

23 April 2018

Chief Ombudsman's Report

Meeting	OLC Board	Agenda Item No.	6
		Paper No.	87.3
Date of meeting	23 April 2018	Time required	5 Minutes

Title	Chief Ombudsman's Update
Sponsor	Rebecca Marsh – Chief Ombudsman
Status	OFFICIAL
To be communicated to:	Members and those in attendance

Executive summary
<p>This Paper provides the Board with a brief update in respect of the activities of the Chief Ombudsman (CO) and the operational activity with regard to external affairs.</p> <p>The CO is continuing her induction and the improvement work across the business. This report shares further actions commenced, in response to the issues in the previous report and the need for a paradigm shift in performance, as well as a brief overview of our externally focussed activities for the Board's information.</p>
Recommendation/action required
The Board is asked to note the activity and the actions underway.

Chief Ombudsman's Report

1. Introduction

1.1. This report provides the Board with an update on the activities of the Chief Ombudsman (CO) since mid-March.

2. Activity on priorities

2.1. The CO has been working on updating our casework, processes, governance and structures.

2.2. The following key areas have been implemented:

- New structures in place as described in last report
- Three pilot teams are in the process of development to go live within the new CMS/new process when it comes on line – to allow for effective benchmarking, comparison and evaluation, with a fourth on high risk to be implemented as soon as resource available.
- Supervision model, with telephone training for staff, beginning with legacy team, to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- New detailed guidance on areas of process to support efficiency
- New governance processes that are cross functional, including a quality committee, a service policy group and a performance oversight group;
- Improved focus and terms of reference for senior management meetings, to reduce time and improve visibility of oversight of key deliverables and risks
- Coherent and specific performance objectives, with line of sight from frontline to senior management and business plan, for all staff in CO reporting structures.
- Clear expectations of line managers to drive delivery and improvement.

3. Category 1 Publication Update

3.1. The Category 1 Publication against Claimline Direct UK Ltd was published on 14 March 2018, following agreement by the sub-committee. A news item was posted to the Legal Ombudsman's website, and messages were issued on Facebook and Twitter. Follow-up Tweets were issued later in the week and the matter was picked up by several trade media outlets including the Law Society Gazette and Legal Futures.

4. Ombudsmen recruitment

4.1. Following the success of the Pool Ombudsmen recruitment earlier this year, we have a further nine who have agreed to come on board from that recruitment activity, subject to Board approval. This will support the delivery plan for the coming year.

4.2. We are also mid-way through another round of Level 1 recruitment, to bring us up to compliment and to support the further development of better ways of working. The CO will further update Board on recruitment on the day.

5. Externally Focussed Activity

5.1 Since the last Board meeting, the CO has met:

- Citizens Advice – discussions on consumer understanding of ombudsman schemes, our recent Category 1 publication, a new signposting guide we are developing with the SRA, and wider issues in the legal services market.
- Law Society – discussions on concerns raised by the Law Society in their response to our business plan consultation, upcoming policy issues for the profession, and future opportunities for collaboration.
- Solicitors Regulation Authority – as part of her induction, a full end-to-end, top-to-bottom run through of their operation and organisation, as well as an introduction to Paul Philip (CEO).

5.2 In addition we have delivered the following:

- amendments to our Scheme Rules, approved by the LSB, which have now been published and are effective from 16 April;
- representation of the Legal Ombudsman at LegalEx in London 21-22 March – Ombudsman Clair Daniel gave two talks on complaints handling which has generated requests to engage from other networks;
- a professional learning course for the CMC sector on 3 April focusing on accident management claims;
- a further course on communication in dispute settings to take place on 24 April;
- work with Legal Choices and the SRA on developing more consumer focused communications; and
- an editorial on ‘stopping complaints before they happen’ in the March issue of Modern Law magazine. Next month’s editorial will focus on costs transparency.