

TO: Posts
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SUBJECT: New SRA Consultation
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SRA consults on radical reform to solicitors' regulation

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (**SRA**) yesterday published its promised Consultation 'Looking to the Future – flexibility and public protection'.

<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/code-conduct-consultation.page#download>

Introducing the Consultation, Enid Rowlands, Chair of the SRA Board, describes one of the key aims as being

“to help address the problem of access to justice - the widespread unmet need of the public and small businesses. People want affordable and relevant services. It makes no sense that solicitors are banned from offering non-reserved legal services, such as legal advice, in the firms that have grown up to meet that need.”

New business models

The revised model clarifies existing flexibility for providers and individuals to establish themselves in different ways, as well as creating further options.

The SRA recognises that the ways people find, access, and use legal services are changing and that in response solicitors, law firms and other organisations are offering new services in more innovative ways and through new business models. There is also an expanding alternative legal services market, which is operating across the sector.

Adopting the mantra 'Alternative Legal Services Market'¹, the key change in the proposals

“is the first ever opportunity for solicitors to freely deliver services outside of regulated firms”.

Better and cheaper access to qualified solicitors

The SRA intends its proposals to result in “*better and cheaper access to qualified solicitors*”. The SRA proposes that this will be achieved by removing the current restrictions on solicitors delivering *non-reserved legal services* to the public or sections of the public through an alternative legal services provider, such as Aurelia Advisory, while using their solicitor title.

¹ accredited to Northumbria University Law School in its report 'Redress for Legal Services', prepared for the Legal Ombudsman

The existing regulatory framework makes it

“challenging for solicitors to compete with providers in the alternative legal services market. The existing rulebook restricts where and how solicitors can work. While most legal services can be delivered outside of regulation, solicitors, the people who are arguably best placed to deliver quality non-reserved legal services, cannot do so with any degree of ease or flexibility. This is because solicitors must practise through a firm authorised by one of the legal regulators whenever providing services to the public or a section of the public.”

The deadline for responses to the Consultation is 21 September 2016. A further consultation on the changes to the more detailed rules to remove unnecessary restrictions and to allow the greater flexibility envisaged by the Consultation will be held later in 2016. The earliest date for implementation is November 2017.

Aurelia Advisory welcomes the proposals and intends to provide its own response to the consultations.

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