



THE FACULTY OFFICE

## **Business Plan 2025-2028 – The Master’s Priorities**

The Master of the Faculties is the Approved Regulator of the profession of Notaries Public in England & Wales and the Faculty Office (led by the Registrar) assists the Master in her functions in the public interest.

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## **Foreword by the Master – Morag Ellis KC**

I am delighted to introduce my priorities for the next three-year period (the Plan). This is my second set of priorities since becoming Master and I welcome the opportunity to outline my vision for the continued transparency of the notarial profession for the benefit of the consumer, the wider public and the profession itself. I am pleased with the progress that was made towards my first set of priorities for the period covering 2022-2025 and look forward to similar positive progress being made in the next three-year period.

The priorities set out in the Plan have been finalised towards the end of very busy period for the Faculty Office. Much of what we do can be described as “day to day business” i.e. the usual regulatory activities. During the last three-year period, we have all had to adjust to new ways of working, specifically adjusting to a post-COVID world and the evolution of Artificial Intelligence. The notarial profession and the Faculty Office share these challenges of adaptation along with the other legal professions and their regulators. The impact of the Post Office Horizon IT scandal reminds all legal regulators that we must keep our regulatory regime under constant review and so you will see the proposal for new resources for notaries to engage in critical self-reflection on professional ethics. The public rightly expects notaries to behave ethically, and I have recently been reminded, meeting the Rt Hon Sarah Sackman, KC MP, Minister for Courts and Legal Services, that the standing of the British legal system and its professions is also critical to the national economy.

As always, most of our focus will be on our core regulatory activities enhanced by the 14 specific priorities which are outlined in the Plan.

All our regulatory work is undertaken in the public’s interest, and we remain committed to providing a first-rate service at a reasonable cost. There is more information about planned income and expenditure in our three yearly budgets annexed to this Plan. Our aim is to regulate in a proportionate way, with a view to achieving useful outcomes. It should not be the role of a regulator to produce red tape for its own sake. Whilst inflation rates are not as high as previously, they remain somewhat volatile, and this will inevitably mean these budgets are likely to be subject to a greater degree of change than in the recent past.

We will formally review progress against our Plan on an annual basis as a living document and prepare annual assessment reports; but it will also be kept under review at our Quarterly Council meetings.

Last but not least, I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Clerk and other officers of the Faculty Office, as well as all the Board members for their dedication, skill and hard work, knowing that we can look forward with confidence to this next three-year period.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ellis', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**The Master of Faculties**

## INTRODUCTION FROM THE REGISTRAR

It has been a great pleasure to work with the Master on her priorities over the past three-year period and I am looking forward to the coming three-year period. We have looked again at ourselves aided in part by the LSB's well led review and by taking time out at a team away day and focused meetings on these priorities chaired by our governance advisor Jim Clifford. We have re-examined our values and checked that we are responding to the right things. It's a moment to remind ourselves of the regulatory principles that should underpin all we do. We have also made use of third-party reviews such as an AML review and our governance advisor's reports.

I am encouraged by the positive feedback we at the Faculty Office has received and the initiative we have taken in the last three-year period. May I mention five.

Firstly, we have continued to recruit new members to the various boards to ensure that they are refreshed appropriately.

Secondly, we expanded our team with the appointment of an administrative officer. We now also have a member of the team designated as an Equality Diversity and Inclusion champion.

Thirdly, we have continued to conduct consumer surveys which provide vital information about the needs of the consumer.

Fourthly, we have increased our monitoring and inspections while developing our digital portal for notarial registrations so that it now includes a bespoke compliance module.

And finally, we implemented several working groups made up of notary and non-notary members to help us prepare and develop our understanding as a regulator on emerging issues. This has allowed the Faculty Office to be more proactive rather than reactive in its regulatory methods.

So, the Plan is designed to help us move forward with all we have learnt from the past few years and concentrate even more on those regulatory objectives that are at the core of what we are about. Once we have taken into account the feedback from the consultation on our Plan we will finalise a delivery / action plan for publication in September.



