

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND
YORK CHAMBERS

A. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that the obligations to meet legal Equal Opportunities requirements are clearly set out.
2. To make all members of chambers and staff aware of Equal Opportunities responsibilities.
3. To promote measures to ensure that there is equality and a lack of discrimination in all aspects of chambers work, administration and provision of services.

B. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

1. Chambers does not discriminate on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, age or disability.
2. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to avoid discrimination in the areas of recruitment, both of members of chambers, staff and

pupils, acceptance of instructions, provision of services or in the distribution of work within chambers. (See Appendix B)

3. Discrimination includes harassment which would not have occurred but for the race or sex of the recipient. It may constitute unlawful direct discrimination. Harassment is any unwelcome conduct which is offensive to the recipient, whatever the motive or intention of the perpetrator. Further definition is given in the harassment policy annexed hereto.

C. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

This policy is to be read in conjunction with, and supplemented by, the relevant provisions of the Chambers Pupillage, Complaints and Staff policies.

1. No member of chambers, pupil or member of staff shall engage in any behaviour that might constitute a breach of the statement of principle at section B hereof or the specific provisions of Chambers Harassment policy.
2. Chambers subscribes to the Equality and Diversity Code of the Bar and it shall be the duty of all members of chambers, pupils and

members of staff to familiarise themselves the provisions thereof. All members of chambers, pupils and staff shall be provided with a copy of this policy document (incorporating the harassment policy) and the Equality Code upon joining chambers.

3. **Representation**

Chambers shall appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer to monitor the operation of and implementation of the policy and report to the annual Meeting of Chambers thereon. The selection of the officer shall be by secret ballot and the appointment shall last for 2 years. The officer may appoint a deputy to assist with administration and the operation of the grievance procedure. For the avoidance of doubt the deputy may be appointed from the staff.

4. The Equal Opportunities Officer may if appropriate and practicable participate in a suitable training course. The said course shall be approved by the Chambers Executive Committee and be paid for by chambers.

5. **Review And Monitoring**

The Equal Opportunities Officer shall conduct an annual review of the operation of the chambers policy in accordance with the monitoring form set out at appendix A hereof. In the event that a grievance is raised in respect of the operation of the policy a review of the operation of the policy shall also be carried out.

6. The Report to Chambers Annual Meeting shall be in writing and circulated amongst members of chambers not less than 48 hours prior to that meeting.

7. **Recruitment**

Vacancies in respect of any position in chambers should be advertised as widely as possible to ensure that the most appropriate candidate for any position is chosen. Any advertisement in connection with any vacancy must be drafted so as to comply with the statement of principle set out at B herein.

8. Any interview shall be conducted so as to comply with the Statement of Principle herein and any member of any interview panel should avoid asking any questions which may lead to the impression that discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, marital status,

sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, age or disability is being practised.

9. Maternity And Paternity Leave and Flexible Working

No member of Chambers shall lose their place in Chambers by virtue of pregnancy or adoption of a child or any absence or leave associated therewith. Chambers encourages flexibility in arrangements for maternity and adoption leave and does not have a requirement for return to practice within a set period.

10. Each member of Chambers taking maternity leave or leave following adoption shall be entitled to period of not less than 6 months free of Chambers rent and expenses. The rent free period may be taken so as to cover a period before the birth of a child. The rent free period shall extend to 6 months notwithstanding the fact that the member of Chambers may have returned to practice within that period.

11. At the conclusion of the rent free period rent shall be payable at the percentage agreed at chambers meeting from time to time and on the basis of the income received in the preceding financial year.

12. Members of Chambers shall be entitled to three month's leave free of Chambers' rent and expenses following the birth or adoption of a child by their partner where they have or share responsibility for that child so that they can discharge that responsibility. For the avoidance of doubt where leave is not taken there shall be no rent/expense free period.

13. Information on training events, social occasions and information on Chambers' business will be passed on to any member of Chambers on maternity leave. They shall be consulted in relation to major Chambers' decisions which may affect their practices.

14. Chambers encourages flexible working arrangements (eg working from home and part time working) to suit the personal situation of members of Chambers. In the event of a member of Chambers wishing to work part time they shall notify the Head of Chambers in writing of their wish so to do. Chambers does not oppose the taking of career breaks and does not require a fresh application to join Chambers should such a break be taken.

15. In the event of a member of chambers working part time following a period of maternity or adoption leave they shall be entitled to pay rent,

until the end of the financial year in which they return to work, on a pro rata basis up to a maximum of 3 days per week.

16. Members of chambers working on flexible working arrangements shall be included in Chambers' business, continuing professional development, marketing and social activities in the same way as full-time working members.

17. Obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Chambers is committed to making its services non discriminatory and accessible to disabled people including lay and professional clients, colleagues, pupils and staff.

18. Chambers meeting shall appoint a nominated person to conduct an annual review of provision for disabled persons to ensure that such provision is satisfactory and not discriminatory.

19. In the event of any request for reasonable adjustments to be made to by changing practices, policies and procedures the aforesaid nominated person shall consider and act upon the same reporting in writing to the Chambers Executive Committee.

20. In the event of any request for reasonable adjustment by way of provision of auxiliary aids and services or adjusting a physical feature the same shall be the responsibility of the Chambers Executive Committee.

D. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

1. Informal complaint about any aspect of the policy and its application can be made at any time to the Equal Opportunities Office or Head of Chambers who will endeavour to resolve any issues informally.
2. In the event of any member of chambers pupil or member of staff being dissatisfied with such process and having a grievance in respect of any aspect of this policy or other equal opportunities issue complaint should be made in writing to the Equal Opportunities Officer. No complainant shall suffer discrimination or victimisation as a result of the making of such complaint.
3. The Officer shall take steps to investigate the complaint and shall appoint another member of chambers to assist in the said investigation.

Additionally, a member of chambers shall be appointed to act as informal advisor to the complainant.

4. Within 14 days of the complaint a written report shall be submitted to the Head of Chambers who shall decide upon the appropriate action to

be taken. In the event that the complaint concerns the Head of Chambers report shall be made to the Executive Committee of chambers.

5. In the event that the complaint involves a member of staff the Officer shall appoint another member of staff to participate in the investigation of the said complaint.

6. In the event that the complaint involves the Equal Opportunities officer the initial written complaint should be to the Executive Committee of Chambers (which shall appoint another member of Chambers to act as an informal advisor to the complainant). The Executive Committee shall report in writing to the Head of Chambers who shall decide upon the appropriate action to be taken.

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APPENDIX A

MONITORING FORM

Date of review:

Carried out by:

Date appointed:

Policy reviewed and updated:

Policy circulated to all members of chambers:

Feedback requested:

Response:

Composition of Chambers:

Membership:	Gender
	Ethnicity
	Disability
Staff:	Gender
	Ethnicity
	Disability

Pupillage:

No. of applicants:

No. interviewed:

Ethnic origin of interviewees:

No. of disabled candidates:

No. of offers made:

Ethnic origin of candidate receiving offer:

Does action need to be taken to consider representation of under represented groups?

Complaints received during year:

Nature of complaint and area of equal opportunities involved (e.g. race, sex):

Outcome:

Action:

Was review of implementation of the policy carried out at the time?

Has there been any recruitment into chambers since the last review?

Has recruitment complied with chambers policy?

If not action proposed to prevent future failure:

Has staff appraisal complied with chambers policy?

If not action proposed to prevent future failure:

Are premises and services adequate for minority users?

Has monitoring of distribution of chambers work been carried out to ensure compliance with Equal Opportunities policy?