

1. Equal Opportunities Policy

- 1.1 The Practice is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants and to embracing diversity in its workforce. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and one in which all decisions are based on merit.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide diversity and equality to all staff, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, age, nationality, national origin, sexuality, religion or belief, marital status or social class.
- 1.3 We believe that commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace is not only good management but also makes sound business sense. We believe that all staff are entitled to a working environment which promotes fairness, equality, dignity and respect to all.
- 1.4 We do not discriminate, nor will tolerate discrimination, against staff on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability or age (the **protected characteristics**). No form of discrimination, intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
- 1.5 Our aim is to ensure that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and where each staff member feels respected and able to give their best to the business.
- 1.6 The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which our staff treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.
- 1.7 All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status. Any staff member who is found to have breached this policy will be subject to disciplinary sanction under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.8 We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and ensuring that the policy is brought to the attention of all staff and that they remain fully aware of their responsibilities towards others. We ensure that all staff have access to this policy and provide appropriate training on a regular basis.

- 1.9 This policy, and the measures we take to implement it and ensure continuing compliance, have been devised on the basis of the relevant legislation and guidance (as amended), including (but not limited to) the Equality Act 2010, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the ECHR Employment Statutory Code of Practice. We have also taken account of ACAS and Government issued guidance on equality and diversity in the workplace. We are fully committed to ensuring all of our legal obligations are complied with at all times and seek regular independent advice in that regard.
- 1.10 We are also fully committed to complying with our obligations under the Solicitors Regulation Authority Code of Conduct 2011 (Chapter 2) in respect of equality and diversity. This policy further serves that purpose.
- 1.11 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Who is covered by this policy?

- 1.12 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including partners, senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, associates, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual workers and agency staff (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).

Who is responsible for this policy?

- 1.13 Our Management Board (the board) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law.
- 1.14 The Practice has appointed the Office Administrator as its Equalities Officer, who has day-to-day responsibility for its operation and compliance.
- 1.15 The Practice is committed to continually taking account of changes in the relevant legislation and guidance to ensure continuing compliance with its legal responsibilities. The Practice is also committed to taking account of the results of its equal opportunities monitoring (see further below) when reviewing this policy.
- 1.16 All Supervising Partners and managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. All Supervising Partners and managers are given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

- 1.17 If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Equalities Officer.

Scope and purpose of the policy

- 1.18 This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, termination of employment and relations with visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.
- 1.19 We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

Forms of discrimination

- 1.20 Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.
- 1.21 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.
- 1.22 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.
- 1.23 Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. 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. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 1.24 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

Recruitment and Selection

- 1.25 We ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Selection for employment will be on the basis of aptitude and ability only.
- 1.26 Our job advertisements avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. They will include an appropriate short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about vacancies.
- 1.27 We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in the Practice. Where appropriate, use may be made of lawful exemptions to recruit suitably qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.
- 1.28 Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with the approval of the Equalities Officer. For example:
- (a) Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
 - (b) Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
 - (c) Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
 - (d) Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).
- 1.29 Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of the Equalities Officer (who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account).
- 1.30 We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport)

before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

- 1.31 To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our Practice, we monitor applicants' (save for speculative applications) ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting, and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity of our workforce.
- 1.32 Persons who submit speculative applications to the Practice (i.e. not in response to an advertised or currently available post) are not monitored unless and until their speculative application is to be progressed to assessment or interview stage.

Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

- 1.33 Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the Practice and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- 1.34 All staff will be helped (by training and continuous development appraisals) and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and the resources of the Practice will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the business.
- 1.35 The Practice will take steps to ensure that there is no discrimination in the way in which staff appraisals are carried out. Staff responsible for appraisals will receive training in equal opportunities where appropriate.
- 1.36 To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in the Practice, we annually monitor our staff's ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect any decision related to their employment. The information is provided and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity of our workforce.

