**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

1. We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures. This applies to our professional dealings with clients and others.
2. The Director is responsible for implementing and monitoring our Equality and Diversity policy. She ensures that appropriate action is taken in relation to any non-compliance identified under this policy or barriers to equal opportunities.
3. We treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of:

* sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity);
* sexual orientation (including civil partnership status);
* race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins);
* religion or belief;
* age;
* caring responsibility; or
* disability.

1. We take all reasonable steps to ensure that the law centre and its staff do not unlawfully discriminate under:

* the Equality Act 2010;
* the Employment Rights Act 1996;
* the Human Rights Act 1998;
* the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;
* the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;
* the Work and Families Act 2006;
* the Civil Partnership Act 2004; and
* any other relevant legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.

1. Wherever possible, we take steps to promote equal opportunity in relation to access to the legal services that we provide, taking account of the diversity of the communities that we serve, in order to ensure that, subject to funding constraints, our services are accessible to all clients.
2. We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of clients. We will take steps to identify the needs of clients in the community and develop plans and procedures setting out how we will meet clients’ needs and for ensuring the services which we provide are accessible to all. We will take account, in particular, the needs of clients with a disability and clients who are unable to communicate effectively in English. We will consider whether particular groups are predominant within our client base and, where possible, will ensure that their needs are met.
3. We do not unlawfully discriminate in dealings with experts and third parties. All experts and third parties are instructed from a register of experts and have been assessed by the law centre as being capable of meeting both our and our clients’ requirements. Experts and third parties are instructed because they satisfy our selection criteria.
4. We treat all job applicants equally and fairly and do not unlawfully discriminate against them. We do this by ensuring that we operate an open and fair recruitment, selection and progression process, using selection criteria which do not discriminate, and making decisions based on individual qualities and personal merit. Promotion within the law centre is made solely on merit.
5. We consider all employees to be equal and create a working environment which is free from unlawful discrimination. This applies equally to voluntary positions and anyone undertaking work experience with us. This will, for example, include arrangements for employment, recruitment, selection and progression, terms and conditions of employment, access to learning and development opportunities, conditions of service, access to promotion and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, dress code, work allocation and any other employment related activities.
6. In particular, we actively consider the making of reasonable workplace adjustments to ensure that staff members with a disability, vulnerability or particular need are fully supported and are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. We will monitor the physical features of our premises to improve access and working arrangements for all staff but staff members who experience any difficulties at work are encouraged to raise these issues as soon as possible.
7. All staff are informed of this policy as part of their induction and during annual equality and diversity update training. All staff are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of this policy and the specific Outcomes within Chapter 2 of the SRA Code of Conduct and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the law centre.
8. We treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination made by any of our staff, clients, barristers, experts or other third parties and will take action where appropriate. All complaints are investigated in accordance with our grievance procedure or complaints procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome. We also monitor the number and outcome of complaints of discrimination.
9. Where acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and/or failure to comply with this policy by any member of staff are identified, we will ensure that our Disciplinary Procedure is followed and this may result in disciplinary proceedings being instigated.
10. We monitor and record equality and diversity information about staff, trustees and volunteers on the basis of age, race, gender, disability, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. We monitor:

* recruitment, selection and progression (applicants and existing staff);
* promotion and transfer;
* training/learning and development;
* terms and conditions of employment;
* take up of benefits;
* grievance and disciplinary procedures; and
* resignations, redundancies, and dismissals.

1. We provide equality and diversity information to the Legal Aid Agency as required in relation to staff and clients under the terms of the LAA Contracts.
2. We identify equality and diversity training needs as and when appropriate, and address them as part of our overall learning and development plan. This includes the provision of annual update equality and diversity training. Our Equality and Diversity training and communication objectives are reviewed at least annually and detailed in our Equality and Diversity Training and Communication Plan.

17. The Director is responsible for this policy and reviews it at least annually to verify it is in effective operation.