

**GOVERNMENT MUST “BE BOLD AND INNOVATIVE” ON LEGAL REFORMS SAYS THE  
LEGAL SERVICES OMBUDSMAN AND LEGAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS  
COMMISSIONER**

The Legal Services Ombudsman and Legal Services Complaints Commissioner, Zahida Manzoor CBE, today welcomed the Government’s White Paper, “The Future of Legal Services: Putting Consumers First”, and said:

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the way legal services are regulated and delivered both in the interests of consumers and the legal professions. ”

However, in responding to the White Paper Ms Manzoor has urged the Government to be bold and innovative in its decisions, commenting that:

“The Government should grasp this opportunity and see the radical reforms through in spite of the challenges from those who will seek to preserve their own interests. Merely tweaking what already exists should not be considered a serious option.”

Talking about the Legal Services Board and the Office for Legal Complaints, Ms Manzoor said:

“As regulator of complaints handling for the largest legal professional body, in my role as Commissioner, and as Ombudsman, where consumers know my decisions are independent and impartial, my experiences have highlighted that both the proposed new Legal Services Board and Office for Legal Complaints need to be recognised and trusted by the public. It is imperative that they are not only independent of Government, the professions and the existing structures and systems, but are seen to be independent and impartial. Anything less would be unacceptable.”

## Notes to Editors:

1. Ms Manzoor was appointed Legal Services Complaints Commissioner (LSCC) in February 2004 in addition to her role as Legal Services Ombudsman (LSO). The LSCC only has powers in relation to the Law Society of England and Wales.
2. The roles of the LSO and the LSCC are distinct. The LSO examines the handling of individual complaints by the professional bodies on behalf of members of the public. Information about the LSO can be accessed on the website, [www.olso.org](http://www.olso.org). The LSCC examines the Law Society's capability to handle complaints made about its members efficiently and effectively. Additional information about the LSCC can be accessed on the website [www.olsc.gov.uk](http://www.olsc.gov.uk).
3. In the LSO's 2002/2003 Annual Report, Ms Manzoor advocated an over-arching independent regulator and independent single point of entry for all complaints against legal practitioners. Following this, in July 2003, Sir David Clementi was appointed to carry out an independent review of the regulatory framework for legal services in England and Wales and in December 2004 Sir David published a Report following his Review. The Government reported that it broadly accepted the main recommendations of the review. These included the establishment of:
  - a Legal Services Board - a new legal services regulator to provide consistent oversight regulation of front line regulators such as the Law Society and the Bar Council.
  - an Office for Legal Complaints - a single independent body to handle consumer complaints in respect of all members of front line regulators, subject to oversight by the Legal Services Board.In October 2005 the Government published its White Paper, 'The Future of Legal Services: Putting Consumers First', which set out the Government's proposals for reform of the legal services in England and Wales.
4. For any enquiries, and a copy of the joint LSO and LSCC response to the White Paper, please contact Catherine Jones, tel: 0113 2615436.

ENDS