

SRA BOARD  
1 June 2016

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## Chief Executive's Report

### Purpose

- 1 This report sets out progress against our strategic objectives and provides an update on operational performance.
  - Section 1: reports on our priorities and progress against the 2015/16 Business Plan.
  - Section 2: provides an update on operational performance.
  - Section 3: provides details on publication and engagement activity.

**If you have any questions about this paper please contact: Paul Philip, Chief Executive, [paul.philip@sra.org.uk](mailto:paul.philip@sra.org.uk), 0121 329 6940.**

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## Chief Executive's Report

### Section 1: Priorities for 2015/16

- 2 This section provides an update focusing on developments and progress against our 2015/16 Business Plan.

#### *Progress against our 2015/16 Business Plan*

- 3 We are making good progress in the work undertaken to achieve the objectives set in our Business Plan. Below, I provide detail of our programme and highlight areas of development and points to note.

<p><b>Objective 1: We will reform our regulation to enable growth and innovation in the market and to strike the right balance between reducing regulatory burdens and ensuring consumer protection</b></p>	<p><b>On track</b></p>
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#### *Looking to the Future: Handbook review*

- 4 We continue to develop proposals informed by an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement. We have also undertaken a Handbook users' survey and a range of internal work across the organisation – engaging with front-line Handbook users.

#### *Anti Money Laundering (AML) report*

- 5 Our Anti Money Laundering thematic Report was published on 12 May 2016.

<p><b>Objective 2: We will work with solicitors and firms to raise standards and uphold core professional principles</b></p>	<p><b>On track</b></p>
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#### *Training for Tomorrow Equivalent means*

- 6 A table showing the numbers of equivalent means applications received since 1 July 2014 when the new regulations came into force is at Annex 1.

#### *Training for Tomorrow - Continuing Competence*

- 7 We recently completed a profession wide survey to understand more about adoption of our new approach to continuing competence. The emerging findings are positive, in particular:

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- Just under 50% of respondents have already adopted the new approach;
- 75% of respondents implemented the new approach in less than 3 months;
- 64% of respondents said there was no cost involved with implementation;
- 88% of respondents that used our tool kit said it was very useful.

- 8 We continue to deliver our programme of engagement to support implementation of the new approach before the 1 November 2016 mandatory adoption deadline. Over 600 solicitors recently took part in our webinar on how to implement the scheme. We will be running a series of regional workshops over the summer and will continue to work with external partners to support implementation.

<p><b>Objective 3: We will improve our operational performance and make justifiable decisions promptly, effectively and efficiently</b></p>	<p><b>On track</b></p>
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***PII Renewals***

- 9 The latest round of insurance renewals appears to have progressed well (this is one of two smaller renewal rounds that take place each year). Just 13 firms have required follow up, of which 7 have been resolved and 6 are currently in discussion with Supervision. None of the 6, however, pose any significant concern. 5 disciplinary investigations are progressing from the earlier autumn round, with formal notices requiring explanations being issued to the affected firms. Preparatory work for the next round of renewals (affecting around 1200 firms) is under way with the insurers.

***Revocations***

- 10 103 firms which did not submit an annual return for PCRE or pay their periodic fee were referred to supervision in March. Supervision have resolved the position for 91 firms, with only 12 ongoing matters. So far, we have sent 4 notices of revocation and 2 letters of guidance. We are on track to complete this work before 31 July 2016. Last year, it was completed in November.

***Practising Certificate Renewal Exercise (PCRE)***

- 11 Preparation continues for the 2016/17 PCRE. IT development has commenced which is on track to be completed in July to enable user acceptance testing to be completed. The PCRE Board have also signed off a robust testing strategy which includes a revised volume and performance testing approach.
- 12 Planning for stakeholder engagement continues and we intend to contact all firms in June to inform them about the 2016/17 project and what they should expect. We have also been engaging with the larger law firms to understand what their renewal experience is like and any areas of improvement that could

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be made to enable them to submit the renewal application ahead of the 31 October deadline. A summary report will be produced in June with suggested recommendations.

***CPANFEE Project***

- 13 An online service to enable accredited course providers to pay their annual fees was successfully launched in May 2016. This is the first IT project to be managed by the SRA and will improve the experience for course providers as well as the future cost of this annual project.

***Keeping of the Roll***

- 14 An improved online service to enable solicitors to restore or remove their name from the roll of solicitors will be launched in June 2016. The forms have been updated to align to the SRA communications strategy of "writing the SRA way" and to also ensure that the customer experience is as effective as possible.

