



Meeting: Legal Services Board

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Item: Paper (23) 06

Title: Conference plans for 2023

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Status: Official

Introduction

1. This paper updates the Board on our proposal for the next Reshaping Legal Services conference.

Recommendation(s)

2. The Board is invited to note and comment on the proposal, with a focus on agreeing on the conference theme/s.

Timing

3. At its meeting on 29 November 2022, the Board considered whether the annual conference should be held annually or biennially. We would be better able to fulfil our objective of maintaining the momentum of the strategy with an annual event. It would also help us to establish the Reshaping Legal Services conference as an key fixture of the sector's calendar.
4. However, if we decided to make the event biennial due to resources, we would need to consider how we continue meaningful engagement in the interim year. This could include roundtables or seminars following up on the topics discussed, in addition to our increased regional and Welsh engagement activity, both online and in person.
5. Currently, subject to budgetary approval and venue availability, we aim to hold the conference in October 2023, one year following the inaugural event. If logistics dictate that we cannot hold the event around that time, we will aim for March 2024 to avoid holding it over the winter months.

Background

6. We held our first Reshaping Legal Services conference, in partnership with the Legal Services Consumer Panel, on 13 October 2022. The theme was 'a diverse public deserves a strong, ethical and diverse profession.' The Board considered the evaluation of the conference at its meeting on 29 November 2022.

7. The aims of this year's conference remain unchanged. Our ambition is to bring together representatives from across the profession to:
 - maintain momentum in the sector-wide mission to deliver the ambitions set out in the Reshaping Legal Services strategy agreed
 - promote collaboration and leadership and positive examples of good practice to encourage others to play their part in tackling the sector's challenges.
8. This paper sets out our proposal for Reshaping Legal Services 2023, with a view to building on the success of last year's event.

Conference themes

9. Our conference is an opportunity to use our unique convening power to bring different stakeholder groups together. Our theme/s should therefore appeal to the broad audience we are targeting, including law firms of all sizes, in-house practitioners, law schools and students/apprentices, government, the advice sector and consumer groups. We also hope to attract regulators from other sectors, as well as international stakeholders, to add to the breadth of perspectives and expertise.
10. We should avoid duplicating the work of others and make sure that our offering is unique, current and brings a fresh perspective. We also want to focus on areas where we can have the greatest impact and influence.
11. Following discussions with Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP) colleagues, who have consulted Panel members, we have outlined options for themes below. The LSCP recommends focusing on access to justice and lowering unmet legal need.
12. Following the discussion, we will refine the theme and decide on a title for the conference. Like last year, we will also test ideas with stakeholders and collaborate to shape the agenda.
13. Regardless of the theme we choose to focus on, we propose dedicating some time to follow up on last year's discussions and reflect on the progress made since then. This is an essential part of maintaining the momentum of the strategy themes, and will allow us to demonstrate the value of the conference.

How can regulation improve access to justice?

14. This is one of the regulatory objectives and it fits squarely under the 'fairer outcomes' strategic theme. However, there is a risk with this theme that discussion gravitates towards legal aid funding decisions over which we and the frontline regulators have no direct influence. However, there is an interesting and important debate to be had about whether regulation helps or hinders access to the publicly funded justice system.

Reducing unmet legal need

15. Following on from the previous theme, although with a greater focus on the consumer market (as opposed to the publicly funded justice system) 'lowering unmet legal need' is a key focus of our strategy, and it again fits under the 'fairer outcomes' theme. In the context of a cost of living crisis and concerns over advice deserts, the topic would be timely. We also plan to publish the next wave of the individual legal needs survey in the autumn, which could be timed to feed into the conference.
16. The Consumer Panel is also developing a proposal for a roundtable on unmet legal need in June, any outputs from which could feed into the conference.

Technology for access

17. Under the 'better services' theme of our strategy, a key focus of our work on legal technology is to help foster a regulatory climate that supports innovation and increases access to legal services for everyone who needs them. Elsewhere on the meeting agenda, we outline our plans to continue taking forward our programme of work on legal technology, and lawtech could be an interesting conference theme. We note though that there are several other conferences in this space, and technology as a headline can sometimes tend to generate a niche audience. While we must play our role in ensuring regulation is not a barrier to innovation, we must be mindful of not duplicating effort through our engagement activity.

