

BAR STANDARDS BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

By Email: consultations@legalombudsman.org.uk

Bar Standards Board response to the Office for Legal Complaints consultation on the Legal Ombudsman's 2026/2027 Business Plan and Budget

1. This is the response of the Bar Standards Board to the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) consultation paper on the Legal Ombudsman's (LeO) 2026/2027 Business Plan and Budget.
2. We note the increased complaints volumes to LeO. The BSB is also experiencing increases in volume and complexity in reports about barristers. We are keen to continue working with LeO and other legal services regulators to better understand the factors behind the increase in complaints and reports, and how we can meet the challenges of responding to such increased volumes. In addition to understanding the reasons for complaints volumes, the BSB is keen to work together to understand and identify broader trends, risks and issues around complaints and to address them.
3. As LeO are aware, the BSB recently announced in October 2025 its plans to start collecting first-tier complaints data directly from the Bar profession, as part of the BSB's implementation of the Legal Services Board's 2024 section 112 first-tier complaints requirements and associated policy statement. Subject to Legal Services Board's approval of our new BSB Handbook rules, we intend to start collecting complaints data from early 2027. Once the data is collected and analysed, we will collaborate with LeO, peer regulators, and other relevant stakeholders, and share insights on complaints trends, issues and other underlying intelligence. Furthermore, we will combine first-tier complaints data with LeO data (which the BSB already receives from LeO), to help tackle the underlying issues behind complaints.
4. The collection of first-tier complaints data, combined with LeO data, will also enable us to identify providers with disproportionately high first-tier complaints volumes, and those with high premature complaints made to LeO. The BSB intends to work directly with identified providers, such as through our supervision processes, in order to help them to reduce their complaints volumes and referrals to LeO. Where relevant, we will collaborate with LeO, for instance to share insights and to help provide guidance and support to identified providers.
5. In order to improve the consumer experience in relation to complaints, and to provide support to legal services providers, the BSB has been contributing to LeO's work on developing early resolution toolkits, alongside our peer regulators. This is a valuable project for the BSB, so we plan to continue to provide support and to continue engagement. In addition to our own complaints handling guidance to the Bar, we believe these toolkits will be very useful, specifically to smaller chambers and sole practitioners,

and we will therefore seek to publicise it within our regulated community once the resources have been developed.

6. The BSB also notes OLC's plan to review the scheme rules, as an option for future transformation. As OLC/LeO's thinking develops on this, the BSB is keen to input and engage on any upcoming proposals. We also continue to support LeO's plans to improve transparency of its complaints outcome decisions, which we believe will be helpful to consumers and to legal services providers.
7. The BSB looks forward to continuing to work with LeO in the next financial year, particularly as we plan to implement, and give effect to our new complaints handling rules and arrangements (circa spring 2026), which is pending approval by the Legal Services Board.

Bar Standards Board
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For further information please contact
The BSB Policy Team
The Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn, London WC1V 7HZ
Email: policy@barstandardsboard.org.uk