

## **LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY**

1. This is the Freedom of Information policy statement of the Legal Services Commission (“the Commission”).
2. The Commission will fulfil its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act (“the Act”) 2000 to release recorded information, unless there is a statutory duty to withhold it, or it is not in the public interest to release it.
3. The Commission is committed to being open and transparent about the way it conducts its business and delivers its services in order to develop and maintain excellent working relationships with all of its clients and stakeholders.
4. The Commission will:
  - a. Seek to optimise the classes of information contained in its Publication Scheme, and encourage our people to place in the public domain as much information as possible about the design, development and delivery of services.
  - b. Provide help and guidance to those who propose to make, or have made, requests for information, where it is required.
  - c. Aim to provide clear and comprehensible responses to requests for information promptly and in any event within 20 working days. If this time limit is to be exceeded, applicants will be advised of the reason for the delay.
  - d. Only apply a charge for providing information where appropriate, and in accordance with the fee regulations.
  - e. Advise applicants in advance if a charge is to be applied. Payment will need to be received before the work is undertaken.
  - f. Only withhold information where it is justifiable to do so and an exemption can be properly applied. Categories of information that the Commission is likely to consider to be exempted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 include:
    - i. Information covered by legal professional privilege.
    - ii. Information that is or will soon be published.
    - iii. Personal data where the disclosure would contravene the Data Protection Act 1998.
    - iv. Information prohibited from disclosure under any other enactment.
    - v. Information accessible to the applicant by other means.

- vi. Information whose disclosure would be likely to prejudice the interests of the Commission or any other person in commercial or contractual activities.
  - vii. Information that has been provided to the Commission in confidence where any disclosure would constitute an actionable breach of confidentiality.
- g. Ensure that it operates an effective and efficient records management system and complies with the Codes of Practice issued under sections 45 and 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- h. Promote awareness of its obligations under the Environmental Information Regulations made under section 74 of the Act and comply with its Environmental Strategy, available on the LSC website [www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk).
5. The Governance Manager in the Chief Executive's Office is responsible for the Commission's compliance with, the Act.
6. The Access to Information leaflet available on the LSC website ([www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk)) explains to members of the public how they can apply for access to official information under the Act. This leaflet is reviewed regularly to maintain its accuracy.

May 2011