LEGAL OMBUDSMAN

OFFICE FOR LEGAL COMPLAINTS

DRAFT STRATEGY 2027-30

NOVEMBER 2026

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About the Office for Legal Complaints and the Legal Ombudsman

The Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) established the Legal Ombudsman scheme (LeO) under the terms of the Legal Services Act 2007 (the Act).

The Act also established the Legal Services Board (LSB) to oversee the regulation of the legal profession in England and Wales. Both the OLC and the LSB are Arm's Length Bodies of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). LeO's work supports and aligns with the regulatory objectives.

LeO covers the majority of legal services provided in England and Wales. The rules and limits about what complaints LeO can help with are set out on LeO's website.

1. Developing a new strategy for LeO

During 2026/27 the OLC and LeO created Vision 2030 – setting a clear direction for LeO's next strategy period and what success would look like.

To deliver that vision, the OLC has now developed a draft strategy for LeO for 2027-30. The strategy is summarised in the graphic on p. 3 and is set out in full in this document, which is published alongside the OLC's draft business plan and budget for LeO in 2027-28 – the first year of the new strategy period. The two documents should be read together.

We are actively seeking stakeholders' thoughts and views on the strategy's scope, aims and enablers, and encourage all those with an interest in LeO's work to engage both with it and the accompanying 27/28 business plan. Your input will help shape the final documents that will be published in spring 2027.

1.1 How to respond

The consultation on the OLC's draft 2027-30 Strategy and on its Business Plan and Budget for LeO in 2027/28 is open from 4 November 2026 until midday 23 December 2026. You can share your feedback before the deadline using this form.

If you have any questions about the consultation, get in touch at: consultations@legalombudsman.org.uk.

Please respond online wherever possible. If you need to write to us, send your response to Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 6167, Slough SL1 0EH.

We will publish responses to the consultation. Please indicate in your response if you think there's a reason that we shouldn't publish it. Our legal responsibilities around freedom of information mean we cannot guarantee responses can be kept confidential.

1.2 Consultation questions

1. Do you support the OLC's draft strategic objective to maximise LeO's insights, expertise and tools to help strengthen trust and confidence in legal services?
2. Do you support the OLC's draft strategic objective to improve user experiences by delivering fair, timely and proportionate complaint resolution?
3. Do you support the OLC's draft strategic objective to create an ombudsman service fit for the future?
4. Do you have any comments on the enabling functions that support the delivery of the 2027-30 strategy, and their areas of focus?
5. Do you have any other comments on the draft OLC Strategy for 2027-30?

2. Draft OLC strategy: summary

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Office for Legal Complaints 2027-30 draft Strategy</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Purpose – why LeO exists</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">To deliver fair and impartial resolution of consumer service complaints against regulated legal service providers, and to use insight from our work to drive improvements in legal services and strengthen trust and confidence in the regulated legal sector.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Vision 2030 – what success looks like</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">The independent Legal Ombudsman will underpin consumer confidence in legal services. As a trusted and influential partner to the regulated legal sector, it strengthens the profession by advancing high-quality complaint resolution and sharing insight-led learning.

At the heart of a digitally-enabled, agile and innovative organisation, we will continue to deliver fair, impartial, proportionate and evidence-based outcomes.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Strategic objectives</th></tr>
<tr><td>Maximise LeO’s insights, expertise and tools to help strengthen trust and confidence in legal services</td><td>Improve user experiences through fair, timely and proportionate complaint resolution</td><td>Create an ombudsman service fit for the future</td></tr>
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<tr><th>2027/28</th><th>2028/29</th><th>2029/30</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mobilise and deliver</td><td>Scale and embed</td><td>Deliver our vision</td></tr>
</table>

3. OLC Strategy Framework for 2027-2030

In this section we set out the context for the OLC's new strategy for LeO, and the case for the transformation it is seeking to make to the LeO scheme.

We define LeO's purpose, our Vision 2030, and the three strategic objectives to deliver it.

Subsequent sections will look at each of the three objectives in turn, providing the outcomes we are aiming to achieve, and indicative pathways to their fulfilment across each year of the new strategy period.

3.1 Context and case for change

Why now?

