

Equality & Diversity Policy

The Company's Commitment

This Company is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in its own policies, practices and procedures and in those areas in which it has influence. The Company intends to treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

This is applied to the Company's professional dealings with staff and other solicitors, agents, clients and third parties.

Regulation and Legislation

In developing and implementing its Equality & Diversity Policy, the Company is committed to complying with any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice including the Equality Act 2010, and any relevant amendments or re-enactments of such legislation of further codes of conduct.

Forms of Discrimination

The following are the kinds of discrimination, which are against the Company's policy:

- (a) **Direct discrimination**, where a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.
- (b) **Indirect discrimination**, where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put a substantially higher proportion of the members of one sex, or persons having a racial or ethnic origin, or a particular religion or belief, or a particular disability or a particular sexual orientation at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary
- (c) **Victimisation**, where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action against the Company under one of the relevant Acts

- (d) **Harassment**, where unwanted conduct related to any of the grounds referred to above takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may involve physical acts or verbal and non-verbal communications and gestures. This will include physical, verbal and non-verbal acts.

Employment

As an employer, the Company will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not discriminate unjustifiably against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, and access to promotion and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, demotions, selection for redundancies, dress code, references, bonus schemes, work allocation and any other employment related activities.

Recruitment and Selection

This Company recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

- (a) it endeavours to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible;
- (b) employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit;
- (c) where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applications from all sections of society and especially from those groups which are under-represented in the workforce;
- (d) selection criteria and processes do not discriminate unjustifiably on the grounds of disability, gender, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation other than in those instances where the Company is exercising permitted positive action;
- (e) wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (genuine occupational requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups;
- (f) all recruitment agencies acting for the Company are aware of its requirement not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

Conditions of service

The Company will treat all employees equally and create a working environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of employees.

Terms and conditions of service for employees will comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The provision of benefits such as working hours, maternity and other leave arrangements, performance appraisal systems, dress code, bonus schemes and any other conditions of employment will not discriminate against any employee on the grounds of their gender, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation or unreasonably on the grounds of their disability.

Promotion and Career development

Promotion within the Company (including Principals) will be made without reference to any of the forbidden grounds and will be based solely on merit. The selection criteria and processes for recruitment and promotion will be kept under review to ensure that there is no unjustifiably discriminatory impact on any particular group. Whilst positive action measures may be taken in accordance with the relevant anti-discrimination legislation to encourage under represented groups to apply for promotion opportunities, recruitment or promotion to all jobs will be based solely on merit. All employees will have equal access to training and other career development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities. However, the Company will take appropriate positive action measured (as permitted by anti discrimination legislation) to provide special training and support for groups which are under represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career development opportunities.

Principals

Arrangements and procedures for selecting Principals, their terms and conditions, access to benefits, facilities or services and termination arrangements will be reviewed and amended where necessary to prevent discrimination on any of the forbidden grounds.

Maternity rights available to Principals shall be no less favourable than those required by legislation for employees.

Third Parties

All lists of approved suppliers and contractors, agents and other third parties, who or which, are regarded as suitable to be instructed by those within the Company have been compiled only on the

basis of the ability of those persons or organisations to undertake work of a particular type and contain no discriminatory exclusion, restriction or preference.

Clients

The Company is generally free to decide whether to accept instructions from any particular client, but any refusal to act will not be based upon any of the forbidden grounds. The Company will take steps to meet the different needs of particular clients arising from its obligations under the anti discrimination legislation (such as the Disability Discrimination Act).

In addition, where necessary and where it is permitted by the relevant anti discrimination legislation (for example, provisions relating to positive action or exemptions) the Company will seek to provide services which meet the specific needs and requests arising from clients' ethnic or cultural background, gender, responsibilities as carers, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or other relevant factors.

Disability

The Company will make all reasonable adjustments for clients, employees or Principals to ensure that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled. The cost of any such reasonable adjustment is not passed on to any disabled client, employee or Principal.

Promoting Equality and Diversity

This Company is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the Company as well as in those areas in which it has influence. All those who act on the Company's behalf will be informed of this Equality & Diversity Policy and will be expected to pay due regard to it when conducting business on the Company's behalf. In all its dealings, including those with suppliers, contractors and recruitment agencies, the Company will seek to promote the principle of equality and diversity. The Company will make every effort to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity in its marketing and communication activities.

Implementing the Policy: Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the Principals of the Company. The Company will appoint a senior person within it to be responsible for the operation of the policy. All employees and Principals of the Company are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of this policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the Company.

Acts of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds by employees or Principals of the Company will result in disciplinary action. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated in a similar fashion. The policy applies to all who are employed or seconded in the Company and to all Principals. Acts of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds by those acting on behalf of the Company will lead to appropriate action including termination of services where appropriate.

Complaints of discrimination

The Company will treat seriously and will take action and investigate where appropriate concerning all complaints of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds made by employees, Principals, clients or other third parties. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Company's grievance or disciplinary procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

Monitoring and review

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to measure its progress and judge its effectiveness. In particular, the Company will, as appropriate, confidentially and so as not to cause offence or discomfort, monitor and record the gender, ethnicity, age and disability of the workforce and Principals. The Company is, however, aware that Principals and staff may not choose to disclose certain information and that care should be taken to avoid inadvertent discrimination in such cases. This information will be used to review the progress and impact of the Equality & Diversity Policy.