

News release

SRA secures grant to develop dispute resolution approaches

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We have been awarded a grant of £119,691 from the latest round of the Regulators Pioneer Fund (RPF). The money will fund a project to explore ways to increase the use of technology-enabled dispute resolution to help individuals and businesses resolve legal issues, without the need to go to court.

Working with consortium partners the Access to Justice Foundation and Law Society, the project will launch in September 2023, and aims to encourage the development of technological solutions which will promote and expand the use of dispute resolution across England and Wales. We will also seek to work collaboratively with the Law Council of Wales.

Paul Philip, Chief Executive of the SRA said: 'We welcome this important opportunity to work with our partners to support people in resolving their legal issues without having to use the courts. This has the potential to make a real difference for individual consumers, saving them time and money, as well as relieving pressure on the court system, which benefits the wider community.'

The project will work with consumers and public representative groups to explore the potential barriers and benefits to using dispute resolution, in particular via digital and online platforms. This will include sharing and developing best practice which demonstrates how dispute resolution can deliver outcomes just as fairly and positively as any matter that goes to court.

Resolving issues before court proceedings can not only potentially save those involved time and money, but may also help relieve pressure on the wider court system.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) recently noted that around 68% of civil court users would prefer to avoid court unless as a last resort. Despite this, in 2019 alone over 2 million civil proceedings were started in County Courts - resulting in significant pressure on the court system and costs for all involved.

This award is one of 24 RPF grants totalling £12 million announced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The aim of the grants is to fund projects designed to drive forward innovation, remove

regulatory red tape and establish the UK as world leader in technologies of the future.

During both previous rounds of the RPF we successfully won funding for, and delivered, projects designed to improve access to legal services.

Read more about these:

- RPF1: Legal Access Challenge [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/legal-access-challenge/>]
- RPF2: Connecting those using legal technologies with those needing their services [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2021-press-releases/regulators-pioneer-fund-2021/>]