

**Not to be used before 00:01 hours, Thursday 31 March 2011**

## **CONSUMER PANEL'S REACTION TO LEGAL OMBUDSMAN PUBLISHING COMPLAINTS ANNOUNCEMENT**

Reacting to the Legal Ombudsman's announcement to delay a decision about whether to identify law firms subject to complaints, Dr Dianne Hayter, chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

*"This excessively cautious, and consumer-unfriendly, decision will be a huge let down for present and future clients. It completely flies in the face of government policy to empower citizens by opening up data on provider performance.*

*"In its first big policy test, the Legal Ombudsman has fallen for spurious objections from the legal profession for which they have provided no evidence. This decision puts second the needs of consumers who depend on legal advice at critical life moments, but struggle to tell a good lawyer from a bad one.*

*"The only winners from today's announcement are the small minority of firms that persistently fail consumers - their poor behaviour will now not be unmasked. This is vital information before a client engages a lawyer.*

*"The Legal Services Consumer Panel will continue to fight for consumers on this issue".*

**-ends-**

**For more information, contact Steve Brooker, Consumer Panel Manager, on 020 7271 0077.**

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Legal Services Consumer Panel was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 to provide independent advice to the Legal Services Board about the interests of consumers of legal services in England and Wales. We investigate issues that affect consumers and use this information to influence decisions about the regulation of legal services.

2. The Legal Ombudsman and the Legal Services Consumer Panel jointly commissioned qualitative research with consumers. The independent research report is available on the Panel's website:  
[http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research\\_and\\_reports/documents/AIMR\\_PublishingComplaintDecisions\\_Report.pdf](http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research_and_reports/documents/AIMR_PublishingComplaintDecisions_Report.pdf)
3. The Legal Ombudsman's discussion paper on publishing decisions and its next steps consultation paper can be found on their website:  
<http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>
4. The Panel's full response to the Legal Ombudsman's discussion paper can be found on its website:  
[http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/consultation\\_responses/documents/2010-12-21\\_LeO\\_PublishingDecisions.pdf](http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/consultation_responses/documents/2010-12-21_LeO_PublishingDecisions.pdf)