



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Zahida Manzoor CBE
Legal Services Complaints Commissioner
Legal Services Ombudsman for England and Wales

Office of the Legal Services
Ombudsman

Office of the Legal Services
Complaints Commissioner

PRESS NOTICE

31 OCTOBER 2007

LEGAL SERVICES OMBUDSMAN AND LEGAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER WELCOMES NEW LEGAL SERVICES ACT

The Legal Services Ombudsman and Legal Services Complaints Commissioner, Zahida Manzoor CBE, has welcomed the new Legal Services Act which received Royal Assent yesterday.

Commenting on the new legislation, she said:

“It has been a long and sometimes difficult road, but finally the reforms can start to become a reality for the consumer and for the legal profession. This new Act brings in much heralded changes to how legal services will be delivered and regulated and how complaints will be handled. As a contributor to Sir David Clementi’s review and an enthusiast for the blueprint he set out, I am pleased to see the changes become law.”

Speaking of the new bodies which will be created by the Act, Ms Manzoor said:

“I look forward to a truly new and independent Office for Legal Complaints. This is a chance for a fresh start for legal complaints handling – something I have advocated for a very long time.

“The legal profession in England and Wales enjoys an unrivalled reputation for the quality of its work. It has nothing to fear from a Legal Services Board, which can help uphold and promote high standards. The profession should welcome its new regulator as an organisation that can only enhance its reputation.

The Legal Services Complaints Commissioner is appointed under the Access to Justice Act 1999 as an independent regulator working with the Law Society on behalf of the consumer to improve standards in complaints handling.

The Legal Services Ombudsman is appointed under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990.

“It is essential that the OLC and LSB are the guardians of fairness, transparency and impartiality for both the legal services consumer and the legal practitioner who provides the service.”

Ms Manzoor also welcomed Alternative Business Structures that will be created under the Act:

“This should see greater competition and raising of standards in the provision of legal services.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Ms Manzoor 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 for a period of three years in March 2006.
2. 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.
3. For any enquiries please contact Marie Craven, tel: 0113 2615446.

ENDS