By Email

5 October 2026

Dear Monisha

Voluntary Assurance: September 2026

I hope all is well.

This Voluntary Assurance letter follows the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) board meeting on 23 September 2026. As usual, it covers:

- Transformation
- Performance
- Insights

Transformation:

The OLC finalised the framework for the 2027-30 strategic plan. This was the third discussion at the Board on the plan and we agreed three objectives focused around using our data and insights to build trust and confidence in legal services, improving consumer experiences of the complaints process, and building an Ombudsman service fit for the future. The Board examined in depth the strategic enablers which will support these objectives, including data, digital, people and governance.

These objectives form the backbone of our business plan for 2027-28, Budget Acceptance Criteria (BAC) and medium-term financial plan. This explored further in the Performance section of this letter.

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) continues to transition from its old operating model to its target operating model, building a Scheme capable of handling more than 20,000 cases each year. Presently, it continues to embed the efficiency improvements from its Lean exercise, which started this summer and is showing promising signs of success.

Alongside this, the Scheme Transformation continues to progress well, with the discovery phase advancing in line with expectations. Working with Deloitte, we are undertaking extensive engagement with colleagues, leaders, and key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive understanding of our current operating model, the challenges we face, and our future requirements. This insight is helping to shape evidence-based design principles and options for a future operating model that supports our strategic ambition of becoming an Ombudsman fit for the future. The Board continues to maintain oversight of the review through established governance arrangements, and further recommendations will be brought forward aligned to the programme milestones.

The OLC welcomes the support the LSB continues to show for the Scheme Transformation Review.

Performance:

The Board focused on performance primarily in the context of the medium-term financial plan and forthcoming BAC.

This is the first time the OLC has considered a medium-term financial plan for the next 3-year strategic plan period. During this period the Board expects LeO to reduce to zero its legacy casework as it transitions to the new operating model. The Board recognises this transition will see higher volumes of cases as demand continues to rise and improvements take time to embed. But by the end of the period the OLC expects LeO to have the capacity and capability to process more cases and do so more speedily.

The Board also considered a draft of the BAC for 2027-28 and I know there has been good dialogue between LeO and the LSB executive on the proposals. The Board discussed a proposed increase to the budget for 2027-28 and spent time examining proposed efficiency savings to limit the increase to the levy. As outlined in our consultation on changes to the Scheme Rules, we also discussed the potential for case fees to contribute a greater share of the operational budget which could mean a reduction in the underlying levy. Lastly, we considered the operational budget over the medium-term as part of the 3-year financial plan and bringing levy increases in line with inflation in future years.

LeO will continue to develop the BAC ahead of formal submission to the LSB.

Insight:

Our Board will receive its quarterly update on casework relating to the regulatory objectives at a future meeting, but we still heard some items relevant to wider insight. This includes an update from LeO's in-house legal which included a discussion about receiving an increasing number of pre-action letters which appear to be supported by AI.

We also approved our annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The report outlined that 68% of the public have heard of the LeO, with 98 unique visits to the Welsh language complaint checker during 2025/26, almost double the previous year. While LeO accepted only 1 case during 2025-26 from a Welsh speaker, it overall accepted 649 cases which represents a 24% increase in cases from residents within Wales.

I look forward to meeting again with you soon.

As ever,



Ric Blakeway
Office for Legal Complaints, Chair