



The Law Society

# **The Legal Ombudsman's Business plan 2013/14**

The Law Society response

1 March 2013



## **The Law Society response to the Legal Ombudsman's Business plan 2013/14**

While we have some concerns about LeO's wish to extend its jurisdiction in a year when it is taking on an unknown quantum, in the form of claims management companies' (CMCs) complaints, we are pleased at the focus on improving quality and ensuring knowledge is captured and shared.

### **Approach to strategy**

In general, we agree with the context that LeO has identified for its strategy. We would query some of the assumptions used to build the strategy. For instance, only a small number of Alternative Business Structures (ABS) have entered the market and many are solicitors firms taking the opportunity to promote non-lawyers or seek outside investment. We think that the impact of ABS will be limited compared to other factors such as changes to legal aid. Furthermore, we do not believe that changes to LeO's timeframes will have a significant impact over the next three years. We would, however, agree that the impact of handling complaints regarding CMCs is unknown and may be significant for LeO. We would consider this a major risk to LeO's operation.

We have been impressed with the information provided by LeO on its performance. We are pleased to see that LeO is raising its KPIs for timeliness. We welcome the focus on knowledge management as part of the drive to improve quality. We recognise that providing an overall budget is difficult while uncertainty remains about the CMC work. However, we are pleased that in relation to the core jurisdiction the cost target will be reduced.

### **Business Plan**

#### *Operational effectiveness*

We are pleased to see an emphasis on continuous improvement. We are unclear as to what is meant by 'external customer service accreditation' and we would welcome more information on this. We are concerned that LeO is planning to publish a customer service framework. Solicitors are already required to meet certain requirements relating to client service and there is a risk that these may conflict with any separate framework. We would hope that LeO will provide more information on this proposal and ensure it works closely, both with the profession and the SRA on any such framework.

#### *Refine and refresh our infrastructure*

We recognise the need to continually review IT needs. However, as a new organisation we would not expect LeO to need a wholesale update of its IT system. Given the costs and involved, any updates should be kept to a minimum.

### *Finance*

We are not clear of a need to review funding models for voluntary jurisdiction. If LeO is asked to use its voluntary jurisdiction, it should model funding mechanisms at that point, based on the jurisdiction in question.

### *Raising awareness and sharing evidence from complaints*

We welcome the statistics that LeO provides on complaints and hope that LeO will continue to provide this data. We would question the cost benefit of commissioning research on a strategy for extended jurisdiction until it is clear if, and how, LeO's jurisdiction will change.

### *Jurisdictional boundaries*

We are concerned that LeO is looking to increase its jurisdiction, at a time when it is just about to start handling CMC complaints. We would hope that LeO would allow this to bed in before considering any other jurisdictional changes.