

Summary: Intervention & Options

Department /Agency: Legal Services Commission	Title: Impact Assessment of Duty Solicitor Slot Allocation from October 2007: A consultation paper	
Stage: Consultation stage	Version: Draft 1	Date: 21 June 2007
Related Publications: Duty Solicitor Slot Allocation from October 2007: A consultation paper		

Available to view or download at:

<http://www.legalservices.gov.uk>

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What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?

Lord Carters' review recommended a departure from the current system of allocating slots in proportion to the number of duty solicitors employed, as this system had the effect of firms employing more duty solicitors than they needed to service the slots. This makes it more expensive than necessary for firms to deliver the service, and so creates inefficiencies in the system.

What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?

There are two objectives for the implementation of these proposals

§ To maintain duty solicitor coverage throughout England and Wales from October 2007

§ To enable firms to commence the restructuring process and thereby compete in the market more effectively when best-value tendering is introduced

What policy options have been considered? Please justify any preferred option.

Option 1 - Continue with the current system

Option 2 - Freeze rotas as of 1st July 2007 and make no change to these until the introduction of best value tendering (BVT)

We are also consulting on additional provisions. These are: making adjustments to rotas where providers have relied on earlier policy announcements and restructured; taking a different approach in different areas, and; access for new entrants.

When will the policy be reviewed to establish the actual costs and benefits and the achievement of the desired effects? We will monitor and evaluate the impact of the proposals post implementation and report on findings in accordance with our statutory duties and the LSC Equality Scheme.

Ministerial Sign-off For consultation stage Impact Assessments:

I have read the Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed by the responsible Minister:

.....Date:

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option: 1	Description: Continue with the current system
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COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS	Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' N/A	
	One-off (Transition) Yrs		
	£ none		
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)		
	£ none	Total Cost (PV)	£ none
<p>Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'</p> <p>·This approach does not break the link between duty solicitors and duty slots, and providers will still pay a premium for duty solicitors; This could result in further fragmentation of the market</p>			

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS	Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' N/A	
	One-off Yrs		
	£ none		
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)		
	£ none	Total Benefit (PV)	£ none
<p>Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' .</p> <p>Minimal disruption to providers; Offers the opportunity for firms to expand market share by acquiring additional duty solicitors</p>			

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks

That this option does not break the link between duty slots and duty solicitors.

Price Base Year 2007	Time Period Years 1	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £ N/A	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £ N/A
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	England & Wales			
On what date will the policy be implemented?	October 2007			
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	LSC			
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£ N/A			
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes			
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	N/A			
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	£ N/A			
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	£ N/A			
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	No			
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A
Are any of these organisations exempt?	No	No	N/A	N/A

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)				(Increase - Decrease)	
Increase	£ N/A	Decrease	£ N/A	Net	£ N/A

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option: 2	Description: Freeze rotas as of 1st July 2007 and make no change to these until the introduction of best value tendering (BVT)
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COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS	Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' N/A		
	One-off (Transition) Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)			
	£ none	Total Cost (PV)	£ none	
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups' · Reduced scope for business expansion through duty work				

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS	Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' Although difficult to quantify as this will vary by provider, under this option it will be open to providers to make costs savings as a result of using accredited representatives to service their duty slots instead of duty solicitors.		
	One-off Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)			
	£ none	Total Benefit (PV)	£ none	
Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' · Breaks the link between duty solicitors and duty slots, and will allow providers to gain efficiencies; There would be no further market fragmentation under this option; Business expansion through own client work is still possible				

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks

This option limits access to the market for new providers; It may also impact negatively on those providers that are currently growing their businesses.

