

News from the Board

Reflections on our July Board meeting - Anna Bradley

21 July 2023

This month's Board was in Newcastle – our second meeting 'away' this year following our visit to Leeds. We took the opportunity to speak with more than 50 stakeholders from across the north east and some members of the public.

Public feedback

We had two great sessions with the public to discuss our new strategy and what we should be prioritising. One theme that came through loud and clear was the importance of regulation in underpinning trust in legal services. On tech, many were open to using it to get help, but generally for more straightforward matters - perhaps not surprising given so many were feeling the cost of living squeeze. Notwithstanding, there were also lots of questions around whether you can trust delivery of legal services through tech.

Baltic discussions

We picked up these themes when we met for dinner with a range of local consumer groups, academics, solicitors and firms at the Baltic centre. One thing that always strikes me about the profession, and those providing legal support, is the incredible diversity of work they do; underpinning the effective functioning of all aspects of society.

Policy workshops

We talked about our response to the Government's consultation on anti-money laundering supervision, next steps on CILEX and what is coming up with the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). On the latter, we discussed the approach to publishing further data on candidates' results, which should help inform candidates' choices about the routes they take to qualification. The plan is to publish the first set of data before the end of the year. We also noted that around 4,000 candidates are booked to take SQE1 this week. The numbers are growing fast and we need to make sure we have the right processes in place to respond to demand.

Practising fees

There was only one formal board paper, which covered our practising fees and Compensation Fund contributions. I wrote about our budget in [my blog last month](https://beta.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/our-board/news-from-the-board/board-27-june-2023/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/our-board/news-from-the-board/board-27-june-2023/]. The Board has now approved the budget, fees and Fund contributions. It amounts to a seven per cent increase in our proportion of the practising certificate fee. We have managed to keep fees down in recent years through efficiencies, but the combination of high inflation and additional work – for instance on sanctions and anti-money laundering – means a rise is necessary this year. The fees are still subject to final approval by the Legal Services Board.

Finally, a shout out for [our strategy consultation](https://beta.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/enhancing-confidence-legal-services/#:~:text=We%20have%20launched%20a%20consultation,into%20effect%20from%20November%202023.) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/enhancing-confidence-legal-services/#:~:text=We%20have%20launched%20a%20consultation,into%20effect%20from%20November%202023.]. We have had incredibly useful feedback from the public and profession already, but we are keen to get as much and diverse feedback as possible. The last day for submissions is 2 August.