

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures. This applies to our professional dealings with clients, all staff (including volunteers), and members of the Management Committee, other solicitors, barristers, experts and third parties.

The Equalities and Diversity Manager is responsible for implementing and monitoring our Equality & Diversity policy. They will undertake a review of this policy annually to verify our operations are effective or more regularly if we identify any non-compliance or problem concerning equality and diversity issues with clients or personnel and ensures that appropriate action is taken in relation to any non-compliance identified under this policy or barriers to equal opportunities.

We treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of:

- (a) Age;
- (b) Disability;
- (c) Gender reassignment;
- (d) Race;
- (e) Religion or belief;
- (f) Sex;
- (g) Sexual orientation;
- (h) Marriage or civil partnership status;
- (i) Pregnancy and maternity or
- (j) Caring responsibility.

We take all reasonable steps to ensure that our staff, management committee members and volunteers are appropriately trained and we do not unlawfully discriminate under the terms of any legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.

As a provider of publicly funded legal services we treat all clients equally and fairly and do not unlawfully discriminate against them. We also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equal opportunity in relation to access to the legal services that we provide, taking account of the diversity of the communities that we serve, in order to ensure that, subject to funding constraints, our services are accessible to all clients.

We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of clients. We have taken steps to identify the needs of clients in our community and developed accessible services to meet those needs, subject to funding constraints. We take account, in particular, of the needs of clients with a disability and clients who are unable to communicate effectively in English. We have a communications plan to promote the steps we have taken and/or will take to ensure that our services are accessible for people with a disability and meet the language needs of our clients. Please refer to our Equalities and Diversity Training and Communication Plan for further details.

We make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled clients, employees or managers are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled, and we do not pass on the costs of these adjustments to these disabled clients, employees or managers.

We do not unlawfully discriminate in dealings with third parties. This applies to dealings with other legal service providers and general procurement.

We treat all job applicants equally and fairly and do not unlawfully discriminate against them. We do this by ensuring that we operate an open and fair recruitment process, using selection criteria that do not discriminate, and making decisions based on individual knowledge, skills and abilities.

We treat all employees equally and create a working environment that is free from unlawful discrimination. This applies equally to voluntary positions and anyone undertaking work experience with us. This includes, for example, arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotion and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, dress code, work allocation and any other employment related activities. Promotion within the Law Centres Networks Network is made solely on merit.

All staff is informed of this policy as part of their induction and during annual equality & diversity update training. All staff are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of this policy and the specific Outcomes within Chapter 2 of the SRA Code of Conduct and are responsible for ensuring compliance with them when undertaking their jobs or representing our Law Centre.

We treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination made by clients, staff, volunteers, members of our Management Committee/Board, barristers, experts or other third parties and take action where appropriate. All complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly, openly and effectively. We investigate them in accordance with our grievance or complaints procedure and the complainant is informed of the outcome. We also monitor the number and outcome of complaints of discrimination.

Acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation are disciplinary offences within the Law Centre. Where acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation are identified, we will ensure that our Disciplinary Procedure is followed.

We monitor and record the number of job applicants from different gender, disability and ethnic groups at least annually.

We monitor at least annually the number of staff from different age, gender, disability and ethnic groups who/who are:

- In post;
- Promoted;
- Transferred;
- Take up training and development opportunities;
- Disciplined, dismissed;
- Resign; and
- Made redundant or accept redundancy.

Where possible and if requested, we will provide equality and diversity information to the Legal Aid Agency about our staff and clients as required in clause 5.5 of the Standard Terms 2018.

Our Disciplinary Procedure will be followed where it is identified that there has been a failure on the part of any member of staff in complying this policy.

We further identify equality and diversity training needs as and when appropriate, and address them in our Training and Communications Plan. We communicate this Equality and Diversity policy and provide guidance to staff and members of our Management Committee on compliance with Equality & diversity requirements via annual Equality & Diversity training. Our Training and Communications Plan can be found in an Appendix to this manual.

Reviewed by TW on: 9.12.2019

Reviewed by CMT on: 8.12.2020

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