
Equality and Diversity Policy

This version 1.0 supersedes any earlier absence management policy, documents or handbooks.

Date of Adoption 23rd May 2023

Review Date January 2026

Owner Chambers Manager/Management Committee

Introduction

1. Chambers is firmly committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We promote an environment where diversity is appreciated. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our clients. Our aim is that employees and members are accorded equal dignity and respect. Chambers is also committed against unlawful discrimination of clients or members of the public.

Policy Purpose

2. The policy's purpose is to:
 - Provide equality, fairness and respect for all members and those in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time;
 - Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation;
 - Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.
3. Chambers recognises that our commitment to equal opportunities necessitates the identification of possible areas of discrimination and positive steps to eliminate any areas of possible disadvantage identified.

Commitments

Equality & Diversity Action Plan

4. Chambers commits to the adoption of an Equality and Diversity Action Plan, which shall identify areas for action and ensure Chambers commitment to taking practical steps to promote equality and diversity.

Work Environment

5. Chambers commits to creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
6. This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help Chambers provide equal opportunities in recruitment, delivery of legal services and any dealings with the public, to prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
7. All staff should understand they, as well as Chambers, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.
8. Chambers commits to providing support and understanding for any member of staff, pupil or member of Chambers who identifies as trans and/or non-binary and/or gender fluid. Chambers recognises that a period of transition can be very complex and difficult for the individual. Should any individual seek to amend or reaffirm how they present to Chambers, the Equality and Diversity Officers and Chambers will act in a supportive and sensitive way to ease any transition and will strive to create an inclusive workplace where you are treated with dignity and respect.

Recruitment, Training & Development

9. Chambers is committed to ensuring fair access to opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff.
10. Decisions concerning staff and member/pupil applications shall be based on merit.
11. Chambers shall undertake reviews of recruitment practices and procedures to ensure fairness, and also update policy to take account of changes in the law or regulatory obligations.
12. Chambers shall monitor the make-up of the workforce, members, pupils and applicants regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality and diversity policy.
13. Monitoring will also include assessing how equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and Equality and Diversity action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Complaints

14. Chambers take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of Chambers work.
15. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Chambers grievance and/or disciplinary procedures. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Complaints against members may be grounds of suspension pursuant to Article 62 of Chambers Constitution or expulsion pursuant to Article 52 of Chambers Constitution.
16. Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
17. Individuals who wish to make a complaint under this policy can do so informally to any member of the Management Committee. If an individual wishes to make a formal complaint this should be addressed to the Head of Chambers or if this inappropriate to Chambers Equality and Diversity Officer.
18. No individual shall be subject to any form of reprisal for raising in good faith any allegation or complaint under this policy.

Equality and Diversity Officers

19. Chambers will ensure that any time there is at least one member of Chambers appointed to the role of Equality and Diversity Officer. Chambers current Equality and Diversity Officer is Jolene Charalambous.