

Meeting: Legal Services Board

Date: 18 October 2022

Item: Paper (22) 53

Title: Proposals for regional and Welsh engagement, 2023/24

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Status: Official

Introduction: Purpose of the paper/ Issue

1. This paper sets out proposals for regional and Welsh engagement activity in 2023/24 in light of learnings from online and in-person events held over the last two years.

Recommendation(s)

2. The Board is invited to agree the proposed approach to regional engagement across England and Wales for 2023/24:
3. The proposed approach includes the following activity:
 - A lunchtime reception in the Senedd, alongside a Board meeting and additional external meetings/visits outside of Cardiff (for example in Newport or Swansea)
 - A further 'Meet the Board' event in an English region we have not been to in recent years
 - Two online events promoted to stakeholders across England and Wales - one targeting consumer groups and the other legal sector stakeholders.

Background

4. We are committed to ensuring that we engage with stakeholders across England and Wales to support the delivery of the Reshaping Legal Services strategy. This engagement is about generating conversations, listening to our stakeholders and identifying opportunities and challenges facing the sector.
5. Historically, we have arranged face-to-face regional engagement events alongside one dedicated 'out of London' Board meeting each year. We visited Newcastle in October 2019, where we held a roundtable discussion at Northumbria University focused on how best to assure the ongoing competence of legal professionals throughout their careers as part of our extensive engagement on this topic.

6. More recently, and in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we fulfilled our commitment to regional engagement by holding a series of virtual events for stakeholders based in Liverpool and the North West (October 2020), the West Midlands (July 2021), and Wales (April 2022). These allowed us to engage with a wider range of stakeholders with a reduced impact on resources.
7. In June 2022, we returned to in-person regional engagement. We held an event in Leeds where we discussed lawtech with stakeholders from across Yorkshire and the Humber.
8. The virtual out-of-London event planned for 28 November focused on the East Midlands has been cancelled, allowing us to focus on producing our inaugural Reshaping Legal Services Conference taking place on 13 October 2022.

Learning from the last two years

9. Key takeaways from our recent regional activity are:
 - There is an appetite among stakeholders for events convened by the LSB. They are an opportunity for us to show leadership.
 - Despite changes to how and where people work, our stakeholders still value opportunities to get together in person.
 - Both in-person and online events have their own benefits, particularly in terms of resourcing and accessibility. It should be noted that in-person events are more resource intensive and we will need to consider this in light of our plan to hold an annual conference.
 - Events with a focused topic (e.g. lawtech or ongoing competence) are more appealing to cold audiences.
 - We need to structure the agendas carefully to allow ample time for discussion on the issues that matter to our stakeholders and their local communities.
 - We could achieve greater value for money from each in-person visit by curating a programme of activity in the region, for example visits to a law centre, firm, local law society or law school, and/or bilateral meetings.
 - It can be more difficult to attract attendance at our events outside of London, but we need to continue to work hard to engage with the widest range of people from a broad range of backgrounds so that our engagement programme can effectively inform and improve our activities as an oversight regulator.

Proposal

10. We are now planning our approach to regional engagement in 2023/24 and beyond. The purpose of this activity is to support the delivery of the Reshaping Legal Services strategy by:
 - generating conversation and debate, and listening to the views and experiences of our stakeholders
 - developing our understanding of the efforts others are making to address the challenges and where we can support
 - raising awareness of our work and priorities and identifying what more we can do

- helping us scan the horizon for emerging issues affecting the public, consumers and legal services sector, both regionally and nationally
- helping us identify existing initiatives or possible solutions to the challenges set out in the Strategy, which we can work together to improve
- building and maintaining effective relationships with stakeholders outside of London, so that we can draw on their insight
- providing opportunities for stakeholders to broaden their own networks in order to facilitate collaboration and partnership working.

11. Going forward, we propose a combination of online and in-person events in order to exploit the advantages of both approaches. We propose increasing our in-person regional engagement to two visits per year. While one visit would be attached to a Board meeting, the second need not be. In this case, it might not be necessary for all Board members to attend, which could help achieve further value for money.

