

Trustpilot's response to quality indicators in the legal services market: Legal Services Board discussion paper



22 April 2021



Introduction to Trustpilot

Trustpilot is a leading independent, online review platform that allows consumers to share, and businesses to respond to honest feedback.

Open and Transparent

Critically, our platform is free to use and open to everybody, where nothing is hidden. No business can pay to remove reviews they don't like, or interfere with feedback before it's posted.

We believe openness and transparency are key to building greater trust between consumers and businesses.

Familiar to consumers

Our brand is recognised in key territories across the globe but is extremely strong in the UK, where our stars help provide insight and guidance to consumers everyday. Our mission is to become a universal symbol of trust and we are well on our way, ranked as one of the top 20 most visited websites in the UK, with over 125 million reviews, 530,000 business website domains and billions of people globally seeing Trustpilot every month, as brands use our symbol and stars to convey their customers' trust in them.

Our continued growth means our reviews and content are becoming richer and more useful to UK consumers and businesses alike across hundreds of business categories and verticals, with UK consumers reading and writing reviews more than ever. In fact, there are now over 800 legal service providers reviewed on Trustpilot in the UK and this number continues to increase.

This familiarity with our brand and platform also means that in situations of personal stress (such as relationship breakdown, house-move, estate-planning, redundancy) when consumers need to find a legal service provider, they already know and trust the information they see as well as knowing how to use Trustpilot to help them to shop around, exercise choice and ultimately inform their decision making.

The full story

Where we continue to offer real value to consumers is as a 'one-stop shop' where, beyond their solicitor, they can engage with services across the full transactional chain. For example, a consumer buying a house can review services across the entire process - from their real estate agent to their mortgage provider, bank and solicitor. When they move in, they can even review the removalist, and the furniture store where they bought a new sofa. This engagement with other parts of the journey provides greater opportunity to see other businesses and services that are relevant to them within that moment.

Reviews help businesses improve

Consumer feedback continues to have the potential to raise standards and improve real outcomes for consumers across multiple markets. We deliver invaluable feedback in the form of individual stories about personal consumer experiences. Businesses, including legal service providers, can:

- use our tools to understand where expectations haven't been met - and raise their standards in those areas; and
- scan reviews to see which aspects they're doing well in, and highlight these on their own website.

Trustpilot also has options for businesses to add specific quality indicators and get more targeted insights via reviews, and use our onsite widget displays to highlight reviews on their websites. We also offer paid services with more in-depth review analysis tools, which allow businesses to get instant sentiment analysis and reporting against specific keywords and topics most written about.

All of the rich, subjective, and relatable review information on Trustpilot can empower consumers to find services matching their idea of 'high quality.' It serves as a useful complement to the technical and factual information that can be featured elsewhere, such as on a register or legal service provider website.

Trustpilot as a ‘digital comparison tool’

Throughout our journey, our principles of openness and transparency have remained our guiding light. We allow everyone to share their experiences on Trustpilot at any time.

Businesses can also encourage more feedback by proactively inviting their consumers to review them, and engage with that feedback.

We believe that if online reviews and content are to continue to rise in popularity, they must have

the objectivity, transparency and the quality that will instil confidence in consumers, and inspire more businesses to deliver what customers really need and want.

As an independent and open platform with strong safeguards against fake and misleading reviews, we’re well-placed to deliver valuable information for both consumers researching the legal services market, and the legal service providers they choose.

