

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Public Lawyers' Association ("PLA") is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity. The PLA strives to ensure that its dealings with individuals and organisations are free from bias of any kind.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 The purpose of the PLA's Equality and Diversity Policy is to promote and support a culture of equality, fairness and respect.
- 2.2 This policy aims to promote a culture where no member of the PLA is placed at any disadvantage or treated differently or unfairly due to any "protected characteristic", namely his/her: age; disability; gender reassignment; marital/civil partnership status; pregnancy/maternity; race; nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation.
- 2.3 The PLA may vary any parts of this policy as appropriate in any case.

3. Who is covered by the policy?

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all members of the PLA when they are carrying out activities on behalf of the PLA namely when acting in pursuance of PLA Executive Committee functions, attending PLA events or training and in participating in PLA working groups.

4. Who is responsible for this policy?

- 4.1 The Executive Committee of the PLA has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 4.2 Members should disclose any instances of discrimination when they become aware to an appropriate member of the Executive Committee.

5. Scope and purpose of the Policy

- 5.1 The Executive Committee will investigate any alleged cases of discrimination (direct, associative, by perception and/or indirect), harassment (and/or harassment by a third party), victimisation or bullying, with speed and sensitivity at the appropriate level.

6. Responsibilities of PLA members

- 6.1 To refrain from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation of any kind either directly or indirectly to any person or organisation whom you come into contact with whilst you are representing the PLA.
- 6.2 To report any incidents where appropriate concerning members of the PLA to a member of the Executive Committee as soon as possible.
- 6.3 If any member of the PLA is found to be in breach of their responsibilities under this Policy then the member may have their membership suspended or terminated.

7. Protected Characteristics and Forms of Discrimination

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010, which took effect on 1 October 2010, is concerned with discrimination in respect of the following nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation
- 7.2 Discrimination can be direct, or indirect, associative, perceptive, harassment or victimisation.

- 7.3 Direct Discrimination is discrimination that occurs where, because of a protected characteristic, a person (A) treats another (B) less favourably than A treats or would treat others. In relation to the protected characteristic of age only, there is no direct discrimination where the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 7.4 Indirect Discrimination is discrimination that occurs where A applies to B an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice that A would apply equally to others, but which puts or would put those who share B's protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. There will be no discrimination if the provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified.
- 7.5 Associative discrimination is direct discrimination against someone who may not possess a protected characteristic themselves but because they associate with a person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- 7.6 Perceptive Discrimination is discrimination against someone because of a perception that he or she has a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) whether or not he or she does, in fact, have that protected characteristic.
- 7.7 Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is a form of discrimination. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 7.8 Victimisation is also a form of discrimination. This is less favourable treatment of someone because they have made an allegation of discrimination, have brought a claim or given evidence or information in relation to such a case.
- 7.9 The PLA does not tolerate discrimination in any form and is committed to eliminating all kinds of discrimination at all levels. Any PLA member who is found to be discriminating on the grounds of a protected characteristic may have their membership suspended or terminated.

8. Bullying

- 8.1 Bullying can take many forms and may encompass some or all of the types of discrimination already listed. PLA will not tolerate bullying in any form and any PLA member who is found to be bullying may have their membership suspended or terminated.

9. Admission of new members

- 9.1 The PLA aims to ensure that no member, or potential new member, suffer discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above.
- 9.2 Potential members will not be asked about health or disability before a decision on membership to the PLA is made.
- 9.3 Potential members must not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy.
- 9.4 Potential members must not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of the Executive Committee (who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account).

10. Disability discrimination

- 10.1 The PLA will consider if any reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate to members, potential members and anyone else who is disabled when attending events organised by, or in relation to materials produced by, the PLA.

11. Raising concerns

- 11.1 The PLA aims to create a culture where discrimination plays no part in the way that it operates. If any member of the PLA wishes to discuss any concerns that they may have concerning any kind of discrimination, then they can do so in confidence with any member of the Executive Committee as they feel appropriate.
- 11.2 All complaints will be dealt with speed and sensitivity. Where appropriate, the Executive Committee may suspend or terminate the membership of members who are found to be in breach of this Policy.

12. Monitoring and review of the policy

- 12.1 This policy is reviewed annually
- 12.2 Please report any recommendations for change to the Executive Committee.

Policy date: March 2016