

# **BELMORES**

Criminal Defence & Road Traffic Solicitors

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

As signatories to the Law Society's Diversity & Inclusion Charter Belmores is fully committed to the Charter and each of its principles.

### **General Commitment**

At Belmores we embrace diversity and encourage our employees to share their views and lifestyles, thereby broadening everyone's awareness of difference. We believe in fostering an environment of inclusion that encourages directors and employees to be successful. By valuing our differences we build upon the strengths of our individuals, the team and the Company. It is an approach that we believe benefits our people and our clients.

Belmores is committed to preventing discrimination and promoting equality and diversity. We intend to treat everyone equally and with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, part time and/or fixed-term status or any other personal characteristic.

The principle of equal treatment will also apply to our professional dealings with third parties, including contractors, consultants, suppliers, clients, barristers and other solicitors.

The policy applies to arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment including promotion, training and any other employment related activities.

Belmores is committed to complying with Principle 9 of the SRA Handbook 2011 which requires that we run the business in a way that encourages equality of opportunity and respect for diversity and to achieving the mandatory Outcomes in Chapter 2 of the Code of Conduct. We consistently work to ensure that we are compliant with all current and future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice.

### **What is Discrimination?**

Discrimination may be direct or indirect and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Generally, a person has been discriminated against if:

- they have been treated less favourably than another person on one or more of the grounds set out above; or
- they are subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for instance, their sex or race; or
- they have a disability and reasonable steps have not been taken to meet their needs; or
- they have been subject to victimization or harassment on one or more of the grounds set out above.

### **What is victimisation?**

A person is victimised where they suffer less favourable treatment because they have, in good faith, made a complaint under this policy, acted as a witness or accompanied a complainant to a hearing.

### **What is harassment?**

A person is harassed where they suffer any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity or creating an intimidating or hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Belmores recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce. We will take such reasonable steps as appropriate to ensure that applications are encouraged from a diverse range of people regardless of their disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, part time and/or fixed-term status or any other personal characteristic.

We will use our best endeavours to comply with any targets for the employment of ethnic minorities as are produced from time to time by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

### **Promotion and Career Development**

Promotion within Belmores (including to directors) 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.

## **Directors**

Arrangements and procedures for selecting directors, their terms and conditions of directorship, access to benefits, facilities or services and termination arrangements will be reviewed and amended where necessary to prevent discrimination on any of the forbidden grounds.

Maternity rights available to directors shall be no less favourable than those required by legislation for employees.

## **Barristers**

Barristers should be instructed on the basis of their skills, experience and ability. The decision to instruct or not to instruct a barrister will not be based on disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, part-time and/or fixed-term status or any other personal characteristic.

We will comply with clients' requests for a named barrister subject to our duty to discuss with the client the suitability of the barrister and to advise appropriately.

## **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 Belmores, 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.

Where we use suppliers, contractors, agents and other third parties they shall where appropriate be asked to comply with Belmores policy on equal opportunities and diversity.

## **Clients**

We are generally free to decide whether to accept instructions from any particular client, but any refusal to act will not be based on disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, part-time and/or fixed-term status or any other personal characteristic.

## **Responsibility**

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the directors of Belmores. We will appoint a senior person within our organisation (currently Dave Foulkes) to be responsible for the operation of the policy.

All employees and directors of Belmores are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of our Equality and Diversity Policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the Company.

Belmores will take action under our disciplinary policy against anyone who is found to have committed, authorised or condoned an act of discrimination.

Belmores will take such steps and make such arrangements, as are reasonable in all the circumstances in order to prevent any of its employees, directors, members or clients who are disabled from being placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled.

## **Compliance**

The principles of equality and diversity are central to our ethos. This policy will be readily accessible to all directors and employees of Belmores. Access can be gained on line to a copy which forms part of our QRMS. A hard copy can be obtained from our Office Manager, Angela Sayer, who will also provide copies to clients and third parties on request. The policy wording will be reviewed annually.

## **Complaints of Discrimination**

Any employee who believes that discrimination is taking place should talk to Dave Foulkes in the first instance. Belmores will treat seriously, and will take action where appropriate, all complaints of discrimination or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds made by employees, directors, clients, barristers, or any other third parties. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with our grievance or complaints procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The policy will be monitored and reviewed in a manner proportionate to the size and nature of the company on a regular basis (and in any event at least annually) to measure its progress and judge the effectiveness of the policy provisions.

In particular, the company will, as appropriate, monitor and record:

- (a) The age, sexual orientation, gender and ethnic composition of the workforce and partners as well as the number of disabled staff, directors at different levels of the organization.

- (b) The age, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity and disability of all applicants, short-listed applicants and successful applicants for jobs and training contracts.
- (c) The number and outcome of complaints of discrimination made by staff, directors, barristers, clients and other third parties.
- (d) The disciplinary action (if any) taken against employees by race, gender, disability and age.

This information will be used to review the progress and impact of the equality and diversity policy and related practices. Any changes required will be made and implemented.

This policy will be communicated and amended and updated where necessary.

**January 2014**