- We provide easily accessible, clear information about any commercial relationships with reviewed businesses - including whether they use our platform for free, or subscribe to our paid services.
- Businesses can edit the ‘about’ section displayed on their profile page at any time. If they want to display review data on their website, they can use our on site widgets to link in real time to their TrustScores or display reviews (available via our paid services).
- Ratings and TrustScores are always up to date, and all reviews are shown in date order according to when they were written, and in a way which is fair, clear, and easy to understand. Our Business Transparency information offers greater insight about how every business collects reviews, responds and reports.
- All reviewers are treated equally regardless of whether they have been actively invited to leave a review or not. It’s not possible to highlight specific reviews by favoured reviewers, or alter the way their reviews are shown on Trustpilot. However, as a useful tool for consumers wanting to read reviews, they can filter their display to show reviews by star-rating or by keyword.
- We have a straightforward process for consumers to amend, edit or delete a review they have posted. Both businesses and consumers are able to flag reviews that breach our guidelines including for harmful or illegal content. These features are completely free.
- We safeguard our platform with a combination of customised fraud detection software and an international team of dedicated analysts, investigators and agents who work with reviews every day. Our bespoke, automated fraud detection software has been developed over many years to identify and remove fraudulent reviews, but we’re also continuing to invest heavily in this area to develop new, cutting-edge technology.
- Alongside this, reviewers are required to declare that they’ve had an experience with the business and agree to our terms. In the event that legal service providers are unable to identify a reviewer as a client or prospective client and don’t believe the review is based on a genuine experience, they can request information from reviewers. Trustpilot’s Content Integrity Team can follow up on this process if insufficient information is provided and the review is flagged.
- Legal service providers can set notifications to be informed when new reviews are written, and they can respond to all reviews about them on Trustpilot for free.
- We set out in our privacy policy how we comply with obligations regarding users’ personal data, and have a full range of guidelines and policies set out on uk.legal.trustpilot.com.

Regulators' quality indicators pilot

Trustpilot is participating in the pilot scheme for conveyancing and employment law launched on 11 February 2021 by the SRA, working alongside the Council for Licensed Conveyancers (CLC) and CILEx Regulation.

While our platform is one of several options for the 70 participating legal service providers, during this phase we've seen a 25% increase in UK businesses using Trustpilot to engage with reviews in the legal sector category.

We also see a strong correlation between the consumer reviews being written on Trustpilot about UK legal service providers and the key quality elements that consumers have highlighted as important to them in the research report for the Legal Services Board.

This serves to further confirm the suitability of Trustpilot for reviews of legal service providers, and underscore the potential for our platform to help empower consumers with useful and easy-to-understand information on quality.

Key metrics

Trustpilot has over **125m reviews** of more than **530,000 business websites** globally.

We have strong brand recognition ranked in the **top 20 most visited websites** in the UK and top 320 globally.

More than **1 consumer review** is written **every second** on Trustpilot.

100% of reviews on our platform are **screened by our fraud detection software**.

Over **800 UK legal sector businesses** are already reviewed on Trustpilot.¹

A majority of these reviews are positive: only **8% of reviews** of UK legal sector businesses on Trustpilot are **1-star or 2-star**.

90%

of reviews on Trustpilot for UK legal sector businesses are **4- or 5-star reviews**

1. This doesn't capture businesses on Trustpilot that are not assigned via our categories system, so the true number is likely to be higher.

Response to discussion paper questions

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?

We agree that these dimensions of quality, when considered together as an overall package of well-signposted information that consumers can easily find, are likely to provide consumers with a useful overview. This is especially the case if online reviews are the primary information source for customer service.

Feedback gleaned from reading reviews can also help legal service providers quickly understand how they might address pain points, such as setting realistic expectations with clients at the beginning of a case, and explaining the process and time frame for potential outcomes.

Customer service and reviews

Reviews have the flexibility to accommodate all of the various ways consumers tend to implicitly talk about quality, and give consumers the freedom to reflect on the quality elements most important to them. They can cover any or all aspects of the quality of service: the overall client experience, including how staff communicate, provide clarity and offer all-round client care. Giving consumers the opportunity to narrate their story means they can articulate in their own way what was important to them in their individual situation, and how it impacted their perception of quality.

As stated in the LSB discussion paper, reviews can also provide consumers reading them with an indication of legal service provider values, such as honesty, trustworthiness, reliability, and professionalism. The research report highlighted that customer experience is a combination of technical aspects of client care: accessibility, responsiveness, timeliness and – often more importantly – good ‘rapport’ with an advisor.

There are infinite ways to describe customer service, but one thread that consistently comes through in existing reviews on Trustpilot is that the support offered to customers — both before and after any transaction — is what helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience. Offering amazing customer service is important to retain customers and grow any business. In practice, support often manifests as client care and good communication.

Trustpilot data shows communication is essential for good customer service

We see customer service aspects reflected in existing reviews of legal service providers on Trustpilot, where client care and communication feature strongly.

