

Meeting	OLC	Agenda Item No.	13
		Paper No.	94.11
Date of meeting	20 March 2019	Time required	20 minutes

Title	Communications and engagement strategy 2019 -20
Sponsor	Rob Powell, CEO and Rebecca Marsh, Chief Ombudsman
Status	OFFICIAL

Executive summary
<p>Last year a Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2018-20 was developed.</p> <p>This paper looks at the key themes from our horizon scanning and engagement work during the year, and the implications of this for our engagement work going forward. A revised plan of engagement has been developed to address these issues. The plan recognises that we have a relatively small team to implement this work and therefore aims to set out how we will work in partnership with others to add value to their work of others and multiply the impact of our unique contribution to the sector.</p> <p>This work has been closely aligned to the development of the 2019-20 Business Plan and Budget. It includes detailed segmentation of stakeholders, a SWOT analysis, alongside delivery plans.</p> <p>This paper summarises the communications and engagement strategy for Board. It covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of our horizon scanning, stakeholder engagement and feedback to the profession work, • Strategic focus for 2019-20
Recommendation/action required
Board is asked to APPROVE the high-level communications and engagement strategy for 2019-20.

Communications and engagement strategy 2019-2020

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to: provide a brief analysis of learning from our horizon scan work and stakeholder engagement over the last year, the implications of this and how we will adapt our Communications and Engagement strategy for 2019/20.

2. 2018-19 analysis: Horizon scanning

The key factors arising from horizon scanning activity in 2018-19 which will impact our communications and engagement strategy in 2019-20 are set out below:

Regulation: The recent SRA regulatory changes, UCL review, and Justice Commission for Wales (as well as recent development in Scotland) highlight both the potential for future change in the sector, as well as the lack of flexibility in the Legal Services Act to enable us to adapt to a changing sector.

Access to justice: A variety of issues have been prominent in the last year including Brexit, discussions about legal aid and the civil liability bill. All could have potential implications for access to justice and therefore potentially to the use of the unregulated sector. This could also therefore raise questions about consumers' ability to access redress.

Scrutiny of ombudsman sector: The focus on bodies such as FoS, and the recent APPG report, highlight the continued interest in the work of ombudsman bodies alongside varied understanding on the purpose and role of ombudsman. This is reflected in scrutiny of our performance and timeliness of the front-end of our work.

Transparency agenda: The majority of regulators have now addressed the questions addressed by the CMA. The CMA have said they will review their recommendations in 2019.

AI: Implications of AI are featuring more prominently on the agenda across the sector, and we have the opportunity to support this discussion.

3. 2018-19 analysis: Learning from engagement

Stakeholders recognise the progress we have made since 2017 to modernise our service, however they expect to see the results of this work i.e. consistently meeting timeliness and quality KPI's, and reducing unit costs.

Questions about timeliness and quality are raised with us via social media, MP letters and questions at events, and shapes the context of our engagement.

There appears to be a perception (perhaps due to the continued focus on timeliness) with stakeholders/legal community that we are a complaints handler, without an

understanding of the wider role and benefits that an ombudsman can bring to the sector. This needs to be re-defined, alongside clarity about how we will achieve this.

Many stakeholders are actively looking at the implications of AI in the legal sector, and have sought our views on the implications for our jurisdiction and redress for consumers.

4. 2018-19 analysis: Learning from feedback work¹

We have continued to work in partnership with others in the sector in 2018/19. This includes regulators, professional bodies and various networks. This ensures our unique perspective and learning is shared effectively with the sector.

Across the year we presented at 15 external events, delivered 7 courses, 4 webinars/videos as well as presenting content for external webinars². We have written 4 pieces of guidance and contributed regular articles for example to Modern Law Magazine.

The profession value our contributions at these events and we always receive positive feedback.

Many in the profession still do not understand the basic elements of our work: how we decide on poor service and remedies, what a good complaints process looks like as well as areas such as how we apply case fees. This both impacts on service providers' ability to resolve complaints and on their view of the Legal Ombudsman. Service providers' perceptions of us often change once they have had the opportunity to engage with us via an event or course.

Service providers attending events/courses are potentially those who want to learn and change their approach. We need to be clearer about how to reach those who most need help or where we identify potential issues, and how we work with others in the sector and make best use of combined resources.

5. 2019-20 Strategic focus

The above analysis highlights several areas of focus for our work in the coming year.

As part of this we have reviewed and updated our Boston Matrix (shared with Board as part of the communications and engagement strategy in June 2018) identifying key relationships, and owners for this work going forward. We have shared that updated analysis with Board.

The 2019-20 business plan, which is a separate item on today's agenda, includes a detailed annual work plan for our stakeholder engagement and feedback work. We will also develop, based on the stakeholder mapping/segmentation, individual engagement plans for the key stakeholders.

¹ Further insights will be gained via the stakeholder survey which is currently in the field

² Twitter Analytics show that "impressions" for our videos and guidance and the highest of our content and are often seen around 1,000 times, compared to around 300-400 for consumer focused tweets.

Our overarching priorities for stakeholder engagement and sharing insight in 2019-20 are set out below:

Stakeholder engagement priorities

2020-23 strategy: Build knowledge/intelligence for the development of the next 3 year strategy, which will include engaging with development in Wales.

Thought leadership: Share with the sector our view of the role of an ombudsman. How we fit into the future of regulation, how we currently benefit the sector, and how we will develop into this role.

- Develop profile of Chair, Chief Ombudsman and NEDs in the sector.
- Respond to the UCL review.
- Engaging with stakeholders on AI and implications for our jurisdiction
- Transparency agenda and scoping publishing decisions project.

Understanding our progress: We need to ensure stakeholders, including those in Wales, have a clear understanding of the journey the Legal Ombudsman is on, what we have achieved, and how we are addressing our challenges.

Insight and learning

Share wider range of stories about our work: Providing an efficient service is one aspect of our work, but we also have stories to share about how we support both consumers and service providers.

Feedback on complaints handling/customer service: Continue to develop close working relationships with professional bodies and networks throughout the year to maximise our impact. As a small team we need to add value to the work of others, and multiply the impact of our contribution. Alongside this we need to review our own data with a view to segmenting the profession and identifying areas for primary focus.