

## Legal Choices summary report 2017-2020

17 November 2020

[Legal Choices summary report 2017-20 \(PDF 24 pages, 2MB\) \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/legal-choices-summary-report-2017-20.pdf?version=4ac58d\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/legal-choices-summary-report-2017-20.pdf?version=4ac58d)

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Finally, we thank the hundreds of thousands of members of the public who have taken part in Legal Choices research, testing and beta activities. Without their participation and involvement, there would not be much to say.

### Executive summary

All the legal services regulators in England and Wales have a clear commitment to public legal education. So, in 2014, we established Legal Choices, a website and social media presence offering independent, objective and factual information that helps people to get to grips with legal services. In response to recommendations in the December 2016 Competition and Markets Authority report on how the legal sector was working for consumers, the regulators agreed a three-year development plan for Legal Choices. This report sets out what we did and looks ahead to the next stages.

The regulators invested £750,000 over the three years, refreshing the look of the website, scaling up marketing, developing four new products and exceeding our target visitor numbers of two to three million, achieving 3.1 million visitors. Importantly, we took a user-centred approach throughout, with every step of the way built on public engagement and input. Of course, not everyone can access an online resource, so a particular area of work was to support vulnerable consumers

and the digitally excluded by developing a product that could be used by advice givers.

We have also improved how Legal Choices links to, and is linked to, other resources of value to the public, including GOV.UK and organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

For much of this year, we have used Legal Choices to provide key information for the public in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Legal Choices does not provide legal advice, but it signposts to expert information, and the many hundreds of thousands of people reading our dedicated information shows just how valuable this type of quick and responsive service can be.

The three-year development programme has been a resounding success, demonstrating that there is a real appetite for authoritative, public interest information that helps people to navigate the sector.

We are now looking ahead to further development, to make sure that Legal Choices realises its potential in making a positive contribution to wider public legal education.

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## **Introduction and background**

[Legal Choices \[https://www.legalchoices.org.uk\]](https://www.legalchoices.org.uk) aims to be an agent of change, sharing information through a website and social media to help make consumer access to the legal services market work better. Run and funded by regulators, Legal Choices supports people who are navigating the legal sector and helps them to make informed choices and purchasing decisions.

It supports the Legal Services Act regulatory objectives:

- improving access to justice
- protecting and promoting the interests of consumers
- increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties.

It is proportionate, transparent and targeted, in line with the better regulation principles.

The Legal Choices website makes a contribution to the legal regulators' [public legal education \(PLE\) work \[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-panel-launched-to-drive-legal-education\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-panel-launched-to-drive-legal-education). Each regulator undertakes wider PLE work in addition to supporting the website.

Legal Choices is positioned as 'just in time' [PLE \[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-panel-launched-to-drive-legal-education\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-panel-launched-to-drive-legal-education). It does not itself offer legal advice, but signposts sources of information and support as part of its value offer. Popular areas of the site include content about the different sources of legal advice (regulated and unregulated) and articles written for interest-based audiences, which are promoted on social media to attract visitors to the site.

The Legal Choices website dates from early 2014. In its first year, basic engagement work was carried out with a range of organisations, such as the Law Centres Network and AdviceUK, which helped to increase traffic to the website. From summer 2015, we used social media marketing techniques to increase our

social presence and build traffic. In the three years 2014–2017, visits to Legal Choices totalled some 164,000.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published a legal services market study report in December 2016. The report recognised that the Legal Choices website had value for users of legal services and made recommendations about developing it as a regulatory information remedy.

The CMA said:

Development of a consumer education hub

‘The Legal Choices platform should be overhauled to ensure that it can play a major role in empowering legal services consumers, particularly when they first engage with the sector. The redevelopment should include input from consumer and business groups, with a clear focus on the needs of consumers, to help consumers navigate and interact with the sector. The content should reflect the purchasing journey for common legal needs, in addition to general public legal information. This improved content should also be actively promoted through effective marketing directly by regulators and consumer groups. Providers should also be encouraged to make consumers aware of it.’

