



Legal Services Board
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Sent by email only to consultations@legalservicesboard.org.uk

2 March 2026

Dear Policy Team,

Consultation: Draft Statement of Policy on Encouraging a Diverse Legal Profession

The Legal Services Consumer Panel (Panel) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the LSB's proposed statement of policy on encouraging a diverse legal profession

The Panel strongly supports the overarching ambition set out in the consultation. A diverse and inclusive legal profession is fundamental to securing public trust, improving consumer outcomes, and supporting a well-functioning and innovative legal services market. Diversity is not an abstract workforce issue but directly linked to whether consumers feel understood, respected, and confident in the advice they receive.

The Consumer Case for Change

The Panel strongly supports the LSB's ambition to encourage a more equal, diverse, and inclusive legal profession. For the Panel, this is not solely a workforce or representational issue; it is a key element of consumer protection, public trust and market effectiveness.

The Panel's vision of a market where everyone can access high-quality, affordable legal services necessarily includes consumers receiving advice from a workforce that reflects and understands the diversity of the communities it serves. Where this is absent, detriment can follow.

The Panel agrees with the LSB's underlying diagnosis that progress to date has been inconsistent and insufficient. The Panel has previously raised concerns about fragmented regulatory action, lack of clarity around intended EDI outcomes, weak alignment between objectives and resourcing, and limited evaluation of impact. However, ambition must translate

into measurable improvements in consumer confidence, experience and outcomes. The Panel encourages the LSB to maintain a clear and explicit line of sight between its diversity framework and demonstratable benefits for consumers.

Research commissioned by the LSCP in 2022 identified clear disparities in the experiences of ethnic minority legal services consumers. Consumers who were confident that they had chosen the right provider and would receive a good service were almost half as likely to be from an ethnic minority background (12% compared with 21% overall). Ethnic minority consumers were less likely to report good service, achieve positive outcomes, or express trust in legal providers. Cultural and language barriers, lack of empathy or understanding, and the over-use of legal jargon were identified as contributing factors.¹

Regulatory Vehicle

While the Panel supports the LSB's objectives and renewed focus in this area, there are reservations about the continued reliance on a statement of policy as the primary vehicle for regulatory change.

The LSB continues to use statements of policy as its principal mechanism for influencing regulations, despite mixed evidence of their effectiveness. The experience of the Empowering Consumers Policy Statement illustrates that this tool did not deliver the step change in transparency, comparability or consumer understanding that had been envisaged. Given the scale and persistence of the diversity challenges identified in this consultation, it is not yet clear why a further statement of policy on its own, would be expected to achieve materially different results.

The LSB has a broad armoury of statutory and oversight tools available to it, including formal directions, performance assessments, approval decisions, and other supervisory levers. It would have been beneficial for the LSB to have explained why and how it arrived at the decision to use this regulatory tool, particularly in an area with long standing historical stagnation. Moreover, it would be useful to get an understanding of how the LSB intends to respond if progress under the proposed framework proves slow or inconsistent.

Strength and Measurability of the Proposed Outcomes

The four proposed outcomes provide a helpful structure, and the distinction between core and enhanced expectations is constructive. However, the Panel remains concerned that the outcomes lack sufficient precision and measurability to drive accountability. As the Panel noted in response to the LSB's 2024/25 Business Plan, progress will not be achieved if outcomes remain opaque, weak or immeasurable.² The LSB should define clearly what 'good' looks like in practice, identify meaningful indicators of progress, and ensure that regulators' resourcing and delivery plans are aligned with those expectations.

¹ MEL Research, 2022, Understanding Ethnic Minority Experiences of Using Legal Services
<https://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/22.10.11-Understanding-ethnic-minority-experiences-report.pdf>

² LSCP, 2024, Consultation on the LSB's Draft Business Plan for 2024-25.
<https://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/24.02.19-LSCP-Response-LSB-2024-25-Business-Plan.pdf>

Without clear benchmarks, robust monitoring and credible consequences for underperformance, there is a risk that regulators may demonstrate compliance in form rather than substance. This risk is especially acute in the context of cultural change. Diversity and inclusion initiatives can generate visible activity (such as strategies, statements or training programmes) without producing measurable improvements in lived experience, workforce progression or consumer outcomes.

Behavioural Change and Culture

If the LSB intends to draw on behavioural change theory, it should articulate more clearly which specific behaviours it expects regulators to influence and how those behavioural shifts will be assessed. There may be merit in identifying early priorities to build an evidence base and momentum, highlighting and disseminating examples of good practice and role models. The LSB could utilise its convening and communicating powers to promote these best practices, inclusive of the consumer voice. However, positive reinforcement should sit alongside clear expectations and credible escalation where regulators fail to deliver substantive improvement.

The Panel also encourages the LSB to embed the consumer perspective at every stage of implementation. Workplace culture, progression practices and conduct standard are not purely internal regulatory matters; they have downstream effects on communication, accessibility, empathy and trust. The LSB should therefore ensure that evaluation frameworks incorporate consumer trust data, experience metrics and outcome disparities, rather than relying solely on workplace indicators.

Finally, the Panel recognises that some of the structural drivers of inequality include educational pathways and entrenched perceptions which sometimes sit beyond the direct control of legal regulators. It will be important for the LSB to recognise where regulatory intervention have greatest leverage, while being clear about where collaboration with other actors is required.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input from the consumer perspective. We hope you find these comments helpful.

Should you have any questions pertaining to this consultation response, please contact Caroline Clayton, Consumer Panel Associate, at Caroline.Clayton@legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk, with any enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Hayhoe
Chair, Legal Services Consumer Panel