on the areas people care about most, being service levels, outcomes, value for money, legal knowledge and so on.

***LSB Question 5:** How useful could consumer feedback, objective data and general information about providers be in informing consumer choice? What are the benefits and drawbacks of these types of information?*

Consumer feedback is by far the most important out of these areas. Consumers find it hard to judge technical quality but service quality is directly observable. It is also a good proxy for assessment of quality.

Ratings and reviews can be found on a DCT site such as ReviewSolicitors or on the legal service provider's own website (where DCTs enable firms to embed ratings). With ReviewSolicitors, consumers can give an overall assessment using a five-star rating system and also give scores for different elements of service.

We believe there are some fundamental problems with just using a net promoter score. It is over simplistic, not giving sufficient information about the experience that clients have had, and is only really useful for firms to understand the changes in their NPS over time. A recent study showed 52% of respondents who actively discouraged others from using a brand had also actively recommended it, undermining the basis of a "one hit" scoring system such as NPS. Not only that but large, influential organisations such as Google, moved away from the outdated NPS score several years ago and thus to fit with the markups that Google require for reviews to be organically placed in search results, any review ratings must be on an 'out of 5' basis.

Traditionally, law firms have generated business through past clients giving a personal recommendation. DCTs like ReviewSolicitors aggregate recommendations from large numbers of past clients so they are likely to offer more reliable information than a single personal recommendation. Also, just because a firm provided good service when dealing with a

conveyancing matter, does not mean it is necessarily strong in its family department. The biggest issue is to ensure that the reviews that are left are verified - this is where case management integrations are vital, and giving firms the opportunity both to reply but also to dispute the veracity of a review.

It is possible that consumers will provide feedback that is directly impacted by the outcome of the case, however strong or weak it was initially. However, if there is a considerable amount of feedback, via the law of large numbers, the more accurate the assessment of the provider's overall quality should be. A legal specific platform can also help by understanding the impact of this effect in different areas of law and adjusting their algorithm accordingly.

Objective data is collected by regulators and this includes metrics about the firm as well as disciplinary records and sanctions. This information needs to be readily available to DCTs so that they can be republished and reach as many potential clients as possible. The information is factual and is verified, but not terribly useful in the main to consumers.

General information about providers is typically shown on a firm's own website or on DCTs already. This information (staff numbers, number of transactions, etc) could be standardised and given to DCTs to republish to ensure accurate information is being supplied.

LSB Question 6: What role, if any, should success rates and complaints data have in informing consumer choice? Is there other quantitative data that would be helpful to inform consumer choice?

Success rates and first-tier complaints would be useful for consumers - however, it is important that the data is reliable. There is also the possibility that law firms will cherry pick the cases they are likely to win. At ReviewSolicitors, we are looking at success rates being based on client satisfaction levels as a provider may have done an excellent job despite prima facie 'losing' a case.

It's important that a platform is able to attempt to collect feedback from the broadest spectrum of clients rather than allowing firms or individuals to select those to invite, and this is where integrations with case management systems are a critical piece of the puzzle.

If a firm is getting large numbers of complaints, a potential client would want to know this. The client would also be particularly interested in knowing when complaints have been upheld.

LSB Question 7: Which of these different channels – law firms' websites, DCTs, a single digital register –do you think could be most effective in providing access to information on quality? Are there other channels we should consider?

Law firm websites need to show information on quality as consumers look at them when shopping around. We recommend that they be required to use an independent DCT provider

and embed a customer feedback rating and reviews on their site. DCT providers already have the solution working - it just needs law firms to be compelled to collect and showcase reviews. Focusing on law firm websites aligns with current client research behaviour.

The Public Panel research has indicated that consumers are more likely to trust information from third party sites - they do not trust testimonials on a firm's own site that could potentially have been written by the firm itself and likely have been selected to only show positive reviews.

DCTs make it much easier for consumers to search for the right law firm for their needs and enables easier comparison. Transparency drives up standards and encourages firms to improve so that they compare favourably on quality. As a result of the pandemic, DCTs have seen explosive growth - if a client cannot go to see a law firm, the firm's online presence is more important than ever before.