In fact, analysis carried out by Trustpilot’s data team in April 2021 shows that communication-related elements are the most critical factor in both positive and negative reviews of legal service providers on Trustpilot. Almost 70% of positive (4- or 5- star) reviews mention ‘communication’, while around 46% of negative reviews contain references to it. References are to email or phone communications, with common word pairings such as ('phone', 'call') ('call', 'back') ('customer', 'service') ('get', 'hold') ('respond', 'email') ('lack', 'communication') ('poor', 'communication'). For negative reviews, the next most important factor, after communication, is “time.” which aligns with the technical aspects of client care - “timeliness” - mentioned above.

70%

of 4-star and 5-star reviews mention communication

Source: Trustpilot data team analysis, 15 April 2021

Communication is the most frequent area of discussion in existing reviews of legal service provider reviews on Trustpilot. This applies for positive and negative reviews.

70% of 4-star and 5-star reviews, and 46% of 1-star and 2-star reviews reference communication.

Source: Trustpilot data team analysis, 15 April 2021

Reviews sometimes feature overlap between customer service and either outcome (“results”) or technical quality (like “attention to detail”), but letting the reviewer put this into their own words provides useful context. This is important complementary information to, say, statistics on how many cases were won or lost. See examples to the right and below showing existing reviews of UK legal service providers on Trustpilot.

Guiding reviewers to focus on customer service

For consumers invited to review legal services, we suggest it will be helpful to provide guidance that will help them focus their reviews on customer service, but not limit their freedom to discuss technical quality and outcomes as they experienced these elements. The reviews already on Trustpilot that highlight challenges such as legal “jargon”, show how difficult it can be for consumers to gauge technical quality. And while we see that some consumers already provide their own subjective views about the outcome in their case, they should be careful to avoid conflating this with the state of the law. For service packages, it may be useful to encourage consumers to also explain what they received as part of the service.

We’re open to exploring which solutions will be most effective to help guide consumers, without limiting their freedom to express their experiences. For example, as a start, review invitations that include standardised information or refer to easily accessible supporting documentation could be used.



[name] were fantastic during a very challenging time.

[...] We experienced an awful life changing experience and needed support. We contacted [name] who from the first call made us feel comfortable and supported. He made things simple for us, as we were starting to get lost in the process and jargon, he always had time for us and made sure all of our queries were answered. He worked very hard with us and reached a satisfactory outcome [...]



A first class experience !

[...] from our first conversation she totally put me at ease and clearly explained the procedures and possible consequences without being in the least condescending or patronising..... a skill which not everybody in her position has acquired ! For this alone I am extremely grateful. I was kept informed throughout proceedings both by Phone and E Mail but importantly only when there was something to communicate, not just for the sake of adding ££££s to the bill. I found [name] extremely professional and would not hesitate to use them again or recommend them to family and friends.



Clinical negligence claim

[...] My claim was dealt with throughout with support, compassion, clear explanation of the process & honest structured expectations. I would not hesitate to recommend to others & would instruct in other matters. Many thanks to [name] & her colleagues.



Great service

Felt looked after and put me at ease during a difficult time. ...Only negative was Took a little longer then expected to get back to me”



My experience

Unfortunaely I was not able to continue with the case. I was updated on a regular basis to what was happening, it did take a long time but this was due to corona virus, and I was dissapointed the claim could not go ahead. My solicitor explained to me fully why we could not continue. I would not hesitate to contact [name] if I requied support in the future.



Slow service

Poor service. Slow and stressful.

Update: since posting this review the company have acknowledged their handling of my case. And compensated me with a refund of my monies.



Terrible experience!

[...] on this occasion it has been atrocious! 3 different solicitors dealt with our house sale. I repeatedly chased various issues going over the same issues on several occasions and covering the same ground with 3 different solicitors. [...] It was only when [name] took over that things started moving and she had finalised everything within a week. Thankyou [name], shame your colleagues are not so consciencious!!!!!!



