

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All personnel must be aware of the firm's policy in relation to discrimination, equality and diversity. The policy deals with all professional dealings by personnel with clients, other solicitors, barristers and third parties, and so covers:
- accepting instructions from clients;
 - using experts and counsel;
 - the provision of services to clients;
 - dealings with those representing others;
 - interaction with everyone involved in or incidental to the provision of services by the firm.
- 1.2 The policy also extends to the recruitment, training and promotion of people within the practice. In connection with both aspects, it is the case that all personnel must comply not only with the professional requirements of the Solicitors Regulation Authority, but also with the law of the land.

2. Forms of discrimination

- 2.1 The firm's policy covers discrimination on the grounds of:
- race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins);
 - sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity or paternity);
 - sexual orientation (including civil partnership status);
 - religion or belief;
 - age;
 - disability;
- 2.2 The types of action that are against the firm's policy are:
- Direct discrimination, where a person is, without lawful cause, less favourably treated on any of the above grounds.
 - Indirect discrimination, where a requirement or condition that cannot be justified is applied equally to all groups but has a disproportionately adverse effect on members of one particular group by reason of any of the above grounds.
 - Victimisation, where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action against the firm for unlawful discrimination on one or more of the above.
 - Harassment, which occurs when unwanted conduct on one of the above grounds has the effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

3 Disability provisions

- 3.1 In addition to the firm's obligations not to discriminate against, harass or victimise those with a disability the firm is also subject to a duty to make reasonable adjustments to prevent those employees, partners and clients who are disabled from being at a disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled.

4 Policy statement

- 4.1 Ellisons is therefore committed to avoiding discrimination in its dealings with clients, partners, employees and all other third parties that have dealings with the firm. It is committed to promoting diversity in its professional activities.

- 4.2 Everyone at the firm is expected and required to treat all others equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of their:
- race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins);
 - sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity or paternity);
 - sexual orientation (including civil partnership status);
 - religion or belief;
 - age;
 - disability.
- 4.3 In addition, the firm will ensure that nobody with whom it has dealings will suffer any substantial disadvantage through any disability that they might have. The firm is committed to making reasonable adjustments for those with a disability in relation to job opportunities, promotion and training within the firm and the provision of services to clients.

5. Enforcement

- 5.1 Everyone should be aware that any breach of the policy is a potential major risk to the firm. The firm does not carry insurance against the consequences of any illegal breach, and any claims in this regard are also likely to involve the firm in significant commitments of managerial time. Further, a breach may be a serious professional offence, and liability may attach not only to the individual(s) concerned, but to also the owners of the firm. For that reason, any breach is likely to be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence. If anyone is concerned that a breach of this policy may be occurring, or has a complaint that they have been victim of a breach, they should immediately report this to any partner.

6. Training

- 6.1 The firm will arrange training sessions for all personnel on this topic when appropriate. This policy forms part of the firm's induction training programme.

7. Planning

- 7.1 For its part, the management of the firm has considered all aspects of its operations to ensure compliance with the professional rules. Any developments of the firm's strategic and business planning, or changes in this manual, will similarly be examined in order to ensure that no inadvertent breach of the firm's policy occurs.

8. Clients

- 8.1 The firm is generally free to debate whether to accept instructions from any particular client, but any refusal to act will not be based on any of the above grounds and care must also be taken to avoid there being any perception that they apply.

9. Barristers and other experts

- 9.1 Barristers and experts should be instructed on the basis of their skills, experience and ability. The firm will not discriminate in the instruction of barristers and/or experts on any of the above grounds.
- 9.2 A client's request for a named barrister or expert should be complied with, subject to the firm's duty to discuss with the client the suitability of the barrister or expert and to advise appropriately. The firm has a duty to discuss with the client any instruction by the client as to choice of barrister or expert that is based on any of the above grounds. The firm will endeavour to persuade the client to modify instructions that appear to be given on discriminatory grounds. Should the client refuse to modify such instructions, the firm will

cease to act unless the preference can be justified under the permitted statutory exceptions referred to as '*genuine occupational requirements*' or '*genuine occupational qualifications*'.

10. Employment, training, and partnership opportunities

- 10.1 Ellisons is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment. This means that all job applicants, employees and partners will receive equal treatment in relation to the above grounds.
- 10.2 Ellisons will also comply with the law and the professional requirements in relation to its partners and prospective partners. Thus, where appropriate, the existing partners will not discriminate on any of the above grounds in the arrangements they make for the purpose of determining to whom they should offer a partnership, the terms on which any partnership is offered, or by refusing to offer, or deliberately not offering, a partnership to anyone. Nor shall the partners discriminate in any way in relation to the provision of benefits to any partner, or in relation to any matter relating to the expulsion of any partner or any detriment to be suffered by him/her.

11. Positive action

- 11.1 Although it is unlawful to discriminate in favour of certain groups on the grounds of race or sex, positive action to enable greater representation of under-represented groups is permitted by law and the appropriateness of such action will be kept under review.

12. Recruitment agencies

- 12.1 The firm will take steps to ensure that applications are attracted from people without regard to the above grounds and will ensure that there are equal opportunities in all stages of the recruitment process. Where recruitment to the firm is achieved through recruitment agencies, steps have been taken to ensure that these agencies support the firm's general approach to the subject.

13. Monitoring and review

- 13.1 This policy will be monitored periodically by the firm to judge its effectiveness. The firm has appointed Alan Dearsley (HR Manager) to be responsible for the operation of the policy. In particular, the firm will monitor the ethnic and gender composition of existing staff and of applicants for jobs and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring. If changes are required, the firm will implement them. Any developments of the firm's strategic and business plans will be similarly examined in order to ensure that no inadvertent breach of the policy occurs.