Because most DCTs offer free levels of service to firms, this can be done without causing a financial burden to them. The competitive nature of the current market ensures that DCTs are encouraged to continuously innovate and improve their services for both consumers and firms, and keeps costs to a minimum across the board. The presence of a regulator owned or managed DCT (or a digital register that goes beyond a basic data service) of any sort would likely suppress this innovation as well as increase the costs for firms as the cost of running it would necessarily need to be recouped.

There is also the quite specific point that feedback collected via any regulated body may confuse clients. A client leaving a negative review against a law firm via a regulator-managed platform would naturally and automatically expect that further action against the law firm would then be taken. The other consideration that needs to be taken into account is that some of those clients will be put off from leaving negative reviews because they wouldn't want the hassle starting this 'perceived' process. This is a well known and common issue that is seen when law firms themselves ask clients to leave reviews using their own questionnaire. ReviewSolicitors boast a 25% - 35% response rate of clients happy to leave a review because people trust independent third party platforms over and above those controlled by regulators or law firm internal review processes.

There are different types of DCTs - generic ones like TrustPilot and Google Reviews that ask the same questions whether someone is reviewing a law firm or a pizza parlour, and specialised ones like ReviewSolicitors that have different questions for different areas of law. Some DCTs only show law firms that are paying to be on the platform, others, like ReviewSolicitors, show the entire market.

Getting client reviews in front of clients at the point where they are choosing legal services is one of the biggest challenges when increasing transparency and availability of comparison data. DCTs are featuring more and more heavily in Google search results. For example, ReviewSolicitors is top of Google for the vast majority of towns and cities where someone writes the name of the location and the word 'solicitors' immediately after.

ReviewSolicitors also features very prominently for simple search terms such as a firm's name, e.g.

Search term - “Clarkson Wright and Jakes”

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "clarkson wright and jakes". The search bar at the top displays the query. Below the search bar, the results are organized into sections. On the left, there are links to the firm's website, "Our People", "Contact Us", "Our Pricing", "Careers with CWJ", "About Us", and "Why Us?". On the right, there is a large image of a man in a suit, likely a partner or director, with a "See photo" link. Below the image, the firm's name "Clarkson Wright & Jakes - Solicitors and Notaries" is displayed, along with a 4.3-star rating from 36 Google reviews. The address "Valiant House, 12 Knoll Rise, Orpington BR6 0PG" is listed, along with the phone number "01689 887887" and the website "cwj.co.uk". A "Popular times" chart shows the firm is usually a little busy at 2 pm. A green box highlights a review from "ReviewsSolicitors.co.uk" dated 4.8/5, stating that the firm is an award-winning regional firm of solicitors based in Orpington, Kent, serving private individuals.

Search term - “Farnfields solicitors”

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "farnfields solicitors". The search bar at the top displays the query. Below the search bar, the results are organized into sections. On the left, there are links to the firm's website, "Meet The Team", "Gillingham Office", "Shaftesbury Office", "Warminster Office", "Job vacancies", and "Our Partners". On the right, there is a large image of a man in a suit, likely a partner or director, with a "See photo" link. Below the image, the firm's name "Farnfields Solicitors | Full Legal Services Dorset & Wiltshire ..." is displayed, along with a 3.9-star rating from 10 reviews. The address "Valiant House, 12 Knoll Rise, Orpington BR6 0PG" is listed, along with the phone number "01689 887887" and the website "cwj.co.uk". A "Popular times" chart shows the firm is usually a little busy at 2 pm. A green box highlights a review from "ReviewsSolicitors.co.uk" dated 3.9/5, stating that the firm is an award-winning regional firm of solicitors based in Orpington, Kent, serving private individuals.

Examples -

Solicitors in Cardiff



cardiff solicitors





<https://www.reviewsolicitors.co.uk> › top › Cardiff

Top 10 Solicitors in Cardiff - ReviewSolicitors

JCP Solicitors Limited. 146 reviews. Ranked #1 Out Of 176 solicitors in Cardiff. Watkins & Gunn. 231 reviews. Your Law LLP. 39 reviews. Robertsons Solicitors. 73 reviews. Fmg Legal Llp. 29 reviews. Zeus Family Law Practice Limited. 13 reviews. Merrils Ede. 17 reviews. Slater And Gordon Uk Limited. 20 reviews.

