

Latest work and updates

Updated 16 December 2022

All the latest news and lawtech developments from the SRA Innovate team.

Open all [#]

Innovate at LegalEx expo

The SRA had a stand at this year's LegalEx expo in November, held once again at London ExCeL. The stand was as busy as ever and it was great to connect with start-ups and innovators who we've worked with in the past. More

In the SRA-sponsored theatre, Head of Innovation and Technology Ben Wagenaar delivered a presentation about our work over 2022, including the Regulators' Pioneer Fund access to justice project and details of trends we're seeing in the sector right now.

On the second day Ben walked through findings from our Unbundled Services pilot, attracting numerous questions at both well-attended sessions.

Although the sessions weren't recorded you can learn more from our September unbundled services pilot webinar. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2xICCVc3o>]

Read the latest Lawtech Insight

Lawtech Insight, produced by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, pulls together the latest news and opinions on technology and innovation in the legal sector and beyond. More

Read the latest issue of Lawtech Insight. [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/lawtech-insight/>]

We hope you find this information useful, and would welcome your thoughts on the content or more widely how we can all work together to better support the growth and use of technology and innovation in the legal sector.

Get in touch [<https://publications.sra.org.uk/lawtech-insight-november-2022/keep-in-touch>]

SRA Innovate visits Brighton and Swansea

The SRA delivered two Innovate events in early July, in both Brighton and Swansea, targeting smaller to medium sized firms – and legal businesses – interested in how they can

work differently by, for instance, using technology better.

More

Attended by a wide range of firms, technology providers and wider stakeholders, the focus was on innovation in the legal sector, opportunities and practical advice for firms, what the public want and what we are doing to support firms to develop and adopt tech and innovation.

We had excellent feedback from stakeholders, with half of delegates giving the event 10 out of 10 for usefulness.

Both panel sessions/Q&As from Brighton are available for you to watch back. Topics discussed include:

- the challenges around picking and choosing technology
- unbundling, and how it can reduce costs for clients and give firms more certainty
- how even small changes can make a big difference
- how consumers are increasingly shopping around
- the benefits to consumers of firms publishing more information online

Fit for the future – using new and existing technology

How consumers choose and use legal services

New Tech Nation funding sources now available

If you are interested in potential sources of funding for lawtech innovation *More*

The organisation Tech Nation have announced seven funding initiatives [<https://technation.io/>] that you might find of interest.

LegalTech in Leeds event

The SRA were delighted to deliver the opening keynote presentation at the inaugural LegalTech in Leeds event.
More

Focusing on our SRA Innovate offering the Regulators' Pioneer Fund access-to-justice project [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulators-pioneer-fund/>], the event reflected the exciting hub that Leeds has become for Legaltech. It was well attended and featured speakers from the Leeds Law

Society, a panel of Legaltech startups and Leeds City Council who are committed to supporting the industry.

The event was recorded on YouTube and can be viewed here

[<https://youtu.be/C0iLYmgkF7c>] .

LawTechUK event: Contracts, just smarter

We're increasingly seeing a return to in-person events and conferences, and a number of our team were delighted to attend LawTechUK's 'Contracts, just smarter' event in Holborn at the end of February. More

The focus of the event [<https://lawtechuk.io/programmes/smarter-contracts>] was on smart legal contracts: pieces of computer code that can automatically perform transactions when certain conditions are met, using a distributed ledger platform.

Read more about the LawtechUK's 'Smarter Contracts' project launch

[<https://lawtechuk.io/>] .

Herbert Smith Freehills have also produced a short video

[<https://www.herbertsmithfreehills.com/insight/smart-legal-contracts-a-video-guide>] detailing how smart contracts work.

Smart legal contracts offer an exciting level of automation in contract development. Indeed, some of the predicted savings mentioned at the event – and even GDP improvements – were quite bold. The Law Commission have already concluded a study

[<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/smart-contracts/>] to show compatibility with

English Law, while LawTechUK have also published a report

[<https://lawtechuk.io/insights/smarter-contracts>] on the capability and opportunity of smart legal contracts.

The SRA are continuing to support LawTechUK's sandbox programme

[<https://technation.io/>] as part of the Regulatory Response Unit and look forward to supporting research in this space.

Small firms and tech startups join BEIS tech roundtable

Find out what was discussed as 40 law firms, tech startups and legal service organisations joined our lawtech roundtable with BEIS. More

More than 40 law firms, tech startups and legal service organisations joined our recent meeting with the government department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to discuss questions around skills, funding and awareness to support adoption of technology in the legal sector.

Key issues discussed included:

- The definition of lawtech, and whether it should cover both the back office software that helps run a law firm through to more advanced, AI-driven tools for contract production or document discovery, for example.
- Whether smaller firms are facing the greatest barriers to adopting technology and, as they are the ones from whom most members of the public seek advice, is there a case for greater help?
- Questions were asked about reserved legal activities and the activities of lawyers day-to-day, depending on the sector of law practised, the challenge of developing technology skills will be different in different sectors.
- Technology is moving so fast that it is very difficult for firms to make informed choices. Firms need solutions to give them what they need now but also help future-proof. It would help if technology providers worked together to provide more open data on what options are available.
- Some thought lawtech is too firm-focused, with scant focus on provision for clients. This may be overcome by conducting very quick, low-cost proof-of-concepts to understand requirements more clearly, demonstrate benefits and think about clients to all groups more readily.
- BEIS is working with British Standards Institution and others to implement a joint action plan [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-action-plan>] that unlocks the role standards can play in supporting innovation. They were keen to hear from real-life business experience in that space.
- We heard from a private practice that had successfully secured its own funding from Innovate UK [<https://www.gov.uk/apply-funding-innovation>] to develop its own solution for the market. They had recently been in touch with SRA Innovate for regulatory support; we would warmly welcome others to do the same.

The meeting was invaluable to the SRA to help us validate our planned activities in lawtech this year. We will be working with BEIS to devise follow-up events with this group to respond to the challenges raised. If you would like to attend the next session, please get in touch

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/contactus>] .