**Howard Dellar**

**Registrar**

## SECTION 1: WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

**Over the term of previous triennium, we made the following progress on the objectives set in the previous plan:**

1. There has been strong, sound and consistent financial management, and maintenance of appropriate reserves. We have much to thank our finance manager Sue Goss for in her work on this and over very many years. This year she retires, and we have appointed her successor.
2. The number of inspections and inspectors has almost doubled meaning that we can obtain assurance from a larger proportion of notaries that they are practising competently.
3. We have developed draft legislation which, if approved, would give the Faculty Office the power to regulate practices (as well as individual notaries).
4. We have appointed a consultant to help revise our rules concerning professional indemnity insurance, particularly around setting minimum terms.
5. We have developed draft rules and guidance to change our disciplinary regime to allow for new administrative sanctions and to improve the effectiveness of the system overall.
6. We held public lectures in each year in our “Rule of Law” series. The first was given by Sir Keith Lindblom (Senior President of Tribunals). The second, in March 2024, was on AI and new technology and was given by industry expert and notary Robert Bond. This year’s lecture is by Professor Stephen Mayson of University College London on professional legal ethics. The purpose of the lectures are to promote debate on rule of law topics amongst notaries and stakeholders and to encourage notaries and their regulator to meet.
7. There was a record number of people wishing to become notaries. The profession is becoming larger and more diverse as evidenced by the latest diversity survey report.
8. Compulsory continuing professional education in anti-money laundering was introduced and the Faculty Office made a concerted effort to communicate the sanctions regime at a time it was being ramped up in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine. This has been coupled with regular news bulletins and website articles which have provided AML and other regulatory information on a timely basis.
9. Developed and signed a new memorandum of understanding with University College London as lead trainer for notaries and met with the course providers several times to ensure that the next generation of notaries is getting the best possible legal education.
10. Two working parties were set up to give specific attention to emerging opportunities and challenges. One concerns new technology including AI and the other looks at the “future of notarial work” and concerns changes in the economy and society and the notary’s relationship with that. The purpose of the working parties is to help keep the Faculty Office’s regulation up to date with changes in technology and the economy. Output from the working parties has included new chapters of the Code of Practice concerning digital devices and AI.

## SECTION 2: THE MASTER'S PRIORITIES

The priorities for the Faculty Office are as follows and have been grouped into the regulatory objectives contained in the Legal Services Act 2007.

### Protecting and promoting the interests of the consumer

<b>1. Practice authorisation</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Under section 69 of the Legal Services Act 2007 the Faculty Office can be empowered to authorise and regulate practices (such as companies and partnerships) to do notarial work, as well as individuals. A statutory instrument would be made by the Lord Chancellor on the application of the Legal Services Board which would make changes to the legislation under which the Master of Faculties regulates notaries.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	We want to make progress to achieving the passing of the proposed legislation and then to implement it in phases.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	<p>Many notaries already work within incorporated and unincorporated bodies and it is anomalous that the Faculty Office cannot authorise or regulate these bodies, even if those bodies are often the ones entering into contracts or other dealings with the public. It is a gap in regulation not to have this.</p> <p>Further, the new legislation would give the Master additional powers including the power to fine. Fining powers would be helpful in providing prompt and proportionate sanctions in appropriate cases, such as where a notary has been found to have committed a minor money laundering breach, where other existing sanctions such as striking-off are not appropriate.</p>
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	We propose first to re-consult on the principles of our proposals as the previous consultation was many years ago, while working up a package of rules and guidance that would be necessary for any application to the Legal Services Board.

	We have already made good progress on the necessary modernisation and are developing the required documentation for utilising the proposed powers.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	<p>We need to consult on the principles of our proposals, and prepare draft regulations, before making an application to the Legal Services Board.</p> <p>It is likely that external consultancy help will be required to buy in the extra capacity to do this and provision has been made in our draft budget.</p>
<b>Timescale</b>	<p>In principle consultation to be launched before mid-2026 and engaging a consultant to help work up a package of draft regulations and guidance during 2026 with a view to making an application to the Legal Services Board in 2027.</p> <p>Implementation is unlikely to take place within this business cycle. The implementation project is a gradual and longer term one which is likely to take place over a decade.</p>
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Legislation amending the powers of the Master achieved and draft regulations and guidance prepared.