People also ask

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Major Family Law Limited. 162 reviews. Ranked #2 Out Of 130 solicitors in Newcastle upon Tyne. Latif Solicitors. 19 reviews. Sweeney Miller LLP. 18 reviews. Keoghs LLP. 13 reviews. Mark Swatts Morse LLP. 24 reviews. Duncan Lewis Solicitors Ltd. 11 reviews. Pepperrells Ltd. 5 reviews. Irwin Mitchell LLP. 11 reviews.

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Solicitors in Liverpool

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Top 10 Solicitors in Liverpool - ReviewSolicitors

Robert James Law Limited. 53 reviews. Ranked #1 Out Of 204 solicitors in Liverpool. Bell Lamb & Joynson. 324 reviews. ABR Solicitors Limited. 231 reviews. Kalsi Solicitors Limited. 177 reviews. Swain & Co Solicitors. 82 reviews. Bond Turner Limited. 366 reviews. JMW Solicitors. 399 reviews. VC LAW. 30 reviews.

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Top 10 Solicitors in Bristol - ReviewSolicitors
Watkins Solicitors Incorporating Brain Sinnott & Co. 101 reviews. Ranked #1 Out Of 189 solicitors in Bristol. Lyons Bowe. 878 reviews. Barcan+kirby LLP. 683 reviews. Menzies Law Limited. 29 reviews. GL Law. 38 reviews. Your Law LLP. 39 reviews. Ageas Law LLP. 27 reviews. Fmg Legal LLP. 29 reviews.

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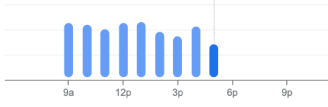
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According to the SRA, 21% of individuals and 26% of SMEs have used legal review sites to help with choosing a law firm. Feedback from member firms of ReviewSolicitors suggests that the true figure is significantly higher, with numbers over 70% checking a firm's reviews online before instructing them - given the ease of doing so, it seems reasonable to assume that a high number is the case, and that it will only get more popular as time goes by.

Every UK law firm has a profile on ReviewSolicitors - just shy of 2,000 are already actively using the platform to collect reviews. There has been a huge upsurge in uptake by firms since the Covid-19 pandemic started, which has accelerated a trend that was already well underway.

When clients are asked for feedback, in general, most law firms perform well - there are high satisfaction rates and law firms usually actively engage with reviewers, further improving their image to potential clients.

The Public Panel research showed most enthusiasm for DCTs in legal services. DCTs are a great source of information for consumers as they have done much of the work to collect feedback from large numbers of clients and enable an effective ranking of the different options. It saves consumers considerable time giving them a better understanding of firms to consider and those to avoid.

A single digital register could help DCTs with raw material - for example, objective data generated by regulatory bodies and the legal ombudsman. We believe that the regulator could do a lot to encourage engagement by consumers and law firms with DCTs - principally, they could require law firms to signpost consumers to review platforms and prompt them to leave a review after the case has closed.

DCTs are generally focused on ensuring the reviews that are left are genuine - they have a number of different ways of doing this. For example, ReviewSolicitors has a number of sophisticated tools at its disposal - checking that significant numbers of reviews are not coming from the same IP address, and looking for patterns in language used to ensure that multiple reviews are not being written by the same author. As DCTs are becoming more sophisticated, manipulation of reviews becomes more difficult.

A single digital register would be a good way of bringing together objective information. We think it important, however, that the single digital register does not try to re-invent the wheel and replicate exactly what DCTs are already doing. It should be focused on objective, factual data that the regulator can verify. If the data could be provided to DCTs in a reusable format, this information could be disseminated to a far larger audience.

LSB Question 8: Do you have evidence on current usage of DCTs not mentioned in the paper? How could we best encourage engagement by consumers and law firms with DCTs? What are your views on the specific potential solutions, such as requiring law firms to signpost to DCTs, embed ratings, or prompt consumers to leave a review?