- 1.37 Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the Practice. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- 1.38 Our conditions of service, benefits, facilities and appraisal system are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

Termination of employment

- 1.39 We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.
- 1.40 We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Disability discrimination

- 1.41 If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.
- 1.42 If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your Supervising Partner or Manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your Supervising Partner or Manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.
- 1.43 If you would prefer to discuss a disability issue in confidence, you are encouraged to speak with the Finance Director.
- 1.44 We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

Fixed term employees and agency workers

- 1.45 We monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Part time work

- 1.46 We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy.

Advising clients

- 1.47 We are committed to providing a high quality legal service to our clients, irrespective of any protected characteristics they or those connected to them may have.
- 1.48 The only circumstances under you shall refuse to act will be in the case of a conflict of interest, or where any employee is put at physical risk or where any solicitor or legal executive working for us is likely to be professionally compromised by continuing to act for a client.

Instructing experts

- 1.49 Any expert who is instructed by us, but who refuses to provide a service because of a discriminatory attitude, which contradicts our policy, shall be removed from our register of experts.
- 1.50 When instructing experts, you shall treat such an expert in the same manner as that of a prospective client. This means that instructions shall not be withheld on the basis of any protected characteristic. Experts shall be instructed as per the guidelines laid down in relation to the Experts' Register which can be found on the Intranet and opinions as to advice received will be based purely on merit.

Breaches of this policy

- 1.51 If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy. If you are uncertain which applies or need advice on how to proceed you should speak to the Finance Director.

- 1.52 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.53 Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment, or has otherwise breached this policy, will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

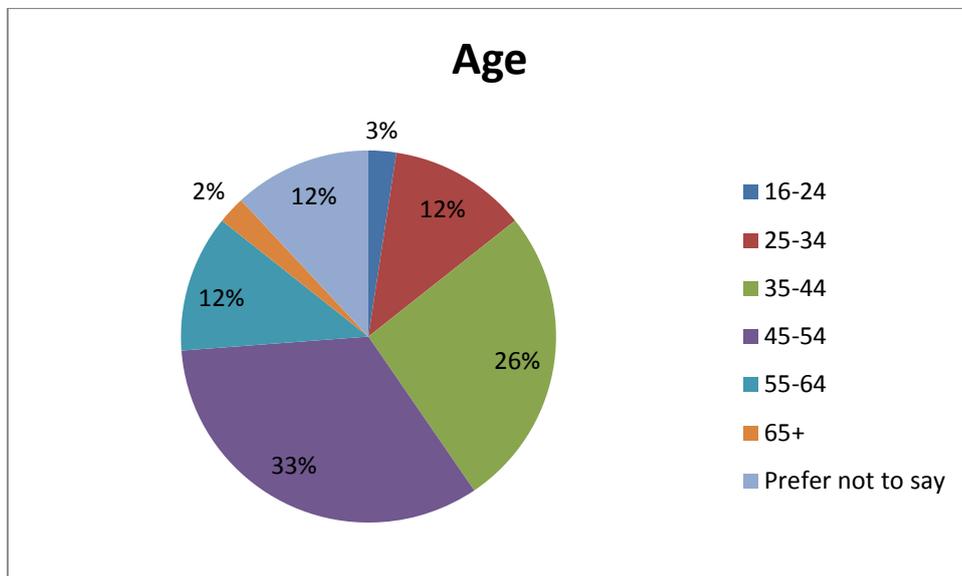
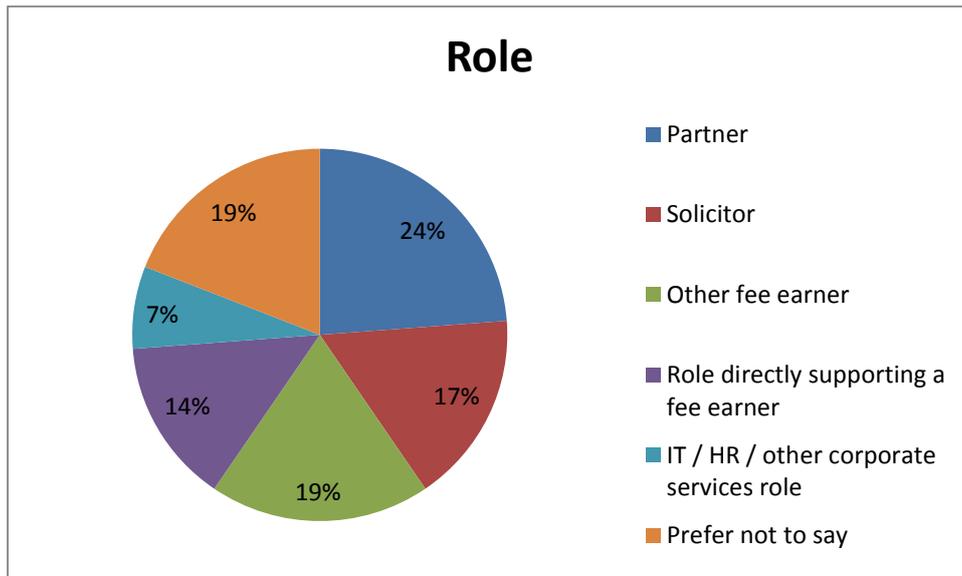
Monitoring and review of the policy

