

New Ombudsman scheme to open in Birmingham

The Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) has chosen Birmingham as the new home for the Ombudsman scheme for legal services it is setting up.

The OLC is a new body set up to establish a new, independent Ombudsman scheme to investigate and resolve complaints made by customers about legal services they have received. The scheme will be up and running before the end of 2010.

Adam Sampson, the Chief Ombudsman said “We are delighted that we will open the new Ombudsman scheme for legal services in Birmingham. It is a great city that we think our staff will enjoy working in. We are also very pleased to meet the Government’s commitment for us to be based in the West Midlands.”

“Making a decision about location for the new office means we can move to Birmingham soon. We are looking forward to setting up a temporary office as quickly as possible and are currently looking at managed office space.”

Mr Sampson added “We have an identified short list of possible buildings. We aim to be an organisation that will offer a vibrant and exciting working environment and therefore our choice of location and building are vital. Environmental sustainability will be a core value and therefore a location that is close to good public transport links is key. “

Following an extensive review of over 30 properties in different parts of the West Midlands the OLC has focused on Birmingham as the future home for its new Ombudsman scheme.

We are looking forward to the outcome of the tender process currently being carried out among the shortlisted premises so we can announce our choice of home for the new Ombudsman scheme.

This process to choose a specific building is designed to ensure that the new Ombudsman scheme is based in an office that will meet its business needs and represents value for money.

Responses to the tender are due in the first week of October. Submissions seeking Ministerial endorsement of the outcome of the tender will follow once the process is complete.

Notes for editors:

1. The formal establishment of the Office for Legal Complaints on 1 July 2009 was a key step in the implementation of the Legal Services Act 2007.

2. The Act sets the stage for wide-ranging reforms to the provision and regulation of legal services in England and Wales and establishes the OLC to administer an Ombudsman scheme that will deal with all consumer complaints about legal services.
3. The OLC will be independent from government and the legal profession. It is a public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and the Ombudsman scheme will become fully operational by no later than the end of 2010.
4. Elizabeth France was named Chair of the OLC in October 2008 by the Legal Services Board. On 3 February 2009, the Legal Services Board and the Chair of the OLC announced the appointment of six OLC Board members. Adam Sampson was named as Chief Ombudsman in March 2009. Biographies of each of the Board members and the Chief Ombudsman and more information can be found on the Office for Legal Complaints website at www.officeforlegalcomplaints.org.uk
5. For information regarding the Office of Legal Complaints, please contact Alison Robinson on 0207 271 0089.