

Meeting	OLC Board	Agenda Item No.	4 127.3
Date of meeting	15 June 2023	Time required	110 mins
Title	2024-27 OLC Strategy		
Sponsor	Elisabeth Davies (OLC Chair)/Paul McFadden (Chief Ombudsman)/ Laura Stroppolo (Head of Programme Management and Assurance)/ Stephanie Godbold (Stakeholder and External Engagement Manager)		
Status	OFFICIAL		
Executive summary			
<p>At April's meeting the Board received an update on work underway to develop the OLC's next strategy, which will run from 2024 to 2027. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an OLC Board workshop in February 2023, LeO's executive team met in April 2023 to further develop thinking around future ambitions for the Legal Ombudsman, potential opportunities and challenges. • Planning was also underway for the internal and external engagement required to support the strategy development process – recognising the need for early and meaningful consultation with LeO's people and key stakeholders, including the LSB, ahead of the formal public consultation process in the autumn. <p>The attached document represents the first iteration of the draft strategy that has been presented to the OLC Board, following the discussions and input outlined above.</p> <p>Views and feedback from Board members are invited on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'strategy on a page', which focuses on the OLC's vision for LeO and proposed strategic objectives, with rationale for these; • The end product we will be aiming for, including agreeing in advance the likely levels of detail; • Engagement with the LSB, following a meeting between the Chief Ombudsman and OLC Chair and LSB on 12 June; • The approach to and timings of wider internal and external consultation processes. <p>Following this discussion, LeO's team will further refine the strategy and engagement plans. A further iteration and update will be provided at July's Board meeting.</p>			
Recommendation / action required			
The OLC Board is asked to note the update and provide feedback on the areas outlined above.			
Equality Diversity and Inclusion			
EDI implications	No		
Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol)			
Paragraph reference	Fol exemption and summary		
N/A	N/A		

Strategy on a page

Purpose and what LeO is here to do					
Improving legal services through giving voice to learning from complaints about legal service providers					
Vision and where LeO is heading					
A leading Ombudsman with every complaint driving better legal services					
Strategic objective for LeO's service			Strategic objective for LeO's impact		
LeO delivers effective and fair complaints resolution and an excellent customer experience			LeO's independent voice and experience of complaints drives improvement in legal services		
Aims			Aims		
We will be inclusive and accessible to everyone who needs us	We will deliver high-quality outcomes at the right point for each complaint	We will provide an efficient, responsive and flexible service	We will build LeO's profile and impact as an independent voice for improvement	We will share learning and insights that support improvements in the legal sector	We will use our experience to raise standards of complaints handling in the legal profession
Enablers					
People					
Resources					
Systems					
Relationships					

<p>Context and framing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legal Ombudsman is at a positive and pivotal stage and is ready to begin reshaping its future. • For the last three years the OLC’s focus has been on reducing the backlog of complaints waiting for an outcome from LeO. Looking ahead, our priority will be on (re)positioning LeO as an Ombudsman with a stronger, confident and more assertive voice. This means moving from the language of recovery to ‘resetting’ and ‘evolving’. • Our unstinting focus remains on customers’ experience of LeO – both users and providers of legal services. We will ensure the improvements LeO has made are sustained and built on, striking the right balance between ambition and realism. • We will use data more intelligently to shape LeO’s decisions and activities, making best use of the untapped resource that LeO already has access to. • LeO will have renewed confidence to assert what’s working and what’s not in legal services – and has high ambitions for the positive impact it can have on the sector. To effect change, it will work in step with the Legal Services Board and the Legal Services Consumer Panel, with more pro-active engagement with consumers, providers, regulators and representatives. • We’re not starting from a blank sheet of paper – eg the Hub Strategy, the EDI Strategy – but the context has changed. This new strategy is being developed against the backdrop of an ongoing crisis in the cost of living, and rapid technological change. We are alive to the potential impact of these factors on legal services and the nature of legal disputes LeO sees, which will continue to evolve until and beyond 2027
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>Improving legal services through giving voice to learning from complaints about legal service providers</p>
<p>ADR/best practice framework</p>	<p>Ombudsman Association strategic position statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ombudsman schemes should have sufficient funding for the proper discharge of their role, and remain free-of-charge to those bringing complaints.</i> • <i>The Ombudsman should be able to provide effective remedies including, where appropriate, providing systemic remedies and the power to follow up or monitor recommendations.</i> • <i>Ombudsman schemes should share information wherever possible to help the wider sector learn from complaints handling, and improve the provision of services</i> <p>The Ombudsman Association Guiding Principles for the Recognition of Ombudsman Schemes (under consultation): <i>“The Ombudsman Association (OA) will recognise a body as an Ombudsman scheme if: (a) the body’s core role is to investigate and resolve, determine or make recommendations with regard to complaints about maladministration, unfair treatment, poor service or other inequitable conduct by those subject to investigation, using learning from those complaints to drive improvement”</i></p>

