



Legal Services Board consultation

Draft Strategic Plan 2015-18 and Business Plan 2015/16

Response by the Junior Lawyers Division of the Law Society of England and Wales

The Junior Lawyers Division of the Law Society of England and Wales (the 'JLD') represents LPC students, LPC graduates, trainee solicitors, and solicitors up to five years qualified. With a membership of approximately 75,000, it is important that we represent our members in all matters likely to affect them currently and/or in the future.

The JLD has reviewed the Legal Services Board ('LSB') 'Draft Strategic Plan 2015-18 and Business Plans 2015/16' (the '**Consultation**') and carefully considered areas where we could provide useful comments to the LSB. We respond with the following:

1. **Paragraph 74:** Within the solicitors profession, there have been some positive reforms to business ownership restrictions. However, some of the more recent proposals (for example, the Solicitors Regulation Authority's ('SRA') recent Separate Business Rule proposal) have been concerning. The key worry is for the protection of the consumer. Whilst we, in theory, agree with removing regulation that unnecessarily restricts sector competition, innovation and growth, it is important that the LSB maintains oversight of these reforms, to ensure that future reforms remain appropriate.
2. **Paragraph 76:** We would like to see the LSB engage with all providers of legal services, with a view to understanding their perception of the regulators. This engagement should focus on how the regulators' changes are positively or negatively affecting the profession. If it was found that the level of changes made by a regulator were confusing the providers of legal services, there should be greater focus on how this confusion can be remedied. We are pleased to see in **paragraph 107** that the LSB will seek views of consumers, providers of legal services, and those that represent them, on the performance of the regulators. However, we note that such research is not listed in **paragraph 111** (and the JLD would like to see it there). It is essential to ensure that trust is maintained in the legal market.
3. **Paragraphs 83 and 89:** The JLD supports the LSB in a renewed focus on understanding the different legal needs of different types of consumers including vulnerable consumers, how they choose to deal with their problems (with or without legal advice) and the reasons why. This is of paramount importance to the profession and access to justice.



4. **Paragraph 83:** The JLD also supports the LSB in a renewed focus on understanding unregulated providers of legal services, including the research proposal described in **paragraph 111** to develop the LSB's understanding of the unregulated legal sector. The JLD would request that this research includes looking into the types of professionals (whether from a legal background or otherwise) in employment or management in this sector. It would be beneficial to consumers to understand the level of legal expertise they can expect when using an unregulated provider. The JLD considers that many of its members who are seeking a training contract may take up work in unregulated legal service providers, unsure as to whether the experience they are gaining in this employment will bring them closer to qualifying as a solicitor.
5. **Paragraph 90:** The JLD supports the LSB in conducting a schematic review into regulators approach to consumer engagement. The JLD would specifically request that the review looks at the extent to which consumers are listened to as part of the decision making process, and the extent to which consumers' views are considered against those of the profession and other stakeholders.
6. **Paragraph 97:** The JLD is well placed to provide thoughts on education and training, and we would welcome being part of the review in 2015/16. We believe this review should take place in this business plan period (rather than 2016/17). Whilst some regulators, including the Law Society and the SRA, are in the middle of significant programmes of change, education and training should be continually reviewed to assess the wider impacts of reform.
7. **Paragraph 98:** The JLD supports the proactive monitoring of the regulators' work on diversity.

The JLD thanks you for taking the time to consider the above.

The Junior Lawyers Division

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Email: juniorlawyers@lawsociety.org.uk