## 2. Review of insurance arrangements

<b>What is it?</b>	Notaries are required to hold a minimum level of professional indemnity insurance cover; that insurance cover should be appropriate to their work. Insurance cover is monitored by the Faculty Office. It is proposed that more prescriptive rules setting out the minimum terms that insurance policies must contain be made. This might include a requirement to hold run-off cover in case a claim emerges after the notary has retired.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<p>Minimum terms with which every notary's insurance policy must comply.</p> <p>We want to avoid requiring minimum terms that the insurance market cannot provide or which make the insurance unnecessarily expensive.</p>
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	By requiring notaries to hold insurance which meets minimum terms the public can be assured that, in the event

	of a claim, the insurance will meet basic minimum requirements.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	A consultant has been commissioned at an initial cost of £3,000 to put together a proposal, working with an expert in the insurance industry, and then consult on it.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	An external consultant is working on devising the minimum terms and producing a consultation. Subject to consultation and an affirmative decision to approve the minimum terms by the Faculty Office, an application for rule change will be made to the Legal Services Board.
<b>Timescale</b>	Consultation late 2025/early 2026.  Application to the Legal Services Board in mid-2026 with a view to implementing the new terms from 1 November 2026, possibly with transitional arrangements for policies still in force and to prevent a spike in demand for new policies.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	New rules for minimum terms of insurance with individual notaries taking out relevant cover.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	A sample of new policies checked in-year by the Faculty Office and by inspectors during the course of inspection.  Seek feedback from notaries about any change in cost of premiums.

**Protecting and promoting the public interest and promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles**

<b>3. Review of disciplinary arrangements</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The proposals are broadly to amend and replace the Notaries (Conduct & Discipline) Rules 2015 (as amended) with a new set of rules which would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• split out the functions of investigative and prosecution presently carried out by the Nominated Notary and allow non-notaries to discharge those functions</li> <li>• bring in new administrative powers which could be used instead of or in addition to disciplinary sanctions imposed by the Commissary Court</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow notaries to agree to penalties with a view to shortening the disciplinary procedure in appropriate cases</li> <li>• produce guidance on penalties</li> <li>• make permanent the interim provision which allows evidence to be taken by simultaneous videoconference</li> <li>• tidying up and harmonising rules regulating the respective roles of Registrar, investigator and prosecutor</li> <li>• create a new “overriding objective” much as applies to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal</li> </ul>
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	A change to our disciplinary rules and procedures dealing with allegations of notarial misconduct.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	<p>The current disciplinary system is somewhat “clunky” in that the disciplinary tribunal side of it sits as a court (the Court of Faculties) and evidence is presented before a judge and two assessors (one notary and one lay person) in a traditional format. This may be disproportionate for some cases and absolutely essential in others where the facts and law are very much in doubt. Each notary has a right to a fair hearing if they are to be deprived of their right to practice but lower-level cases not involving strike off or suspension for a period might not always require a full disciplinary tribunal.</p> <p>By introducing administrative sanctions subject to appropriate checks and balances, a disciplinary outcome in appropriate cases be reached more swiftly. We consider this to be in the public interest.</p> <p>The investigation and advocacy of cases is also likely to be enhanced by widening the pool of potential investigators and prosecutors to non-notaries. Again, we consider this to be in the public interest.</p>
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	The proposed new rules have been prepared and consulted upon. We are finishing the associated guidance at which point the application for agreement will be made to the Legal Services Board.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Rule changes and an application to the Legal Services Board.
<b>Timescale</b>	<p>The application to be submitted to the Legal Services Board and for approval during 2025.</p> <p>Making of the new rules early in 2026.</p>

<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	The Faculty Office beginning to use administrative sanctions in appropriate cases. Increased professionalisation of the prosecution of disciplinary cases.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	<p>We have key performance indicators in place for disciplinary cases which will be continued.</p> <p>This monitoring will be continuous.</p> <p>In addition for quality assurance purposes we will prepare a checklist to be completed at the end of each disciplinary case by way of case review. This will identify how well the investigator and the prosecutor have performed and any learning which has arisen from the case.</p>

