

The Barrister Group Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

The Barrister Group is committed to encouraging an environment where equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted to, by and amongst those who work and engage with us and to eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The Barrister Group values the differences that a diverse workforce brings. This is a key value to which all who work and engage with us are expected to give their support. In line with the regulatory objectives of the Legal Services Board and Bar Standards Board to support the accessibility of legal services, our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our clients, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

In providing services and facilities, we are also committed against unlawful discrimination of clients or the public or anyone else interacting with The Barrister Group.

Responsibility and Support

Overall responsibility for this policy rests with the board who fully support this approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. As The Barrister Group is a collaborative collection of individuals and businesses practising in their own right, it encourages open and transparent discussion and development of all of its policies, procedures and processes. Amendments can be proposed through this online Chambers Operating Manual located.

The Barrister Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officers are Stassi Jennings and Michaela Hardwick.

Everyone who works or engages with us should understand they, as well as The Barrister Group, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination in the course of their engagement, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public. This is particularly the case for those whose role means that they are regulated for the work they undertake.

Purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our engagement, whether employed, contracted or membership and whether temporary, part-time or full-time;
- not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, 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; and
- 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.

Services and Fees Structure

As part of its overall strategy, The Barrister Group has deliberately designed its fee structure to support its values of fairness and flexibility and by its very nature supports a cultural environment where Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can flourish.

As a barrister, under the services agreement that you have entered into with The Barrister Group, the charges which you pay The Barrister Group, for the provision of clerking services, including access to “Chambers 365”, The Barrister Group’s diary and case management software, are payable to The Barrister Group on a percentage of receipts basis, and any disbursements incurred by The Barrister Group on your behalf are payable as soon as they are incurred.

Under the services agreement that you have entered into with The Barrister Group, you do not pay “Chambers’ rent” in the sense traditionally understood and associated with sets of chambers. This is because:

- the services agreement is made with you individually and provides you with services personally;
- save that the charges relate to the provision of clerking services, which are equally provided to all other members of Chambers, the charges include no element of additional shared chambers’ expenses, whether relating to the cost of your occupation of premises, the use of equipment by you, the provision of library, marketing or other services to you, and in so far as you require and are provided with any such additional services, they are charged by way of disbursements; and
- the percentage of receipts upon which you are charged is calculated solely by reference to the cost of providing clerking services for the work which you have received fees upon.
- We are a responsible organisation committed to policies that contribute to allowing our members to practice in a comfortable, flexible, professional environment.

Application

The Barrister Group commits to:

1. Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
2. Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences in the contributions of all who work and engage with us are recognised and valued.
3. Training managers, supervisors and all who work and engage with us to understand their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. The responsibilities include all who work and engage with us conducting themselves in a way which helps The Barrister Group provide equal opportunities, prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination in all of the following circumstances:
 - a. recruitment and selection, including advertisements, job descriptions, interview and selection procedures;
 - b. training;
 - c. promotion and career development opportunities;
 - d. terms and conditions of employment, and access to employment related benefits and facilities;
 - e. grievance handling and the application of disciplinary procedures; and
 - f. selection for redundancy.

4. Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, members, pupils, clients, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of The Barrister Group work activities.
5. Dealing with such acts as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures and taking appropriate action. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. More detail of how this will progress in practice can be found in The Barrister Group disciplinary and grievance procedures [link in OM version]
6. 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.
7. Making opportunities for training, development and progress available to all who work and engage with us. Everyone will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
8. Making decisions concerning all who work and engage with us based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
9. Reviewing employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and to also updating them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
10. Conducting reviews on at least an annual basis to assess how this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Training

In addition to the above core training, we will ensure that every member of all selections panels is trained in fair recruitment and selection processes.

Training under this policy will consist of:

- fair and effective selection and avoiding unconscious bias;
- attraction and advertising;
- application processes;
- shortlisting skills;
- interviewing skills;
- assessment and making a selection decision; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

Recruitment and Selection

The Barrister Group recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

- all recruitment and selection processes use objective and fair criteria;
- it endeavours to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible;
- employment, pupillage and membership 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 underrepresented in the workforce;
- selection criteria and processes do not discriminate unjustifiably on the grounds of gender, race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, marital status, part time status, age, religion or belief, other than in those instances where The Barrister Group is exercising lawfully permitted positive action;



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- wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (Genuine Occupational Requirements) will be used to recruit suitable employees to meet the special needs of particular groups;
- all recruitment agencies acting for The Barrister Group are aware of its requirement not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

- **Pupils**

When undertaking recruitment and selection of pupils, in addition to the above, we will ensure that applicants with relevant characteristics are not refused engagement because of such characteristics. In order to support regulatory objectives, The Barrister Group will compile and retain data about the relevant characteristics of all applicants for the purposes of reviewing the data in order to see whether there are any apparent disparities in recruitment.

Communication

A copy of this policy is provided to all those who work and engage with The Barrister Group and is available both on our website and the online The Barrister Group Operating Manual.