

## Crown & Mehria Solicitors: Equality & Diversity Policy

The principles of equality and diversity are inherent in our values. They are part of the culture of Crown & Mehria Solicitors and are fundamental to our success.

Crown & Mehria Solicitors are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures. It is important to us that:

**We provide equal access to our services:** this means that we will not discriminate on sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics of any person we deal with.

**We provide equal access to our premises:** this means that where there are special needs or disability which prevent access to our premises, we will make suitable arrangements to accommodate the needs of that individual even if it means that we have to travel to provide a home service.

**We treat everyone with respect:** this means listening, seeking to understand, and respecting differences of others.

**We always seek to behave fairly and decently:** this means being open minded and unprejudiced to others.

**We are committed to generosity of spirit:** this includes creating for others opportunities for development and advancement and supporting them in taking those opportunities.

**We act with integrity:** this means behaving ethically, upholding the law and the values of our profession are of paramount importance to us.

**We believe** that the diversity of our firm is a reflection of our policies in action. We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion.

**We believe** that diversity and inclusiveness provide us with a wide pool of knowledge and skills, which are relevant to the area of our expertise.

**We know** that the talents required to provide excellent client service are not defined by sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics unrelated to legal service capability.

Through our commitment to Equality and Diversity, it is our aim to create an environment in which:

- All decisions are based on merit
- The individual differences and contributions of our staff are recognised and valued
- All parties feel able to strive to achieve their full potential
- Employees, clients and agents are supportive of each other, to achieve a common goal
- All parties are treated with respect and there is an absence of bullying or harassment

The human rights of every employee, client or agent with whom we engage, are respected and preserved without exception.

### **(A) REGULATION AND LEGISLATION**

In developing and implementing its equality and diversity policy, Crown & Mehria Solicitors (Firm) is committed to complying with Principle 9, Chapter 2 of the Solicitors Code of Conduct 2011 and with all current and any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice including, but not limited to:

- (a) the Equality Act 2010
  - (b) the Equal Pay Act 1970,
  - (c) the Sex Discrimination Act 1975,
  - (d) the Race Relations Act 1976,
  - (e) the Disability Discrimination Act 1995,
  - (f) the Employment Rights Act 1996
  - (g) the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003,
  - (h) the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
  - (i) the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- and any relevant amendments or re-enactments of such legislation
- . (i) The Commission for Racial Equality code of practice for the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment (1983)
  - . (ii) The Equal Opportunities Commission code of practice on sex

discrimination; equal opportunities policies, procedures and practices in employment (1985)

- . (iii) The Equal Opportunities Commission code of practice on Equal Pay (2003)
- . (iv) The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 codes of practice in relation to rights of access to facilities, services and premises in employment
- . (v) The European Community code of practice on the protection of the dignity of men and women at work.

And any relevant amendments to such codes or further codes of practice

## **(B) FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

The following are the kinds of discrimination, which are against the Firm's policy:

- . (a) Direct discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin), sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity), sexual orientation (including civil partnership status), religion or belief, age or disability.
- . (b) Indirect discrimination, where a provision, criterion, practice, requirement or condition (as appropriate) which is applied to everyone, has the effect of placing at a disadvantage a particular person, or group of people, by reason of: race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin), sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity), sexual orientation (including civil partnership status), religion or belief, age or disability; and it cannot be shown that to apply that provision, criterion, practice, requirement or condition in that way is a proportionate means for achieving a legitimate aim.
- . (c) 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.
- . (d) 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. Harassment can also occur where it has the defined effect upon the victim, notwithstanding the harasser's intention - it is the effect which

the harassment has upon the victim that is important.

## **(C) 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:

- . (a) it endeavors to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible;
- . (b) employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit;
- . (c) 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;
- . (d) selection criteria and processes do not discriminate unjustifiably on the grounds of race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin); sex (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity); sexual orientation (including civil partnership status); religion or belief; age or disability; other than in those instances where the Firm is exercising permitted positive action;
- . (e) wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (genuine occupational requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups;
- . (f) 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 employees equally and create a working environment

which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of employees.

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

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; or sexual orientation.

### **Promotion and Career Development**

Promotion within the Firm 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 underrepresented 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 underrepresented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career development opportunities.

## **(D) 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 barristers' 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; or sexual orientation 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.

### **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 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 anti-discrimination legislation such as the acts previously mentioned above.

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 which 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.

### **(E) 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 will be informed of this anti-discrimination policy and will be provided with equality and diversity training appropriate to their needs and responsibilities.

This Firm will monitor, evaluate and update procedures and policies at a minimum annually and will inform employees, clients and third parties of any updates and changes in policy relevant to themselves. All staff members will be asked to review and confirm an understanding of and commitment to the Firm's anti-discrimination policy annually and completion of this action will be

logged accordingly.

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.

### **Training Plan**

Ashfaq Altaf the sole practitioner of the Firm has overall responsibility for ensuring that all staff members including new staff members have access to and are made aware of the Firm's Equality and Diversity Policy statement and their commitment to it. Ashfaq Altaf is also responsible for ensuring that relevant training is delivered to all members of staff.

All Crown & Mehria Solicitors employees will be provided with:

- A copy of the Firm's Equality and Diversity Policy statement and will be informed of any amendments or updates to the policy thereafter.
- Compliance training, which amongst a wide range of topics includes Equality and Diversity training and will be tailored to suit this Firm's specific requirements. This will be delivered by a third party training provider or in house which ever is considered appropriate.
- Equality and Diversity specific training which will be delivered by appropriate methods to the individual member of staff needs.
- Updates to the above training will be provided as and when required e.g. at point of change to the policy, legal requirements etc.  
N.B. All training provided will be recorded on the individual staff members training record.

## **(F) IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY**

### **Responsibility**

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with Ashfaq Altaf. Ashfaq Altaf is the senior person within the Firm who is responsible for the operation of the policy.

All employees 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.

Acts of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds by employees 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.

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.

Crown & Mehria Solicitors employees are provided with a copy of the Equality and Diversity Plan and relevant training where appropriate to ensure that the plan is effectively implemented by everyone concerned.

### **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, clients, barristers or 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.

Any complaints should be made in writing to:

Mr Ashfaq Altaf  
Crown & Mehria Solicitors  
106 High Street  
Aylesbury  
Bucks  
HP21 8JD

### **Monitoring and review**

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to measure its progress and judge its effectiveness. In particular, the Firm will, as appropriate, monitor and record:

The gender and ethnic composition of the workforce as well as the

- (a) number of disabled staff at different levels of the organisation
- (b) the ethnicity, gender and disability of all applicants, short-listed applicants and successful applicants for jobs and training contract



- (c) the ethnicity, gender and disability of all applicants for promotion and training opportunities and details of whether they were successful
- (d) 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 sexual orientation and religion or belief of all partners and 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. The firm should, however, be aware that staff may not choose to disclose their sexual orientation or religion or belief and that care should be taken to avoid inadvertent discrimination in such cases
- (e) the number and outcome of complaints of discrimination made by staff, barristers, clients and other third parties
- (f) 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.

#### **(G) PUBLICATION OF THIS POLICY**

Every member of the Firm will receive a copy of this policy and it will be available on request to any client, third party and to the Solicitors Regulation Authority. A copy of the policy will be included on the Firms website at [www.crownmehria.co.uk](http://www.crownmehria.co.uk)