

Legal Ombudsman

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By Email

13 May 2026

Dear Monisha

Voluntary Assurance: April 2026

This is my first Voluntary Assurance letter to the Legal Services Board (LSB) as chair of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC).

My letters will be formed of three parts:

- Transformation
- Performance
- Insight

This letter follows our board meeting on 29 April 2026. It does not seek to duplicate the board papers and minutes.

Transformation

We know the Legal Ombudsman (LeO) requires transformation to respond to demand and improve consumer trust in legal services. In response, the Chief Ombudsman and executive presented proposals for Scheme transformation consisting of three changes: Scheme rules, case fees and Ombudsman final decision publications. A significant driver for this work being a quarter of consumers reporting to LeO their legal provider not providing a final response to their complaint.

The board welcomed the ambition behind the proposals and the main focus of our meeting was test and challenge of them. We sought assurance the proposed changes to Scheme rules were fair and inclusive, but also tested whether there were areas these could go further. We also discussed how the new rules would be applied in practice and what additional data should be captured relating to their use. We tested the basis for the proposed case fee increases and sought assurance this would be sufficient to encourage behaviour change at Tier 1, as well as its compatibility with any new target operating model. We further discussed the plans and progress to enable full decision publication and how this could inform a wider transparency agenda. Across all three elements, the board sought assurance relating to risk and benefit realisation.

The board approved consulting on these measures and we will consider them again in light of the sector and consumers' responses. The final proposals will come to the LSB and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) later this year.

The board also received an update on progress towards the discovery phase of transformation, alongside ensuring the right skills, capacity and governance is put in place. We discussed how the risks around funding approvals were being managed and mitigated. The board welcomed the decision of the LSB in March on LeO's transformation. The continued support of LSB and the MoJ and timely approval of budgets is vital so transformation can move forward at pace.

Performance

We considered the performance of LeO in Q4, as well as across 2025-26. We can see LeO has been resilient in the face of rising and volatile demand and productivity has improved. For example, demand was 60% higher in Q4 compared to the same quarter the preceding year but the customer journey time improved by 11% over the same period. However, we know the current operating model is not sustainable and there was some discussion about developing the model relating to in-depth investigations as well as Early Resolution. The board also sought assurance relating to people and culture, with improvement in attrition, although some issues relating to long-term sickness remain.

We received assurance relating to the Annual Report and Accounts and an update from the Independent Adjudicator, who provided positive feedback on LeO's handling of its own service complaints. The number of service complaints escalating to the Adjudicator was low and their decisions consistent with the service complaints team in almost all cases.

Insight

For the OLC to contribute further to the regulatory objectives of the Legal Services Act, we are encouraging LeO to share insights and trends at each board meeting. There is a significant focus on, amongst other areas, residential conveyancing and motor finance commission claims, given the risks both to demand but also poor consumer experiences with legal providers. This focus is reflected in LeO's programme of learning and insight work and its strategic engagement.

At our next meeting, the board will turn its attention to developing LeO's 2027-2030 strategic plan.

As ever,



Ric Blakeway
Office for Legal Complaints, Chair