



## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

### 1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 The Firm is committed to providing an inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory work environment and to promoting a culture that actively values Diversity and Equality. It recognises that the presence and success of a broad range of talented people of different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work. This Policy aims to ensure effective policies and practice of promoting Diversity and Equality, and the avoidance of unlawful discrimination at work.
- 1.2 This Policy applies to all employees, Partners, Directors, and workers including independent contractors to the Firm, agency workers, secondees, and work experience students (collectively referred to as "Workers").
- 1.3 This Policy is not contractual and does not form part of any terms and conditions of employment or engagement. The Firm has the right to amend this Policy at any time. It will communicate any material changes to employees.

### 2.0 General principles

- 2.1 The procedure applies to all employees, regardless of length of service. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors.
- 2.2 The Firm is committed to a policy of equal opportunities in employment where individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities, without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics).
- 2.3 We do not discriminate because of any protected characteristic. Our policy and practice require that all employees are afforded equal opportunities within employment, and that entry into employment and career progression will be determined only by personal merit. In all cases, an individual's ability to perform a role will be the primary consideration.
- 2.4 All employees have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other employees, regardless of their status. Attention is drawn to the Firm's separate Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 2.5 Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who breaches this policy and serious breaches may be treated as gross misconduct justifying summary dismissal.
- 2.6 The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which employees treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors and former employees.
- 2.7 Employees who are involved in management or recruitment, or who have any questions about the content or application of this policy, should contact the HR Manager to request training or further information.

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### **3.0 Forms of Discrimination**

- 3.1 The following are examples of discrimination which are against the Firm's policy:
- 3.2 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out in section 2.2. For example, rejecting an applicant because of his/her race (if it is believed that s/he would not "fit in") would be direct discrimination. This includes discrimination by association or perception. For example, treating colleagues less favourably because they perceive them to be disabled (even if they are not), or because they are associated with a person who has a particular protected characteristic (say, a partner with a different nationality).
- 3.3 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement for a job that all applicants have 10 years' experience would put younger applicants, who may be sufficiently well-qualified, at a disadvantage if it is not possible for them to have attained this amount of experience. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified.
- 3.4 Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is dealt with further in the Firm's Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 3.5 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint, or disclosed his/her pay to a colleague for the purposes of that person seeking to establish whether there is a connection between pay and having/not having a protected characteristic.

### **4.0 Recruitment**

- 4.1 The Firm welcomes diversity amongst its employees and seeks to ensure that all candidates for employment are treated fairly, and that selection is based solely on the individual's abilities and qualifications. The recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job, having regard to experience and qualifications where necessary.

### **5.0 Promotion**

- 5.1 When considering candidates for promotion, general ability will be the main requirement and no-one will be discriminated against because of any of the protected characteristics.

### **6.0 Terms and Conditions of Employment**

- 6.1 The Firm will not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic in respect of the general terms and conditions of employment, employee facilities and benefits.

### **7.0 Termination of Employment**

- 7.1 The Firm will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. The Firm will also ensure that the Disciplinary Procedure and any penalty is applied without discrimination, whether this results in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

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## **8.0 Disability Discrimination**

8.1 The Firm encourages all employees who are disabled, or who become disabled, to tell the Firm, so that we can provide appropriate support. If you experience difficulties at work because of a disability you should inform your line manager or the HR team to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The Firm will consider the matter carefully and will try to accommodate your needs within reason. If the Firm considers that a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain the reasons for this and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

## **9.0 Grievance Procedure**

9.1 All allegations of discrimination because of a protected characteristic will be dealt with seriously and confidentially, and in accordance with the Firm's Grievance Procedure. Employees who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. If you are found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment, you will be subject to disciplinary action under the Firm's Disciplinary Procedure. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Firm takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

## **10.0 Responsibility of Managers & Team Leaders**

- 10.1 All managers/team leaders and others in charge of groups of staff are responsible for ensuring that discrimination (including harassment) does not occur in their work area. In particular, managers must ensure that:
- a) you fully understand the Firm's Equal Opportunities Policy and Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy and are able to offer advice on them, and on the Disciplinary Procedure as it relates to a complaint of harassment or discrimination, if asked to do so;
  - b) your team is aware of and understands the Firm's Equal Opportunities Policy and Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy;
  - c) your team's work environment is free of visual harassment such as pin-ups and graffiti;
  - d) you are alert to physical and verbal harassment or discrimination in your work area and deal with it immediately, whether or not it is brought formally to your attention;
  - e) you are supportive of individuals who state that they have been harassed or discriminated against and, following an allegation of harassment or discrimination, there is no further harassment or victimisation; and
  - f) you maintain confidentiality in all cases of harassment or discrimination.

## **11.0 Responsibility of Individuals**

11.1 This policy applies to all Firm employees, workers and contract workers. Everyone has a personal responsibility to ensure that this policy is fully observed and complied with, and you must notify your manager/team leader of any incidents of which you become aware.

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