<b>4. Consolidation of accounts rules</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	We will continue to review our regulatory arrangements for notaries' accounts with particular emphasis on the three sets of accounts rules: the Notaries Accounts Rules 1989 (as amended), the Notaries' Accounts (Deposit Interest) Rules 1989 and the Notaries Trust Accounts Rules 1989. Specifically we will seek to consolidate them which will make them easier to follow and more practical to use.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	A consolidation of the accounts rules that notaries have to follow and any housekeeping or modernisation that may be appropriate.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	Streamlining them makes it easier for notaries and for consumers to understand the rules. It makes it easier to make amendments as there will be one set to amend and it will result in modernisations which mean that it is better suited to the world in which notaries work today.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	The proposed new rules have been prepared and will be consulted on. After that, subject to reflecting on the consultation replies, an application will be made to the Legal Services Board.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Rule changes and an application to the Legal Services Board.
<b>Timescale</b>	<p>Consultation in September 2025.</p> <p>Consideration and response to consultation December 2025.</p> <p>Application to the Legal Services Board January 2026.</p>

	This timeline may be affected if the Solicitors Regulation Authority make changes of their own (e.g. concerning the holding of clients monies).
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Consolidated accounts rules.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	As above.

<b>5. Develop an outcomes framework</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Much good work is done by the Faculty Office but to meet current best practice standards as well as to be helpful we should devise and use a framework by which the outcomes of its projects can be assessed.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	A way of better measuring the impact of Faculty Office projects by measuring more reliably and proportionately whether its objectives are being achieved.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	To give assurance that its income is being spent well, to give assurance to the Master of Faculties, senior management and Legal Services Board that the Faculty Office is achieving positive outcomes, and to add to accountability to the Notaries and to the general public.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	Following a period of internal scoping, an appropriate external specialist will be commissioned to develop a relevant framework based on what has been considered to work well in other organisations.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Development of a policy, framework and templates.
<b>Timescale</b>	Commission external advice - 2025/2026  Begin using new framework 2026.  Continue using for all main Faculty Office projects and functions.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Faculty Office documents showing better how it is achieving outcomes.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	This is a question to be answered by the external advice.

<b>6. Professional ethics</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Explore how the Faculty Office can promote professional ethics amongst notaries
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	Providing resources which enable notaries to reflect on the application of professional ethics in their day to day work, e.g. observing the independence of a notary, avoiding and managing conflicts of interest etc
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	The Code of Practice states that “Integrity is central to the notarial profession and the office of a notary.” If notaries do not act with integrity and are not seen to act with integrity the trust and confidence in notarial acts diminishes and the public value that a notary provides is put at risk. Although complaints against notaries are few we consider that professional ethics should not be taken for granted. Even if the notarial profession adheres to a high level of professional ethics today, that does not mean that it will follow that new candidates coming into the profession tomorrow will, or that there will be examples of bad conduct and unethical decision making. As such we agree with the Legal Services Board that more work on promoting professional ethics is needed in each part of the legal professions.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	<p>We propose to develop a bank of materials that notaries can use in self-reflection or reflecting with colleagues on the ethical challenges that they might face. These would employ real-world ethical challenges. We propose to work with notaries to devise materials that are bespoke and relevant.</p> <p>We will consider whether to mandate use of these resources when they have been prepared.</p>
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	<p>Development of educational resources and guidance.</p> <p>Possible mandating under the existing continuing professional education rules.</p> <p>Commissioning of help from experts in the field of notarial practice may be required and some external validation or checking may be necessary.</p>

<b>Timescale</b>	<p>Conversations with notarial societies and at the Advisory Board and gather information in 2025.</p> <p>Prepare or commission new materials in 2026.</p> <p>If suitable mandate from late 2026/early 2027.</p>
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Bank of materials available on the Faculty Office website.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	Widespread engagement by notaries with the materials engendering debate, conversation, challenge and feedback.