- ✓ Demand for Legal Ombudsman services is systemically and rapidly increasing, significantly outpacing operational gains and stretching the current operating model beyond sustainability.
- ✓ Consumer behaviour and expectations are being reshaped by advances in digital technology and AI. These changes are creating new opportunities to improve accessibility and inclusion, while also influencing the nature, complexity and volume of complaints. LeO must evolve alongside these societal shifts, ensuring its services remain accessible, trusted and effective in a rapidly changing environment.
- ✓ The Legal Ombudsman has a significant opportunity to increase its impact beyond individual complaint resolution. By making greater use of its data, insight, learning and decisions, and strengthening its relationships with regulators and the wider legal sector, LeO can therefore work proactively to improve first-tier complaint handling, address the root causes of complaints, prevent avoidable demand and contribute to better outcomes for consumers across the legal services system.
- ✓ Stakeholder expectations – including those of government, regulators, legal service providers and consumers – are converging around sustainability, prevention and digital enablement.
- ✓ Complementing and underpinning these, there is an equal expectation that LeO should demonstrate a clear and evidence-based approach to value for money, and balance ambition with affordability, capacity and risk.

- ✓ In a constrained funding environment, there is a clear imperative to shift from a levy-dependent scale-up model towards one that is digitally-enabled, preventative and proportionate.
- ✓ Incremental efficiency and short-term demand management remain necessary but are insufficient on their own; whole-service transformation is required.

3.2 Purpose

Why LeO exists

To deliver fair and impartial resolution of consumer service complaints against regulated legal service providers, and to use insight from our work to drive improvements in legal services and strengthen trust and confidence in the regulated legal sector.

3.3 Vision 2030

What success looks like

"The independent Legal Ombudsman will underpin consumer confidence in legal services. As a trusted and influential partner to the regulated legal sector, it strengthens the profession by advancing high-quality complaint resolution and sharing insight-led learning.

"At the heart of a digitally enabled, agile and innovative organisation, we will continue to deliver fair, impartial, proportionate and evidence-based outcomes."

3.4 Strategic Objectives

What we will achieve

Strategic objectives		
Maximising LeO's insights, expertise and tools to help strengthen trust and confidence in legal services	Improving user experiences by delivering fair, timely and proportionate complaint resolution	Creating an ombudsman service fit for the future

4. Objectives, outcomes and pathways to delivery

4.1 Strategic Objective:

Maximising LeO's insights, expertise and tools to help strengthen trust and confidence in legal services

This objective brings together LeO's role in improving first-tier complaint handling, sharing learning from its casework and decisions, and helping the sector respond to the root causes of failures. It reflects a contribution model: LeO cannot strengthen confidence in legal services alone. But it can use its evidence, expertise, tools and relationships to help providers and regulators to improve complaint handling and service quality, to prevent avoidable complaints, and to address emerging issues. Collectively, these improvements will help to strengthen consumer trust and confidence in using legal services.

By 2030, this means:

- LeO's insights, expertise and tools are used by providers and regulators to improve first-tier complaint handling, strengthen service quality and prevent avoidable complaints
- LeO's Model Complaints Resolution Procedure is increasingly recognised as a foundational standard of good practice in the legal sector
- Ombudsman decisions are used as a source of authoritative learning, clearly communicating LeO's approach to fairness, remedies and good complaint handling
- LeO's data and internal processes support the timely and effective surfacing and sharing of emerging risks, actionable insights and root causes
- Regulators, legal service providers, sector representative bodies and consumer organisations regard LeO as a trusted partner and a respected source of insight about the sector
- Users of regulated legal services have greater confidence that poor service can be challenged and resolved fairly
- A sector culture that increasingly values complaints as a source of learning, insight and continuous improvement

Indicative delivery pathway

The milestones shown below illustrate an indicative pathway towards the fulfilment of the 2030 outcomes across the three years of the strategy period. Where appropriate, more detailed commitments, delivery plans and measures will be set out in each year's Business Plan and Budget.

Year 1:

- Undertake targeted engagement with regulators, representative bodies and priority provider groups to support early adoption of the MCRP
- Strengthen data quality, systems and analytical capability to enable identification of root causes, systemic issues and emerging risks
- Define and launch a clear learning and insight offer and underpinning operating model, including the expanded publication of Ombudsman decisions
- Establish structured intelligence-sharing arrangements with key regulators and oversight bodies
- Use an evidence-led approach to engage with service providers to focus support and improvement activity where it is most needed
- Begin to promote a sector narrative that positions complaints as a source of learning and service improvement

Year 2:

- Drive wider adoption and practical implementation of the MCRP, supported by targeted guidance, training and engagement in high-impact areas
- Increase the use of Ombudsman decisions as a source of practical learning and improvement
- Embed consistent internal processes for generating, sharing and acting on insight, with shorter feedback loops and more regular outputs
- Deliver a more mature, joined-up suite of products and services linking insight to practical tools, training, support and guidance for providers
- Deepen collaboration through more systematic, routine sharing of intelligence to support regulatory activity and risk identification
- Support and amplify a shift in sector behaviour, with increasing appreciation of the role of complaints in continuous improvement