## **CMA recommendations on helping consumers navigate the sector**

The CMA went on to set out a series of detailed recommendations on the development of Legal Choices:

We recommend to the Bar Standards Board (BSB), CILEX Regulation, Council for Licensed Conveyancers (CLC), the Costs Lawyers Standards Board (CLSB), the Intellectual Property Regulation Board (IPReg), The Master of the Faculties and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) that they should:

- Review and further develop the content of the Legal Choices website to:
  - present a comprehensive whole of market overview of different types of provider, including those not regulated by frontline regulators
  - provide information and practical guides on comparing and choosing a legal services provider
  - provide guidance on what information consumers and small businesses should reasonably expect from legal services providers on engagement and during the course of ongoing cases.
- Identify how best to support the vulnerable and those who are either unable or do not have confidence to access the Legal Choices website.
- Actively consult the Legal Ombudsman (LeO), the Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP), the Legal Services Board, relevant consumer and small business groups, such as Which?, Citizens Advice, and the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and self-regulatory bodies on content and focus. Furthermore, the frontline regulators

should consider how to meet ongoing consumer and business needs in future changes to editorial content.

- Engage with government, including the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Government Digital Service (GDS) to improve signposting to Legal Choices and consistency of content between Legal Choices and GOV.UK.
- Engage with relevant bodies in Northern Ireland and Scotland to consider how to ensure individual consumers and small businesses across the UK can be signposted to appropriate information.

We recommend to the BSB, CILEX Regulation, CLC, CLSB, ICAEW, IPREG, The Master of the Faculties and the SRA to:

- Actively promote Legal Choices from their websites and on published materials.
- Encourage legal services providers to make consumers aware of Legal Choices.
- Explore other channels to promote awareness of the Legal Choices website, including paid search.

We recommend to the MoJ that it coordinates changes to content on GOV.UK and introduces signposting to the Legal Choices website across its content.

In 2017, the Legal Choices delivery team created a three-year plan that, among other things, sought to respond to the CMA's key recommendations. The plan was agreed by the joint regulators and delivery of the programme began in the legal year starting 1 November 2017. As we near the end of the three-year work programme, this close-out report offers an overview of activities, achievements and challenges, and considers the next steps for Legal Choices.

## [Our approach](#)

### **Goals**

The Legal Choices development plan described three main goals for the three-year period to October 2020:

- redevelop the content offering based on rigorous user research
- scale up and diversify marketing activities, aiming for two to three million visits over 2017–2020
- consolidate internal governance and extend stakeholder engagement.

The plan, which reflected a set of goals agreed with the CMA, identified a target audience of individual members of the public, small and medium-sized businesses, potential users of legal services, and intermediaries who support them in England and Wales.

### **Funding**

Based on the scope of work outlined in the plan, in mid-2017 the joint regulators (at the time, a group of seven) agreed a funding package for the three-year development programme of around £750,000. Contributions over the life of the plan were based on a funding split originally agreed in 2014, with the subsequent addition of a contribution from ICAEW and an ongoing commitment to in-kind

support from the regulators. That in-kind support includes a contribution to content generation by all regulators and, for the SRA, delivery of the development programme including provision of all the technical services, management oversight, day-to-day running, governance support, procurement support, legal services and digital and marketing expertise.

The table below sets out the financial contributions agreed by the regulators in 2017.

<b>Regulator</b>	<b>Y1 funds</b>	<b>Y1 share</b>	<b>Y2 funds</b>	<b>Y2 share</b>	<b>Y3 funds</b>	<b>Y3 share</b>	<b>Total budget</b>	<b>Overall share</b>
<b>Solicitors Regulation Authority</b>	£110,000	55%	£137,500	55%	£137,500	55%	£385,000	55%
<b>Bar Standards Board</b>	£42,000	21%	£52,500	21%	£52,500	21%	£147,000	21%
<b>CILEx Regulation Council for Licensed Conveyancers</b>	£18,000	9%	£22,500	9%	£22,500	9%	£63,000	9%
<b>Faculty Office Costs Lawyers Standards Board</b>	£4,000	2%	£5,000	2%	£5,000	2%	£14,000	2%
<b>Intellectual Property Regulation Board</b>	£4,000	2%	£5,000	2%	£5,000	2%	£14,000	2%
<b>Total</b>	£200,000	100%	£250,000	100%	£250,000	100%	£700,000	100%
<b>ICAEW</b>			£10,000		£18,000		£18,000	£46,000
<b>Revised budget (Inc ICAEW)</b>			£210,000		£268,000		£268,000	£746,000

The BSB withdrew from Legal Choices at the end of year two (October 2019). The remaining regulators contributed further funds to ensure the delivery of the project.