Feedback from ReviewSolicitors member firms is that the majority of their new clients have checked their reviews on a DCT prior to instructing them. This is potentially variable by area of law, size of firm and so on, but for the bulk of transactions in the market now it seems that people google “[firm name] reviews” in order to validate their choice prior to instruction. The ease of doing this on ubiquitous smartphones, as well as the conditioning to do so for many other consumer purchases means that this is both common and growing.

We believe that law firms should be mandated to work with independent feedback tools, prompting clients to leave them a review on closure of a case and signposting consumers to review platforms. For example, ReviewSolicitors provides a homepage widget for each firm so that it can demonstrate its average review rating, showing its most recent reviews. Clicking on this widget takes the consumer to the firm’s specific page on ReviewSolicitors, giving the consumer more detailed information.

LSB Question 9: What, if any, steps should regulatory bodies take to help consumers and legal services providers engage with DCTs safely?

We fully agree that DCT providers should have a trusted and reliable platform for consumers to use. DCTs could agree to adhere to a voluntary accreditation scheme, giving assurance about their credentials and practices. Given the nature of the internet, it is impossible to ensure that only properly accredited or validated services are shown to consumers online.

Regulators such as the SRA could signpost clients to accredited platforms and hold dedicated pages on their relevant websites which allow consumers to read more information about how the platforms work and give quick access to relevant information.

Public legal education can support consumers to promote the use of DCTs. If consumers are confident that the tools they are using offer transparent, impartial and accurate information, this will build trust in the tools and the legal market generally.

Legal service providers would also benefit from information as to how DCTs work, how to engage with them and start collecting and displaying reviews.

LSB Question 10: What range of quality information, if any, would it be appropriate to hold on a single digital register?

The single digital register should be focused on objective, factual data. It could provide information about law firms and individual practitioners, namely contact details for the firm, the

areas of law the practitioner/entity is authorised to provide, the age and size of the firm, the experience of the practitioners, and disciplinary data from the SRA and LeO.

As previously mentioned any attempt for a digital register provided by a regulator will be off-putting to clients wanting to leave genuinely negative feedback.

LSB Question 11: What are your views on the relative merits of a market-led approach compared with standardised regulator-led approach?

A market-led approach would involve regulators supporting the emergence of a flourishing, competitive DCT market, sitting alongside a single digital register.

A regulator-led approach would involve adding a further feedback system for consumers, but which would not necessarily be seen by consumers as definitive, so would likely fragment the market and reduce the quality of feedback on each individual DCT.

Our view is that the market-led approach is both inevitable, given it already exists, and far more sensible - DCTs are innovating rapidly to a legal market with new demands and will continue to do so. Competition between DCTs means that the overall quality of these offerings is improving, serving consumers better than a fixed model designed by regulators. The benefits will be delivered more quickly and far more cheaply than regulators establishing a bespoke platform. There has been a huge upsurge in the use of DCTs during the pandemic, both by consumers and law firms. What is needed is for regulators to help DCTs to thrive by mandating firms to collect and display feedback, using independent sources. The SRA pilot will shed more light on next steps for this.

Although a regulator-led approach could bring in standardised quality information, this will be a huge undertaking at considerable cost, and take significant time, with no guarantees of success, and no guarantee that the standardized information is what consumers are looking for. Commercial DCTs have a huge head start and, as their entire business is focused on reviews and other feedback tools, are likely to be more nimble to innovate as the market continues to change. We believe that the regulator should focus on a single digital register providing objective information which is useful for consumers, enabling them to make a better informed choice, and spreading this information widely through working with existing DCTs.

LSB Question 12: Do you have any further comments on our analysis and approach to determining suitable quality indicators?

One of the options from the LSB discussion paper was to set up a single digital register. Not much further information was available about what this single digital register was set to achieve or the extent to which it would operate. On one hand, the new register could be as simple as one central resource that DCT providers could use in order to add SRA, CILEX, CLC and BSB

members data. If this was the extent on which a single digital register would operate then ReviewSolicitors would fully support the idea.