Year 3:

- Establish the MCRP as a recognised standard for good complaint-handling practice, with evidence of adoption and practical use across the sector
- Demonstrate a mature, sustainable insight function that consistently surfaces actionable insights and informs internal and external decision-making
- Evidence that LeO's Ombudsman decisions, insight and learning products are widely used and valued, with clear impact on provider practice and sector learning
- Demonstrate a sustained role as a trusted partner and respected source of insight for regulators, providers, sector representative bodies and consumer organisations
- Evidence a positive shift in sector attitudes and behaviours, including greater willingness to learn from complaints and improve services

4.2 Strategic Objective:

Improving user experiences by delivering fair, timely and proportionate complaint resolution

This objective focuses on the experience and outcomes of people who use the Legal Ombudsman, including both individual consumers and legal service providers. It is about ensuring complaints are resolved fairly, consistently and as early as possible, whilst recognising that different complaints require different levels of intervention. By resolving more complaints at the earliest appropriate stage, reducing unnecessary delay and complexity, and targeting resource where it has the greatest impact, LeO will deliver a service that is accessible, responsive and trusted by all those who rely on it.

By 2030, this means:

- A service model capable of adapting to changes in the volume, complexity and risk profile of complaints
- Decisions that are timely, consistent and proportionate
- More complaints resolved earlier, with minimum formality
- Prioritised investigations for higher risk complaints where the need or impact is greatest
- Services that are accessible, inclusive and centred on the reasonable needs of users
- Strong confidence in the resolutions we deliver

Indicative delivery pathway

The milestones shown below illustrate an indicative pathway towards the fulfilment of the 2030 outcomes across the three years of the strategy period. Where appropriate, more detailed commitments, delivery plans and measures will be set out in each year's Business Plan and Budget.

Year 1:

- Define the skills and capacity needed to deliver a high-quality digital service
- Establish clear measures of outcomes and impact for consumers and providers
- Begin phased implementation of a new service model to improve how complaints are handled
- Simplify and improve processes to reduce delay and complexity
- Adopt a risk prioritisation for casework

- Begin developing improved digital services to support how users interact and self-serve
- Implement our scheme rule and case fee changes to reduce customer journey times and deliver more informal resolution-focused complaint handling

Year 2:

- Implement the initial phases of the new operating model, delivering a more consistent, transparent and efficient service for consumers and providers
- Introduce new digital channels that simplify how complaints are brought to LeO and improve accessibility for all users
- Provide enhanced digital case management capabilities, enabling consumers and legal service providers to interact with and track their cases online
- Establish the foundations of the future service, embedding new ways of working and building organisational capability to support sustained improvement

Year 3:

- Resolve complaints proportionately and significantly more quickly through earlier intervention, simplification and improved use of insight and technology
- Operate a sustainable service that can meet projected incoming demand of approximately 21,000 complaints, while maintaining quality, fairness and independence
- Deliver a mature operating model that is digitally enabled, data-informed and capable of adapting to changing customer expectations and demand
- Provide an end-to-end service that offers a seamless experience across digital and non-digital channels
- Use intelligence and learning derived from complaints to support improvement across the legal sector and improve outcomes for consumers

4.3 Strategic Objective:

Creating an ombudsman service fit for the future

This objective focuses on ensuring LeO has the capability, capacity and resilience required to deliver its ambitions over the long term. It recognises that improving complaint resolution, strengthening sector learning and responding to changing demand will require more than incremental improvement. Through transformation of its systems, processes, technology, workforce capability and organisational culture, LeO will build a modern, agile and sustainable ombudsman service that is able to deliver greater impact, respond to future challenges and provide lasting value for consumers, providers and the wider sector.

By 2030, this means:

- A service model that supports both efficient complaint resolution and an effective insight, learning and prevention role across the legal services sector
- Equipping LeO with the capability, controls and culture needed for success
- A redesigned end-to-end operating model across assessment, early resolution, investigation and decision-making
- An agile, transparent and resilient service that can respond to changing demand without reducing quality or public confidence
- Digital, data, automation and AI embedded where they add value, improving efficiency, insights, accessibility and customer outcomes rather than adding unnecessary complexity
- A future-ready workforce, with strengthened capability in leadership, digital and continuous improvement, embedded within a culture that supports innovation, accountability and change
- Integrated systems and clear end-to-end ownership
- Safe, well-governed change that protects operational delivery

Indicative delivery pathway

The milestones shown below illustrate an indicative pathway towards the fulfilment of the 2030 outcomes across the three years of the strategy period. Where appropriate, more detailed commitments, delivery plans and measures will be set out in each year's Business Plan and Budget.

