

## **GULLANDS – EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **A. Our commitment**

the firm is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in our own policies, practices and procedures and in those areas in which we have influence. This applies to our 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:-

- a. race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins),
- b. gender (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity),
- c. sexual orientation (including civil partnership status),
- d. religion or belief,
- e. age or
- f. 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.

In implementing its equality and diversity policy, the firm will comply with the Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2007, the Equality Act 2010 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 will

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.

The 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; employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merits; selection criteria and processes do not discriminate on any of the prohibited grounds referred to above; and all recruitment agencies acting for the firm are aware of its requirement not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

We 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, we will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service which take into account the specific needs of members of the firm.

Promotion within the firm will be made without reference to any of the prohibited grounds referred to at section A 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.

## **C. Barristers and other third parties**

### **(1) Barristers**

Barristers should be instructed on the basis of their skills, experience and ability. The firm will not, on any of the prohibited grounds referred to above, avoid briefing a barrister and will not request barristers' clerks to do so. Clients' requests for a named barrister should be complied with, subject to the firm's duty to discuss with the client the suitability of the barrister and to advise appropriately. The firm will discuss with the client any request by the client that only a barrister who is (for example) not disabled or who is of a particular gender, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, age, or sexual orientation be instructed. In the absence of a valid reason for this request, which must be within any exemptions permitted by the anti-discrimination legislation, the firm will endeavour to persuade the client to modify their instructions insofar as they are given on discriminatory grounds. Should the client refuse to modify such instructions, the firm will cease to act.

## **(2) 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.

## **D. Clients**

The firm 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 prohibited grounds referred to above. The firm will take steps to meet the different needs of particular clients arising from its obligations under anti-discrimination legislation. 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 firm will seek to provide services which meet the specific needs and requests arising from clients' ethnic or cultural background, age, gender, responsibilities as carers, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or other relevant factors.

## **E. Promoting equality and diversity**

The 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.

## **F. Implementing the Policy**

### **(1) Responsibility**

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the partners of the firm. The firm has appointed the Managing Partner 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.

### **(2) 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, barristers 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.

## **G. Application and status of this policy**

(1) This policy is not part of any contract of employment or partnership agreement and may be changed at any time.

(2) 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 Rule 6.01 of the Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2007 and breach of either will result in disciplinary action, including termination of services where appropriate.

## **H. Publication of this policy**

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.