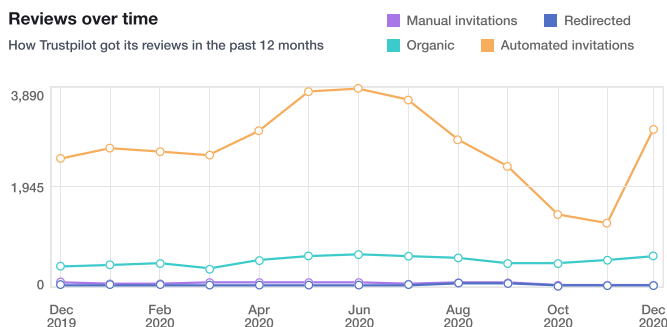
Nice to talk to. Attention to detail poor.

Nice folks to talk to. But poor on detail. In my recent purchase it was clear that they hadn't read the documents which was disappointing. Would not use again.

Excerpts from existing Trustpilot reviews of UK legal service providers.

Reviews over time

How Trustpilot got its reviews in the past 12 months



Our Business Transparency Pages give consumers insight into how businesses collect, report and respond to reviews

On Trustpilot, profile pages for each business always present reviews in the same way, ordered by date, but able to be filtered by review rating (e.g. 1-star or 5-star) and also most frequent keywords. We also provide an overall TrustScore, which is calculated so that the newest reviews are given the most weight and older reviews count less towards the overall TrustScore. Our Business Transparency information provides greater insight about how businesses interact with the reviews they receive and show how many reviews are flagged, and whether these were removed from Trustpilot. It also shows how responsive a business is to its reviews, especially those that might be negative. Consumers know businesses are unable to get things right every single time, but also want to know how a business reacts when things do occasionally go wrong or if there is an unhappy customer.

Customer service can be difficult to compare, because different individuals place emphasis on different elements. However, our overarching TrustScore, easy to use filters and the additional transparent insight make it particularly accessible and easy to understand (also at a glance) for consumers. All these features can help consumers facilitate comparison.

Categories Log in Sign up For companies

Trustpilot
Reviews 126,122 • Great
 4.2

Write a review

Reviews 126,122
Filter by: Rating English

☐ Excellent 69%
☐ Great 9%
☐ Average 4%
☐ Poor 3%
☐ Bad 15%

Cynthia Smith
1 review

4 hours ago

They always get the job done thanks...
Have sent in reviews several times and have always had positive outcome.

Useful Share Reply

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?

We agree that these types of objective and subjective information can deliver valuable insight for consumers across all dimensions of quality. This is especially so if the different types of information are provided via well-signposted and easily accessible complementary sources.

Consumer reviews provide important context

Subjective consumer feedback is an invaluable and complementary dataset that enriches objective facts and general service provider information when placed alongside it. For example, consider statistics about cases won or lost: on face value, cases lost may appear negative, but we're aware of reviews where consumers explain that from their perspective, the overall outcome was not a "loss" because the service level was high, and the legal service provider accurately set their expectations regarding the potential outcome of the court case involved.

Online reviews are undoubtedly one of the best ways to collect consumer feedback. In fact, independent reviews are the second-most trusted form of feedback sought out by consumers, after recommendations from friends and family.² Text-based, free-form reviews encourage narratives to include a range of different aspects of customer service that inform perceived quality and are complemented by a visual rating, such as five stars. Reviews are flexible enough to allow a full range of individual opinions across whichever factors the reviewer finds important to them to highlight. And they let the reviewer express this in their own way, in everyday language.

Reviews are relatable

For consumers reading reviews, this information is easily digestible because it's written in plain language they can relate to, and minus the professional speak common on legal service provider pages. Readers of reviews have the freedom to decide themselves how much weight and credibility they will place on each story or individual experience. They can then consider these insights together with objective information from other sources to complete the overall quality picture.

If consumers are directed to an independent and trusted online reviews service provider such as Trustpilot, they will have the opportunity to read a full range of narratives that likely cover many of the aspects mentioned in the Quality indicators in legal services research report. These include being perceived as 'good to work with', such as approachable, interested, responsive and friendly; having experience in the relevant legal issue; coming across as genuine and reputable; and providing a satisfactory level of client care, such as a good rapport with the provider, who listened, was sympathetic, seemed to be on their side, and used plain language; and whether they experienced accessibility, such as responsiveness, timeliness. Reviewers can describe whether their expectations were met in these areas and why, or why not.