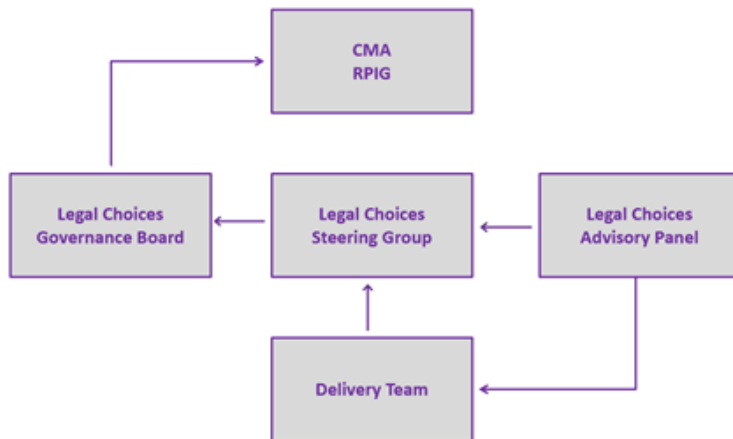
The development work and three-year programme was delivered on budget.

## **Governance**

The governance of Legal Choices was reviewed in line with the development programme and significantly increased funding. A new Legal Choices Governance Board, chaired by the chief executive of the CLC and made up of the chief executives of each participating regulator, was established to provide strategic and budgetary oversight. The editorial board that was put in place in 2014 was refreshed, enhanced and relaunched as the Legal Choices Steering Group, chaired by the SRA's executive director of external and corporate affairs, with a wider membership, including LeO and the LSCP. A wider Legal Choices Advisory Panel was set up to provide review and insight, with a membership of some 20 consumer and

business groups. In 2020, the Legal Choices Steering Group created a marketing sub-group to monitor progress on a monthly basis and look at content generation.

## Legal Choices Governance Structure



Progress in delivering the Legal Choices 2017–20 development plan has been reported to the Remedies Programme Implementation Group, which coordinates the regulators' response to the CMA recommendations.

## Engagement

### **Third sector stakeholders and consumer organisations**

The Legal Choices Advisory Panel is a key mechanism for extending stakeholder engagement. Members include a range of intermediary and consumer groups. Among them are groups that represent people with protected characteristics, with an interest in increasing access to legal services and expertise in their areas.

### **Legal Choices Advisory Panel member organisations**

- AdviceUK
- Age UK
- British Chambers of Commerce
- Citizens Advice
- Citizenship Foundation
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Grapevine
- Just for Kids Law
- Law Centres Network
- Mind
- National Alliance of Women's Organisations
- National Association of Gypsy Traveller Officers
- Personal Support Unit
- Race Equality Foundation
- Refugee Action
- The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner
- Which?

The Legal Choices Advisory Panel was established as a LinkedIn group so that it could operate as a discussion forum.

Panel members sent representatives to participate in a two-day workshop to generate product ideas in June 2018. This formed the starting point of efforts to redevelop the Legal Choices content offering based on the results of rigorous, applied research. The workshop, designed after the completion of a desk review of relevant existing research, took a design-thinking approach to generate a large number of ideas for digital solutions for the Legal Choices website which could educate and empower users and substantially increase the number of visitors to the site. Participants were guided through a range of group activities to:

- encourage them to empathise with the users of key legal areas
- generate a list of key user needs
- share examples of solutions to these needs which already exist within and outside the legal world
- generate ideas to be taken into research, prototyping, development and testing.

Key areas covered were as follows:

- will writing and probate
- conveyancing
- housing - evictions
- asylum claims
- family - divorce/separation
- legal needs of small and medium enterprises.

More than 300 product ideas were discussed, 20 ideas were elaborated at the end of the two-day session and selected for a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

One of the four product ideas eventually selected for prototyping is a tool for advice givers. This addresses the CMA's recommendation to 'identify how best to support the vulnerable and those who are either unable or do not have confidence to access the Legal Choices website.' Frontline advice givers from Legal Choices Advisory Panel member organisations participated in several rounds of user testing of the tool, providing constructive and positive feedback.