<p><b>Objective 4: We will work with our stakeholders to improve the quality of our services and their experience when using them</b></p>	<p><b>On track</b></p>
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- 15 Overall we are on track to achieve our 4 objectives.

**Section 2: Operational Performance**

***KPIs***

- 16 We continued to make good progress against our key disciplinary proceedings target by achieving 91% against the 90% target. This is a rolling KPI and the actual performance in April was 93%.
- 17 Proposed revised KPIs will be brought to the Board in July for approval.

**Section 3: Publications and Engagement Activity**

***Welsh Assembly***

- 18 Elections for a new Welsh Assembly took place on 5 May 2016. We have written to the new Assembly Members to introduce the work of the SRA, and continue our engagement with AMs.

***Stakeholder contact***

- 19 We continued a programme of wider stakeholder engagement. Our regular quarterly meeting with the CLLS took place, alongside separate meetings of local law societies across the country. I made presentations to the Law

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Society's annual Risk and Compliance conference, to the Manchester Law Society and the General Counsel Strategy Summit.

- 20 Norwich was the destination for the first of our eight local law society sessions this year. Hosted by the Norwich and Norfolk Law Society, David Heath and David Willis talked through the importance of flexible routes to becoming a solicitor and how we plan to free up solicitors to work outside authorised firms. They were joined by Crispin Passmore and Jane Malcolm. Our engagement was well received, and topics covered included the new Handbook and the solicitors qualifying exam.
- 21 Cardiff will be the first in a number of Handbook consultation events. Three events held on the same day at the same venue Radisson Blu Hotel, Cardiff on 18 May - covering in-house solicitors, general solicitors and consumers. The event will be attended by senior members of the SRA Policy Team.

***Virtual reference groups (VRGs)***

- 22 We now have 146 individuals registered to the Virtual Reference Groups, broken down as follows: Handbook – 24; Innovate – 22; Small Firms – 65; and EDI – 35. We are undertaking specific work to promote membership of the EDI VRG.

***SRA open data digital register***

- 23 In early April, basic data on the firms we regulate was made available to registered data re-publishers in a new web service. The web service allows data re-users (eg comparison websites, consumer rating/review websites) to access refreshed data every 24 hours. It also lets them directly query the data set from a third-party web application, to create 'mash-ups' with other data such as geo-location, service offerings, standard fees and client feedback. Four re-publishers—reallymoving.com, lawyerchecker.co.uk, accesssolicitor.com and resolver.co.uk—are accessing the service.
- 24 Meanwhile, more than 10,000 SRA people have used "Law firm search" since its launch in late March, searching for firms we regulate by name or ID number, and going on to browse content designed to help and inform users of legal services. The majority of people using "Law firm search" have never visited the SRA website before.

***Social media***

- 25 In early May, we adopted and published internally an SRA staff social media policy and guidelines in order to make clear how the organisation expects those who work for us and on our behalf to behave when they use social media. The policy and guidelines spell out the ground rules for social advocacy or activism to responsibly encourage SRA employees to amplify the organisation's social reach and influence. A programme of work to develop our approach to social media is in place, and we expect to be able to report substantial progress shortly.

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### ***Legal Choices***

- 26 Traffic to [www.legalchoices.org.uk](http://www.legalchoices.org.uk) in the first three months of 2016 was up 100 per cent from a year earlier. We continue to run the website on behalf of all legal services sector regulators in England and Wales. Over a three-week period in April-May, a targeted Facebook post on “Pets and the law” reached more than 100,000 animal lovers, directly engaging more than 5,000 of them as demonstrated by interaction with the post—likes, shares and clicks.

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**Date** 18 May 2016

### **Annexes:**

**Annex 1** Training for Tomorrow - Equivalent means

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**Training for Tomorrow - Equivalent means**

As at 12/5/2016, the following numbers of equivalent means applications had been received since 01/07/2014, when the new regulations came into force:

<b>EQ App 12.05.16</b>	<b>Received</b>	<b>Granted</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Work in progress</b>	<b>Unallocated</b>
<b>Common Professional examination</b>	99	47	21	22	8	1
<b>CPE for non graduates</b>	34	22	2	3	7	0
<b>Legal Practice Course</b>	13	2	1	4	6	0
<b>Period of Recognised Training</b>	132	57	16	17	36	6
<b>Professional Skills Course</b>	7	3	0	4	0	0
<b>Morgenbesser</b>	3	0	0	3	0	0