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## Press Release

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### **A Fresh Start for Resolving Legal Complaints**

Today, Wednesday 6 October, the Legal Ombudsman will open for business to help people resolve complaints about lawyers.

This is the first time people can come to an independent and impartial body to help them resolve a legal complaint. The service covers all lawyers, including solicitors, barristers and others (see notes to editors for a full list).

The Ombudsman has official powers to put things right if the service a consumer received from their lawyer was not satisfactory.

The new Legal Ombudsman will also enhance the reputation of the profession and aims to simplify the current consumer complaints system. Consumers can have greater confidence in using legal services because they know they can access an independent body that has specific powers to help. The service is free of charge to consumers.

**Chief Ombudsman, Adam Sampson** said:

“We know that most of the time, lawyers provide a good service. But sometimes things can go wrong. When they do, people must have access to someone they can have confidence in to put things right. That is our job – to resolve complaints quickly and fairly. We have worked hard to make sure we bring a fresh approach to legal complaints with a focus on justice.”

“We also want to work closely with lawyers and their regulators to raise standards. We want to help prevent complaints and make the legal and justice systems work better”.

**Jonathan Djanogly MP, Minister responsible for Legal Services** commented:

“The new Legal Ombudsman will make a real difference for people who want to make a complaint about their lawyer.

“The consumer will have a single point of contact, instead of the current confusing situation, and the process will be a smoother one for the legal profession.

The logo for the Legal Ombudsman. The word "LEGAL" is in a bold, pink, sans-serif font. A large, stylized, pink, handwritten-style flourish or signature line starts from the top right of the "L" and loops around the "E" and "G". Below "LEGAL", the word "OMBUDSMAN" is written in a black, all-caps, sans-serif font.

“As a lawyer myself I fully understand the vital part this will play in the regulatory system that helps maintain the high standing that our lawyers have around the world.”

**Peter Vicary-Smith, CEO Which?** said:

“The arrival of the Legal Ombudsman is a welcome step forward for consumers who use legal services. It is hugely important for consumers to have the opportunity to contact an independent 'referee' who looks at both sides of the argument, makes enquiries, asks questions and comes up with a remedy or solution that they believe is fair.

**For more information** or to speak to an Ombudsman spokesperson please contact:

Alison Robinson, Head of External Affairs on 0121 245 3070 or 07741 035 967.

### **Notes to Editors:**

The Legal Ombudsman can look into complaints about lawyers in England and Wales. The Ombudsman is a vital part of the Legal Services Act 2007 (see link below), which is in the process of transforming the regulatory framework of legal services in England and Wales.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/contents>

By law, the Legal Ombudsman is a free service for consumers. It is funded by a levy on the legal profession but with Government controls in place to ensure it is independent and free from influence when it comes to resolving complaints. There is no cost to the taxpayer. A range of publications to help consumers and lawyers can be found here: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/publications>

The Ombudsman will provide a more effective service, using technology to ensure that it resolves complaints quickly and at less cost than the previous arrangements.

The Legal Ombudsman will deal with complaints about a broad cross-section of legal professionals. For example:

- Barristers
- Law costs draftsmen
- Legal executives
- Licensed conveyancers
- Notaries
- Patent attorneys
- Probate practitioners
- Registered European lawyers
- Solicitors
- Trademark attorneys

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