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30 October 2019

Dear Wanda

### **September's voluntary assurance letter**

Thank you for your voluntary assurance letter of 3 October, which reported on your board meeting of 26 September. I would like to share the Board's reflections on this letter.

I should start by reflecting on the reports I have received of David and Matthew's attendance at your Board last week. As they explained, the LSB wishes to see OLC succeed and to be able to promote it as a "state of the art" disputes resolution service, dealing with things, as the Act puts it "quickly and with minimal formality", and delivering intelligence and learning from its casework that makes things better for consumers.

A key part of that level of performance will be building confidence among partners and stakeholders. As David and Matthew suggested, we think there is much to be gained in terms of the relationship between LSB and OLC if our engagement could be seen less as scrutiny and more as a process for building confidence. I offer the Board's reflections against that background.

The first point to make is that the Board was encouraged by the progress being made, particularly on reducing the size of the pre-assessment pool and performance against KPIs relating to the investigations stage of the business. However, while recognising progress is not always linear, the Board noted that the closure target for September had been missed and asked to be kept closely informed of any further information that might help determine whether this could be an early indicator of a trend.

While we can see it is to some extent a matter of language, the Board also raised questions about the description of performance as "strong". We see a distinction between effective progress towards a "green state", and performance once that state has been achieved. I understand this was reflected in discussion at your Board.

The Board noted fewer metrics being reported on than in the past. While, as you know, we have powers require reports and set performance targets for the OLC, we think it more sensible at this stage for the OLC Board to ensure that it has the information it needs to run its business effectively, and to put in place mechanisms to provide LSB with confidence that it is doing so. One way of doing that is sharing with us directly the metrics being used. However, as the range of metrics is reduced, OLC may need to find alternative supplementary assurance mechanisms. I would value your thoughts on this point. I should add on a related matter that LSB staff are grateful for the assurances that have been provided by OLC staff in terms of reporting on quality and people measures.

Finally, in connection with assurance, the Board expressed a preference for voluntary assurance letters to come more clearly on behalf of OLC Board as a whole, and that it would be content to sacrifice, within reason, some of the immediacy of the current letters in order to achieve that.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Phillips". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely" text.

**Dr Helen Phillips**  
Chair