### 7. Review inspections work

<b>What is it?</b>	Review the inspections work. Inspections provide the front line of investigation into the work of notaries through a combination of remote and onsite inspections by senior notaries commissioned by the Faculty Office on a risk assessed basis.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	Consider whether inspections are working well and whether anything can be improved.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	As inspections are the main regulatory tool by which the Faculty Office gets an in-depth impression of how an individual notary is performing it is sensible that a review takes place to ascertain the robustness and usefulness of the existing inspection regime.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	<p>Combination of interviewing inspectors, drawing conclusions from case reviews, examining KPIs, seeking feedback from those inspected and taking stock of in-house experience.</p> <p>Once the information gathering has completed we will consider whether any changes to the framework are required.</p>
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	<p>Information gathering.</p> <p>Potential rule change application.</p>
<b>Timescale</b>	<p>Terms of reference drawn up late 2026.</p> <p>Information gathering early 2027.</p> <p>Report on conclusions to Advisory Board and Master end 2027.</p>

	Follow up during 2028.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	NA
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	Unknown at this stage.  Once we have identified any weaknesses or blockages, remedying these will be the key aim of the review.

### Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession

<b>8. Diversity</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Develop a standalone diversity action plan spanning the diversity of the profession and EDI as it affects Access to Justice. (see also point 12).
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	To ensure diversity of all kinds amongst the profession by tackling blockages where possible and also ensuring that the Faculty Office boards contain members who have experience of the diverse character of UK society. To address aspects of EDI as they affect Access to Justice across the wide range of the general public, enabling the profession to serve all consumers with equality and inclusivity.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	A diverse profession is a flourishing profession, and one well placed to serve the consumer That service must be equally available to all.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	We will also conduct another diversity survey during this three-year period and will reflect on the results of that report.  We will proceed with an independent EDI evidence-based participatory research project gathering perspectives from notaries across the profession and develop a plan based on its findings and focusing both on how the profession can be and stay diverse and inclusive and how EDI aspects are addressed for of all consumers of notarial services.

	<p>We will look to diversify and refresh where appropriate all the Faculty Office Boards and implement additional and appropriate training.</p> <p>Continue to work alongside other regulators in attending the regular EDI forum and developing our knowledge of EDI issues affecting consumers and notaries.</p>
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Largely in-house but we will need to commission the independent EDI evidenced-based participatory research project separately.
<b>Timescale</b>	Undertake the independent review in 2025 and develop our response to that for consultation in early 2026 . Triennial diversity survey mid-term.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	The Faculty Office will have a better understanding of the composition of the profession and combat barriers to entry and progression . It will also support the development of notarial services and standards to meet the EDI needs of a modern consumer group.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	The independent report will contain recommendations for monitoring and evaluation.

### 9. Post-qualification supervision of probate and conveyancing

<b>What is it?</b>	To ensure the right level of supervision for new notaries who are practicing in probate and/or conveyancing.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	We have identified probate and conveyancing as two high risk areas, particularly as they involve the handling of client money and valuable assets. To ensure that the level of supervision is correct.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	To manage risk and make sure that notaries working in these fields have the best possible start in their early years of practice as a notary. We carried out a call for evidence during 2024 and the response can be read <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	We are proposing to require new notaries to have in-person supervision (whether physical or virtual) for their day to day conveyancing and probate work to be supervised rather than the periodic inspections that occur currently. An exception could be made to the requirement for person supervision if the notary had already come through a supervision route in

	another branch of the legal profession that the Faculty Office recognises as suitably robust. We propose to pair this with mandatory inspections for notaries wishing to practice in these areas in their first years of practice.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Rule change application.
<b>Timescale</b>	Finalise draft of rule change and prepare consultation during second half of 2025. Make rule change application in 2026 with a view to implementing late 2026.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Better supervision of new notaries wishing to do probate and/or conveyancing.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	Inspection of notaries conducting probate and/or conveyancing and complaints data showing positive trends. However the data is expected to be somewhat “lumpy” as there are only a small number of notaries practice in these areas.