The legal sector as a force for social good

18. This broad theme would provide the flexibility to develop an agenda picking up multiple workstreams linking to where legal regulation can support social good across the sector. This could draw in themes around ethics and the rule of law, addressing unmet legal need, and legal education and training. We would aim to encourage the sector to think broadly about the vital role that the law, lawyers and regulation play in society, as well as encouraging collaboration to ensure legal services work better for everyone.
19. We could poll stakeholders ahead of the conference on the areas where they think lawyers and regulators can make the most difference, such as improving diversity and inclusion, providing services to consumers in new and innovative ways or supporting the rule of law. Using this collaborative approach will allow us to curate an agenda based on where stakeholders tell us they would like us to focus our convening power.
20. We invite the Board to consider these and any other ideas.

Programme

21. We plan to hold the event in a central London venue with live streaming to increase participation and support inclusion. We will increase the level of online interaction. We propose that the event is chaired by the LSB Chair.

22. Based on the evaluation of last year's conference, other proposals relating to the programme include:

- beginning the day with a breakfast roundtable to provide an opportunity for Board members, LSCP colleagues and others to get together with our speakers to discuss the conference themes, key issues facing the sector and priorities for the coming year.
- inviting a government minister to kick off the main conference programme and deliver a short opening speech (15 minutes maximum).
- a session focused on the LSB, covering key areas of our work, our current priorities and a Q&A session to encourage dialogue. This session would provide a platform for us to launch new research or a collaborative initiative. There is also the option of inviting the LSCP and frontline regulators to participate in the Q&A session. Some of last year's attendees said they would welcome the opportunity to hear more from us and the other regulators.
- two panel discussions, lasting at least 1 hour 15 mins each. We will brief the chairs and panellists to make sure opening remarks are kept short (around three minutes each) to maximise the opportunity for discussion.
- Subject to venue suitability, growing the number of organisations 'exhibiting' at the event. In addition to Law Care and the Association of Women Solicitors, we could consider inviting representatives from other diversity and representative groups, in addition to having our own themed tables.

23. We will keep the delegate experience in mind when curating the programme, ensuring that attendees are not sat down for too long, content is engaging and discursive, and there is plenty of time for networking.

24. We will invite a range of speakers who will help stimulate discussion, encourage attendance and inspire collaboration and action. Like last year, we will make sure that our speakers are diverse and represent both of the nations we regulate – England and Wales.

Conference delegates

25. Subject to budget constraints, our intention is to grow the event and attract 150 external attendees, an increase of 40 people.

26. As well as inviting those who attended last year's conference, we will cast the net wide with a view to attracting new audiences and developing new relationships. Although this is a London event, we will make sure that stakeholders from across England and Wales are invited to join us in person or remotely if they prefer.

27. We will also develop our access scheme, which allows students and recent graduates to attend without having to pay for their travel and accommodation (where necessary). We will develop a fair application process with an accompanying set of criteria to score applications against. We will promote this

scheme widely to attract a diverse range of applicants from across the jurisdiction and the different legal professions.

Measuring success

28. As with all our engagement activity, we will evaluate the success of the conference. We have developed a set of KPIs linked to the conference objectives and themes to help us make sure that the event represents good value financially and in terms of opportunity cost, as well as being beneficial for us and our stakeholders.

Resources

29. The provisional budget allocation for this year's event is £59,500. This is included in the LSB's draft budget for 2023/24, which we are currently consulting on. The biggest cost will be associated with the venue.

30. We will seek value for money by leveraging our existing relationships to help promote the event, as well as to secure speakers. We will also make saving on the cost of a conference chair, should there be an appetite from the LSB Chair to fulfil this role. We will re-use last year's event collateral, such as banners and lectern graphics, saving on design and print costs.

Next steps

31. Subject to decisions on themes, budget and timing, we will look to secure a central London venue. Once a venue is confirmed, we will launch registrations. We will also work with SLT and colleagues to workshop ideas for speakers. We would also welcome suggestions from Board.

32. We will update the Board once the agenda begins to take shape. In the meantime, we will maintain contact with the Board leads for communications and engagement.

Risks and mitigations	
Financial:	Financial issues are covered above
Legal:	The legal team will be involved in the project team to assist with identifying and mitigating any risks well ahead of time
Communications and engagement:	Communications and engagement issues are addressed above
Equality and diversity:	EDI issues are addressed above
Resource:	Resourcing issues are covered above
Environmental:	We will bear in mind sustainability when sourcing suppliers

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