

Legal Ombudsman: Challenge and Advisory Group

1) Background

During the 2021/22 Business Plan consultation process a number of stakeholders offered their support in addressing both the backlog and developing pilot projects which look at different ways of working. Stakeholders were also clear that they would like a greater level of opportunity and chance to understand the progress of performance.

The OLC has committed in the Business Plan to oversee the setting up of an Advisory Group to take this forward. These TOR set out a model for ensuring that members expertise is focused on immediate and pressing areas of work during the year.

2) Frequency

The Group will run for a twelve-month period from April 2021, after which time it will be reviewed to check whether objectives have been met. This will also be a chance to identify whether there is a continuing role for the Group with revised objectives, recognising the evolution from looking at input on plans for transforming service delivery and reducing the backlog, to looking at system-wide ownership including how first-tier complaint handling can work more effectively.

The intention is that there will be three key meetings during the year (kick-off and six-month and final review) attended by the full Group. Between this members will be asked to attend up to three other meetings and contribute to the development of plans and working documents if required. These will be focused on specific areas of work, depending on area of expertise.

In addition it may be useful for some members to join an OLC Board session to share views and provide an update on the work that is taking place.

3) Objectives

As an Advisory Group decision-making remains with the Legal Ombudsman Executive and the OLC Board. The following objectives reflect the Legal Ombudsman's Business Plan priorities for 2021/22.

- Gain an initial understanding of the key challenges that the Legal Ombudsman is aiming to address over the next 12 months.
- Develop a shared understanding of LeO's current process and the requirements/limitations that scheme rules and legislation place on the scheme
- Challenge LeO's existing approaches and ways of working.
- Advise on plans for reducing the backlog to ensure that the approaches are fit for purpose and are likely to have the most significant impact on operational performance.

- Advise on the roll-out of pilot projects and support delivery were appropriate. This include ADR suggestions which are currently in place as well as new initiatives which could be considered.
- Share views on the wider changes which could be made to the scheme in both the short-term and the medium-term which could facilitate greater efficiencies and value for money.
- Consider future opportunities for system-wide ownership of first-tier complaints handling.

4) Membership

- The Advisory Group will be initially chaired by the OLC Chair. Reflecting the pressing focus on improving operational delivery the Chairing is likely to then pass to the Chief Ombudsman; as the role of the Group evolves consideration will be given as to whether this moves back to the OLC Chair, recognising a stronger focus on system-wide ownership later in the year.
- Membership of the Group will be targeted at specific representatives from regulators and professional bodies in the legal sector and in order to focus on supporting the Legal Ombudsman on the specific areas outlined above.
- Wider progress will be shared with those who wish to remain more broadly informed.

Specific experience sought:

- Experience of ADR processes such as adjudication and mediation.
- Experience of developing/managing operational processes for investigations / complaints handling which support fair and effective results for both consumers and professionals, including lean working methodologies.
- Responding to backlogs