

# BCL Legal Equal Opportunities Policy

BCL Legal ("the Company") is committed to a Policy of Equality of Opportunity in all of its recruitment and employment practices and procedures. It is the Company's policy not to discriminate against its workers and candidates on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy or trade union membership or the fact that they are a part-time worker or a fixed-term employee.

The Company's workers, applicants for employment and candidates shall not be disadvantaged by any policies or conditions of service which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes. The Company shall, at all times, strive to work within legislative requirements as well as promoting best practice. The Company's long-term aim is that the composition of its workforce should reflect that of the local community and that all workers should be offered equal opportunities to achieve their full potential. The Company is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to the attention of all workers.

The following paragraphs deal with the specific categories of workers and areas of work which we have identified as potentially giving rise to equal opportunities issues and provides more specific guidance on the parameters of our policy and approach to equal opportunities.

This policy is for guidance only and does not form part of your contract of employment.

## **1. TO WHOM DOES THIS POLICY APPLY?**

This policy applies to all employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees and to job applicants.

You have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to treat colleagues and candidates with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, the Company may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and will not therefore tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

## **2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY**

The directors have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination.

Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to this policy and promote the aims and objectives of the Company with regard to equal opportunities. Managers will be given training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment selection best practice.

All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If any member of staff has any question regarding the content or application of this policy, he or she should not hesitate to contact Vicky Clark for guidance.

## **3. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

The Company will not unlawfully discriminate on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy, trade union membership, or part-time or fixed-term status.

This policy applies to the advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, to training and development, opportunities for promotion, to conditions of service, benefits and facilities and pay, to health and safety and to conduct at work, to grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment, including redundancy.

The Company will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of religion, culture, and domestic responsibilities.

#### **4. FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the grounds set out in section 3 above.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race. If this provision, criterion or practice cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex or race, it would be indirectly discriminatory. Discrimination also includes harassment.

Victimisation occurs where an individual treats another individual less favourably on the grounds that he or she has done or intends to do one of the following protected acts: bringing discrimination proceedings; giving evidence or information in connection with discrimination proceedings; making an allegation of unlawful discrimination; or doing anything else under, or by reference to, the discrimination legislation. A false complaint is protected if it is made in good faith.

#### **5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

5.1 The Company aims to ensure that no job applicant or candidate receives less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed in section 3 above. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Job selection criteria will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

The Company and its employees or workers will not accept instructions to commit unlawful discrimination, or to procure or attempt to procure the commission of such discrimination.

#### **6. STAFF TRAINING AND PROMOTION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

Staff training needs will be identified through staff appraisals. You will be given appropriate access to training to enable you to progress within the organisation. All promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

The composition and movement of workers at different levels will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the Company. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under represented groups.

The Company's conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed to ensure that they are available to all employees who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them. This includes pay, policies and all benefits offered.

#### **7. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

The Company will monitor redundancy criteria and procedures to ensure that they are fair and objective and do not directly or indirectly discriminate against employees.

The Company will also ensure that disciplinary procedures are carried out fairly and uniformly for employees, whether they result in the giving of disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

#### **8. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION**

If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment with the Company, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition. This is to enable the Company to support you as much as possible. You may also wish to advise your line manager of any reasonable adjustments to your working conditions or the duties of your job which you consider to be necessary, or which would assist you in the performance of your duties. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and with your medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of your job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for us to accommodate the suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide you with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.

#### **9. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY**

If you believe that you may have been disadvantaged on any of the unlawful grounds listed at section 3 above you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Company's Grievance Procedure. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Individuals who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.

If, after investigation, you are proven to have harassed any other member of staff on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, disability or age or otherwise act in breach of this policy, you will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Company will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

#### **10. MONITORING AND REVISION OF POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed annually by a director. Recommendations for any amendments will be reported to the Board. The Company will regularly monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure that it is achieving the objectives stated in the Equal Opportunity Policy Statement.