The other extreme is that the LSB mandates other regulators to put together a digital register which attempts to be the central resource for consumers and law firms alike. The platform would encourage clients to populate it with feedback and attempt to disseminate this feedback to potential consumers of legal services. For a variety of reasons, ReviewSolicitors would like to strongly point out that any attempt by a regulator-led, non-commercial practice to put a platform together is very likely to fail. This will come at a price tag of several, if not tens of, millions of pounds which could mirror the failure of other similarly led regulator projects such as Veyo by the Law Society.

<https://www.legalcheek.com/2016/04/the-law-society-just-wasted-7-million-on-a-failed-business-venture-here-is-what-they-could-of-spent-it-on/>

<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/veyo-e-conveyancing-project-to-be-wound-up/5052576.article>

It is important to note that adoption rates by consumers of similar regulator-led projects have been minimal, such as the 'Legal Choices' website, which is not achieving what it was set out to do as clients struggle to reach the site at the point where they are choosing legal services.

We draw your attention to some potential difficulties that any such venture would reasonably expect and ultimately struggle to succeed because of the:

1. Skills and expertise needed in an ever-changing technology market - Technology is evolving at an ever increasing rate. Any platform looking to operate in this market needs to be dynamic in its approach and nimble to adopt new technologies. A regulator-led website could quickly become outdated as technology advances to keep up with consumer demand.
2. Dynamic nature of how consumers want their feedback captured, what feedback needs to be captured, and how that feedback is relevant and used by consumers looking for legal services - ReviewSolicitors invests heavily in new methods of review collection to enable clients of law firms to adapt to market changes. Our questionnaire is continually evolving to meet new requirements for objective data that can be captured. Institutional organisations could struggle to achieve the same level of client interaction.
3. Placement of feedback - There are many examples of other legal review sites that have sprung up over the years but ultimately they fail because getting reviews in front of clients is a costly exercise. There is little point in having 'just' a central resource that consumers can use, should they choose to be proactive and search for comparison data, as most clients are not proactive when choosing legal service providers. Instead review

and comparison data needs to be placed in the hands of consumers at the point they choose legal services - without them having to be actively searching for it (it needs to appear on law firms websites and top of Google for the many tens of thousands of search terms used by consumers). SEO is a dynamic 'beast' and in order to keep the reviews at the top of search results, many hundreds of hours of research and analysis need to be undertaken. Any regulator led website would need to have the mindset of a commercial organisation in this sense, in ensuring the same level of penetration for review visibility.

4. Cost - Quite self explanatory, any new venture will inevitably cost millions of pounds just in the scoping and building of the platform. Current DCT providers are already in the market (having invested heavily) and have an advantage of established user bases and buy-in from law firms. There is no guarantee that even with a significantly larger budget, that any new venture would be accepted or successful as the legal services industry is a notoriously difficult market to sell into.
5. Uptake from law firms - Law firms value independent DCT providers which is evident in the growth of uptake in the past 24 months. Adding an additional regulator-led platform into the market at this late stage will most likely stifle the changes that have been seen. Many legal service providers will become hesitant in getting involved in reviews because they will be unsure of which provider to use. The setup and establishment of a digital register set on collecting and showcasing client reviews will undoubtedly take 3-5 years and by this time the market will have continued to change.
6. Need to remain fair and impartial to both consumers, and law firms the regulator is regulating. It can be difficult when handling controversial matters such as defamatory reviews and negative reviews. An independent third party review platform has to maintain a fair and transparent platform to ensure its reviews and integrity of its data can be relied upon. The concept that a client is leaving a review on a regulator-led platform will be off-putting to some clients who have had a negative experience in the same way that clients are often dissuaded from completing law firms' own feedback surveys. This is an important consideration that needs to be fully understood.
7. Understanding what law firms need from a technology perspective compared to the type of feedback that a regulator will encourage to be collected. For example, will a regulator help law firms by providing a Google Reviews integration? If so, how will they police what Google does/does not allow? How will this reflect when a law firm has been encouraged by the regulator to collect on Google, but then cannot get a Google review removed that is defamatory? These are already some of the challenges that are being faced and could quite easily lead to a backlash from law firms. Working with organisations that are already successfully collecting reviews for law firms would provide a much greater chance to achieve the objectives outlined by the CMA. ReviewSolicitors allows other DCTs to add their reviews into the ReviewSolicitors platform to help consumers have the ability to see all objective data in one location. We would expect that a regulator-led platform would struggle to achieve this.

