

Early Market Engagement (EME)

Legal Services Board

Research on service delivery

Deadline for responses: Friday 23 Aug 2024

1. Background

The Legal Services Consumer Panel was created by the Legal Services Act 2007.¹ The Panel is an independent arm of the Legal Services Board and is made up of eight non-legal professionals' members whose appointments were approved by the Lord Chancellor.

We provide high quality, evidenced-based advice to the Legal Services Board, to help them make decisions that are shaped around the needs of users. The Panel has a remit to represent the interests of the many different consumers of legal services, but our primary focus are individual and vulnerable consumers.

2. Background to the research

Digital legal services can improve access to justice by making the law more accessible to people. Engaging with a lawyer can feel intimidating and overly complex and traditional methods of administering legal services can create unnecessary barriers particularly for younger generations who may prefer to communicate via email or by other digital means ahead of phone or face-to-face communication methods.

In 2023, our Tracker Survey found that legal service users prefer a hybrid approach to service delivery; they were more likely to be happy communicating face-to-face (76%) for the initial meeting than by telephone (67%) and email (65%). At other stages, consumers were more likely to be happy to use the telephone and email than face-to-face communication.

Since Covid 19, there have been some monumental changes in service delivery. The sudden shift to remote and contactless forced a raft of changes that have largely been embraced by lawyers. There is also some evidence that clients have embraced these changes, with some stating a preference for accessing legal services online, driven by a desire for affordability, efficiency and simplicity.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/part/2/crossheading/consumer-panel>

Whilst many law firms have embraced tech to streamline internal processes, they have been slower to adopt technology which improves the client experience. The regulators are, however, in support of changes that improve clients' experiences, driven partly by the need to plug the access to justice gap.

Regulators are gearing up for more Sandboxes (avenues for providers to test and develop digital tools without as much regulatory burden). And there is clearer guidance from the oversight regulator (Legal Services Board) on the role and responsibility of front-line regulators to promote and support technology and innovation, some of which is bound to include digital solutions to address the access to justice gap.

3. Research objective

With the increased use of digital platforms/ tools, we seek to commission research to understand users' experiences and perceptions of digital services in family, probate and conveyancing law.

4. We intend for the research to address the following questions:

1. Explore whether consumers have a choice over the use of service delivery models on offer and any consequences around this.
2. Explore whether digital services are of sufficient quality (consumer satisfaction and perception).
3. Explore whether and how risk factors are identified and addressed e.g. with vulnerable consumers with consumers in vulnerable situations
4. Explore whether there are demographic differences that should be taken into consideration by legal services providers.
5. Explore at what stage/s do consumers want elements of face to face, if at all, and when they are happy to wholly use digital tools. Does this differ across the areas of law identified?
6. What are some of the reasons consumers give for preference for face to face and digital tools?
7. How can consumers preferences be reflected in the design of digital services?
8. If consumers note a preference for face to face, what are some of the reasons they give for their preference.

An added benefit of the research would be to identify the following:

9. Identify and outline the different types of digital tools/platforms used in the areas of law identified above.
10. What are consumers' experiences of tools like zoom vs telephone and does this make a difference?
11. Does rural location have an impact on consumers preferences?
12. Are there any cost implications/benefit for consumers to consider?

We are keen to explore what is working or not working well for consumers, areas of opportunities, as well as any risks or improvements in the use of digital tools in these areas of law.

The Panel also wants to better understand when face-to-face is important to consumers, when wholly digital options are suitable, or when a hybrid approach should be adopted.

The Panel wants to explore these issues to enhance and support the development of digital solutions, as well as identify areas for improvements or opportunities to exploit further.

5. Approach

We are open to the methods used but anticipate some form of qualitative fieldwork to collect new data which may complement existing data and insights.

6. Outputs

We would like a detailed report of approximately 40-50 pages in Word format, organised around the key themes outlined in the research questions above.

A guide is provided below:

- What is currently available for consumers/possible gaps
- Impact of digital services on consumers
- Consumers preferences and appetite for services that meets their needs
- Consumers understanding of risks and how to mitigate risks
- Improvement that can be made to enhance uptake and build consumer confidence
- Any 'low hanging fruit' i.e. high impact/low cost/easy to implement ideas

7. Budget

The budget is yet to be confirmed; we are seeking a quote for commissioning this research project.

8. Timeline

We plan for the research to start early -mid November and conclude no later than mid March, as this work must be completed in the financial year 2024/25.

9. Key Considerations

Suppliers should keep the following points in mind when giving responses:

- **Capacity and Capability:** Can your organisation deliver research services at scale and within the required timelines?
- **Methodology:** What approaches or methodologies can you offer?
- **Data Security:** How do you ensure the confidentiality and security of data, especially when dealing with sensitive information?

- **Previous Experience:** Provide examples of previous research projects your organisation has completed that are similar in scope or subject matter.
- **Costs:**
 - **Cost Structure:** How do you price your research services (e.g., fixed price, hourly)? If possible, provide a quote for the project, detailing the costs for the priority questions (section 4, questions 1-8) and the additional ones (questions 9-12).
 - **Budget Flexibility:** How do you accommodate budget constraints or changes in project scope? Can you offer scalable solutions that adjust to different budgetary requirements?

10. Contact Information

Suppliers interested in participating in this EME are requested to submit their responses by **Friday 23rd Aug** to:

tenders@legalservicesboard.org.uk

11. Next Steps

After reviewing the feedback received through this EME, we will decide on the most appropriate procurement approach.

12. Disclaimer

This EME is not a formal procurement process and does not constitute a commitment to procure any services. We reserve the right to use the information provided in this engagement to inform its procurement strategy. Participation in this EME does not offer any advantage or guarantee in the future procurement process.