Price Base Year 2007	Time Period Years 1	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £ N/A	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £ N/A
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	England & Wales			
On what date will the policy be implemented?	October 2007			
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	LSC			
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£ N/A			
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes			
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	Yes/No			
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	£ N/A			
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	£ N/A			
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	No			
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A
Are any of these organisations exempt?	No	No	N/A	N/A

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)				(Increase - Decrease)	
Increase	£ N/A	Decrease	£ N/A	Net	£ N/A

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option: Applicable to option 2	Description: Access for new entrants under option 2
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COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS	Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' N/A	
	One-off (Transition) Yrs		
	£ none		
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)		
	£ none	Total Cost (PV)	£ none
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups' No non-monetised costs have been identified for this option.			

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS	Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' N/A	
	One-off Yrs		
	£ none		
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)		
	£ none	Total Benefit (PV)	£ none
Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' Allowing new entrants will safeguard supply and effective competition in areas where supplier numbers fall			

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks Firms will want to enter duty rotas.
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Price Base Year 2007	Time Period Years 1	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £ N/A	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £ N/A
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	England and Wales				
On what date will the policy be implemented?	October 2007				
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	LSC				
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£ N/A				
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes				
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	Yes/No				
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	£ N/A				
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	£ N/A				
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	No				
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #FFFF00; text-align: center;">Micro N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #FFFF00; text-align: center;">Small N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #FFFF00; text-align: center;">Medium N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; background-color: #FFFF00; text-align: center;">Large N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A
Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A		
Are any of these organisations exempt?	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">No</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">No</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N/A</td> </tr> </table>	No	No	N/A	N/A
No	No	N/A	N/A		

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)				(Increase - Decrease)	
Increase	£ N/A	Decrease	£ N/A	Net	£ N/A

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option: Applicable to options 1 and 2	Description: Taking a different approach in different areas
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COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS	Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' N/A		
	One-off (Transition) Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)			
	£ none	Total Cost (PV)	£ N/A	
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'				
No non-monetised costs have been identified for this option..				

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS	Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' N/A		
	One-off Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)			
	£ none	Total Benefit (PV)	£ N/A	
Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'				
The choice of option and the implementation of the policy could be flexed in response to local conditions such as number of suppliers and volume of work				

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks
Numbers of providers and volumes of work will vary from area to area.

Price Base Year	Time Period Years	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £ N/A	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £ N/A
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	TBC				
On what date will the policy be implemented?	October 2007				
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	LSC				
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£ N/A				
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes				
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	Yes/No				
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	£ N/A				
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	£ N/A				
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	No				
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Micro N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Small N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Medium N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Large N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A
Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A		
Are any of these organisations exempt?	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">No</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">No</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N/A</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N/A</td> </tr> </table>	No	No	N/A	N/A
No	No	N/A	N/A		

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)				(Increase - Decrease)
Increase	£ N/A	Decrease	£ N/A	Net £ N/A

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option:	Description: Making adjustments to rotas where providers have relied on earlier policy announcements and restructured
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COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS	Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' N/A		
	One-off (Transition) Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)			
£ none		Total Cost (PV)	£ none	
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'				
This could only happen at the expense of other providers' slot allocation				

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS	Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' N/A		
	One-off Yrs			
	£ none			
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)			
£ none		Total Benefit (PV)	£ none	
Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' Some providers have suggested that they might have been disadvantaged by the LSC's aborted decision to allocate duty slots according to historical volumes. It is possible, in allocating slots from October 2007, to address this by re-allocating additional slots to such providers in this period.				

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks The key concern here is that there are a finite number of duty slots. Any increase to entitlement for one provider in a given area means less scope for access to duty slots for the remaining providers within that area.

Price Base Year	Time Period Years	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £ N/A	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £ N/A
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?				TBC	
On what date will the policy be implemented?				October 07	
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?				LSC	
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?				£ N/A	
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?				Yes	
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?				Yes/No	
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?				£ N/A	
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?				£ N/A	
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?				No	
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)		Micro N/A	Small N/A	Medium N/A	Large N/A
Are any of these organisations exempt?		No	No	N/A	N/A

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)				(Increase - Decrease)	
Increase	£ N/A	Decrease	£ N/A	Net	£ N/A

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Evidence Base (for summary sheets)

[Use this space (with a recommended maximum of 30 pages) to set out the evidence, analysis and detailed narrative from which you have generated your policy options or proposal. Ensure that the information is organised in such a way as to explain clearly the summary information on the preceding pages of this form.]

