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Introduction

This policy sets out the way in which we manage Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all RDP Law employees, contractors, consultants, temporary employees (all hereinafter referred to as individuals). This policy is not a binding contract, but a set of guidelines for implementation. The organisation explicitly reserves the right to modify any provisions of this statement at any time and without notice.

Aims of this policy

This 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. The firm intends to treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of their disability, gender, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age. It is committed to positively encouraging equality of opportunity and respect for diversity throughout the work force and to ensuring that appropriate values.

In developing and implementing its Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Policy, the firm is committed to complying with the SRA Principles, the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") and all current and future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice.

Policy

The following are the principal kinds of discrimination, which are against the firm's policy:-

- **Direct discrimination**, where a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, pregnancy, maternity and paternity, marital status, (including civil partnership status) disability or sexual orientation (including transgender persons) or religion or belief.
- **Indirect discrimination**, where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put a substantially higher proportion of the members of one sex, or persons having a racial or ethnic origin, or a particular religion or belief, or a particular disability or a particular sexual orientation at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary. Also included is discrimination by association, which is when someone is treated unfavourably on the basis of another person's protected characteristic and discrimination by perception, which is when someone is treated unfavourably because others believe they have a protected characteristic.
- **Victimisation**, where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action against the firm under one of the relevant Acts.
- **Harassment**, when unwanted conduct related to any of the grounds referred to above takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may involve physical acts or verbal and non-verbal communications and gestures. This will include physical, verbal and non-verbal acts.

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Employment and Training

General Statement

As an employer, the firm will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not discriminate unjustifiably 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 activities.

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;
- employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit;
- where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applications from all sections of society and especially from those groups which are under-represented in the workforce;
- selection criteria and processes do not discriminate unjustifiably on the grounds of disability; gender; marital status; race; racial group; colour; ethnic or national origin; nationality; religion or belief; or sexual orientation; other than in those instances where the firm is exercising permitted positive action;
- wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (genuine occupational requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups;
- all recruitment agencies acting for the firm are aware of its requirement not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

Conditions of Service

The firm will treat all individuals equally and create a working environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of individuals.

Terms and conditions of service for individuals 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 individual on the grounds of their gender; marital status; race; racial group; colour; ethnic or national origin; nationality; religion or belief; sexual orientation; age; or unreasonably on the grounds of their disability.

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Where appropriate and necessary, the firm will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service which take into account the specific needs of employees which arise from their ethnic or cultural background; gender; responsibilities as carers; disability; religion or belief; sexual orientation or age.

Promotion and Career Development

Promotion within the firm (including partners in the event of any partners being created) will be made without reference to any of the forbidden grounds 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 be taken in accordance with the relevant anti-discrimination legislation to encourage 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 the anti-discrimination legislation) to provide special training and support for groups which are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career development opportunities.

Training

All employees and managers will receive appropriate training on this Policy and Equality and Diversity issues generally at induction and throughout their employment both in writing and at communication meetings. Responsibility for ensuring training is with the firm's Directors.

Partners/Members/Directors

Arrangements and procedures for selecting partners, their terms and conditions of partnership, access to benefits, facilities or services and termination arrangements are in accordance with the terms of this Policy. Maternity rights available to partners shall be no less favourable than those required by legislation for employees.

Barristers and Third Parties

Barristers

Barristers should be instructed on the basis of their skills, experience and ability. The firm will not, on any of the forbidden grounds, avoid briefing a barrister and will not request barrister's 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 not disabled or who is of a particular gender; marital status; race; racial group; colour; ethnic or national origin; nationality; religion or belief; sexual orientation or age be instructed. In the absence of a valid reason for this request, which must be within the exemptions permitted by the anti-discrimination legislation, the firm will endeavour to persuade the client to modify their instructions in so far as they are given on discriminatory grounds. Should the client refuse to modify such instructions, the firm will cease to act.

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Suppliers

All lists 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 compiled only on the basis of the ability of those persons or organisations to undertake work of a particular type and contain no discriminatory exclusion, restriction or preference.

Clients

The firm is generally free to decide whether or not to accept instructions from any particular client, but any refusal to act will not be based upon any of the forbidden grounds.

The firm will take steps to meet the different needs of particular clients arising from its obligations under the Act.

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 to meet the specific needs and requests arising from clients' ethnic or cultural background; gender; responsibilities as carers; disability; religion or belief; sexual orientation or other relevant factors. In accordance with the provisions of the Act and SRA Outcome (2.3) the Firm will undertake reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled clients are not placed at a disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled and will not pass on the costs of such adjustments to clients.

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.

Employees and consultants will be informed of this anti-discrimination 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 anti-discrimination 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.

Implementing the PolicyResponsibility

Responsibility for implementing and operating the policy rests with the Directors of the firm. The Personnel Manager has been appointed to be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the policy and its regular review.

All employees and consultants of the firm are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of its anti-discrimination policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the firm.

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Acts of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds by employees or consultants of the firm will result in disciplinary action. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated in a similar fashion. The policy applies to all who are employed in the firm and to all consultants.

Acts of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds by those acting on behalf of the firm will lead to appropriate action including termination of services where appropriate.

Complaints of Discrimination

The firm will treat seriously, and will take action where appropriate concerning, all complaints of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds made by employees, consultants, clients, barristers or any other third parties.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the firm's grievance or complaints procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

Monitoring and Review

The 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. In particular, the firm will, as appropriate, monitor:-

- The gender and ethnic composition of the workforce as well as the number of disabled staff at different levels of the organisation.
- The ethnicity, gender and disability of all applicants, short-listed applicants and successful applicants for jobs and training contracts.
- The ethnicity, gender and disability of all applicants for promotion (including to partnership, if any) and training opportunities and details of whether they were successful.
- Where it is possible to do so, and where doing so will not cause offence or discomfort to those whom it is intended to protect, the age, sexual orientation and religion or belief of all staff will be monitored so as to ensure that they are not being discriminated against in terms of the opportunities or benefits available to them. Firms should, however, be aware that staff may choose not to disclose their age, sexual orientation or religion or belief and that care should be taken to avoid inadvertent discrimination in such cases.
- The number and outcome of complaints of discrimination made by staff, consultants, barristers, clients and other third parties.
- The disciplinary action (if any) taken against employees by race, gender and disability.

This information will be used to review the progress and impact of the Anti-Discrimination policy. Any changes required will be made and implemented.

Reporting Diversity

The SRA requires law firms to collate information about equality and diversity every two years and to publish the results on the firm's website.