



The Competition and Markets Authority published a [report on 15/12/2016](#), demanding greater transparency from Legal Services Providers. This is our response to it.

We congratulate the Competition and Markets Authority on an excellent and thorough report.

The report has bigger fish to fry than our small sector, and so we are particularly pleased to see that CMA has taken the time to look in some detail at the pros and cons of Professional McKenzie Friends. We hope that the report's recommendations will lay to rest once and for all the Judicial Executive Board's proposed blanket ban on Professional McKenzie Friends.

The report acknowledges that paid McKenzie Friends "may provide an important service to the vulnerable and those who cannot afford to instruct a solicitor or barrister," and "the proportionality of a blanket ban needs to be assessed carefully given its likely impact on consumer choice." (para 5.84).

The report found "The evidence that we have reviewed is mixed but does not suggest that there are significant quality issues relating to the use of McKenzie Friends" (para 4.75). It also records the shared view of LSB, SRA and LSCP that "although risks exist in the use of paid McKenzie Friends, a ban on their remuneration would be disproportionate and serve to compromise consumer choice and access to legal services." (appendix G para 14)

SPMF hopes that all will now accept the previous recommendation of LSB and LSCP, that self-regulation is the way forward. LSB regulation would drive up cost; a blanket ban would remove the option altogether. Membership of a Trade Association such as SPMF provides the right balance: a proportionate degree of protection to the consumer by verifying the accreditation and insurance of its members, while preserving the essential nature of the McKenzie Friend as a low-cost option.