The review format lets consumers explain and highlight which of these most affected their customer experience, and how. It also lets consumers reading reviews decide which of the consumers that have left reviews are their peers. Consumers can ask themselves: "Which reviews most closely reflect my situation?", "Which reviewers share the same views on quality as I do?", and "Who seems most similar to me?" This helps them decide which reviews to place the most weight on.

Alongside reviews, star ratings and scores (such as Trustpilot's time-weighted TrustScore) can also help provide a quick, at-a-glance feel for customer service. Stars are universal as an indication of quality, which means they're useful as a quick measure, or signpost. But these shouldn't be used without empowering consumers to - if they so choose - easily find, read and decide for themselves whether they believe such reviews justify the score. This is one of the reasons why Trustpilot onsite display widgets always link through to the reviewed business's profile page, showing all of their reviews in the order they were written.

2. Based on research conducted by Trustpilot and Canvas8 in 2020.

Boosting confidence

We're aware that the LSB research highlighted some concerns about the reliability of reviews. At Trustpilot, we're continuing to build on our reputation as a trustworthy, independent review platform that offers both verified and organic reviews, at a volume that's high enough to generate meaningful data. We're continuing to improve measures to safeguard the integrity of content, so that consumers can be confident they're seeing genuine feedback. With the added confidence that regulator backing would bring, alongside the opportunity to deliver useful information and support on best practices for using review platforms, there is an unlimited collaborative opportunity to engage all parties (including businesses) to use it constructively. This will vastly improve transparency of quality in the legal services market, not least for the benefit of consumers.

3. Which groups of consumers and/or providers should action in this area focus on?

We suggest that consumer feedback in the form of online reviews should be a resource available to, and encouraged for all consumers, and all types of providers. Openness and transparency are critical to trust in online reviews. And in our view, open means that everyone is given the opportunity to have their say (providing the feedback is based on a genuine buying or service experience).

There's no doubt that the global Covid pandemic has driven accelerated growth of e-commerce in 2020 and in turn, the number of reviews that consumers are writing and reading. Trustpilot experienced a 25% increase in reviews being written globally, with company views across our platform also increasing by 29% (comparing March to October 2020). For both consumers and businesses, being online has become a necessity, not just a convenience. And we anticipate that online reviews and content are likely to continue to rise in popularity.

A framework for choice

We suggest providing everyone with the opportunity to read and write reviews (and encouraging businesses to respond and engage with them). We also suggest providing support to consumers and legal services providers to help them use reviews safely and correctly, including information about the tools available and best practices for maximising their value. For customers who've had an experience, such choice gives them the opportunity to decide whether or not writing a review is appropriate in their particular case. Providing them with access to information, including how to comply with content requirements will help guide them towards success. If consumers can also be informed about where to go if they need to file legitimate complaints about providers, they will be less likely to use reviews for this purpose.

In this regard, the SRA website in particular already has guiding information which provides a useful starting point. We can also provide content on best practices, tips and recommendations. There is scope for exploring further potential solutions, such as including helpful, neutral information in review invitations to encourage reviewers to describe their experience and perhaps cover aspects like whether the service provider was 'good to work with' or not; provided a satisfactory level of client care or not; and whether they experienced accessibility, such as responsiveness, timeliness or not. Existing reviews on Trustpilot show that reviewers tend to do this fairly well already, but we're open to exploring ways this can be improved.

25%

increase in reviews being written globally due to Covid-19 pandemic

Source: Trustpilot data team analysis, 15 April 2021

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 believe in allowing everyone to have their say on customer service. We also believe that consumer (or client) feedback is best collected via online reviews, and that this should be the primary source.

There is a danger of consumer fatigue if consumers are too frequently asked to rate, review or provide formal means of feedback through multiple channels. We suggest limiting the number of DCTs that should cover this area, and stimulating their focused use by consumers and businesses.