Assessment of the benefits and costs of the proposed options

1. Below is a summary of the two options that are presented in the consultation paper. Given the inherent variability in the additional provisions and the nature of the data held, it has not proved possible to set out the costs and benefits associated with these provisions.

A note on Costs and Benefits

2. It is difficult to determine with certainty the likelihood that the possible costs and benefits associated with each option will actually occur. This partial impact assessment sets out the possible costs and benefits and we would welcome views on these as part of the consultation process.

Option 1 – Continue with the current system

3. Under this option we would continue to link the number of duty solicitors employed by a provider to the number of slots they are eligible for on any given scheme.

Benefits:

- Minimal disruption to providers
- Offers the opportunity for firms to expand market share by acquiring additional duty solicitors

Costs, disbenefits and risks:

- This approach does not serve to break the link between duty solicitors and duty slots (which was the objective of our February Market Stability policy announcement)
- Further fragmentation of the market at this stage would impact on existing providers by limiting access to volume

Option 2: Freeze rotas as of 1st July 2007 and make no change to these until the proposed introduction of best value tendering (BVT)

4. Under this option, we would take a snapshot of the existing rotas as of 1st July 2007, and then fix these until the possible introduction of BVT.

Benefits

- Breaks the link between duty solicitors and duty slots
- There would be no further fragmentation of the market
- Business expansion through own client work is still possible

Costs, disbenefits and risks:

- reduced scope for business expansion through duty work
- Competition may be limited ahead of best-value tendering

- Greater risk of loss of coverage in some areas
- The rotas will not reflect any changes within firms and this effect will increase over time

Impact on Clients

5. The options that are suggested in the consultation paper have no direct effect on clients.

Impact on Providers

6. If the options enabling providers to receive an allocated proportion of duty solicitor slots that was not related to the number of duty solicitors they employed were implemented, then all providers could benefit from the ability to restructure their business to minimise overheads.
7. However if the date for the snapshot is set at 1 July 2007 then those firms who expand between **1 July and 30th September** by hiring more duty solicitors will not have the benefit of having this reflected in their allocations going forward.
8. It is not possible to calculate how many firms will be in this category as it is dependent on the future staffing structure decisions of providers, although this consultation paper will give all providers notice of our future intentions on slot allocation and should influence their staffing decisions. However, we can refer back to the information gathered during the previous consultations on slot allocation to help assess the extent of change experienced by providers over a period of months.
9. The response to the additional consultation on slot allocation was published on 6th June 2007. One of the options in that consultation was that we revert to a snapshot of 28th November 2006 when allocating slots from 1st July 2007 to 30th September 2007. In the accompanying final impact assessment we examined what the impact on providers would be.
10. However, the proposals in the current consultation paper would see providers restored to their 1 July 2007 membership on 1st October 2007, this is a difference of just 3 months between the two dates, compared to a difference of 8 months between 28th November 2006 and 1st July 2007. Therefore, the impact of the proposal is likely to be less significant, although we are not yet in a position to quantify this. It is also important to note that this data did not include magistrates' court slots or panel work or firms that we did not have ethnicity data for.
11. It should also be borne in mind that impacts will be driven by the configuration of options and considerations selected following the consultation. There are a broad number of permutations based upon options that are forward looking. This means that precision as to impacts is very difficult to gauge and therefore the following analysis presents the picture as clearly as it can be defined at this stage.
12. Additionally, option B proposes to freeze the duty solicitor rotas in the run up to the proposed introduction of BVT in October 2008. Therefore new firms would not be permitted to enter the market. It is not possible to accurately state the number of potential applicants that there would be between October 2007 and October 2008.
13. However we can look back to historic data to see how many new firms are issued contracts each year. We have excluded last year's figures from the table as a moratorium has been in operation since 1 April 2007.

