

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. Who is covered by this policy?

- 1.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including barristers, clerks, pupils, mini pupils, employees, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency staff (collectively referred to as Relevant Persons in this policy).

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 29 Bedford Row Chambers Limited (Chambers/We) is/are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all barristers, employees, workers, job applicants, pupils and mini pupils. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.
- 2.2 We do not discriminate against individuals on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).
- 2.3 The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which Relevant Persons treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.
- 2.4 All Relevant Persons have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other Relevant Persons regardless of their status.
- 2.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

3. Who is responsible for this policy?

- 3.1 Our board of directors (the Board) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility including regular review of this policy has been delegated to Head of Equality Committee.
- 3.2 If you are involved in management or recruitment or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact Nicola Kessell to request training or further information.
- 3.3 Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting Roshi Amiraftabi or Nicola Kessell.

4. Scope and purpose of this policy

- 4.1 This policy sets out our approach to diversity, equity and inclusion. Our aim is to encourage and support diversity, equity and inclusion and actively promote a culture that values difference and eliminates discrimination in our workplace. This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with Relevant Persons and to relations between Relevant Persons at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of

service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

- 4.2 We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

5. Forms of discrimination

- 5.1 You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, barristers, pupils and visitors. This applies in the workplace (when dealing with clients, suppliers or other work-related contacts and on work-related trips or events including social events).

- 5.2 Discrimination by or against a Relevant Person is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

- 5.3 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

- 5.4 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time (rather than part time) could put women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be objectively justified.

- 5.5 Harassment includes sexual harassment and any other unwanted conduct related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.

- 5.6 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone in retaliation for their having complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and in respect of employees will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

5.7 Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

6. Recruitment and Selection

- 6.1 Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. When recruiting or promoting, we will aim to take steps to improve the diversity of our workforce and provide equality of opportunity. We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are

regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Short-listing of applicants should be done by more than one person wherever possible.

- 6.2 Vacancies should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying.
- 6.3 Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with the approval of the Board. For example:
- (a) Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
 - (b) Questions to establish if any reasonable adjustments may be needed at interview because of a disability
 - (c) Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
 - (d) Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.

- 6.4 Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a protected characteristic. Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of the Board who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account.
- 6.5 We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from UK Visas and Immigration.
- 6.6 Chambers has established the post of Equality and Diversity Officer and an Equality Committee. It has established a Pupillage Committee to deal with appointment of Pupils and a Tenancy Committee to make recommendations in relation to Pupils applying for tenancy and also in relation to lateral hires.
- 6.7 Chambers has sent and will continue to send members of its Pupillage Committee, its Tenancy Committee, its Management Committee, its Senior Clerk and Administrator on training courses relating to Equal Opportunities.
- 6.8 Clerks will ensure that any work that is not specifically addressed is, so far as possible, offered equally to those with appropriate skills and experience (subject to availability) and will take the necessary action under the Bar Code of Conduct should any professional client seek to unfairly influence the use of a particular barrister or decline to use a barrister on discriminatory grounds.

- 6.9 Chambers will ensure that any recruitment agency it uses is aware of and complies with this policy.
- 6.10 For the purposes of complying with the obligation to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 candidates called to interview will be asked to inform the Chambers Administrator of any particular needs they have as a result of a disability or condition to enable them to attend, perform at interview or, following selection work in Chambers to the best of their abilities.
- 6.11 All candidates filling in a Job Application will be invited [but not required] to complete a confidential Equal Opportunities Monitoring form. We monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure to ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation. As stated above, provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting, and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.
- 6.12 To prevent allegations of bias or impropriety an interviewee must be interviewed simultaneously by at least two interviewers. Where possible at least one interviewer should be a woman. A written record will be kept of the interview for a period of 12 months.
- 6.13 The Chambers Administrator will in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Officer monitor on an annual basis all recruitment exercises for mini pupillages, pupillages, staff and members to ensure that equal consideration and opportunity is given to all applicants. They shall report annually to the Management Committee on their findings and shall make comparisons with the available statistics for the national and local population and for BVC enrollers, pupils in all Chambers and Law Degree applicants.
- 6.14 Promotion within Chambers will be based solely on merit and no quota system will operate.
- 6.15 All recruitment, selection and short-listing of mini-pupils, pupils, tenants and staff (whether permanent or temporary) save for any work experience candidates will be guided by this policy.

7. Staff Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service

- 7.1 Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.
- 7.2 Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

8. Termination of Employment – Employees only

- 8.1 We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

- 8.2 We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

9. Disability Discrimination

- 9.1 If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.
- 9.2 If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact the Chambers Administrator to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The Chambers' Administrator may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.
- 9.3 We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

10. Fixed Term Employees (and Agency Workers)

- 10.1 We monitor our use of fixed-term employees (and agency workers), and their conditions of service. This is to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities and are treated the same as comparable permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro rata basis where appropriate) unless that different treatment is justified. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

11. Part Time Work

- 11.1 We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression. This is to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities and are treated the same as comparable permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro rata basis where appropriate) unless that different treatment is justified.

12. Breaches of this Policy

- 12.1 If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter with the Company. If you are an employee you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. Otherwise, other members of staff may raise such matters with their managers. There must be no victimisation or retaliation against Relevant Persons who complain about discrimination. If you need advice on how to proceed you should speak to Chambers Administrator.
- 12.2 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Relevant Persons who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.

- 12.3 Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal.
- 12.4 Any other Relevant Person who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will involve in appropriate steps being taken including termination of engagements and, in very serious cases, notifying the Bar Council where appropriate. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

13. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

- 13.1 We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.
- 13.2 All Relevant Persons are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Chambers Administrator or Head of Equality Committee.