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CLC Response to Consultation on the Legal Ombudsman's Strategy and Business Plan 2017-2020

The CLC is grateful for the opportunity to comment on your Strategy and Business Plan 2017-2020, which we have reviewed with interest.

We will focus on four key points.

1. We oppose the extension of LeO's jurisdiction to 'unauthorised' providers

We have very serious concerns about this possibility. It is not clear how such an extension of LeO's work would be funded. We note the undertaking that funds from the levy on front line regulators will not be used to fund exploration of the options around unauthorised providers, but it is not clear how that is to be guaranteed. More fundamentally though, bringing unauthorised providers into LeO's jurisdiction risks creating considerable consumer confusion and blurring of boundaries between regulated and unregulated providers of legal services that is damaging to the legal services market and consumer protection. We therefore hope that LeO will resist such a change.

2. We very much welcome the objective to promote best practice in the handling of first tier complaints

We have valued closer working with LeO over the last eighteen months and we are looking forward to our next joint webinar later this month. We hope to find new ways to engage the regulated community with LeO to make further improvements to the handling of first tier complaints.

3. We have concerns about the basis of the levy

Given the challenges around complaints handling data that LeO is currently addressing, there may in the past have been miscalculations of the size of the levy on individual front line regulators. We look for reassurance on that point soon and for correction of any past errors. We note the need for LeO to achieve a 15% efficiency target by 2019-20. In view of the high unit cost of complaints handled by LeO currently, we hope that this can be exceeded so that the burden on the regulated community can be reduced.

4. IT and data

The integrity and accuracy of LeO's data is vital and we have welcomed conversations with the team about that. We are very keen to work with LeO to improve data collection and reporting.

Ends