## **Linking to government and other resources**

Legal Choices has also engaged with representatives of the MoJ at several points over the past three years. This is primarily with the aim of increasing referrals from GOV.UK to legalchoices.org.uk, in line with the CMA's recommendation: 'we recommend to the MoJ that it coordinates changes to content on GOV.UK and introduces signposting to the Legal Choices website across its content.' We have shared progress and perspectives, too, in order to identify and avoid potential duplication.

A key element of the Legal Choices offer - explanation of the different types of legal adviser - is currently positioned on four GOV.UK web pages that, together, are viewed by more than 500 users per day on average. And, monthly referrals from GOV.UK to legalchoices.org.uk are rising, as shown below.

## **Unique users referred to Legal Choices from GOV.UK per month, 2017/18 to 2019/20**

### **Month and year Users referred**

Nov-17	1
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Dec-17	0
Jan-18	0
Feb-18	0
Mar-18	1
Apr-18	6
May-18	14
Jun-18	8
Jul-18	10
Aug-18	8
Sep-18	5
Oct-18	6
Nov-18	8
Dec-18	4
Jan-19	8
Feb-19	16
Mar-19	3
Apr-19	7
May-19	12
Jun-19	8
Jul-19	18
Aug-19	19
Sep-19	14
Oct-19	25
Nov-19	5
Dec-19	17
Jan-20	32
Feb-20	80
Mar-20	17
Apr-20	48
May-20	68
Jun-20	74
Jul-20	139
Aug-20	159
Sep-20	131
Oct-20	119

Legal Choices covers England and Wales and it signposts people to relevant bodies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, in line with the CMA's recommendation to 'engage with relevant bodies in Northern Ireland and Scotland to consider how to ensure individual consumers and small businesses across the UK can be signposted to appropriate information.'

## **Developing content**

### **Objective**

Our goal in redeveloping the content offering of Legal Choices was to increase consumer engagement in the legal market and contribute to consumer



empowerment by helping consumers to:

- identify that they have a legal need
- shop around
- understand the differences between legal services providers
- understand quality measures that might influence their decisions
- make better comparisons and good choices.

## Approach

The delivery team's approach to the development of the Legal Choices content offering for the past three years has been thoroughly user centric. To inform every design decision and development choice, we have sought evidence of relevant user need. Our approach has been inspired by the GDS, and in our view aligns with the latest published [Service Standard \[https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard\]](https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard).

Following the June 2018 ideas workshop, 10 ideas and 10 variant ideas were subjected to stress testing and SWOT analysis. The 10 highest-scoring ideas were selected for inclusion in the research phase of the project.

The research phase of the project ran for four months in 2018. The main intent of the research was not to choose the strongest of the 10 product ideas as they stood, but to define a list of needs that successful products should address (whatever their form).

The research design was reviewed by specialist teams at several of the participating regulators before being approved by the Legal Choices Steering Group. The research included a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative phase was conducted before the quantitative stage to inform questionnaire design.

## Qualitative research

A total of 10 online focus groups with five to six people were conducted across five areas of law (two focus groups in each area).

Participants were asked to complete a short pre-task, drawing out their most recent legal experience as a journey with prompts to ensure they focus on key parts of the journey:

- recognising a legal need
- finding a legal services professional
- experience of legal services
- resolution of the legal issue.

Participants were asked to indicate 'high' and 'low' points of the journey. The research questions in this stage of the study were as follows:

- What are the typical user journeys to see a legal problem to its resolution?
- What behaviours are typical among legal users?
- What are the audience's support needs?
- What are the audience's information needs?
- What would help audiences make more effective decisions (at the start of the process and during)?
- What visual imagery builds trust among legal service users and potential legal service users?

## Quantitative research

The quantitative research used two main instruments:

- a 15-minute online questionnaire with 1,000 members of the public
- an online questionnaire with 400 senior decision makers at small and medium-sized businesses.

The general public sample included people who have never used legal services (or used legal services outside the core areas) and people who have used legal services for the following in the last five years: conveyancing, writing a will, probate and divorce.

