



Update on Shared Legal Service

Audit Committee 19 November 2018

Purpose

The Audit Committee received an update on the legal shared service on 30 July 2018 at which a subsequent update was requested on progress against the Service Improvement Plan

This presentation to the Audit Committee summarises the service improvements being implemented and progress against these

Service Issues

Outputs from the annual CBC user survey and subsequent user forum have been used to develop a Service Improvement Plan with LGSS Law to address the following issues:

- Higher than expected staff churn and resulting delays
- Instances of ineffective case handover
- Issues with capacity
- Issues with response times to client requests
- Higher than expected billing queries

It should be noted that many of these were also issues with the old in-house service. However, a key 'value add' for the shared service was to improve on this, which is why these issues are highlighted here.

Improvements and Actions (1)

- LGSS Law to investigate processes to allow the sharing of large documents between LGSS Law and CBC clients quickly and easily to maximise process efficiencies:
Completed- LGSS Law now has controlled access to Box and modern.gov.
- LGSS Law and CBC to refresh the guidance on the CBC intranet relating to instructing work, to improve 'self-help' and quality of instructions : **Work 90% complete on implementing e-forms (to channel all instructions in approved formats to relevant legal team inboxes). Work is also ongoing to complete draft Service Level Agreements for agreement with relevant service heads. New process notes will also be added.**

Improvements and Actions (2)

- LGSS Law to work with client areas to create a prospectus of available training courses for CBC and for this to be published on the intranet : **A prospectus is being formulated and will be shared by end of November.**
- LGSS Law to promote mediation/round table discussions in an attempt to settle cases and to provide written guidance on how/when/why this should be considered: **Implemented - fee earners have been briefed on raising Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) where relevant for consideration. The new training prospectus will also provide some opportunities for staff training.**

Improvements and Actions (3)

- LGSS Law to devise additional Finance Management Information on average case costs for benchmarking to ensure continued value for money: **Impacted by LGSS Law staff changes – now owned by Director of Finance & Operations; progress reported at 6 month review (October).**
- LGSS Law to continue recruitment drive to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet CBC client needs without unnecessary advisor churn: **Ongoing action- priority for new interim Director Legal Practice.**

Improvements and Actions (4)

- End of case survey responses low : Currently registering very high levels of client satisfaction, but sample size is low. Queries raised with low responding service areas have resulted in changes to the case header information to enable busy users to identify the matter – and submit a response – more easily.

Improved Commissioning (1)

Analysis of costs drivers in high value care work has identified:

- Increased volumes
- Increased complexity
- Inefficient internal practices (which require improving)
- ‘Non-value adding’ practices (which require changing/removing)

Improved Commissioning (2)

Examples of inefficient practice includes:

- Incomplete or inconsistent instructions/statements leading to increased lawyer time identifying the key issues
- Delayed collation/submission of supporting evidence for Court Applications requiring repeat reviews before submission

Examples of 'non-value adding' practices include:

- Requesting lawyer attendance at meetings where not necessary
- Utilising paralegals for meeting minutes
- Utilising LGSS Law for redacting documents

Responses

- Training/awareness for relevant professionals on statement writing, and pre action interventions (such as Alternative Dispute Resolution) to avoid costly court proceedings- [available from end November](#)
- Case tracker to keep proceedings on track – [implemented](#)
- Upgraded user guidance including refreshed instructions proforma and e-forms - [implemented](#)
- Updated internal Service Level Agreements with service areas reinforcing responsibilities on both sides- [implemented](#)

VFM and Costs benchmarking

- A key objective of the move to a shared service was to reduce the work being sent to external solicitors due to lack of capacity or capability, to benefit from preferential shareholder rates
- In FY15/16 work sent to external solicitors totalled **c£72k** for Core work and **c£118k** for Non-Core : in FY17/18 this has reduced to **nil** for Core work and **c£37k** for Non- Core
- VFM in the context of Care cases needs to be set against case outcomes – CBC average case duration is **28 weeks** against a National average of **32 weeks**
- Benchmarking against the market is underway in housing transactional work to set fixed fee tariffs to control costs

LGSS Law Company Performance

- New senior management in place and addressing all the issues
- Analysis and monitoring of fee earners' performance significantly enhanced
- Quality of billing and supporting management information much improved
- Outstanding debt being addressed and much reduced
- Dividends to the shareholders still anticipated
- Potential expansion of the business to include other local authorities remains a realistic objective

Summary

- The original business case for sharing legal services set some significant challenges:
 - Initial cost savings achieved (£250k in year 1)
 - Savings in year 2 not met, but not a straightforward comparison as volumes and complexity had increased
 - Ability to attract and retain high calibre lawyers – mixed results to date
 - More legal work being directed through LGSS Law, which is good for the Council as a shareholder
- Staff churn and billing quality issues not anticipated and both have caused additional effort and inefficiency
- However, both have been addressed and significant improvements are underway as outlined in the presentation above
- The Service Improvement Plan is in place and already partially delivered.