

Minutes of the SLCC Consumer Panel

Monday 17 June 2019

Venue: The Stamp Office, 10 – 14 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG

Present: Shaben Begum (SB), Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
 Jane Williams (JW), QMU
 Gillian Fyfe (GF), Citizens Advice Scotland
 Louise Johnson (LJ), Scottish Women’s Aid
 (Speakerphone) Miriam Simpson (MS), Competition & Markets Authority

Mark Paxton, Interim Director, Public Policy, SLCC
 Ali Marron, Oversight Manager, SLCC
 Susan Williams, Best Practice Advisor, SLCC

Apologies: None

1	<p>Welcome</p> <p>MP welcomed those present and led the introductions.</p> <p>GF queried whether the Panel members were representing their own organisations. All agreed that their primary focus was to contribute to input on consumer principles and vulnerable consumers from their experience and knowledge but were not directly representing organisations or committing them to particular policy positions.</p> <p>MP noted that he had followed up on the previous discussions, on Young Scot. He would continue to pursue this with a view to adding someone from there to the Panel, subject to Board approval.</p> <p>The Panel discussed known gaps in representation on the Panel and agreed that the time commitment was the reason. Agreed that it would be useful to identify individuals who might be willing to give feedback by email, even if not attending meetings. Identified that in various areas, complaints were not being lodged (as would be expected by volume or impact) – such as commercial legal advice, criminal law, child-related issues, persons with disabilities and mental health issues. People might not complain if they</p>	<p>MP to follow up with Young Scot</p>
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	<p>felt this could jeopardise conclusion of their matters, or create the impression they were “difficult” (particularly in small communities).</p> <p>The Panel agreed to think of possible contacts to approach. Suggestions included Liz Welch, Equality and Human Rights Commissions, Families Outside (Nancy Loucks), Mental Health Commission (Colin McKay), Children First, also Young Scot because of numbers of children in contact with Child Reporters.</p> <p>Contacts could be asked to identify any possible patterns in the concerns raised with them, and if they knew why people may not ultimately complain to the SLCC.</p>	All to report back. MP to include on agenda for next meeting
2.	<p>Election of New Chair</p> <p>Shaben Begum was unanimously elected as Chair and took over in that capacity.</p>	
3.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>None.</p>	
4.	<p>Declaration of Interest</p> <p>None</p>	
4A	<p>Minutes of last meeting</p> <p>Agreed that the notes from the last meeting would be circulated to all.</p>	MP to circulate
5	<p>Consumer Panel Strategy and Priorities</p> <p>The Panel discussed setting priorities for the next year.</p> <p>All agreed that consumer focus was still not receiving enough priority; the Robertson Review had not engaged directly with the public. It was hoped that all the “Access to Justice” issues arising from the Review would be instituted. A consistent and ongoing message was needed, with consumer considerations entrenched in legislation. Consumer inclusiveness needed to be inbuilt; for instance, the Scottish Civil Justice Council had proposed fast-track procedures but how would that meet the real needs for quality and access by consumers. Other pending or proposed legislation to watch - and comment on - included the Mediation Bill, MIAMs, Family Law Bill (expected Sept / October 2019), Justice Committee proposals, Civil Justice Council modernisation process. It would be useful for Panel members to share responses from their own organisations to pick up common themes or highlight the need for better understanding. Scottish Human Rights Commission consultation may flag up human rights issues.</p> <p>MP stressed that the panel was independent of the SLCC Board, thus would have a different focus to the SLCC responses. SLCC IS keen to engage with the profession and networks to take advantage of other opportunities to feed back to other organisations.</p> <p>Topics identified for priority consideration / comment in Panel plans for 2019/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to Justice - Consumer Principles - Relationship building and Awareness - Research into why people do not complain 	<p>SB to invite Amanda Miller (VP of LSS) to the next meeting to try to build relationships.</p> <p>SLCC to maintain list of potential topics for comment</p>

	- Responses to consultation	
6	<p>Public Polling on FftF Recommendations</p> <p>It was noted that LSS and Faculty of Advocates have been very active on FftF in representing lawyers' views on the impact on the profession. No lobby group currently represents consumer views, nor are these views known currently. This is something that the Panel would want to address. MP confirmed that it may be possible to commission some polling to be carried out on whether the public would prefer to see the profession self-regulating or an independent body and other key matters raised in the review.</p> <p>MS pointed out that a survey was being done with the business sector, evidencing competition and consumer issues and that CMA had today published their response to the review.</p> <p>The Panel agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that it was important to engage and be aware of gaps of awareness amongst individual consumers. - Public consultation processes did not always attract comment from people on the ground, who may not participate in groups that did give input, although collective advisory groups will give a broad overview - It is difficult to identify potential service-users - It could be useful to work with the CMA to get ideas - It would be useful to poll in a way that would look at general policy ("are you comfortable with complaining to the same organisation that sets standards") and also possibly identify the reasons why people may not complain – such as how easy it was to get information or identify the steps in the process, whether a different process would make the process quicker / easier / lead to a better outcome. - Likely questions would cover the idea of a single regulator, access, accessibility across different groups <p>SB asked if the Consumer Panel could get a consultation session with the polling company. MP advised he would take information from the panel today on areas to be covered and would share questions with the panel by e-mail. Results would then be shared with the panel to allow for discussion on follow-up work depending on what the results show.</p>	MP: commission polling on key issues and share questions and then outcome with Panel
7	<p>New SLCC Website and Consumer Panel page</p> <p>MP briefly outlined the stages to the new website going live last week. Key features included making it more accessible on mobile devices and catering for additional needs. There is less focus on the statutory position and more on how to complain, as well as increased information to the profession. The Consumer Panel page is included and MP keen to work with Panel if they have feedback or ideas for further content on that page.</p> <p>SB and LJ both had issues getting access to the page. Agreed that SLCC Communications Officer would contact them.</p> <p>Panel members will give feedback. It may be useful to flag other resources on this page.</p>	All to feed back
8	<p>SLCC Strategy 2020 – 2023</p> <p>MP reported this is under discussion by the Board. More information will be available at the next meeting and Consumer Panel are encouraged to input into the thinking on this.</p>	Next agenda

9	Date of next meeting Dates for the forthcoming year to be set and notified to the Panel, potential dates for September will be circulated.	MP
10	Any Other Business SB reiterated the need to keep a watching brief on the pending legislation identified in Item 5.	All