

Equality and Diversity Policy

A. The Firm's Commitment

(1) General Commitment

The firm 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. This applies to the firm's dealings with members of the firm (which in this policy shall include the firm's employees, partners and any self-employed person engaged by the firm) and other solicitors, barristers, clients and third parties.

The firm will treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect and will not discriminate without lawful cause against any person, nor victimise or harass them on the grounds of their race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), gender (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity), sexual orientation (including civil partnership status), religion or belief, age or disability.

The firm will take such steps and make such adjustments as are necessary in all the circumstances in order to prevent any members of the firm and clients from being placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled.

(2) Regulation and Legislation

In implementing its equality and diversity policy, the firm will comply with the SRA's Code of Conduct 2011 and with current and any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice and any relevant amendments or re-enactments of such legislation and any relevant amendment to such codes or further codes of practice.

B. The Firm as an Employer

As an employer, the firm will treat all members of the firm and job applicants equally and fairly and not discriminate unlawfully against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, 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 matters.

(1) Recruitment and Selection

This firm recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that it endeavours to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible; and that employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merits. Also, that the selection criteria and processes do not discriminate on any of the prohibited grounds referred to.

(2) Conditions of Service

The firm will create a working environment which is free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and which respects the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of members of the firm.

Terms and conditions of service for members of the firm 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 member of the firm on any of the prohibited grounds referred to above. Where appropriate and necessary, the firm will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service which take into account the specific needs of members of the firm.

(3) Promotion and Career Development

Promotion within the firm will be made without reference to any of the prohibited grounds referred to above 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, where lawful, be taken in accordance with relevant anti-discrimination legislation to encourage members of 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 firm will take appropriate positive action measures (as permitted by anti-discrimination legislation) to provide special training and support for members of groups which are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career opportunities.

C. Third Parties

Terms and conditions of business make it clear that when instructing third parties the sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability of the third party will not be taken into account and, if the client insists that the solicitors do so, they will cease acting for the client forthwith.

(1) Suppliers

All lists, if any, of approved suppliers and databases of contractors, agents and other third parties who, or which, are regarded as suitable to be instructed by those within the firm have been or will be compiled only on the basis of the ability of those persons or organisations to undertake work of a particular type and do not or will not contain discriminatory exclusion, restriction or preference.

(2) Clients

The firm notwithstanding the freedom to accept or reject instructions from any particular client ensure the decision is not based on the client's or potential client's sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

Terms of business are not in any way directly or indirectly discriminatory against the client and potential client on the basis of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

Language or terminology is not offensive to the client.

Reasonable steps will be taken to ascertain how to best communicate with the client rather than making assumptions based on matters such as the client's ethnic origin or disability.

Terms and conditions of business are able to be read by the client, for example, in the case of a blind or partially blind client, ensure that the terms of conditions are explained in full and understood by the client over the telephone or in person, the provision of the terms of business in large text should also be available if considered necessary.

Ascertain, when taking instructions whether the client has any needs in relations to their ability to receive instructions, advice and services from a solicitor, and make such reasonable adjustments in the appropriate time to facilitate this and advise the client of the availability of those adjustments.

Make it clear to the client for whom a reasonable adjustment has been, or needs to be made, that the costs of that reasonable adjustment will be borne by the firm and not passed onto the client as a disbursement.

D. Promoting Equality and Diversity

This firm is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the firm as well as in those areas in which it has influence. Members of the firm will be informed of this policy and will be provided with equality and diversity training appropriate to their needs and responsibilities. All those who act on the firm's behalf will be informed of this equality and diversity policy and will be expected to pay due regard to it when conducting business on the firm's behalf. In all its dealings, including those with suppliers, contractors and recruitment agencies, the firm will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity. The firm will make every effort to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity in its marketing and communication activities.

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the partners of the firm. The firm has appointed Shelley Grint to be responsible for the operation of the policy. All members of the firm 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 firm. Any breach of this policy by members of the firm will result in disciplinary action, including termination of services where appropriate.

E. Complaints of Discrimination

The firm will treat seriously and will take action where appropriate concerning all complaints of breaches of this policy made by members of the firm, clients or other third parties. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the firm's grievance, disciplinary and/or complaints procedures and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

F. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed in a manner proportionate to the size and nature of the firm on a regular basis to measure its progress and judge its effectiveness. This policy is not part of any contract of employment or partnership agreement and may be changed at any time.

Notwithstanding the above, it is a requirement of the firm that all members of the firm comply with this policy and with the provisions of SRA's Code of Conduct 2011.

Every member of the firm will receive a copy of this policy and it will be available on request to any client and to the Solicitors' Regulation Authority. A copy of the policy will be included on the firm's website.