

SRA response

OLC Business Plan and Budget 2021-22: Response of the Solicitors Regulation Authority

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Introduction

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is the regulator of solicitors and law firms in England and Wales. We work to protect members of the public and support the rule of law and the administration of justice. We do this by overseeing all education and training requirements necessary to practise as a solicitor, licensing individuals and firms to practise, setting the standards of the profession and regulating and enforcing compliance against these standards. We are the largest regulator of legal services in England and Wales, covering around 80% of the regulated market. We oversee some 206,000 solicitors and more than 10,000 law firms (correct as of November 2020).

We welcome the opportunity to respond to Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) Business Plan and Budget 2021-22 consultation.

Response to consultation

This has been a difficult year for everyone, including the legal sector, and we like you considered that as we set our own Business Plan for 2020-21 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/business-plans/business-plan/archive/business-plan-2020-2021/>] which similarly recognises the need to be agile and responsive to what is a fast-moving and uncertain picture.

While we do not have any specific comments to make on the individual consultation questions, we would like to highlight those areas where there may be opportunities for further joint working and collaboration, and shared knowledge and experience.

Addressing the core operational work will always be the first objective for regulators and ombudsmen and we welcome the sharp focus you bring to this in your first priority. As ever, we will continue to work closely with your teams to make sure that complaints about those we regulate reach the right organisation and are looked at appropriately and in a timely way. In a similar way, we would be happy to share any experience or insight that would contribute to developing the services you outline in your second priority.

We welcome your proposed priority three on increasing the impact of the learning from casework, contextualising data, greater transparency and improving firms' complaint handling and therefore customer service. Again, this is an area where coordinating work with other key stakeholders on topical issues such as quality indicators and public access to information about firms through Legal Choices will be important.

We look forward to working with you on your priorities, and to meeting and discussing with your new Chief Ombudsman and Chief Operating Officer early this year.