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Every week, it seems, there is another new development reported in the trade press, prompted directly or indirectly by the LSA. Change seems relentless. But just what is the scale of that change? As the saying goes *“it’s too soon to tell”*.

Partly this is because the most significant change, the introduction of alternative business structures (ABS), was only realised in October 2011. But it is also a consequence of no agreed benchmark and a lack of quantifiable data with which to measure change.

To remedy this, on 4 April the Legal Services Board (LSB) published an interim report describing the legal services market at the point at which ABS firms started to emerge against a number of indicators.

The indicators cover a number of the outcomes for the legal services market that the Act seeks to deliver including, for example, the quality of legal services improving, a higher proportion of the public being able to access justice and, the introduction of an efficient legal system delivering quality legal services at a reasonable cost.

The report reveals major knowledge gaps which will need to be filled to help measure change. These range from the volume of consumers using legal services to turnover of non-solicitor legal service providers.

However it has been possible to track changes over the past five years in some areas. For example we see that entry levels into the legal profession have begun to match the diversity of the population between 2006/07 and 2010/11. And while there has been a large growth in the supply of authorised persons as a whole, there has been relatively small changes in business structures running up to ABS implementation.

So while some very tentative positive movement has been made, it is too soon to be able to tell with certainty what this reveals about the future shape of the market. As more evidence is gathered to fill the knowledge gaps our understanding of the long-term impact of the Act and its reforms will grow.

Our interim report and the follow up we propose to publish in October 2012 will begin the process of shedding light on how the market is changing. This is work in progress, and so any and all input between now and October is welcome.

The report can be found at:

http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/what_we_do/Research/Publications/pdf/market_impacts_of_the_legal_services_act_interim_baseline_report.pdf