

News from the Board

Reflections on our March Board - Anna Bradley

4 March 2020 | Anna Bradley

This week saw us get out of the Board room to visit Chester, where we took the opportunity to hear from local voices in the north west and north Wales.

Meeting people in and around Chester

Before our Board meeting, we held two workshops with the public.

The first was about our current Compensation Fund consultation. It might seem like a potentially technical subject, but the group got to grips with the issues quickly. With a limited pot of money and the need to make sure the Fund is sustainable, the participants gave us a good steer as to the kinds of claims they think we should be prioritising. The consultation runs to 21 April, after which we will review all the contributions before making decisions on next steps.

In the second focus group, we discussed how people feel about using technology to access legal services. Many felt very comfortable and expected to be able to get help and make choices at the click of a button, some were concerned about how they could know what to trust and a few did not want to use technology at all.

The speed, ease of access and ability to self-serve were for many the main selling points of tech. So most could see the value technology could bring in tasks like assessing a problem or getting initial legal help. But they felt strongly that there would still be a need for expert, professional advice from a person at certain points with certain types of problem.

The Board also met with around 20 different local organisations - from local law societies to business groups, universities to disability charities. Topics for discussion included developing Welsh law, the risks around legal aid deserts, and whether there is anything as a regulator we should be doing to respond to climate change or 'environmental catastrophe' as one of our guests described it. This chimed with some comments made in the consultation on our draft corporate strategy.

We had a busy agenda for the Board meeting, including looking at next steps for our regulation in Wales, our EDI work, responses to our advocacy consultation and the future of the Solicitors Indemnity Fund. The big agenda item was discussing the results of our consultation on our new corporate strategy for 2020 - 2023.



Corporate strategy

We had excellent engagement on this consultation - not just the written responses, but from a wide range of face to face conversations with the profession, older people, small business owners, entrepreneurs, young people and consumer groups.

I'm pleased that there was broad support for all three of our strategic priorities. There was also some useful feedback, for example on the importance of properly resourcing and prioritising our core work.

On speaking out more, which is part of our third proposed objective, there was both a strong welcome and a caution. Stakeholders want us to do more of this, but they also want us to recognise and manage the risk of duplicating or distracting from the role of others, including established groups and representative bodies. Relatedly, on collaboration - everyone wants more of that, which has caused us to reflect on how we prioritise our resources to best effect; something for our business plan discussions in April.

We will publish an updated version of the strategy in March, before consulting on our business plan later this year.

Accountability and transparency

I have spoken a lot in this blog about our work to make sure we are being more open and accountable. It's a vital part of making sure the public and profession have confidence in our governance, decision making and performance.

In this month's Board papers you will see us publish our enhanced Balanced Scorecard, reporting on performance for the last quarter and overall trends.

I'd welcome your feedback on how useful you find our approach in this area, and whether we can improve it.