

News release

Encouraging trends identified in one-year review of SRA's transparency reforms

15 October 2020

The availability of more online information about solicitors and law firms is already making a difference as people start use it to help with decisions about accessing legal services.

Approaching one year on since our Transparency Rules came into full effect, independent research commissioned by the regulator has also found that most firms surveyed said they were publishing the necessary price and service information.

Crucially only 10% of consumers now say, with access to information on price, that they believe instructing a solicitor may be an unaffordable option for them. This compares to more than half presuming this was the case in the past.

At a time when Covid-19 is potentially creating a challenging environment for many businesses, and the public are increasingly shopping online, nearly a third (29%) of law firms also said they recommend proactively publishing more online information as a good way to help win new clients.

We first introduced our transparency rules in December 2018, with further elements coming into force in November 2019. The rules mean that all regulated law firms must publish price and information on their websites about certain common legal services, such as conveyancing. Firms without websites should make the information available in other formats.

Firms also have to publish their complaints procedures and display the SRA clickable logo – which proves the practice is genuine and shows people what protections are available to them if they use that firm.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: “Currently only one in ten people who have a legal issue are going to professional providers such as solicitors for help. We know that a lack of easy to find information about the services law firms’ offer and the cost of those services is part of the problem.

“So it is really encouraging to see that, although it is still early days, people and small businesses are looking at the information now available and finding it useful, particularly as they think about the type and costs of the service they need. In these difficult times and with more and more of us

relying on shopping around online, it is also welcome that many firms see publishing information as an important part of winning new clients.”

Further key findings from the research included:

- 77% of the public find information now available online is useful in helping them find and choose potential legal providers
- The final decision on who to instruct is then ultimately based on experience, recommendations and reputation in 83% of cases
- 68% of firms said they are now publishing the required information on services and prices, with 90% saying they are displaying the clickable logo

While a majority of firms declared they were following the new requirements, our sampling of law firm websites suggests others might need more help in understanding fully all that they are required to publish.

Feedback from consumer groups and other stakeholders also suggests that some firms need to do more to make the information they are publishing more easily accessible for the public, for example by removing legal jargon and presenting information in plainer English.

The one-year review of the transparency rules is the first report published as part of our commitment to a five-year programme of evaluation to review the long-term impact of the reforms we introduced alongside our new Standards and Regulations reforms.

Read the summary of our one-year report, which includes the external research conducted by IRN Research [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/better-information-legal-services-market/>] .