Face-to-face engagement

12. For 2023/24, we propose the following in-person engagement activity:

- A lunchtime reception in the Senedd, alongside the Board meeting in Wales on 6 June 2023. In addition to Senedd Members, we propose inviting legal services providers and their representative groups, legal education and training providers, local advice agencies and consumer groups. This aligns with the ambitions in our Communications and Engagement Strategy 2021-24 to both expand our public affairs work and ensure regular visits to Wales, given the rapid pace of change in the Welsh legal landscape. The reception could take place either the day before or after the Board meeting, which we propose holding outside of Cardiff, for example in Newport or Swansea. We would also look at planning other meetings and/or visits in this location, to maximise the amount meaningful engagement we achieve from our time in Wales.
- A further 'Meet the Board' engagement event in an English region we have not been to in recent years, such as the East or West Midlands, East Anglia or the West Country. This could take the form of a breakfast roundtable or stakeholder dinner, or an event organised and promoted in partnership with the relevant local law society/societies. We would have the opportunity to tailor the content to the area we are visiting, by researching regional issues. As with the visit to Wales, we would also look at arranging meetings with and/or visits to key stakeholders in the area, alongside the main engagement event. This could include, for example, a visit to a law school, or attending a local law society committee meeting.

13. Beyond 2023/24, we propose making sure that we have a meaningful and consistent in-person presence in Wales every year. This will help make sure that we are plugged into the issues that are unique to the devolved nation, as well as the variety of Welsh Government and other initiatives looking at the future and the divergence of Welsh and English law. We are already exploring options to

bring regulators together with the Welsh Government to facilitate engagement on issues affecting the Welsh justice sector.

Online engagement

14. In addition to the in-person activity, we propose two online events in 2023/24. These would be open to stakeholders from across England and Wales – one targeting consumer groups and the other legal sector stakeholders. This approach would help us to demonstrate our commitment to consumer engagement, and could be organised jointly with the Legal Services Consumer Panel. Although it may be more challenging to convene a large number of consumer groups, this presents an opportunity for us to develop new relationships with this key audience, whose insights we can draw on to inform and improve our work.
15. The content for each online session would include an introductory presentation on who we are and what we do, as well as an overview of our priorities tailored appropriately to the audience. The intention would be for the LSB Chair and/or other Board members to facilitate discussion related to the strategic themes of our strategy as well as issues that are important to attendees. Discussion on the opportunities and challenges that are or could affect the sector or the provision of legal services would also enhance our horizon scanning function.
16. Beyond 2023/24, we will consider targeting our online events at different audiences where our engagement to date has been more limited, for example, students, trainees, legal apprentices and others who are at the earlier stages of their careers. We will also consider holding dedicated events for sub-sections of the profession, for example, large/City firms, small firms/sole practitioners or in-house lawyers, recognising that the issues and challenges they face can be unique.

Monitoring and evaluation

17. As with all our engagement activity, we will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our regional and Welsh engagement. We will consider both quantitative and qualitative measures to help us make sure that our activity is useful to our stakeholders as well as to us and our work, and represents good value financially and in terms of opportunity cost.
18. Our evaluation measures could draw on:
 - feedback from attendees
 - the insight we receive by encouraging open dialogue and listening to our stakeholders
 - the number and range of new relationships, partnerships or collaborations established either with us or between others
 - over the longer-term, a shift in stakeholder perceptions of the LSB. In particular, we would expect this work and other communications and engagement activity to contribute to an increased understanding of our role within the regulatory landscape. We would also expect improved results relating to our leadership role in the sector and our willingness to listen and

collaborate.

19. A deep dive is also due to be conducted in March 2023, when we will consider the impact of our communications and engagement work more broadly, ahead of updating the 2021-24 communications strategy.

Resourcing

20. Our most recent in-person engagement event (Leeds, June 2022) cost around £5,000, most of which was spent on travel and accommodation. The venue was provided free of charge. It is anticipated that travel and accommodation costs will increase slightly due to inflation, perhaps to around £6,000 for each of the two locations, with added catering costs for a reception in the Senedd at around £750. Event space in the Senedd is free, and we will aim to partner with stakeholders to secure other venues at little or no cost.

Risks and mitigations	
Financial:	In order to achieve the greatest value for money, we will aim to partner with stakeholders in order to secure venues at low or no cost.
Legal:	N/A
Communications and engagement:	Key issues are covered above
Equality and diversity:	Key issues are covered above

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol)		
Para ref	Fol exemption and summary	Expires
N/A	None	N/A
N/A	None	N/A