



Neil Stevenson
Chief Executive
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission

By Email only

17 March 2022

Dear Neil,

SLCC 2022-23 Budget and Operating Plan Consultation

I am writing to share the SLCC Consumer Panel's response to your consultation on the SLCC's 2022-23 Budget and Operating Plan. We welcome the opportunity to share our views. We have only responded on those aspects where we have specific comments to make.

Taking action to secure files from firms

The Panel regularly sees feedback from consumers about the impact of long timescales for dealing with complaints, although we are aware that there have been significant improvements made in recent years. We therefore welcome the continued action to ensure the SLCC can secure the information it needs from firms as swiftly as possible to investigate complaints. We have been very concerned to see the time and cost attached to pursuing this, both by staff and via court action. This is not in the interests of consumers looking for swift resolution of their complaint.

Transparency

We are concerned to see that work to provide greater transparency about how the SLCC carries out its duties is not being taken forward this year. We understand the competing pressures on time and resource, but we do believe this helps to build public confidence and understanding and we would be keen to see this remain on the SLCC's agenda.

Reform

The Panel is supportive of the work proposed to continue to shape and respond to the various aspects of reform, noting the welcome work recently completed on Alternative Business Structures, and ongoing discussions about complaints changes and wider regulatory reform. The Panel wishes to see broad reform brought forward that put the legal service consumer at the heart of regulation.

Customer service

We've been pleased to hear about and input to recent work on customer service, which we very much welcome, and look forward to seeing continuing. In the coming year, we'd like to see consideration of how this work could specifically focus on supporting vulnerable consumers. This is an issue we see other regulators tackling, both in their own processes and services, but also the way in which they can advise and support the professions they regulate on supporting vulnerable consumers. We are very much aware that those consumers are less likely to feel confident in making complaints, and this work should seek to address those barriers wherever possible.

I hope this is helpful, and we look forward to working together over the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Williams
Chair
SLCC Consumer Panel

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<https://www.scottishlegalcomplaints.org.uk/about-us/consumer-panel/>