## 10. Wellbeing

<b>10. Wellbeing</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The wellbeing of notaries includes their physical and mental health
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	Explore what the Faculty Office can do to keep up or improve wellbeing amongst notaries.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	Most notaries are sole practitioners as regard their notarial work and that can lead to isolation and an inability to “bounce-off” ideas with other professionals. Poor wellbeing including that brought about by isolation can lead to impaired judgement and poor decision making, and a decline in the standard of care given to clients. There is a link here with professional ethics.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	<p>We are at an early stage and need to explore this priority further in conversation with experts including those at Law Care and the professional notarial societies.</p> <p>We suspect that one remedy will be increased contact between notaries and to that end we would be keen to promote more in-person events, such as regional groups.</p>

<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	This is a pervasive priority that will run through our other projects.
<b>Timescale</b>	None. Ongoing.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Notaries who are functioning well.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	Unknown but if we can promote more in-person events for notaries, we can consider what the update is.

### Supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law and legal education

<b>11. Rule of law lectures</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Holding an annual lecture on the rule of law or legal education
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	An annual lecture which brings together notaries, their regulator and others to hear from a distinguished speaker on a topical subject.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	Previous rule of law lectures have provided inspiration and impetus to the work of the Faculty Office and have been an opportunity to convey important messages to notaries in person in a social atmosphere
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	Identify and showcase a distinguished speaker on a topical subject to do with the rule of law or legal education
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Some cost for venue and refreshments has been provided for in the budget.
<b>Timescale</b>	Annual.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	NA
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	A good engagement from notaries.  Ideas and themes from the lecture then informing the work of the Faculty Office.

**Increasing public understanding of the citizen’s legal rights and duties and improving access to justice.**

<b>12. Access to justice</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Seeking to make notaries more accessible to a range of consumers with different needs, economic circumstances and geographical locations.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	A geographical spread of notaries (or provision for those services to be given at a distance) and notaries offering services affordably to avoid “deserts” of notarial services. Also, increasing public understanding of what a notary does and when a notary is needed. The delivery of notarial services in a way which responds to the EDI needs of the consumers and that regulatory focus and professional standards reflect this .
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	We know that the distribution of notaries across England and Wales is somewhat uneven and secondly and more generally EDI aspects of consumer needs have been neglected in the notarial profession.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	Commission research to ascertain whether consumers needs are being met or whether geographical or price constraints are preventing notaries from accessing notaries. It may be that technological solutions exist which mean that geographical spread is less important than it once was.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Cost of independent research . Note that this can be combined with 8 (above).
<b>Timescale</b>	Undertake research in 2026 and consultation on response in early 2026.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Report findings providing the Faculty Office with a greater understanding of whether there is unmet need from consumers of notarial services.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	For the greater understanding on unmet consumer need to feed into our various programmes of work. We will use our outcomes framework (see priority 5). We may be able to use our consumer survey to judge the impact of this work.

<b>13. Wales</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The Faculty Office is responsible for regulating notaries in England and Wales however we recognise that regulation can be “England-centric”.
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	To ensure that the Faculty Office is fully catering for the needs of Welsh notaries and consumers of notarial services in Wales and in the Welsh language.
<b>Why do we want to do this?</b>	The Faculty Office is established to regulate notaries both in England and Wales and so separate attention at Wales specific opportunities and challenges is important to us.
<b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b>	We will look at how the website can be translated into Welsh, how there can be appropriate representation of Welsh notaries and consumers on the various panels/working groups and consider how to make sure there are enough notaries to meet Welsh consumers’ needs (including language needs where applicable).
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	Technical changes to the Faculty Office website.  Call for nominations to include people from Wales to serve on Faculty Office boards.
<b>Timescale</b>	Changes to website before early 2026.  Changes to recruitment materials from 2025.  Ongoing work to reflect on how our work interrelates with Wales.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	Welsh language facility on the Faculty Office website.  More Welsh representatives on our boards.  Greater understanding of the Welsh legal services market and the needs of Welsh speakers and how these can be met.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	We will develop appropriate metrics as part of the development of the impact framework in point 5.