Year 1:

- Begin phased implementation of the redesigned operating model
- Introduce early service model changes and priority transformation initiatives
- Begin deployment of enabling digital, data, automation and AI capabilities

- Implement initial organisational, governance, people and cultural changes
- Establish benefits tracking and delivery assurance against the roadmap

Year 2:

- Scale the redesigned operating model across the organisation
- Embed redesigned systems, processes, governance and accountability structures
- Expand the insights, learning and prevention model
- Strengthen workforce capability, leadership effectiveness and continuous improvement culture

Year 3:

- Embed the transformed operating model as business as usual
- Evaluate delivery against agreed success measures
- Continuously improve and adapt the operating model to respond to changing demand and organisational needs
- Embed insight-led demand reduction and sector influence
- Demonstrate longer-term value for money, sustainability and confidence in the model

5. Enabling functions

We have identified a range of enabling functions that will play a critical role in delivering LeO's strategic objectives by providing the capability, systems, governance and assurance that underpin effective organisational performance.

This includes developing a skilled and engaged workforce, fostering a positive and accountable organisational culture, and building strong partnerships and relationships across the legal sector and wider stakeholders to support delivery and influence improvement.

Through effective use of data and digital capabilities, alongside robust governance and risk management, enabling functions will support informed decision-making, drive efficiencies and enhance service quality. Together, they will ensure LeO operates with resilience, transparency and a clear focus on value for money, enabling sustainable delivery of our strategic ambitions.

Progress towards the strategy will be supported through delivery plans for each enabling function, translating long-term objectives into clear priorities, milestones and measurable outcomes, while providing flexibility to respond to changing risks, opportunities and organisational needs.

This section looks in turn at the six enabling functions we believe critical to the successful achievement of the strategy:

- People and Culture
- Relationships and Partnerships
- Data and Intelligence
- Digital Systems
- Governance
- Transformation Programme

5.1 People and Culture

Our People and Culture approach is built on two core pillars:

- **Raising the Bar of the organisation**; and
- **Operational Excellence in people policy, process and practice**.

Together, they position our people as a key driver of organisational performance, service quality and long-term impact.

At its heart, the approach is people-centred, focused on attracting and developing talent, enabling confident and accountable leadership, and building the culture and capability needed to support delivery. It supports delivery by strengthening organisational capability and embedding the systems, governance and insight needed to drive consistent performance and high-quality service.

Over the strategy period, we will strengthen our approach to contribution, growth and development; build collective leadership and readiness for change; and create an inclusive colleague experience that supports wellbeing, belonging and voice. This will help us attract, retain and develop the people and skills we need for the future.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Continuous Improvement run throughout as critical enablers, ensuring our culture is inclusive, resilient, and focused on delivering excellence.

By aligning individual potential with organisational ambition, and making effective use of data, insight and team capability, this approach will help create an environment where our people can thrive and LeO can deliver at its best.

5.2 Relationships and Partnerships

Relationships and partnerships will be central to how LeO achieves its ambitions for better local complaint resolution, stronger sector learning, and greater trust and confidence in legal services. Our position gives us a distinctive view of what complaints reveal about service quality, complaint handling, emerging risks and the experience of users when things go wrong. Our relationships enable us to deliver those insights to where they support practical improvement and effect positive change.

We will strengthen structured engagement with the Legal Services Board, legal service regulators, representative bodies and consumer organisations, using our data, insight and expertise to support effective regulation, sector learning and earlier identification of systemic issues. Through purposeful intelligence-sharing and regular dialogue, we will build our role as a trusted, independent and authoritative source of evidence about what complaints show across the sector.

We will work collaboratively with regulators and sector partners to explore opportunities to achieve smoother customer journeys across the regulatory system – reducing unnecessary complexity, and improving signposting, referral pathways and

coordination between different organisations where that would result in more effective and efficient services for consumers.

We will also deepen our relationships with legal service providers and their representatives, supporting wider adoption and practical use of the Model Complaints Resolution Procedure. Through targeted engagement, guidance, training and learning resources, we will help providers use complaints as tools for improvement, reducing avoidable escalation and improving outcomes for both consumers and providers.

By 2030, our relationships and partnerships should be clearly contributing to our impact: regulators using our insight, providers improving first-tier complaint handling, and consumer-facing partners recognising LeO's role in strengthening confidence that poor service can be challenged and resolved fairly. In this way, relationships and partnerships will act as a practical transmission mechanism between LeO's casework, sector learning and the broader trust and confidence outcomes set out in this strategy.

