

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Impact Assessment

Title of Policy/Service/Contract: Legal Services
(in conjunction with the LEXCEL Quality Manual and incorporating Corporate Policies and Professional Standards from SRA)

Division: Legal Services Department

Lead Officer: Tom Clark- Solicitor to the Council/
Clare McGough- Lexcel Manager

Date Assessment completed: 30 November 2012

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?

1. The Legal Services Department to provide high quality Legal Services to client departments &/ or other external client that it services.

The Legal Services Department is governed by corporate policies and addresses this in the Quality Manual.

See Lexcel Quality Manual (September 2011 Version), which incorporates:-

- (a) Quality Policies and Objectives (Section 1B at pages 10-12);
- (b) Client Care Policy (Section 2 at pages 24- 32) including Non Discrimination Policy in respect of provisions of services;
- (c) Single Equalities and Diversity Scheme 2009- 2012; and
- (d) Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008-2018.

Additionally, the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Code of Conduct (October 2012) governs all solicitors. Particular attention is drawn to the Equality and Diversity under Chapter 2.

2. Key areas covered in the Lexcel Quality Manual in the above polices:-

- (a) availability
- (b) approachable
- (c) easily understood
- (d) prompt
- (e) courtesy
- (f) competence
- (g) confidentiality
- (h) commitment
- (i) communication
- (j) impartiality

1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

Additional to the Corporate Policies, the Lexcel Quality Manual governs the day-to-day running of the Legal Services Department and is applicable to all who make contact with the service. Whilst the Legal Services Departments clients are in-house client department (internal) and the Legal Services Departments do not provide legal advice services to other external client and members of the public, but in handling their work they do have contact with people outside this Council.

1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?

As part of the Lexcel Accreditation, client- departments are requested to complete a customer survey. The client survey is based on service performance and there have been no issues raised in relation to Equality and Diversity issues. As the Legal Services Department do not have direct contact with members of the public no analytical data has been obtained of external sources although the department acknowledge the information provided for under the corporate Equalities Profile and Key Statistics and Data about the District.

It is also worthy to note that the client departments are obliged to undertake Equality and Diversity Assessment and therefore prior to instructions being passed to Legal Services this would have been considered and Legal Services review such matters as and when they arise to advise the client of the law relating to this to ensure compliance.

1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?

One identified group which the Legal Services Department do have more dealings with is regarding Gypsy and Traveller evictions. The statistics acknowledged corporately on this protected group can be found within the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy as well as the documents mentioned above. The Legal Services Department carry out full Welfare Checks and refer any members of the group to additional services offered by Mid Sussex District Council (e.g. Housing) as well as external agencies (e.g. NHS and Social Services)

1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? Yes

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes, particularly Appendix One of the MSDC Guidance "Integrating Equality and Diversity into Procurement", and complete the next three questions.

Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.

Barristers and occasionally external solicitors from various chambers/ firms under the Sussex Consortium Legal Services Framework

What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?

As part of the tendering process those Chambers/ firms are required under the framework to have an equality and diversity policy and an assessment is carried out.

How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?

As detailed above, within the Sussex Consortium Framework

2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
<p>The needs of different ethnic groups including Gypsy and Travellers- development of the Council's policy and procedure on removal of illegal encampment including more involvement with outside agencies to assist in promoting well-being of the group.</p>	<p>Review of policy and procedure being undertaken, meetings with Sussex Police and County level to try and set new communications standards.</p> <p>Advising local residents and Gypsy and Travellers, including local residents meeting to manage expectations.</p> <p>Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity course provided corporately by HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues.</p> <p>Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual, usually through service department meetings.</p>	<p>Implementation and constant review.</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>Mei Chiu</p> <p>Tom Clark</p> <p>Clare McGough</p>	<p>Level of complaints received and review with partners on process and its effectiveness.</p> <p>Check training records</p> <p>Lexcel Assessment</p>
<p>The needs of men and women. Including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.</p>				
<p>None identified</p>	<p>Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity course provided corporately by HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Tom Clark</p>	<p>Check training records</p>

	issues.	On-going	Clare McGough	Lexcel Assessment
The needs of disabled people				
<p>Poor access to the Legal Services Department's offices</p>	<p>Contact details of an officer dealing with a matter are advertised on the correspondence so that people can make contact via telephone and e-mail. Meeting rooms set up corporately to book to arrange for meetings at a more accessible office.</p> <p>Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity course provided corporately by HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues.</p> <p>Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.</p>	<p>None at present as the current action taken has been successful.</p> <p>On- going</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>None- department wide</p> <p>Tom Clark</p> <p>Clare McGough</p>	<p>Any complaints</p> <p>Check training records</p> <p>Lexcel Assessment</p>
The needs of people with a religion or belief				
<p>None identified</p>	<p>Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity course provided corporately by HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues.</p> <p>Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.</p>	<p>On- going</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>Tom Clark</p> <p>Clare McGough</p>	<p>Check training records</p> <p>Lexcel Assessment</p>

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people				
None identified	Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues. Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.	On- going	Tom Clark	Check training records
Issues from marriage and civil partnership				
None identified	Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues. Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.	On- going	Tom Clark	Check training records
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people				
None identified	Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues. Promoting the SRA Code of	On- going	Tom Clark	Check training records
Lexcel Assessment				

	Conduct and the Quality Manual.		McGough	
The needs of transgender communities				
None identified	Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues. Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.	On- going On-going	Tom Clark Clare McGough	Check training records Lexcel Assessment
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area				
No specific individuals identified but charities associations and clubs who assist such protected groups for the community are an indirect way of the Council in delivering services.	Reduced rates are offered by way of legal fees to enter into contractual agreements, licences and leases. Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the issues. Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.	On- going On-going	Tom Clark Clare McGough	Check training records Lexcel Assessment
The needs of people who live in a rural area				
None identified	Officers continue to participate in -house and external training course on equality and diversity HR as well as external training providers so as to be aware of the	On- going	Tom Clark	Check training records

	issues.			
	Promoting the SRA Code of Conduct and the Quality Manual.	On-going	Clare McGough	Lexcel Assessment

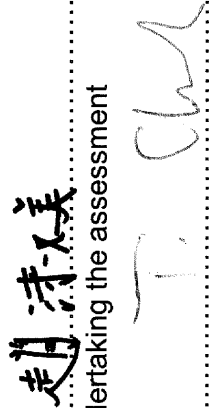
3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited impact on identified group as the Legal Services Department is an in-house legal department protecting the Council. Generally the co-operate equality and diversity polices is satisfactory for the Legal Services Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the above progress.

4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

Signature
 Person undertaking the assessment

Date


 Signature
 Head of Service

Date
 Date 7/12/12

Please send your completed impact assessment to Neal Barton for publication on the website.