Statutory/regulatory alignment (while never “capture”)	<p>The OLC’s strategy must pull in the same direction as the LSB’s regulatory objectives, its 10 -year strategy for the sector and annual plans, and the complementary workplan of the Legal Services Consumer Panel.</p> <p>Legal Services Act 2007</p> <p><i>(2)The OLC must, so far as is reasonably practicable, act in a way—</i> <i>(a)which is compatible with the regulatory objectives, and</i> <i>(b)which it considers most appropriate for the purpose of meeting those objectives.</i> <i>(3)The OLC must have regard to any principles appearing to it to represent the best practice of those who administer ombudsman schemes.</i></p>
Vision	<p style="text-align: center;">A leading Ombudsman with every complaint driving better legal services</p>
What this means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every complaint matters. Each is an opportunity for LeO to add value to individual consumers and service providers, and to use their feedback to improve and evolve what we do for everyone. It’s also an opportunity to gain insights into what’s going wrong in legal services, and to feed this back to improve the sector for the future. • It also goes to the heart of what we offer as an employer – our people have the chance to make a difference every day, both to the parties involved in individual complaints and in contributing to wider improvements in the legal sector. • There is no hierarchy: the dual aspects of the vision have equal focus and weight. • The fact this is a vision – where LeO needs to be, versus where it is now – reflects journey we need to go on to make it a reality. At the moment, we’re not doing enough with our data and intelligence, or using our independent voice as strongly as we need to. • It’s tempting to make general aspirations about wanting to improve [fairness in] the sector (cf SRA’s strategy) – but this roots the OLC’s vision firmly in complaints, which is where we have a unique insight and potential impact. This avoids perceived overreach and ambiguity.

Strategic objectives	LeO's service: LeO delivers effective and fair complaints resolution and an excellent customer experience			LeO's impact: LeO's independent voice and experience of complaints drives better outcomes for those relying on legal services		
Aims	We will be inclusive and accessible to everyone who needs us	We will deliver high-quality outcomes at the right point for each complaint	We will provide an efficient and responsive service	We will build LeO's profile and impact as an independent voice for improvement	We will share learning and insights that support improvements in the legal sector	We will use our experience to raise standards of complaints handling in the legal profession
What this means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining customers' expectations throughout their journey with LeO. • Focusing on the earliest appropriate resolution . • Sustaining substantially reduced waiting times. • Implementing a streamlined process, continuing our evolution from 'one-size-fits-all' to a personal approach. • Fully integrating systems and using technology at all points of the customer journey, enhancing processes and enriching data and insights about customers' experience. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring this work is adequately funded, reflecting its centrality to LeO's role as an Ombudsman. • Building effective strategic relationships to maximise our impact. • Refreshing the forums and channels through which LeO shares insight, working closely with the legal sector and other stakeholders to define what they value and how they want to receive it. • Ensuring we have systems and technology to deliver our ambitions, enhancing processes and enriching data and insights about the nature of complaints and their resolutions. • Having the confidence to give difficult messages where things need to change • Relatedly, greater use of LeO's powers to publish decisions in the public interest. • Ensuring 'perfect' isn't the enemy of the good – we will need to test interventions and refine our approach. 		

Strategic objectives	LeO's service: LeO delivers effective and fair complaints resolution and an excellent customer experience	LeO's impact: LeO's independent voice and experience of complaints drives better outcomes for those relying on legal services
What this doesn't mean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making short-term gains at the expense of sustainable improvement. • Investing in technology and tools because they're the latest thing without carefully considering their benefits and potential impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promising to deliver what we can't do, or focus on certain interventions over others where others may have a bigger impact. • Promising budget changes and savings that will leave this work under-resourced. • Limiting our ambitions because of the possibility of challenge or because we can't bring everyone along on this journey. • That we will necessarily see a decrease in complaint volumes; in raising our profile we may see more and/or different complaints.
Indicative outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher customer satisfaction • Fewer (upheld) complaints about LeO's own service • Sustained lower waiting times • Higher quality scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not necessarily fewer complaints – but potentially a positive shift towards complaints being resolved at the earliest appropriate point, with or without LeO's intervention. • Raising and setting standards in tier one complaints handling, resulting in changes in the nature and complexity of complaints at first or second tier - reflecting LeO interventions. In particular, LeO may see more complex cases, if more straightforward issues are resolved at first tier. • Greater awareness of LeO, its value and its impact, as evidenced through stakeholder surveys and feedback. • Over time, fewer 'silent sufferers' and greater consumer confidence about what to do when they have a complaint. • Shorter timeframe for insight-sharing (from trend or case study insight to reporting). • Falling cost of complaints to the legal profession.

	People	Resources	Systems	Relationships
Enablers and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative and inclusive culture that will recognise the degree of change required... • Talented people attracted/retained by strong EVP • Right blend of technical and 'soft' skills • Blend 'resolutions' and 'learning and insight', moving away from siloed roles • EDI/vulnerability expertise • Diverse workforce reflecting our customer base • Pathways for both operations and corporate staff • Building on future ways of working strategy • Being creative about what we offer within constraints of public sector • Candidates' job market • Inflexibility over pay and benefit offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater share of resources to insight, impact and engagement • Sustainable funding of learning/training opportunities • Future balance of case fees and levy • Opportunities for a three-year strategic funding settlement • Asking for more in a challenging economic environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New/enhanced customer engagement channels • Capturing customer feedback • Robust BI/MI systems • Emphasis on better data. Exploring and engaging in Ombudsman sector investments in data led approach • Better capture of complaint insight • Emphasis on flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature ongoing dialogue with profession • Strategic relationships with regulators • Shared ownership and aligned messaging by regulators and LeO on a 'valuing complaints' and learning culture • Strengthening relationship with LSB • Strong partnership with LSCP • Relationships with front-line consumer bodies • Learning/sharing with other ADR bodies and OA