Letting everyone have their say via customer service doesn't mean that legal service providers must engage with consumer feedback presented in the form of online reviews, but they should accept that this is a useful, legitimate and valid tool for consumers to use to describe the quality element of customer service, if consumers so choose. In practice, this also means that where consumers have chosen to review legal service providers online, those legal service providers should not try to have selected reviews or their overall profiles removed from platforms. Infact, recent research shows that whether they were previously aware of review censoring or not, 71% of people in the UK³ are very concerned about it. We suggest that consumer feedback via online reviews should be encouraged across the entire market, with legal service providers encouraged to engage at the level that is proportionate to their resources.

Transparency on engagement level

Given that not all businesses (particularly very small legal service providers) feel they have the capacity to regularly engage with reviews, we suggest that it is fair to be transparent to consumers reading reviews whether or not the reviewed service is an active user of the platform or not. On Trustpilot, this information is provided clearly via each "Business Transparency" box on the profile page where we state whether the business has claimed their profile, whether they're actively asking for reviews, whether they pay for extra features or not, and whether they reply to reviews. (See below figure.)

This helps to set expectations regarding the reviews overall, and whether reviewers should expect engagement or not. We explain that "claiming" a profile allows the business to do things like reply to reviews, invite customers to write reviews, and more. We also state that asking for reviews can generate a more representative spread of feedback, which in turn will affect the business's overall star rating. This is important for proportionality, and also maximises our ability to provide comparable information.

Business Transparency



Claimed their Trustpilot profile June 2014. [What's this?](#)

See how this company has been using Trustpilot for the past 12 months

Asks their customers for reviews whether positive or negative. 

Pays to access extra Trustpilot features. 

Typically replies to negative reviews in 24 hours or less. 

Has replied to 92% of their negative reviews. 

3. Based on research conducted by Trustpilot and Canvas8 in 2020.

Business Transparency



Claimed their Trustpilot profile June 2014. [What's this?](#)

See how this company has been using Trustpilot for the past 12 months

Asks their customers for reviews whether positive or negative. ^

Companies who regularly ask their customers to review them tend to have a more representative star rating. [Read more](#) 

Pays to access extra Trustpilot features. ^

Our paid plans offer more review invitations, marketing materials, business support, [and more](#). 

Typically replies to negative reviews in 24 hours or less. ^

We take all days of the week into account (including weekends) and consider 1- and 2-star reviews to be negative. [Read more](#) 

Has replied to 92% of their negative reviews. ^

We consider 1- and 2-star reviews to be negative. [Read more](#) 

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?

When it comes to choosing products and services, consumers have always relied on family, friends, colleagues and peers for advice. With more and more people researching and shopping online for the convenience, choice and value and a combination of innovation, commercial and societal pressures taking more businesses online; online reviews can help businesses earn and showcase trust online.

While platforms such as Trustpilot can't replicate the human relationships or physical experiences you get through recommendations from friends and family, we can bring the very real and relatable experiences from real consumers into one, independent place.

We believe this is best achieved via an open platform, such as Trustpilot, because we recognise that information is less valuable to consumers if it can be bought or edited to suit the commercial needs of any given brand, product or service - which can be the case with more 'closed' review platform models.

We also believe this should be via a platform that is not just limited to legal service providers, and instead allows consumers the opportunity to review all types of products and services. This means they are more likely to already be familiar with using the platform to shop around, before having the need to engage a legal services provider. Also, consumers will be able to review all aspects of a transaction - including the services provided by complementary businesses, such as banks, mortgage brokers, removalists etc.

Confidence can be improved through knowledge and support

For legal service providers, we have observed that over the last few years, there has been a marked increase in positivity towards reviews. But a range of different attitudes remain. There are modern, forward-thinking law firms or conveyancing services that have embraced online reviews on Trustpilot, and other more traditional law firms that are reluctant to do so.

For the latter group, the backing of a regulatory body may provide the extra confidence and legitimacy needed to foster change. It is also an opportunity to collaborate to provide support to legal service providers who need it most in order to move forward.

In our experience, reluctance to embrace online reviews is often rooted in a lack of knowledge about how to use the platform in question, and how the business can use and gain from the feedback provided. Legal service providers can quite quickly use their reviews to gain valuable feedback, once they're familiar with the platform. On Trustpilot, this is possible with a basic introduction to our free services, which can be delivered in a variety of ways.