14. Table 3 below demonstrates the ethnicity of managerial control of firms that have entered into crime contracts each year since 2003/2004. We can see from this that approximately 66% of new firms are likely to have a White British majority managerial control, between 25% and 30% are likely to have BME majority managerial control and there a small number that are likely to have a split managerial control.
15. Currently 11.8% of providers with a general criminal contract have BME majority managerial control with a further 4.6% of providers with split managerial control between White British and BME.

Table 1: Ethnicity of managerial control of firms entering a general criminal contract

			Numbers of firms signing a contract			Total
			2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	
Ethnicity	White British	Count	38	25	17	80
		% within year	66.7%	69.4%	68.0%	67.8%
	BME	Count	15	11	7	33
		% within year	26.3%	30.6%	28.0%	28.0%
	Split	Count	4	0	1	5
		% within year	7.0%	.0%	4.0%	4.2%
Total	Count		57	36	25	118
	% within year		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

16. Table 4 shows the same firms divided by gender of majority managerial control. This table shows that we are likely to see 65% of new firms to be under male control, 20% under female control and 10% under split control.
17. Of offices holding crime contracts that returned a survey, 72.8% had majority male, 12.7% majority female and 14.5% split managerial control.

Table 2: Gender Status of managerial control of firms entering a general criminal contract

			Numbers of firms signing a contract			Total
			2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	
Gender	Male control	Count	44	22	14	80
		% within year	75.9%	62.9%	56.0%	67.8%
	Female control	Count	10	7	7	24
		% within year	17.2%	20.0%	28.0%	20.3%
	Split control	Count	4	6	4	14
		% within year	6.9%	17.1%	16.0%	11.9%
Total	Count		58	35	25	118
	% within year		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Impact on Employees

18. We anticipate there to be a direct effect upon qualified duty solicitors if a change is implemented to the current allocation methods that would enable firms to reduce the number of duty solicitors they employ while maintaining the number of duty slots they would have been allocated.

19. Individual providers will decide how to structure their businesses. As a result of these decisions there may be a reduction in the number of duty solicitors employed and a possible increase in the number of accredited representatives employed.
20. It is unclear whether the duty solicitors would be redeployed within firms to undertake other crime work. We would particularly welcome the input of relevant employees as part of this consultation to inform our final impact assessment.

Rural

21. Our assessment of the impact of the outline proposals is that access for clients in rural areas to legally aided services will be maintained and, in some cases improved, at no extra expense to them.

Small Firms Impact Test

22. Many providers of legal and advice services are small businesses. The Law Society, the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, and other representative bodies with whom the LSC will consult in respect of these proposals will represent their interests. We would particularly welcome the input of small firms on consultation to help inform us draft a full regulatory assessment of the options set out in the consultation paper.

Competition assessment

23. The proposals will enable all firms to commence the restructuring process and thereby compete in the market more effectively.

Legal Aid Impact Test

24. None of the proposals in the consultation paper will have a direct impact on the level of spending incurred by the Commission for duty solicitor work. As outlined earlier in the paper the cost benefits will be realised by the firms themselves.

Enforcement, sanctions and monitoring

25. The LSC will monitor the performance of providers using a range of key performance indicators and take action where necessary, including terminating contracts.

Implementation and delivery plans

26. This will be completed in the full regulatory impact assessment which will be published after the public consultation closes.

Post Implementation Review

27. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of the proposals post implementation and report on findings in accordance with our statutory duties and the LSC Equality Scheme.

