



LEGAL SERVICES  
**BOARD**

# Research strategy

## **Introduction**

The LSB believes that consumers will be best served by open and transparent regulation of legal services. We believe that this transparency must extend to our commitment to using research evidence. Research should shine a light on issues and identify the most appropriate regulatory solution – whether that is to remove, change or introduce regulation.

Our research will also act as our window to improving our understanding of consumer needs, helping us learn how they would like to see legal services delivered to them. We will endeavour to use research both through regular ongoing engagement with consumers and through strategic projects on specific issues. Throughout consumers and citizens will remain at the heart of our policy making agenda.

The LSB research is designed to help the LSB meet its eight regulatory objectives as laid out the Legal Services Act 2007. Each year the Board of the LSB will set and publish a Business Plan outlining the objectives for the year ahead. The annual research programme will be designed to both provide the evidence to help us meet these annual objectives and to develop the evidence base to help deliver the long term regulatory objectives laid out in statute. The annual research programme will make it clear how the research priorities map out against both the annual business plan and the regulatory objectives.

## **Our commitment to Research**

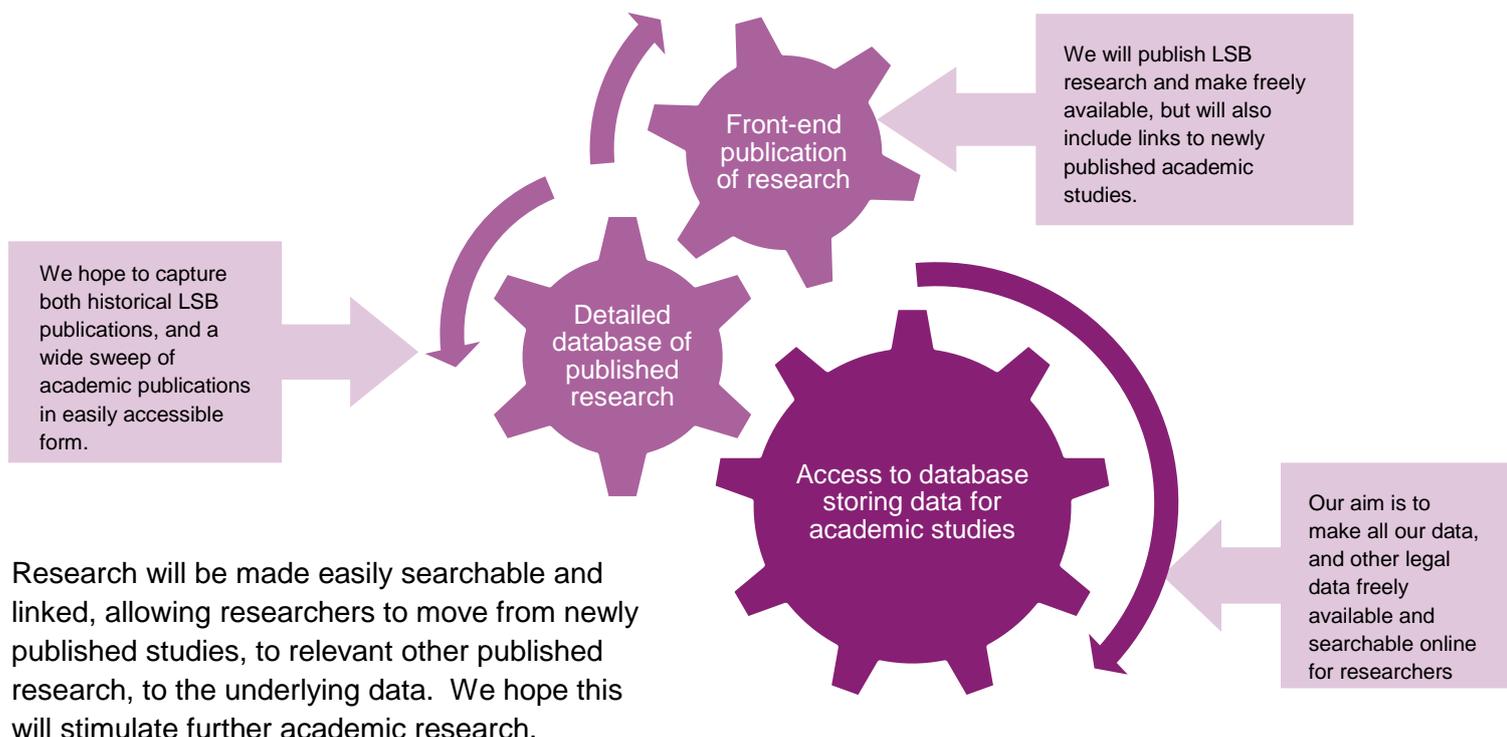
The LSB is committed to using research to ensure all the work we do is underpinned by robust relevant evidence. Whenever possible we will use existing evidence to inform our work. But, where necessary and affordable we will produce or encourage others to produce original research to fill gaps in evidence that exist where our regulatory objectives require us to investigate. We want all our proposals to be evidence based – but we will not be afraid to try options and use research to evaluate after the event where evidence is patchy. Inevitably policy work will involve the interpretation of often mixed evidence and the application of a degree of judgement in drawing on the research evidence available.