## 14. Artificial intelligence and new technology

<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<p>Technology is moving apace in the fields of digital commerce and artificial technology. Developments in technology can supplant traditional ways of doing business such as meeting clients in person and by automating processes traditionally carried out by people.</p>
<p><b>What do we want to achieve?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider what areas of notarial work might be automated using AI or new technology and consider whether notaries might invest in new technology of their own.</li> <li>• To consider which opportunities and threats are being posed to the future of notarial work posed by AI and new technology.</li> <li>• To consider what new/additional regulatory requirements and risks arise through greater adoption of AI by the profession including what if something goes wrong as a result of over-reliance on an AI product.</li> <li>• To consider what guidance should be given to notaries on the use of AI and new technology covering:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ethical considerations</li> <li>(ii) Intellectual property</li> <li>(iii) Client confidentiality</li> <li>(iv) Cyber security.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• To consider what representations should be made to Government, international bodies, investors and providers of new technology, in concert with the representative notarial societies, so that notaries and the Faculty Office can be involved in the design of new technological systems, laws and best practice.</li> <li>• To consider what “the future of notarial work” looks like and how notaries can best serve the public and the consumer as society and the economy changes due to technological change and to make any necessary changes to the Faculty Office rules and regulations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why do we want to do this?</b></p>	<p>Not to do this could risk making notaries or the Faculty Office regulation obsolete or out of date. The Faculty Office needs to be on the front foot so that its regulation and the work of notaries remains relevant and continues to serve the economy and the public interest.</p>
<p><b>How will we implement what we want to achieve?</b></p>	<p>We have two working groups – one on AI and New Technology and one on the Future of Notarial Work bringing together notaries, Faculty Office representatives and experts in the field who will make suggestions for the Faculty Office to consider.</p>

	Part of the anticipated work will be to publish a new set of minimum standards for the use of digital verification technology for notarial work and two new chapters in the Code of Practice covering remote notarisatation and electronic documents.
<b>What will that involve (rule change, resource implications etc)?</b>	The priority will encompass the existing schedule of meetings for the two working parties on AI and New Technology and one on the Future of Notarial Work drawing together internal and external expertise and insights. Rule changes, policy and guidance are likely to flow from these groups. We shall also have AI and new technology on our “horizon scanning” work. We are not anticipating needing to use paid consultants at this time but will keep the matter under review.
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing with no set completion date.  New chapters for the Code of Practice to be published before April 2026.
<b>What will the end result look like?</b>	This is unknowable at this stage as it is not possible to predict the extent and types of changes that new technology will bring to the role of notaries.
<b>How will we know that we have been successful?</b>	If the Faculty Office is able to engage meaningfully with developments with AI and new technology and changes in society. We don’t have any metrics for this. Clearly if the demand for notarial services drops drastically, this will register early. We cannot however fully control market forces or the way in which notaries fit into a changing society and economy brought about by technological developments.

## SECTION 3: ONGOING WORK

**We have areas of focus which continue from the last triennium. They are:**

**Legal Choices:** We remain committed to the Legal Choices project and helping to develop it further – this project is managed by a governance board and steering committee group and between various regulators is ongoing from the previous three-year period. The Registrar will pass the chair to the BSB in the autumn of 2025 and under his leadership the regulators have been united in their commitment to the project and the Regulatory Information Service.

**Sanctions:** The Faculty Office will continue to reinforce the sanctions regime as outlined in its sanctions action plan and keep this work stream under review. This continues to be an ongoing action and is to be reviewed at Master's Quarterly Board Meeting. There will be continued focus during the year on ethics and financial crime.

**Working with others:** There is an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the legal regulators but we will consider whether to enter into new MOUs with other organisations with whom we share information and collaborate such as the SRA and Companies House.

**Well led:** we will undertake a review of our meeting schedules, our published minutes and materials generally and implement changes to minute taking. We will seek to instruct an organisation like the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to review our governance more generally. We will review how scrutiny is undertaken by the Master and the committees generally.

**Capacity:** we will review our operating capacity and the allocation of resources between priorities and ongoing operational work. Where appropriate we will increase the use of specialist consultants where resource allows.

**The Faculty Office**

**10 July 2025**