

## LSB progress report

### Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)

***Date action plan was published:*** 29 June 2017

The action plan is published [here](#).

The LSB sufficiency assessment of action plan is published [here](#).

***Progress Update:*** 16 October 2018

The action plan set out a number of commitments from the SRA. This update reviews its progress in delivering on these commitments. Where possible the information below has been drawn from the following five key documents:

- [SRA consultation document](#) 'Looking to the future: better information, more choice'
- [SRA Post consultation position](#) 'Looking to the Future: Better Information, more choice - Our post consultation position'
- [SRA rules change application](#) to the LSB
- [SRA Guidance](#) 'Transparency in price and service'
- [SRA Guidance](#) 'Engaging with online reviews'

The SRA has had an opportunity to update the LSB on its progress on any commitments in the action plan not covered by the publications above.

The commitments related to four different high-level outcomes relating to market transparency which LSB asked all frontline regulators to focus on in their action plans. This note sets out the status of each commitment under each outcome:

- 1) Action to deliver a step change in standards of transparency to help consumers (i) to understand the price and service they will receive, what redress is available and the regulatory status of their provider and (ii) to compare providers.
  - **Completed:** The SRA action plan committed to publish a consultation and introduce rules for transparency requirements. The SRA published a consultation 'Looking to the future: better information, more choice' in September 2017 and published a decision document 'Looking to the Future: Better Information, more choice - Our post consultation position' in June 2018. It submitted a rules change application to the LSB on 5 July 2018 which was approved on 03 August 2018. The new rules will come into force in December 2018.

- **In progress:** The SRA action plan committed to a logo for firms to use to denote their regulatory status. The rules change application requires firms to display on their website a digital badge that verifies that a firm is regulated by the SRA. The SRA are currently in the process of developing the digital badge.
  - **In progress:** The SRA action plan promised to develop guidance for solicitors on providing information to their clients at point of engagement (which would include guidance on client care letters) when the new requirements are introduced in December 2018. SRA expects to publish such guidance at the start of 2019.
  - **In progress:** The SRA action plan promised to develop a plain English guide on what to expect of a solicitor and the different protections available (smile guide). SRA has informed us that this is currently in development and they are planning to publish it in early 2019.
- 2) Promotion of the use of independent feedback platforms to help consumers to understand the quality of the services offered by competing providers.
- **Completed:** The SRA action plan promised to issue guidance to providers on engaging with online feedback platforms in 2019. The SRA post consultation position paper promised that SRA will provide guidance to firms on engaging with client reviews and feedback platforms, such as Trustpilot and Checkatrade. This guidance was published in early October 2018.
- 3) Facilitation of the development of a dynamic intermediary market through making data more accessible to comparison tools and other intermediaries.
- **In progress:** The SRA action plan had a commitment to have an updated digital register in place during 2019. We are aware that the SRA is currently in the process of updating its IT system which will support this register. The SRA expects a new register to go live during 2019.
- 4) Making better information available to assist consumers when they are identifying their legal needs and the types of legal services providers (both regulated and unregulated) who can help them.
- **In progress:** The legal regulators are working together to deliver a three-year plan to enhance the Legal Choices website and social media channels. The Legal Choices Governance Board and Steering Group are continuing to lead the work, informed by the Advisory Panel which includes 17 organisations from the consumer and not-for-profit sectors. The suppliers that have been appointed to deliver the plan's market research and digital design components delivered a two day 'ideation' workshop in June 2018, which is

informing a detailed redesign and relaunch strategy for the website. This will be discussed with the legal regulators in the autumn. In the meantime the regulators are continuing with their schedule of new content for members of the public that focuses on priority areas of law, as well as topical articles, which is promoted by using the website's social media channels. So far in 2018 new articles have focused on holiday sickness claims, immigration work (connected to Windrush), cycling laws and divorce processes.

- **In progress:** The regulators have taken some steps to assess the feasibility of a joint register, in particular working on a taxonomy of the data to be included in the register. Work to explore the feasibility of a single digital register is ongoing. As an interim step, regulators are working on opportunities to provide a better access point to the legal regulators' respective registers of regulated entities and individuals through the Legal Choices website.

In addition to the delivery of these commitments we recognise that the SRA has delivered a substantial programme of stakeholder engagement in developing and delivering these proposals.

Furthermore we note that the SRA has carried out a significant amount of research to support its better information reforms. An overview of this [research](#) can be set out on the SRA's website.