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# **Equal Opportunities' Policy**

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## **Equal Opportunities' Statement**

Zenith Chambers (ZC) is firmly committed to the active promotion of equal opportunities. ZC recognises that such a commitment requires the taking of positive steps to identify and eliminate possible areas of discrimination so as to afford:

- equality of access to all applicants for pupillage, tenancy or employment
- equality of treatment to all members, pupils and staff
- equality of service to professional clients covering both the planning of services and the decision whether to accept instructions or offer advice.

## **Equal Opportunities' Policy**

This adds more detail to the Equality Statement, in terms of scope and implementation.

### ***Introduction***

All members and staff of Zenith Chambers are committed to ensuring that individuals and groups are not treated more or less favourably on the grounds of their race, colour, nationality, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political persuasion, age or disability, whether they are existing or potential clients, members, pupils, employees or providers of services to Zenith Chambers.

ZC, its members, pupils and staff, are aware of and abide by current equality legislation, and by the principles set out in the Bar Council's Equality Code the contents of which it has adopted.

The policy applies to, and will be implemented by, all members, pupils and staff of the organisation at all times and with particular regard to:

- (i) The provision of services and acceptance of instructions
- (ii) Employment matters, including recruitment, selection, training opportunities and treatment of staff
- (iii) Procedures for the fair selection of pupils and new tenants

All Members of Chambers are expected to read, understand and comply with The Bar Council Equality Code and any requests from the Bar Council in relation to equal opportunities. It is a condition of the acceptance of a tenancy at ZC that any new tenant reads and understands the Code.

Within ZC, Equal Opportunities is not simply a matter bolted on to existing structures, considered separately and responded to as a last minute thought. Whenever possible, consideration of Equal Opportunities' issues is included at each stage in any decision making process. This means that the potential for discrimination, whether direct or indirect, and the positive furtherance of equality of opportunity objectives are brought into account at each stage when decisions are made.

Chambers promotes its equality policy in all literature which is in the public domain.

ZC has appointed Sarah Greenan, a Member of Chambers, to act as 'Equal Opportunities Officer'. This officer is expected to show commitment to the implementation of Chambers' Equal Opportunities' policy on a continuing basis.

### ***Recruitment and Selection***

ZC does not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age or religion in the selection and treatment of Members, pupils and staff.

ZC takes great care to ensure that there is equality of opportunity throughout the organisation. Applicants for staff vacancies, pupillages and tenancy will be considered purely on merit, and, save for the limited exception set out below, no discrimination will be made on irrelevant grounds such as those previously mentioned.

Recruitment procedures evaluate the skills, knowledge and experience of those applying for positions. Where a vacancy exists, or is being considered, the required skills, knowledge and experience is compared with those of the applicant in reaching a decision on their suitability. A full record is kept on file as part of the recruitment process.

However, applicants applying for pupillages and tenancy vacancies may be discriminated on the grounds of age but only where such discrimination can be shown to be reasonably justifiable. (See amendment to para. 305 of the Bar Code of Conduct).

Notes of selection interviews are retained and maintained for a period of at least 12 months. In the selection of pupils, ZC complies with the requirements of the Bar Code of Conduct, the Equality Code and the Pupillage Guidelines.

For each person working in Zenith there is:

- a written contract of employment
- an individual job description
- a record of staff sickness and planned holidays
- training records
- an annual appraisal with appropriate records maintained

The job description for each staff member of Zenith will set out in writing what is expected of them. This is given to them on commencement of their employment, together with a copy of the Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

Each job description is reviewed again within three months of their commencing employment, as well as during their annual appraisal, with a view to identifying the individual's training needs and ability to do what is required of them. In general terms, staff can always expect that time will be spent with them going through what is expected of them, how procedures

work, how they should deal with problem situations if they arise and what training they may require to help them improve in the job they do at present, as well as equipping them for future promotion.

### ***Monitoring and Review***

Sarah Greenan, the Equal Opportunities' Officer is responsible for monitoring compliance of this policy in relation to the Law relating to equal opportunities and discrimination, the Bar Code of Conduct, Bar Equality Codee and Pupillage guidelines, to ensure at all times that procedures are followed and continue to be appropriate.

This includes:

- Monitoring compliance with the Bar Code of Conduct and the cab rank rule when accepting instructions from clients (subject to the current provisions regarding publicly funded work which have removed the "deeming" provision for such Family and criminal cases).
- Ensuring that all 'Zenith' staff members are aware of the obligation to ensure equality of opportunity and organise, plan, deliver and monitor services appropriately.
- Monitoring the use and suitability of the premises in relation to the provision of services to disabled users.
- Ensuring compliance regarding the recruitment and treatment of all personnel (staff, members and pupils)

This officer reports to the Management Committee (MC) on these issues as and when matters arise and to the Quality Manager once per annum usually in February.

The MC reviews formally any policy, practice and procedural issues in connection with non-discrimination in the provision of services at least annually, usually in February. The MC will deal with any changes required, but may raise with the Members at the AGM any substantial issues requiring discussion.

Members are expected to comply with any request by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) or Criminal Defence Service (CDS) for the provision of information in relation to equal opportunities. Staff members comply with CPS reporting requirements.

Issues relating to the suitability of the premises for disabled users are also considered as part of the business planning process.

Instances of breach of the policy in connection with staff members are referred to the Practice Director in order that the breach can be logged in the relevant file.

Instances of breach in connection with pupils or tenants are referred to the Management Committee who will also inform the Practice Director.

In the event of a breach of the policy by a member of staff then internal disciplinary procedures will be followed.

In connection with a breach of policy by a Member, the Management Committee can take action in respect of a Member in accordance with procedures set out in the Constitution. This could result in suspension or expulsion.

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The Bar Code of Conduct can be read on line at:  
<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/standardsandguidance/codeofconduct/>

The Bar Equality Code can be read on-line at:  
<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/standardsandguidance/eanddcode/>.

The Bar's Pupillage Guidelines can be found in Section 8 of the Practice Management Standards of the Bar, which can be read on line at:  
<http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/guidance/practicemanagementguidelines/>.