

## CLIENT CARE / QUALITY POLICY

Merrils Ede is committed to offering a quality service by specialist departments containing expert lawyers and experienced support staff. Merrils Ede is a member of Lawnet a group of over 60 independent law firms who share a common attitude to quality, growth and success.

To achieve this, the firm is committed to comply with the requirements of the LQS and to improve continually the effectiveness of the firm's practice management systems. In addition the firm is committed to the principles of LawNet's Client Service Charter (see below).

The firm strives to ensure that its advice is cost effective and communicated in a manner that is appropriate for each client. We are committed to providing a truly professional service, meaning that all personnel must act with integrity in all their dealings with clients. This is in part achieved by ensuring that the firm and individuals provide legal services according to the fundamental, ethical and professional standards expected under the SRA Codes of Conduct for Solicitors and the Firm. All personnel should have regard to the mandatory principles which apply being;

- Uphold the rule of law and the proper administration of justice.
- Act with integrity.
- Act in the best interests of each client.
- Provide a good standard of service to our clients.
- Comply with our legal and regulatory obligations, and deal with our regulators and ombudsmen in an open, timely and co-operative manner;

- Run our businesses and carry out our role in the business effectively and in accordance with proper governance and sound financial and risk management principles;
- Promote equality and diversity within our businesses and not discriminate unlawfully in connection with the provision of legal services; and
- Protect client money and assets.
- Not behave in a way that is likely to diminish the trust the public places in you or the legal profession.
- Not allow our independence to be compromised.

## Potential enquires

Anyone contacting the firm will be deemed as clients or potential clients and therefore treated with courtesy and respect. All enquires will be responded as soon as possible. Each head of department will make reception aware if they can accept new instructions and if not sign post the potential client to an alternative provider.

## Competence

The firm will accept instructions only where it can meet its commitment to the provision of an expert and professional service to clients and resources.

Where instructions would be beyond the expertise or the capabilities of the firm they will be declined.

The firm maintains lists of work that it will and will not undertake; in any cases of doubt as to the ability of the firm to act appropriately for the client, the appropriate head of department should be consulted and you will be notified if we are unable to continue with your instructions.

## Confidentiality

All solicitors are bound by the professional rules which require confidentiality to be maintained in all dealings with clients. This means that nobody may reveal to any outsider the nature of instructions provided or advice given to any client, other than in the pursuit of the client's instructions. In most circumstances it will also be inappropriate to reveal that Merrills Ede is in receipt of instructions from any named client.

## Commitment

Clients seek legal advice for a variety of reasons, but many approach a solicitor when they are vulnerable and in turmoil, whether in their personal lives or in their business activities. Clients are entitled to expect a genuine commitment from all personnel in handling their instructions, and for the firm to attach appropriate priority to their requirements. Refer to our Client Service Charter as below.

## Courtesy

All clients are entitled to be dealt with in a respectful and courteous manner. All personnel should show a genuine concern for the firm's clients by doing their best to help them.

## Referrals

Any referrals of the client to third parties must be in the client's best interest and in accordance with our Introduction to Third Parties Policy.

## Disability

In accordance with the firm's Equality and Diversity Policy, the firm will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled clients are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those that are not disabled and will not pass on the costs of these reasonable adjustments to the disabled client.

## Communication

This policy will be communicated to all members of the firm on induction and on-going training plans. A copy of this policy is displayed on the firm's website. Should the website become inaccessible and the firm at that time has other facing media then a copy of this policy may in the alternative be placed on one of those medias.

## Responsibility

The person responsible for this policy is COLP The head of departments are responsible for the communication of this policy to staff.

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is in suitable and effective operation throughout the practice.

## Client Service Charter

Our commitments to you:

### **Listening**

- We are committed to listening, understanding and helping you achieve your goals
- We will ask you what you think about our service which may include asking you to complete a client satisfaction survey.

### **Communication**

- We will avoid jargon and use Plain English explaining any necessary legal terms
- We will communicate with you in the way you prefer
- We will tell you how long we expect things to take and provide a realistic expectation
- Update you regularly on progress and when suitable

- If you contact us you can expect a response or an acknowledgement to inform you of the timeframe for a full response within a reasonable time scale
- If the issue is more time sensitive or you tell us you need a response in a particular timeframe we will endeavour to meet your requirements.

### **Looking after you**

- All our clients are valued and important
- We will let you know who will be working with you and give you their direct contact details
- We are committed to providing service that takes into account all your needs – not just the matter in hand
- We will be friendly, approachable and professional.

### **Fees**

- We will be open and transparent about our fees at all times, providing fixed fees where we consider possible
- Where not possible, we will give you the best information that we can on the likely total cost of your case at the outset.
- Should anything alter we will contact you before we incur any additional costs
- Any bill we send you will be clear and itemised, showing the work done and amount charged.

### **Our people**

- Our firm is committed to ensuring that our clients are central to everything we do
- We will ensure our people are properly resourced and have the appropriate training
- When assigning the right person to your case we will take into account your needs, expectations and budget

- We are committed to looking after our people because happy people do better work
- Our firm is regularly audited to ensure maintaining high standards
- We are committed to providing excellent service by monitoring client satisfaction

**To provide you with excellent service, we need you to**

- Tell us what your objectives are and be clear about your expectations
- Respond as soon as possible to any requests for information
- Let us know straight away if anything changes
- Work cooperatively with us to set and achieve realistic timescales
- Appreciate that we have to follow a strict professional code of conduct
- Help us to keep working for you by paying our invoices on time
- Let us know if we are not providing you with the service you expected.

**If things go wrong**

- If things go wrong or you are less than happy with our service please tell us immediately
- We welcome your feedback as it helps us provide a better service
- If we cannot resolve the problem we will let you know who to contact with your concerns

Reviewed October 2019