

Stakeholder Perceptions Research Summary

October 2026



Integrity



Excellence



Fairness



Transparency



Efficiency



Executive Summary

CRL commissioned Enventure Research, an independent research company, to understand how its regulated community and wider stakeholders perceive its role, effectiveness and independence. The research combined 949 survey responses with 20 in-depth interviews, providing a substantial evidence base to inform CRL's strategy, communications and stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder perceptions were mixed, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting negative views of CRL. However, the findings were not uniform. Stakeholders with direct experience of CRL's regulatory work were generally more positive, describing the organisation as accessible, pragmatic and proportionate.

The evidence therefore points to a gap between CRL's technical regulatory capability and confidence in the organisation. Concerns focused particularly on trust, transparency, responsiveness and the visibility of decision-making.

Stakeholders broadly recognised CRL's core regulatory functions and valued its independence. However, many also attributed responsibilities to CRL that sit with CILEX, particularly member representation and professional support.

This confusion affected how stakeholders assessed CRL's role, accountability and independence. A clearer and more consistent explanation of the distinction between the regulator and the professional body will be important to ensuring that CRL is understood and assessed against its public-interest responsibilities.

Stakeholders regularly engaged with CRL's communications, although levels of understanding and confidence in its work and decision-making varied. The findings suggest opportunities to provide clearer guidance, increase visibility of regulatory processes and further demonstrate how stakeholder feedback is considered and acted upon.

CRL is already progressing relevant activity. This includes implementing the findings of its completed [Mazur lessons learned review](#) and refreshing its approach to communications and engagement as a strategic priority for 2026/27. Continued reporting on delivery and outcomes will help demonstrate progress and strengthen accountability. The findings also provide a valuable evidence base to build on existing strengths while addressing areas where stakeholders want greater clarity, engagement and transparency.

Purpose of the Research



Methodology

Online survey

The survey ran from 1 December 2025 to 11 January 2026 and received 949 responses from authorised members, non-authorised members, students and trainees.

Stakeholder interviews

The research also included 20 confidential interviews with members, regulated entities, government and regulatory stakeholders, representatives of the wider legal community, and education providers.

The interviews explored perceptions of CRL's role, independence, effectiveness and communications in greater depth.

Interpreting the findings

Participation in the survey was voluntary and the results were not weighted. The findings therefore represent the views of respondents rather than the entire stakeholder population. The interviews provide insight into stakeholder experiences and reasoning but do not indicate how widely each view is held.

We commissioned this research to understand how our regulated community and other stakeholders perceive CRL, including our role, effectiveness and independence.

The research supports CRL's Corporate Strategy 2028–2030, particularly our aims to uphold standards and public trust, secure our independence and sustainability, and act as an authoritative and capable regulator.

As we refresh our approach to communications and stakeholder engagement, gaining an evidence-based understanding of stakeholder perceptions will help us address misconceptions, improve engagement and ensure our regulatory approach remains transparent, credible and responsive.

Core objectives

- Understand awareness and perceptions of CRL's role, effectiveness and independence.
- Explore stakeholder expectations and concerns, including potential risks and opportunities.
- Assess the effectiveness of CRL's communications and stakeholder engagement.
- Gather evidence to inform our strategic direction and strengthen accountability and transparency



Stakeholder confidence is shaped more by trust and communication than by CRL's technical regulatory capability

The research identified a clear gap between perceptions of CRL's day-to-day regulatory work and wider confidence in the organisation. Four connected findings explain this overall picture.

1. Overall perceptions were mixed and varied considerably across stakeholder group

Over 50% of respondents held a negative view of CRL, compared with 19% who held a positive view. Negative sentiment was concentrated among litigation-focused practitioners, non-authorised members and stakeholders most affected by the Mazur ruling.

This was not a uniform assessment of CRL's performance. Views differed according to stakeholders' professional circumstances and their experience of interacting with the regulator.

2. Direct regulatory experience was generally more positive than CRL's wider reputation

Regulated entities with direct, ongoing contact often described CRL as accessible, pragmatic, thorough and proportionate. Operational activities such as authorisation and routine regulatory oversight attracted more balanced views than measures relating to trust and institutional credibility.

The central challenge therefore appears to concern confidence in CRL's judgement, transparency and responsiveness, rather than its technical ability to regulate.

3. Confusion about CRL's role affected expectations and perceptions of independence

Although 63% of respondents felt confident that they understood CRL's role, many also attributed responsibilities to CRL that sit with CILEX, particularly member representation and professional support.

Independence was important to 65% of respondents, but only 32% considered CRL effective at demonstrating it. A further 39% expressed a neutral view, suggesting that CRL's independence and institutional identity were not always visible or clearly understood.

4. Communication activity did not consistently translate into understanding or confidence

Stakeholders regularly accessed CRL information, including email updates and the CRL website, yet 50% felt not very or not at all well informed about its work and decisions.

Stakeholders wanted clearer practical guidance, greater visibility of decision-making and more evidence that CRL listens and responds to feedback. The Mazur ruling intensified these concerns, particularly around timeliness, tone, empathy and accountability.

I think they need to be able to demonstrate, 'We've heard and we've doing things differently as a result of people's feedback'.

Wider legal community

They're really open, really approachable.

Regulated entity

Recommendations

CRL should focus on five priority actions to strengthen trust, clarify CRL's role and improve stakeholder confidence.

1. Continue to strengthen trust through visible delivery

CRL should continue to strengthen trust through transparent decision-making, clear accountability and evidence of delivery. Building on its completed Mazur lessons learned review, CRL should communicate how the resulting actions are being implemented and how they are improving its preparedness, regulatory processes and stakeholder engagement.

2. Clarify CRL's regulatory purpose and independence

CRL should explain consistently what it regulates, how its role differs from that of CILEX and how its independence operates in practice. This distinction should inform CRL's language, branding and engagement across all channels.

3. Embed transparency within regulatory delivery

Provide clearer information about regulatory processes, including expected timescales, decision-making stages, service standards and performance. Where delays or uncertainty arise, stakeholders should receive timely explanations and progress updates.

4. Move from broadcast communications to evidence-led engagement

CRL should tailor its communications to the needs of different stakeholder groups, provide more practical guidance and create visible feedback loops. Regular "you said, we did" reporting should show how stakeholder evidence informs policy and operational decisions.

5. Strengthen CRL's external position and partnerships

CRL should deepen collaboration with CILEX, education providers, legal regulators and sector bodies to improve understanding of qualification pathways, regulatory status and practice rights. It should also communicate the contribution of the CILEX route to accessibility, diversity and professional mobility.