Another consideration is that the ReviewSolicitors platform is being adapted on the back of the LSB paper and SRA pilot. These changes include:

1. Launching a similar website to ReviewSolicitors but for barristers (ReviewBarristers) in August 2021. This will provide barristers with the same level of technology that is currently being offered on ReviewSolicitors
2. Barristers, CILEX and CLC members will be added into the existing ReviewSolicitors website in September 2021. This will give consumers a whole of market search. This is on top of having a dedicated ReviewBarristers website.
3. Innovation of the ReviewSolicitors individual solicitor module (coming June 2021) will now allow consumers to directly 'compare' law firms and individual solicitors to handle their matter. This will allow consumers to compare side by side, in an easy to see table, how each solicitor performs in areas such as:
 - a. Review rating
 - b. Legal expertise
 - c. Value for money
 - d. Pricing data
 - e. Local and national benchmarking
 - f. Recommended to friends and family
 - g. Successful case outcome percentage
 - h. Availability
 - i. Location

Clients will then be able to make an informed decision about which solicitor is right for them.

4. New appointment booking service to simplify the process of booking an appointment with a solicitor after the client has confirmed their choice. Appointments will be offered by telephone, video conferencing and face to face.
5. ReviewSolicitors has opened up its platform to other DCT providers (e.g. sites providing price comparison). This gives these providers the ability to access and display the ReviewSolicitors ratings for law firms on their platforms. This is a similar concept seen in the hospitality industry where when booking a holiday on TUI.co.uk, you can see the "Tripadvisor" rating for the hotel.

ReviewSolicitors currently has just shy of 2000 law firms who are actively using the platform to collect client feedback. We have buy-in and cooperation from over two thirds of the law firms taking part in the current SRA pilot and we hope that the SRA will approach all firms taking part to understand how DCT providers are helping them achieve their goal of becoming more transparent to clients.

Final point of note:

ReviewSolicitors, alongside other DCT providers, is still in the early stages of tackling what is a difficult market to change. It is important that the LSB provides recommendations that do not hamper the work that has been done to date.

As per the research conducted and published by the LSB and SRA, the market is already moving towards clients having more choice and data at their fingertips when choosing legal representation. The market is flourishing and growing day by day. Since the start of the year ReviewSolicitors has seen a 36% increase in law firms premium memberships. This includes firms such as:

- Blacks
- Stowe Family Law
- Thackray Williams
- Pardoes
- Metamorph
- Morrisons
- Hugh James
- MTA
- Heringtons
- Dunn & Baker
- Fisher Jones & Greenwood
- Setfords
- Hanne & Co
- Boyce Hatton
- MLP
- Menzies
- Prettys
- Thornton Jones
- Banner Jones
- Kingsfords
- Talbots

It is important that the LSB provides recommendations that support the already flourishing DCT market. Attempting to enter the reviews market in the hope a better job can be done will only result in a lack of motivation for existing providers. When the complexity of what seems 'relatively easy' to do is ultimately realised, the legal market for reviews will take a step backwards inevitably hurting and frustrating consumers.

ReviewSolicitors is using this paper to formally make an open invitation for collaboration to the LSB, SRA and any other regulatory organisations in the legal sector, who share our goal of helping consumers have greater access to transparency and legal services, and are interested in shaping our platform.

In order to make the platform as useful, transparent and fair to all, we would encourage a series of meetings, roundtables and focus groups to help further the platform and increase transparency within the market. We are happy to share our roadmap for the site with the changes mentioned above and are keen to further improve the platform with regulator-led input.

This type of collaboration from the regulators will help shape our already established platform, used by over 4.5 million consumers a year and will yield a much quicker, cost-effective and reliable outcome meeting the paper's objectives.