

Consumers set to benefit as The Co-operative Legal Services is granted ABS

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The Co-operative Legal Services has become the first accredited provider under the new ABS.

Today it has been announced that The Co-operative Legal Services has been made the first brand to be granted alternative business structure (ABS) status.

Under the new Legal Services Act, The Co-operative Legal Services can now tender offerings previously only available through a solicitor.

This will increase the competitiveness of the legal sector and make the services more accessible.

Consumers will now be able to turn to The Co-operative Legal Services for matters of probate (<https://www.co-operative.coop/legalservices/probate/>) and estate administration, will-writing, personal injury (<https://www.co-operative.coop/legalservices/personal-injury-claims/>), conveyancing and employment.

The company will also move into family law later in the year, which will establish them as one of the leading consumer service providers in the country.

Commenting on the announcement, Eddie Ryan, Managing Director of The Co-operative Legal Services, stated: "When the Legal Services Act was first drafted it was envisaged that its enactment would enable consumer brands to enter the closed world of legal services, so this is an historic occasion not only for The Co-operative Legal Services but for all customers needing access to legal services in the UK.

"We believe that the presence of The Co-operative's trusted brand and values, together with a combination of first class products and services, will provide customers with greater accessibility to expert legal advice and better value for money."

The Co-operative Legal Services was established in 2006 as a part of the The Co-operative Group and consumers continue to turn to The Co-operative for their reputation as a steadfast service provider that works on behalf of the interests of the British public.

"This move is a natural extension to the range of professional services we currently provide within The Co-operative which includes banking, pharmacy and Funeralcare," Mr Ryan said.

"Our customers already receive market leading levels of service in these areas are our Legal Services business will follow in the same vein.

"We are committed to playing a leading role in this new era by offering straightforward value-for-money expert legal services, backed by an ethos of social responsibility and a level of protection that can be provided by a diverse, multi-billion pound organisation."

When visiting The Co-operative Legal Services in Bristol yesterday (March 28th) to acknowledge the occasion, justice minister Jonathan Djanogly called the move to an ABS structure a "milestone".

"ABSs introduce more competition in the market place, delivering competitive pricing, higher standards of product and more choice for the consumer," he stated. "Our UK legal services are unrivalled around the world and these changes will allow them to reach new heights, as solicitors' firms develop new markets, seek external investment and join up with other businesses to offer different products to consumers and provide opportunities for growth."

The adoption of the new structure will also allow The Co-operative Legal Services (<http://www.co-operative.coop/legalservices/>) to do its bit for employment in the country, by adding at least 150 more employees to their 450-strong workforce.

In preparation for the expansion, the Group previously announced that it will take on five times more apprentices in 2012 than it did in 2011.

This employment drive will be the first stage in a programme of expansion that will see The Co-operative Legal Services become the largest law provider on the market.

For more information contact: Date: 28 March 2012

Dave Smith
The Co-operative Group Press Office
Tel: 0161 827 5614
Mob: 07702 152771
Email: dave.smith@co-operative.coop

Lindsay Colbeck
Senior PR Officer
0161 827 5629
07713 267499
Email lindsay.colbeck@co-operative.coop

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