- 1.54 This policy is reviewed annually by the Equalities Officer and the Management Board.

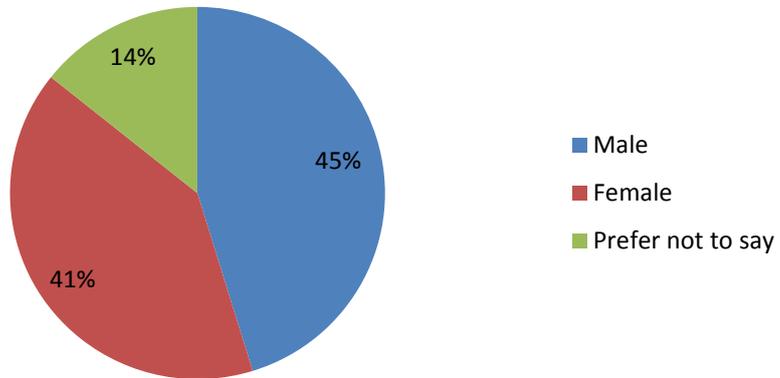
We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. As part of this process we monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of our staff.



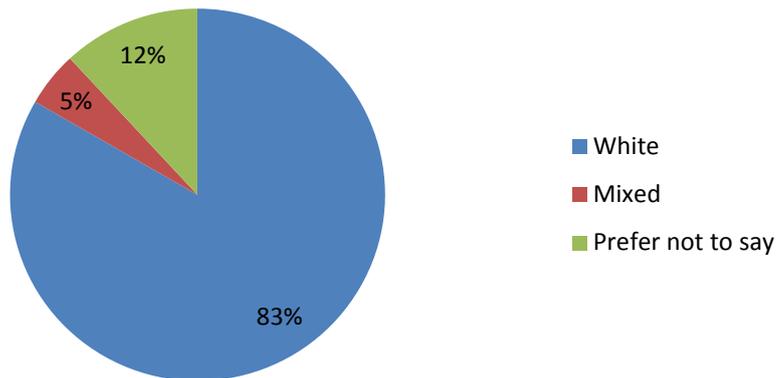
Dolmans Solicitors Ethnicity and Diversity Data – January 2017



