

LAW SOCIETY'S CLIENT CARE CAMPAIGN PROPOSALS

I write further to our recent correspondence and discussions regarding a regulatory settlement for the decision I made to declare the 2008/09 Law Society Complaints Handling Plan inadequate and to levy a penalty.

Thank you for providing the framework for investing the equivalent amount of the penalty (£275k ring fenced) into proposals that aim to improve client care and complaints handling within the profession. I can now confirm my agreement to these proposals.

The four key elements to the programme and proposed timescales set out in your letter of 16 January 2009 that I am agreeing to are as follows:

- The creation of a new client care project manager post to lead the project team responsible for this within the Law Society, to be in post by the end of February 2009 and ready to provide quarterly reports to OLSCC from March 2009 onwards;
- A free consultancy service to be provided to those firms which generate multiple complaints, recruitment of consultants to be completed by the end of Quarter 1 (March 2009), roll out of service to up to 200 firms from the beginning of Quarter 2 of 2009;
- A dedicated complaints and client care helpline with recruitment of an additional person in February 2009 and the new helpline launched in Quarter 2 of 2009;
- An increased contribution towards the funding of the Diversity Access Scheme, enabling disadvantaged individuals to become a solicitor, to fund two additional places per year from June 2009 until June 2013.

I believe that these proposals offer a helpful way forward by addressing client care at source and thereby improving the consumer experience and also by ensuring greater access to the legal profession by those who are less advantaged.

I will agree to quarterly reporting by the Law Society from March 2009 onwards, but would like to stress that any variation to the initiatives (the numbers affected, timescales involved or the level of funding) will need to be agreed with my Office before changes occur.

The Law Society's Director of Government Relations proposes that a more detailed business plan would be provided at the end of March 2009. I am content to receive the more detailed plan at that stage, but would ask that you ensure that it includes the following information:

- more detail for each initiative and their specific timescales;
- planned milestones to be reached at the end of each quarter; and
- planned expenditure broken down by each quarter

I am pleased that we have been able to reach a pragmatic and mutually agreeable solution.