Where legal service providers see the possibility of receiving negative reviews as a potential drawback, there is also an opportunity to increase their confidence in reviews. This can be, for example, with supporting information about the value of negative reviews, and tips on how businesses can respond well to such reviews by showing they care. Done well, this can result in a net gain from the situation by winning over readers of reviews. We would be willing to explore how useful information can be delivered most effectively.

If consumers have fears or concerns about the potential pitfalls of DCTs, such as fake reviews, we suggest that transparency and information about the process (and platform) can help. For example, Trustpilot's recent [Transparency Report](#) explains the work we do to safeguard the integrity of our platform, and we also have information on our Support Center about how we use machines to help us detect which reviews are legitimate and which are not - precisely because (as illustrated by the quotes on p16 of the discussion paper) fakes are extremely difficult for humans to detect.

On Trustpilot, consumers can see how each legal service provider collects and uses reviews, via the "Business transparency" page.

This breaks down data further into areas such as star ratings over time, the behaviour of the business in replying to reviews and whether or not they flag reviews and why. This helps consumers assess the legitimacy of the process, and the credibility of the reviews they read.

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?

Where it is used, we suggest that data on success rates and complaints should be separate and distinct from consumer feedback provided as online reviews. This will help ensure that review feedback is used correctly and legitimately, and not treated as a vehicle for complaints. If reviewers are so dissatisfied as to have filed or considered filing a complaint about a business, this is often apparent from any review they have also written. Therefore, republishing quantitative data here would be superfluous.

Signposting and linking

We suggest that instead of DCTs republishing certain objective data, it would be best to link to relevant pages. F.ex. on Trustpilot, the right side of the page (desktop) contains information about the reviewed business. This is where businesses provide information about themselves or link to their own website. It may be possible to explore options for allowing legal service providers to fill out standardised information such as size of the firm. It may also be possible to link or refer consumers to additional pages that contain relevant data, such as that provided by public bodies.

Data about the number of complaints may provide an overall snapshot about unmet expectations. We suggest that the narrative about what happened and what the consumer experienced is especially useful for consumers trying to gauge quality. Much in the same way that a TrustScore provides one quantitative measure of a business, the reviews underpinning that score provide the valuable context. Signposting should be done in such a way as to tell consumers about the information available and where to find it, and let them choose what's most relevant.

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?

All channels are potentially relevant to quality, but they should hold different information. For example, law firm websites can provide an indication of tone and professionalism. In our view, a single digital register should not incorporate consumer feedback, but it could, however, include standardised, objective data that is not found on law firm websites or on DCTs.

We suggest that at least two channels should be used to provide information on quality, and should link to each other to signpost to consumers where they can find information. This could be achieved via DCTs and law firm websites. Or it could be achieved via all three options - especially if, as stated above, a single digital register does not include consumer feedback, and this is provided by DCTs such as Trustpilot.

For example, if consolidated information about each legal services provider is provided in a central register, this could signpost to the law firm website (which can indicate technical quality, level of establishment, years of expertise and location), and also signpost to DCTs, for example selected independent online review providers for customer feedback.

This could be as simple as a statement that the business has been reviewed on Trustpilot and a link to click through and read reviews. A more sophisticated option could be to include a consolidated rating, such as Trustpilot's TrustScore, and the number of reviews - where both of these update in real time. We have a number of widgets via our free and paid services that can be embedded on websites. Some of these show the number of reviews the business has received, which will give consumers an idea of 'sample size', to help them assess credibility.

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?

Every business needs trust. Trust provides the foundation for relationships - whether business or personal. Trust signals in search engines, comparison websites and especially review platforms help fill the trust gap that exists between consumers and law firms.

Legal service providers should be required to signpost to third-party, independent sources of trust, such as DCTs like Trustpilot. This will boost credibility and increase consumer confidence in law firms. They should at least be encouraged to prompt consumers to leave a review. We know that where businesses send out standard invitations for customers to review them on Trustpilot via email, this tends to increase the response rate. Where such a process is encouraged, endorsed or supported by authorities, this will add further legitimacy. In our view, law firms should have the option of embedding ratings if they so choose.

