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**LEGAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER  
2009/10 ANNUAL REPORT LOOKS FORWARD TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR COMPLAINT  
HANDLING**

The Legal Services Complaints Commissioner, Zahida Manzoor CBE, today (24 February 2010) released her sixth and final Annual Report, 'Past Present Future', covering the period 1 April 2009 to 31 December 2009.

In the Report the Commissioner reflects on the last five years of legal reforms and looks forward to a momentous time for the delivery and regulation of legal services in England and Wales. With the establishment of the new independent complaints handling body, the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC), and the Legal Services Board, the Commissioner recognises that her work and that of the Law Society's Legal Complaints Service (LCS) is coming to an end. She welcomes the improvements in complaints handling by the LCS, commenting that:

"As I look ahead to the conclusion of my role and my Commissioner's Office on 31 March 2010, the outlook and optimism for legal services regulation and complaints handling could not be more different from when I was appointed as Legal Services Complaints Commissioner in 2004.

"The story told in my final Annual Report is that of a turnaround in performance in complaints handling about solicitors. It is truly a success story. I am pleased that we can now look forward with optimism to the OLC opening its doors to complaints with now only distant memories of the problems that existed with complaints being handled by the Law Society at the time of my appointment as Commissioner."

The Commissioner is also pleased to report that LCS achieved the targets she set it for 2009. She believes that the establishment of the OLC will be easier because of the LCS keeping the work it has in progress to the levels she set it. She commented:

“With the closure of the LCS approaching, 2009 was a challenging year for it. It is pleasing to see that managers and staff of the LCS kept focus on what was important, providing a good service to those who have found a need to complain about the work of their solicitors.”

The Commissioner was also pleased to comment on the client care initiative she jointly announced with the Law Society in March 2009. She commented:

“When I jointly announced an agreement for the Law Society to invest a substantial amount (£275,000) for starting a range of client care measures designed to improve capability and capacity in the legal profession, I knew that this could be a significant legacy to improve legal services in the future. These initiatives have already produced positive changes in some of the firms of solicitors involved, and I look to the Law Society in the future to continue investing in improved client care by its members.

“Through this agreement with the Law Society, I was also keen to encourage increasing numbers of people from diverse backgrounds to enter the legal profession to ensure that future provision remains relevant and sensitive to consumer needs. I, therefore, agreed with the Law Society that two additional places per year for 5 years would be funded through the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme to enable this to happen.”

The Commissioner recognises that the improvement seen for consumers is as a result of the work of many people. She commented:

“The credit for this turnaround in performance must be shared and I am grateful to thank some of the key individuals and organisations who have contributed to this success. These include the dedicated past and present staff and leaders of the Law Society, the LCS and the Solicitors Regulation Authority and their predecessor bodies.

“I have also had tremendous support from a wide variety of stakeholders and my thanks go to all who showed such interest in, and enthusiasm for, our task.

“Finally I would like to particularly record my thanks for their exceptional skills and dedication to the current and former staff of my Office, and my Advisory and Consumer Board members without whom this success could not have been achieved.”

(Ends)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. The Commissioner's 2009/10 Annual Report "Past Present Future" can be downloaded on the OLSCC website [www.olsc.gov.uk](http://www.olsc.gov.uk)
2. Ms Manzoor CBE was appointed Legal Services Complaints Commissioner in February 2004 in addition to her role as Legal Services Ombudsman (LSO). The Commissioner only has powers in relation to the Law Society of England and Wales. Ms Manzoor was reappointed as both Commissioner and LSO in February 2009.
3. The Commissioner is also the Legal Services Ombudsman (LSO) for England and Wales. The Annual Report for that Office will be published in July 2010. It can be downloaded from the Ombudsman's website [www.olso.org](http://www.olso.org). The roles of the LSO and the Commissioner are distinct. The LSO examines the handling of individual complaints by the professional bodies on behalf of members of the public. The Commissioner examines the Law Society's capability to handle complaints made about its members efficiently and effectively.
4. The Commissioner set a total of 3 targets for the Law Society's Legal Complaints Service for 2009 under section 52 of the Access to Justice Act 1999.
5. For enquiries please contact Les Courtneil, 0113 2615427.