

Annex three: Stakeholder engagement

1. In this section, we outline how we have developed our consultation proposals and impact assessment.
2. We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders prior to the launch of our consultation. Our proposals have generated diverse views from the profession and wider stakeholders interested in this area. This engagement allowed us to explore, understand and develop our consultation policy proposals.
3. In our discussion paper, we began the conversation on how we can improve the information available to consumers of legal services. The paper explored the types of data we could publish through a public register. We received 30 responses from a range of organisations including law firms, the Law Society, local law societies and representative groups. The responses allowed us to identify the following impacts of our early proposals:

Positive	Negative
General support from profession and wider stakeholders to make regulatory data available to consumers	Firms feel that publication of price may subject them to further competitive pressures and as a result there will be likely push back
Limited administrative burden as firms already have in place systems to collect data	Increased burden on firms to publish price
Some firms see commercial advantages in making information available, for example, low levels of complaints can be a sign of quality	Concern that if we publish complaints and enforcement data about regulated firms, this will give a commercial advantage to unregulated providers
Consumer representative bodies suggest that our proposals will have positive impact on consumer choice	Without context, data could be confusing or misleading for consumers and there would be an increased burden on firms

4. We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to inform our consultation proposals.

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- We ran focus groups with members of the public in Birmingham and Derby to seek their views about information types and formats, and to see how they might benefit from having better access to that information.
 - We chaired roundtable meetings with charities and groups representing consumers in Cardiff, London, Birmingham and Leicester to explore barriers that people can experience in trying to access solicitors, and to get views about the ways that better information might make a difference.
 - We met with key organisations representing consumers and their interests, including Citizens Advice, LeO, and the LSCP.
 - We met with representatives of small businesses, including regional Chambers of Commerce and members of the SME Alliance at a roundtable.
 - We ran a roundtable with small businesses owners.
 - We liaised with representatives from the national arm of the Federation of Small Businesses.
5. We also engaged with solicitors and firms we regulate. The views raised have been invaluable in helping us to understand the challenges and opportunities of our proposals. Our engagement has included:
- visits to local law societies across England and Wales and events with our Board members
 - discussions with the Law Society and other professional associations
 - discussions with representative groups, including the Black Solicitors Network and the Sole Practitioners Group.
6. We recognise that many stakeholders will be interested in our proposal that firms delivering certain types of legal services will need to publish details on price. We have carried out research with the profession to help us understand concerns, challenges and benefits of our proposal.

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7. In April 2017, we launched a small online survey to help us explore approaches to price transparency currently used by firms and the challenges they face in publishing price. We received 43 responses from a range of organisations including alternative businesses structures, top 100 firms, sole practitioners and high street practices.
8. We have also carried out a web sweep of regulated firms in May 2017. This exercise gave us an insight into:
 - how many firms have websites
 - availability of pricing information
 - how pricing information is presented to consumers
 - current good practice in price and service stage transparency.
9. We are currently undertaking research into price transparency in the legal services market. This explores how consumers react to different pricing models and price presentations, in order to identify how we can help consumers make the best choices. This project will also help us to gain a better understanding of the challenges and benefits for firms in providing price information.
10. In July 2017, we launched a survey to further explore price transparency. We contacted all the firms we regulate to ask them:
 - whether they advertised prices and, if so, how they did it
 - what were the challenges and barriers of advertising upfront price information to potential clients
 - what were the benefits and risks of different pricing models, such as estimated quotes or fixed fees
 - whether firms gave information to comparison sites.
11. We are currently working on analysing the responses with a view to publishing a report in autumn 2017.

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12. In addition to an online survey, which has already been sent to all SRA regulated firms in July, we have also commissioned external research which focuses on trialling different ways of presenting prices to consumers. The final report for this research will be published in autumn 2017.
13. We have also engaged with our Small Firms and BAME firms virtual reference groups to seek their views on our proposals.