The quantitative stage of research set out to address the following questions:

- What impact will the ideated products have on users' empowerment?
- What impact will the ideated products have on users' education?
- How likely are the ideated products to be used?
- Who do ideated products have the most impact on?

## Research findings

The research study identified five product ideas suitable to take forward to piloting stage:

1. A tool that guides me through the process of dealing with a legal problem.
2. A website with people's reviews of legal service providers.
3. A tool that allows me to look up legal jargon and turn it into plain English.
4. A quick way of finding out if legal services would be right for my situation, without having to do lots of research.
5. A set of resources for advice givers.

The final research report details the evidence discovered in relation to each product idea.

## Prototyping, user testing, build and beta

Four product ideas were taken forward into the next stage of work:

1. Help me understand the process
2. Help me trust my lawyer
3. Help me understand legal terms
4. Help me give good advice

In each case, work began with prototyping the product on screen. Prototypes went through a minimum of two major design iterations and user-testing cycles before going into build. The culmination of the build phase for each product was the launch of a beta version – either privately or publicly.

## The four products: Progress, challenges, next steps

A description of each product follows, along with an overview of progress, challenges and next steps.

### Product 1: Help me understand the process

#### Description



An evolving suite of chatbots focused on different processes and groups.

#### **User need**

As a user, I need to understand how the process will work in my circumstances so that I feel in control.

#### **Success criteria**

- I understand the value that a legal services provider could add.
- I know what activities to expect and what's expected of me – at each stage.
- I know what questions to ask and what should be happening at any point.

#### **Status**

- Public beta version released in February 2020, providing chatbot-style help to users facing 'no fault' eviction proceedings
- Almost 100,000 page views to date, with an average duration of three minutes, 44 seconds per view

#### **Challenges**

- Engaging subject matter experts to create and maintain chatbot content on a voluntary basis is difficult and the approach will be reviewed.
- Government ban on evictions introduced shortly after beta release due to Covid-19 outbreak.
- Queen's Speech 2020 announced intention to abolish 'no fault' evictions.

#### **Next steps**

- Refine eviction variant based on user feedback and observed behaviour.
- Commission the development of at least two more chatbots, proposals include one on immigration/asylum law and one in family law.

### **Product 2: Help me trust my lawyer**

#### **Description**

A meta-search of disciplinary and regulatory decisions about legal services providers.

#### **User need**

As a user, I want reassurance there are no regulatory issues with my legal services provider, so that I feel more confident in my relationship with them.

#### **Success criteria**

I can easily and quickly check whether a given provider is the subject of regulatory or disciplinary decisions published by any legal services regulator.

#### **Status**

- Search experience prototyped and user tested at high fidelity.



- Solution design completed.
- First build completed and tested.
- Data processing agreement (or alternative arrangements) reached with participating regulators after obtaining legal advice.
- Build changes in progress to accommodate data publication changes made by regulators prior to public beta release.

### **Challenges**

- Perceived data processing constraints meant obtaining the agreement of participating regulators to process their data took more than 12 months; one regulator has not yet granted approval and the BSB withdrew from Legal Choices venture; discussions continue.
- This product emerged from user research and is not part of the feasibility work undertaken by the joint regulators through the Regulators Programme Implementation Group in 2017 to look at whether a single register for the legal sector was an option.

### **Next steps**

- Complete changes and release beta version of product.
- Refine beta based on user feedback and observed behaviour.
- Seek and obtain consent and/agreement to include data from ICAEW and BSB.
- Scope work required to expand the range of data covered by the product to include non-disciplinary data, offering single-register type functionality for the overwhelming majority of the legal services market. If agreed, this offers a solution to the separate CMA recommendation on the potential for a single register.

## **Product 3: Help me understand legal terms**

### **Description**

A searchable plain English dictionary of terms, signposting related Legal Choices content, extending to a tool that suggests alternatives to complex terms in uploaded content.

### **User need**

As a user, I want to make sure I understand the documents written by my legal services provider so that I'm confident I have what I need.

### **Success criteria**

- I get documents that I can understand.
- I get independent, reliable definitions of terms that I can trust.

### **Status**

- Permission secured to use Plain English Campaign dictionary.
- Dictionary experience prototyped and user tested at high fidelity.
- Public beta released in February 2020.
- More than half a million page views to date, with an average page view duration of four minutes and eight seconds

### **Challenges**

- This product has not yet posed any challenges to the project.