5.3 Data and Intelligence

Our Data and Intelligence enables an intelligence-led organisation, where trusted, accessible information supports evidence-based decision-making at every level. It positions data as a core asset, improving performance, outcomes and delivery of our statutory role.

The approach focuses on strengthening the quality and availability of decision data, providing a clear, joined-up view of operational, financial and performance activity. This enables better prioritisation, resource allocation and performance management.

Data also drives automation and efficiency by enabling data-led workflows, reducing manual effort and improving consistency. This supports increased productivity and a more scalable operating model.

A strong focus on insight and learning ensures that trends, outcomes and systemic issues are understood and acted upon both within LeO and across the wider legal services landscape. By turning complaint data, casework evidence and customer experience into actionable insight, we will support organisational improvement, better first-tier complaint handling, earlier identification of emerging risks, and stronger sector learning.

Aligned with Governance, the approach ensures data is managed with clear accountability, robust standards and appropriate assurance. Working alongside

Digital Systems and People and Culture, it builds data capability and confidence across teams.

Overall, Data and Intelligence enables better decisions, greater efficiency and a high-performing organisation, supporting delivery of our strategic objectives.

5.4 Digital Systems

Our Digital Systems approach supports a modern, resilient and ethical digital environment that enhances organisational performance, improves service delivery and enables our people to operate at their best. It is underpinned by a *digital-first* ambition, ensuring systems, data and processes are designed around user need, efficiency and long-term sustainability.

At its core, the approach focuses on reliable, secure and well-integrated platforms that simplify work, reduce manual effort and enable teams to focus on higher-value activity.

Through automation, accessible data and user-centred design, Digital Systems increases productivity, improves consistency and strengthens service quality.

Aligned closely with Governance, Digital Systems ensures clear accountability, robust risk management and effective oversight of the digital estate. It establishes strong data and system standards, supports transparency and assurance, and prioritises investment based on strategic value. This enables better decision-making through timely, reliable insight into performance, risk and operations.

An ethical and responsible approach is embedded throughout, ensuring data is protected, systems are secure, and new technologies – such as AI – are adopted in a transparent and proportionate way, consistent with our public service obligations.

Working alongside People and Culture, Digital Systems equips teams with the tools, skills and support needed to succeed, strengthening capability, confidence and continuous improvement.

Overall, Digital Systems acts as a key enabler of organisational performance, bringing together technology, data and governance to create a more efficient, productive and future-ready organisation.

5.5 Governance

Governance at LeO acts as a critical enabling function, providing the structure, clarity and assurance required for the organisation to deliver its strategic objectives effectively. It supports delivery by establishing clear accountabilities across leadership levels, embedding a consistent assurance pipeline from operational activity through to the Executive Team and Board, and ensuring that performance, risk, financial and transformation information is brought together to inform decision-making.

Governance plays a direct role in improving outcomes by strengthening operational grip, enabling earlier identification and management of risks, and ensuring that resources and priorities remain aligned to the organisation's strategic objectives. It also underpins delivery of transformation by providing clear governance arrangements, structured oversight and independent scrutiny, ensuring that change programmes are coordinated, risks are actively managed and delivery remains aligned to strategy and value for money.

Overall, governance enables stronger organisational performance by improving the quality, consistency and transparency of decision-making about strategic trade-offs, ensuring that ambition, affordability, capacity and risk are considered together. This directly supports the achievement of our objectives, while maintaining external confidence in LeO's stewardship of public funds and delivery of its statutory role.

5.6 Transformation Programme

The Transformation Programme acts as a critical enabling function by bringing together strategic change into a single, coherent and deliverable programme. It provides the structure, coordination and discipline needed to translate strategic ambition into sustained organisational change, ensuring that activity is aligned to priorities, balanced with business-as-usual delivery, and focused on measurable outcomes. Initially, the programme will support discovery, design and implementation planning, providing the evidence, governance and delivery framework needed to inform longer-term change and annual delivery priorities.

It strengthens visibility of priorities, dependencies and sequencing across change activity, enabling more informed decision-making and reducing fragmentation. Through structured discovery, clear scoping and early cross-functional engagement, the programme supports the design of changes that are realistic, deliverable and responsive to user need, while identifying risks and opportunities early to reduce rework and improve delivery confidence.

Aligned closely with governance and assurance, the programme establishes consistent oversight of delivery, benefits realisation and risk management. As strategic changes are approved and implemented, ownership will progressively transfer into business-as-usual delivery through annual plans and established management arrangements. This approach enables LeO to deliver change at pace while maintaining control, protecting service quality and supporting long-term sustainability.