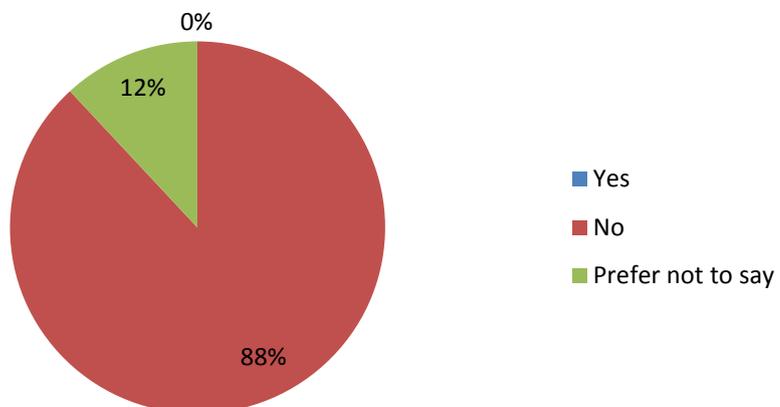
Gender



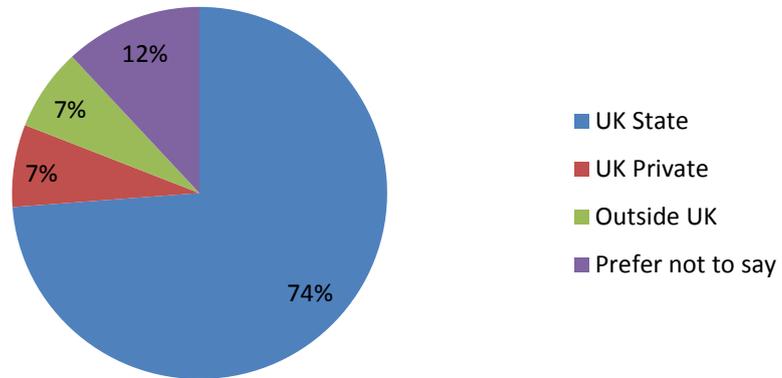
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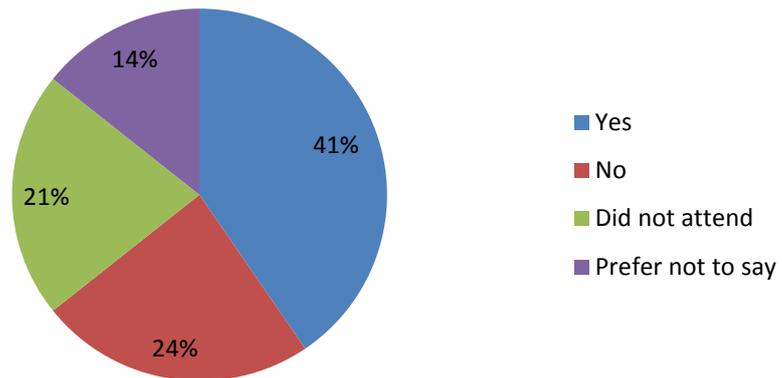
Disability



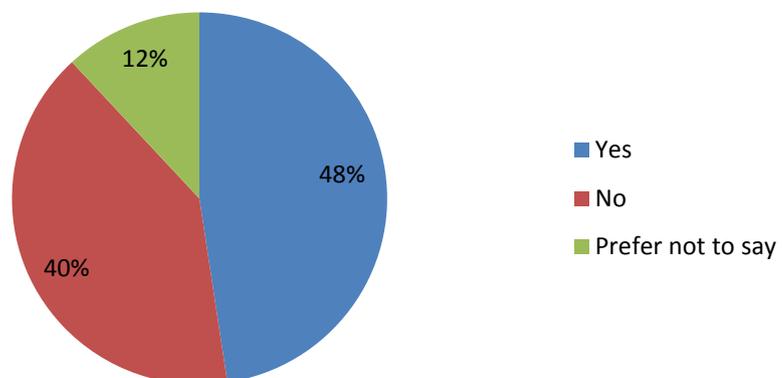
Schools Attended from 11 - 18 Years



First Generation to Attend University



Primary Carer for a Child Under 18



Caring for Family, Friends or Others