### **Next steps**

- Refine beta based on user feedback and observed behaviour.
- Extend product with copy-and-paste tool that offers in-context definitions of (or replacements for) terms used in an email or contract, for example.
- Create and publish on YouTube rich/multimedia dictionary entries for key and/or gateway terms.

## **Product 4: Help me give good advice**

### **Description**

A set of information packs, collated from published Legal Choices content, which can be customised by advice givers and easily shared with those they provide advice to.

### **User need**

As an advice giver, I want a simple way to share relevant, reliable information with those who I advise in order to help them.

### **Success criteria**

- I can tailor information (from a trusted source) to the needs of my client.
- I can easily compile the information and share it with my client in different ways.

### **Status**

- Three iterations prototyped and tested with advice givers.
- First build complete and tested.
- Currently in private beta.

### **Challenges**

- More difficult than expected to find frontline advice givers willing to act as user test participants, due to resource pressures.
- Concerns about General Data Protection Regulation implications raised (post build) by information governance specialists now resolved.

### **Next steps**

- Refine beta based on user feedback and observed behaviour.
- Work with Legal Choices Advisory Panel to further develop content offering so that there is demand for the content-sharing tool.

## **User experience and visual identity**

In parallel to product development, a piece of work on user experience and visual identity was completed.

Participants in the online focus groups for the primary research were asked to

review two concepts for the Legal Choices website. Users wanted a balance between professional and friendly for the website, with too friendly a feel indicating a lack of experience and too professional a feel being too alienating.

Anecdotal evidence from product idea workshop participants suggested that Legal Choices website users may feel pressured, stressed or confused, and may find themselves in a state of emotional agitation or anxiety.

Meanwhile, user testing of a range of visual concepts for the website showed that designs featuring images of people generated strong and varied responses – both positive and negative.

With this in mind, a design concept was elaborated using images of fractals – patterns that repeat themselves at various scales across a single structure. Studies have shown that viewing fractal patterns can substantially reduce stress levels, as humans are habituated to viewing and making sense of fractal patterns in nature.

The concept became the center piece of a responsive, ‘mobile first’ user experience that was designed, developed and tested in autumn 2018, and deployed to go live in early 2019. An expert heuristic evaluation ahead of scaled up digital marketing activities in early 2020 found that the user experience was not a blocker. Meanwhile, user testing of prototypes embedded in the Legal Choices user experience repeatedly generated positive user feedback.

The next major step in improving Legal Choices user experience is a review of key user journeys and consideration of evidence to determine whether site navigation and information architecture should be redeveloped.

### **Digital marketing activity**

A key objective for the 2017–2020 period was to scale up and diversify Legal Choices marketing activities. Indeed, this change was necessary in order to achieve the goal of two million to three million visits for the period. In the preceding three-year period, visits to Legal Choices totalled 164,000, so the ambition was significant.

By the end of October 2020, baseline traffic had almost tripled to 0.45 million visits over three years, driven by organic search and organic social traffic. Meanwhile, a digital marketing campaign that began in February 2020 generated 2.65 million visits by the end of October. It should be noted that the campaign focused on topical Covid-19 related content, in line with very significant public interest and concern, and may, therefore, not reflect a ‘typical’ pattern of traffic.

The majority of the £230,000 placement spend was split between Facebook ‘featured articles’ and the Google Display Network, with an overall cost per click of less than £0.09, excluding creative and management costs.

### **Facebook and Facebook Audience Network**

An article on the requirement to wear face coverings on public transport illustrates how we used Facebook and its audience network to create traffic for legalchoices.org.uk. A short article about the topic was published on Legal Choices in mid-June and promoted on Facebook (both on platform and through the Facebook Audience Network) for 16 days, generating more than 150,000 visits to Legal Choices at a cost per click of £0.04.

Legal Choices articles featured on Facebook promoted relevant elements of our broader Legal Choices offering to readers, including the ‘Help me understand legal terms’ beta product, and encouraged further engagement with Legal Choices via moderated on-site discussion.