To meet our policy needs we will draw on a wide variety of research sources, whether through original research commissioned by the LSB, research from Approved Regulators or existing academic research. We aim to work closely with the academic community to see where we can work together to improve and develop the evidence base for our work. In other areas we will seek to carry out analysis in-house to explore issues and improve our understanding of the industry. Key in all circumstances will be our need to ensure that we maintain focus on the regulatory objectives and deliver good consumer outcomes through our oversight while ensuring cost effective regulation of legal services.

The LSB will always operate within a constrained budgetary environment, deciding in which areas and issues and in what way to maximise the value from our limited research budget will be essential. Research will inevitably split between empirical studies and research on policy options developed. We will be transparent about such choices, communicating widely with Approved Regulators and other stakeholders about the choices we face and ensuring their views are considered as part of our process of prioritisation.

We will publish all our research making it freely available on our website, helping provide a critical check on the work we do and providing others with the tools to undertake further

research where they have an interest. We aim to make the LSB website a hub for research wider than that simply commissioned by the LSB, incorporating research by academics looking at topics across legal services and regulation – subject to reasonable standards of peer review. Alongside the publication of all of our own data we will aim to bring together data from across the legal services market. Wherever possible we will make data freely available for all those who wish to research or simply understand more about the legal services market.



### Our principles of Research

Research commissioned by the LSB – whether commissioned by the LSB or completed by LSB staff – will always strive to meet the following six principles:

- **Independence**  
It is essential that our regulatory interventions are evidence based and focused on the consumer and public interest and not vested interest.
- **Transparency**  
We are committed to publishing all of the research we commission publicly with all supporting materials and all of the data produced where possible (in some cases information about individual respondents will have to remain confidential). All information relating to our research will be freely available to all on our website ([www.legalservicesboard.org.uk](http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk)).
- **Challenging**  
The purpose of research is not to confirm preconceptions but to challenge assumptions and ensure that the work delivered by the LSB really does deliver the best possible regulation in both the public and consumer interest.
- **Ambitious**

The regulatory objectives set for the LSB are challenging and to meet this challenge we will need to be ambitious with the scale and scope of our research.

- **Robust**

Robust research can ensure that the decisions we take have their intended impact and do not adversely affect particular stakeholders. Our research governance will be designed to ensure that the robustness of the research is tested and credibility of the research ensured.

- **Collegiate**

We share many of our objectives both with the Approved Regulators and with other stakeholders. In pursuing our principle of transparency we will also seek to identify opportunities for us to fund and commission research jointly with other stakeholders and to contribute to their work informally in cases where a joint formal approach is not practicable.

## Research Governance

The LSB sets great importance on the credibility of its research. All our research will be published, made freely available on the LSB website and open to challenge and debate. To ensure that we maintain the standards of quality and independence necessary we will use a Research Strategy Group with independent representation to act as guardians of the LSB's research programme.



The Research Strategy Group will have mixed representation from the LSB staff, the LSB Board, the Consumer Panel, academia and the Approved Regulators. Independent representatives will sit on the Group for two years to ensure a good mix of skills overseeing the LSB's research over time.

The Research Strategy Group is designed to provide clear independent oversight for the LSB's research programme, but we will also be looking to engage with a wider set of stakeholders in developing our research programme. Each year we will hold seminars for all stakeholders, feeding back on the research commissioned in the previous year and allowing an open debate of the research priorities for the following year.

Furthermore academics and other stakeholders are welcome to send us their ideas for research that they believe is necessary in support of our objectives. We will consider all ideas equally and may commission these project proposals ourselves or simply support funding bids from external funding sources. The LSB will produce a pro-forma available on its website for all academics submitting research proposals to the LSB highlighting the need to link all ideas to regulatory and business plan objectives. Ideas submitted before October will be considered for LSB funding for the following funding year starting in April. We remain committed to complete transparency in our processes and the research we produce as we believe that this will best support us in meeting our regulatory objectives.