Since supplying the figures stated in the discussion paper, we've seen growth in the number of UK legal service providers engaging with reviewers on Trustpilot. But we believe the support and validation provided by the backing of a regulatory body will assist in giving even more legal service providers, and consumers, confidence to use and engage with DCTs, particularly online reviews. We also suggest law firm engagement is likely to be encouraged via industry information sessions or other guidance and sharing of best practices, especially useful guidance on how to reply to reviews.

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

It's critical to make sure legal service providers know the options open to them in using DCTs (particularly online review platforms), and receive best practice guidance (building on, for example, the sort of information already created by the SRA). Consumers will benefit if they know where to find information. Regulatory bodies should signpost to recommended third-party review platforms that they view as robust and independent resources for consumers to engage with.

We believe increased engagement will follow where regulatory bodies can:

- help legal service providers and consumers see and understand the value of feedback, including the importance of a mix of feedback, and the value of negative reviews (so that legal service providers don't focus solely on achieving a perfect rating, or try to remove negative reviews);
- provide a framework and support for legal service providers in understanding how the selected platforms work and how they can get the most out of them;
- guide consumers to write powerful, dispassionate reviews that inspire businesses to improve;
- endorse and encourage the use of existing DCTs; and
- work with DCTs to find solutions that enhance the suitability and features provided for both consumers and legal service providers alike.

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

Stated previously, a single digital register should not incorporate consumer feedback. It could, however, aggregate standardised, objective data that is not easily located on law firm websites, and not found on DCTs such as online review platforms. For example, this might be companies house data on directors, years established, number of staff, any referrals to legal ombudsmen, who they are regulated by, and potentially also addresses and contact details for complaints.

11. 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?

If comparing the two models outlined at point 5a. and b. in the Quality Indicators discussion paper, we suggest there are clear benefits to a market-led approach using a very limited number of existing, well-known and trusted platforms such as Trustpilot for customer feedback. These include:

- minimising the risk of consumer fatigue from from having to provide feedback to multiple platforms;
- avoiding the costs involved with setting up a separate platform, and resources potentially required for content moderation; and
- avoiding the need for consumers to learn how to use another platform.

On this last point, most consumers use legal services infrequently. They will have a limited opportunity to build familiarity with the interface and features of a new platform created just for legal services. This is in contrast to the millions of UK consumers who already have reviews on Trustpilot and have experience in using the tools we offer, such as filtering by keyword (see below example, using “time” as a keyword). We are also the 20th most-visited website in the UK, with an Alexa ranking of 320 globally, growing volume of traffic, and a specific focus on building trust with consumers.

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

In today’s world, there is certainly a shift in how consumers want to interact with the brands and businesses they use. We’ve seen this shift take place across various sectors from retail commerce to more traditional sectors of banking, finance and insurance and automotive. As these sectors have moved online, so has their need to earn and establish trust and they have embraced consumer reviews as a way of doing this and as a way to get closer to their customers and improve.

It’s an exciting time for the legal services industry and we strongly feel that our knowledge of consumers through the reviews they are writing everyday can only compliment the LSB’s thirst for change and promote innovation within the sector. We are open to collaborating further and to help support this positive change. Providing greater choice and understanding to consumers and helping inform their decision making is key, but businesses who embrace open and collaborative feedback through consumer reviews will also reap the rewards of understanding their customers better. Combining open, independent reviews with the more objective data you’ve suggested is a good start and we’d be more than happy to discuss the practicalities of doing this.

★ Trustpilot Categories Log in Sign up For companies

4.8

Reviews 749 Filter by: Rating English

Rating	Percentage
Excellent	87%
Great	7%
Average	2%
Poor	<1%
Bad	3%

All reviews service case claim Time solicitor Process start

Way outcome step team finish company communication

experience work support

XX 5 reviews

22 Feb 2021

My experience

Unfortunaetly I was not able to continue with the case. I was updated on a regular basis to what was happening, it did take long time but this was due to corona virus, and I was dissapointed the claim could not go ahead. My solicitor explained to me fully why we could not continue. I would not hesitate to contact Hudgell if I requied support in the future.

Useful Share Reply

On Trustpilot, it’s possible to filter reviews by keyword, such as “time”.