## **Google Display**

The most important of our several Google Display ad groups has promoted the ‘Help me understand legal terms’ beta product to members of an affinity audience, based on browsing history. Users with a browsing history that suggests interest in legal definitions are displayed Legal Choices ad content. Between February and September 2020, this ad group generated almost 0.5 million visits to Legal Choices at an average cost per click of £0.08.

A small portion of the overall placement budget has also been spent on the Google Search Network as a pilot to test its utility, but auction-based system drives a higher cost per click – around £0.50. We do not consider that this offers good value for money, even if the resulting traffic is of a higher quality.

Traffic has also been driven to Legal Choices through a range of regulator activities, for example, all participating regulators link to Legal Choices from their own websites. Where possible, the regulators promote Legal Choices social media through their own social media channels. Events are also used to promote Legal Choices to law firms and legal services providers – for example, the SRA has a dedicated Legal Choices marketplace stand at its annual Compliance Officers conference, which in 2019 was attended by some 1,400 people. This encourages firms to link their own websites to Legal Choices. The SRA also uses its stand and main theatre two-day presence at the annual LegalEx event at the Excel centre in London to encourage providers to link to Legal Choices as a way of supporting their clients and prospective clients.

## **Outcomes**

By the end of period covered by the 2017–2020 delivery plan, Legal Choices had four evidence-based content products in beta release and a considerable volume of data from users – both feedback and behavioural – to inform future product iterations.

All four products received high system usability scale (SUS) scores from users during prototype testing. A SUS score of 68 out of 100 or higher is generally considered to be above average. No user scored any of the Legal Choices prototypes lower than 80 out of 100. And most scores fell in the 90–100 range.

Approximately 100 users of the dictionary beta so far have offered feedback about it. Of the people who say they are using the dictionary to help them understand a document, 63% say they have a better understanding of the document as a result of using the dictionary. On a scale of one to 10, with one being ‘very unlikely’ and 10 ‘very likely’, the average likelihood that a user would recommend the dictionary to someone else is seven.

Meanwhile, Legal Choices has intensified and broadened engagement activities with a range of stakeholders – users, consumer and other third sector organisations, and government. It has linked to GOV.UK and also to resources in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Legal Choices achieved its target of two to three million visits well ahead of schedule, and exceeded the upper limit of the target range, attracting 3.1 million

visits in the three years ending 31 October 2020. Importantly, it has provided a responsive and effective resource for the public during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, recent research suggests that Legal Choices is recognised and used by many legal services users in England and Wales. An SRA-commissioned independent study on consumer use of information published by law firms was carried out. It surveyed 2,029 individual consumers of legal services and 1,550 small business consumers of legal services in the 18-month period from January 2019 to June 2020. Of the individual consumers surveyed, 37% said they were aware of Legal Choices ‘as a way to find legal services’, and 11% said they had used it. Among small business consumers, 55% said they were aware of Legal Choices, and 22% said they had used it.

In summary, the programme has achieved all its objectives, addressed all the CMA recommendations in relation to Legal Choices and demonstrated that Legal Choices has the potential to make a positive contribution to wider PLE.

### **Next steps**

Funding from all partner legal regulators (all the regulators except for the BSB) has been agreed for the next three-year development programme. Based on the approach so successfully used to date and modelled for the joint regulators in mid-2019, the anticipated next steps for Legal Choices are as follows:

- Continue social and digital display marketing, although at a somewhat lower cadence than in 2020, based on a pipeline of fresh, topical, relatable content, including rich/multimedia content.
- Build stronger relationships with existing and potential affiliates in the third and public sectors as a basis for a sustained, sophisticated affiliate marketing campaign.
- Complete at least two cycles of user research, design and testing to refine the user journeys on the Legal Choices website, and complete the copywriting and design work that flows from the findings this activity.
- Refine and extend three of the four content products as follows:
  - Help me understand legal terms – introduce a copy-and-paste tool that will offer in-context definitions of (or replacements for) terms used in an email or contract; create and publish on YouTube rich/multimedia dictionary entries for key and/or gateway terms.
  - Help me understand the process – commission the development of at least two more chatbots, including one in immigration/asylum law and one in family law.
  - Help me trust my lawyer – scope the work required to expand the range of data covered by the index to include non-disciplinary data.
- Revisit alternative product ideas from primary research and assess potential to generate traffic and meet established user need.