Compensation Simplification Measures

28. The Cabinet Office has published interim guidance on compensatory simplification, to be applied when producing regulatory impact assessments. The interim guidance requires government bodies to actively look for opportunities to simplify or remove existing requirements when they want to introduce new regulation, and to assess both the extent to which the simplification proposal(s) will offset the cost of the new regulatory measure and the impact of removing the existing provision.
29. These proposals do not impose any additional or reduced regulatory burdens on providers. The proposals are part of a wider programme for change in the police station that will lead to the introduction of fixed fees in the police station that will be clearer, simpler and easier to administer.

Specific Impact Tests: Checklist

Use the table below to demonstrate how broadly you have considered the potential impacts of your policy options.

Ensure that the results of any tests that impact on the cost-benefit analysis are contained within the main evidence base; other results may be annexed.

Type of testing undertaken	<i>Results in Evidence Base?</i>	<i>Results annexed?</i>
Competition Assessment	Yes	No
Small Firms Impact Test	Yes	No
Legal Aid	Yes	No
Sustainable Development	No	No
Carbon Assessment	No	No
Other Environment	No	No
Health Impact Assessment	No	No
Race Equality	Yes	Yes
Disability Equality	Yes	Yes
Gender Equality	Yes	Yes
Human Rights	No	No
Rural Proofing	Yes	No

Requirements of a Regulatory Impact Assessment

Race Equality

1. Public authorities in Britain have a legal duty to promote race equality. This means that they must have due regard to how they will:
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - Promote equal opportunities
 - Promote good relations between people from different groups.
2. The LSC is also under a specific duty to conduct race equality impact assessments of its policies in relation to the public duty to promote race equality and within this, to identify whether there is a differential and adverse impact on particular racial groups.

Disability Equality

3. The Disability Equality Duty came into force on 5th December 2006. The LSC has already published its Disability Equality Scheme and it is available on the LSC website www.legalservices.gov.uk. This sets out the actions that we will be taking to promote disability equality for legal service providers and the clients they serve, and our staff.
4. When carrying out our functions, we must have due regard to the duties placed upon us by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. These are to:
 - Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
 - Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
 - Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
 - Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
 - Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
 - Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.
5. Since 5th December 2006, the LSC is also under a specific duty to conduct disability equality impact assessments of its policies in relation to the public duty to promote disability equality and within this, to identify whether there is a differential and adverse impact on disabled people and other people.

Gender Equality

6. The Equality Act of 2006 places a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need:
 - To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
 - To promote equality of opportunity between men and women
 - This general duty will come into effect on 6th April 2007.

7. Since 6th April 2007, the LSC is also under a specific duty to conduct gender equality impact assessments of its policies in relation to the public duty to promote gender equality and within this, to identify whether there is a differential and adverse impact on people of different genders.

Rural Proofing

8. Public authorities also need to take account of rural circumstances and needs (Rural White Paper, 2000). Rural proofing states that policy makers should systematically:
 - Consider whether their policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas, because of particular rural circumstances or needs
 - Make a proper assessment of those impacts, if they are likely to be significant
 - Adjust the policy, where appropriate, with solutions to meet rural needs and circumstances.
9. Where appropriate, the LSC also considers the rural impacts of its policies to identify whether there is a differential and adverse impact on rural areas.

Current Position

10. Black and minority ethnic (“BME”) groups, the disabled, people of different genders, and people living and/or working in rural communities have a direct interest in any changes to the legal aid scheme, as the owners and/or managers of solicitor firms providing legal aid services, as employees of those organisations, as barristers and experts providing services to contracted organisations and as clients of legal aid services.
11. Research conducted by the Legal Services Research Centre (“LSRC”) in 2006, to be published in a forthcoming report has provided information on the ethnicity, gender, age and disability profile of providers of legal aid services, their employees and their clients based on the results of diversity monitoring forms completed by 44.7% of providers with legal aid contracts, and data from the LSC corporate information system. In addition, the LSC has published its annual Equality Report for 2006, which provides information on a number of areas including numbers of clients assisted in different groups.