



Law
Commission
Reforming the law

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION STATEMENT

This sets out the Law Commission's commitment to equality and diversity and the steps taken to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken fully into account in its work.

The Equality and Diversity Statement of the Ministry of Justice (with which the Law Commission is associated) reads as follows:

We serve a diverse society. That is a society made up of men and women; of people of different races, cultures and religions; of people with and without disabilities; of young people and older people; of straight and gay people; of people with and without caring responsibilities; and of people with many other differences. We recognise, respect and value that diversity and will strive in all we do to serve the interests of people from all sections of society. We will also strive to become an organisation that reflects more fully the diversity of the society we serve and truly values the contributions which employees from all sections of society make to our work.

In particular we will:

- in the development of our policies, take account of the interests of all sections of society
- ensure that wherever possible the services we provide meet the needs and expectations of all our service-users
- seek to influence others with whom we work, or from whom we purchase goods and services, to share our commitment to valuing the diversity of our society.

We will, to meet our business objectives:

- provide real equality of opportunity in the recruitment, development and promotion of all our employees irrespective of; race, nationality, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sex, marital status, disability, AIDS/HIV positive status, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, work pattern, membership or non-membership of a Trade Union and/or Corporate Staff Network or any reason which is irrelevant to the employee's ability to do the job
- eliminate unfair discrimination and harassment in our workplaces;
- extend family friendly working practices
- develop all our employees to their maximum potential and make the best use of their different talents
- offer positive action training and development, where appropriate, for employees from under represented groups
- consult employees, including employees from minority groups, about how we can improve equality of opportunity and support diversity.

We will set ourselves goals with measurable outcomes to assess our progress towards becoming a diverse organisation providing excellent service to all sections of society.

We hold ourselves accountable for their achievement.

The Law Commission has adopted the Ministry of Justice's Equality and Diversity Statement (set out above) and, since December 2000, has been committed to a programme of action to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken fully into account in the substance of the recommendations on law and policy which the Commission makes.

The Commission is committed to consulting fully with those likely to be affected by its proposals, including different groups within society, and to assessing the impact of its proposed policies and removing or mitigating any adverse effect on particular groups

within society wherever possible. All Law Commission staff attend the Ministry of Justice's Diversity Awareness Training programme. Progress will be reported in the Commission's Annual Reports.

LAW REFORM

Set out below is the action to which the Law Commission is committed, so as to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken fully into account in its work, for:

- the substance of the recommendations on law and policy which the Commission makes

- full consultation with those likely to be affected by the Commission's recommendations, including different groups within society

- assessment of the impact of the Commission's proposed policies and, if the impact may adversely affect particular groups within society, action to remove or mitigate that adverse impact wherever possible

The Commission will: Responsibilities

- Recognise its responsibility to take account of the interests of all sections of society in the development of its recommendations;

- Ensure that all its law reform staff recognise their responsibility to take account of the interests of all sections of society in the development of the Commission's recommendations.

Working Practices

- In its project initiation requirements, refer to equality and diversity issues (including whether particular projects need to involve any literature in minority languages or for minority groups); and determine from an early stage in a project whether there are issues where particular considerations may arise (directly or indirectly) regarding particular groups.

- Consider whether policies proposed in a law reform project might have an unequal effect (directly or indirectly) on any particular group(s). If so, consider whether that inequality (and its extent) is justified. If it is not justified, change the policy (or take other action) to remove or mitigate any adverse differential impact.

- Use the Commission's house-style guidance about gender-neutral language for all Commission publications.

- Send press notices to media serving different sections of society.

Guidance, Advice and Information

- During projects, ensure representatives of different sections of society are consulted on proposals for reform, when appropriate for particular projects.

- Obtain information and advice on equality and diversity issues (when appropriate) with regard to particular law reform projects.

- Ask for suggestions for new projects from relevant organisations.

PERSONNEL MATTERS

Set out below is the action to which the Commission's staff is committed, so as to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken fully into account in personnel matters at the Commission.

The Commission will ensure equal opportunities in recruitment, selection and working practices, and will:

Responsibilities

Ensure that each member of staff has an equality or diversity objective featured in their Performance and Development Plan each year.

Ensure that all managers recognise that they have responsibilities for promoting equal opportunities for their staff;

Designate a member of staff as having particular responsibilities for equality and diversity, reflected in his/her job objectives.

Require that member of staff to remind all staff twice a year of their opportunity for private discussion with their manager about any equality or diversity issues.

Recruitment and Selection

Invite job applications from all qualified and eligible individuals irrespective of race, age, gender, marital status, disability or sexual orientation.

In recruitment literature, refer to Commission's equal opportunities and work/lifefriendly policies.

Ensure that all posts are open to part-time working and/or job-sharing (unless there is a good reason why a post must be held by one full-time member of staff).

Advertise for lawyers and research assistants on the Commission's website, making application forms available on that website.

Advertise in the ethnic press as advised by the Ministry of Justice's Human Resources Directorate.

Review annually:

(a) the standard job description and person specification for the most frequently vacant posts (team managers, team lawyers and research assistants) so as not to discourage potential candidates with non-traditional work experience from applying if they might be suitable

(b) the criteria for selection, to ensure women and those from ethnic minorities are not discriminated against

Invite applicants to complete forms declaring their ethnicity and disability, for monitoring purposes.

Disabilities

With a view to encouraging the participation of those with disabilities, make reasonable adjustments to eliminate disadvantage in relation to appointments. Take measures to assist disabled staff to carry out the full range of duties and to eliminate any barriers that might prevent the performance of those duties. Invite applicants to identify in advance special arrangements they might need at interview, to ensure the necessary practical arrangements are made.

Use the two ticks scheme "Positive about Disabled People". This offers an equal opportunity to people with disabilities – whether registered or not.

Information, Training and Working Practices

Apply best equal opportunities practices in staff appraisal, development and promotion.

Ensure that new entrants and existing staff receive oral and/or written information about equal treatment, work/life-friendly policies established in the Ministry of Justice's "Finding a Balance" pack and about policy considerations.

Ensure that all staff receive diversity training and appraisal training as

appropriate. Also, when necessary, ensure that managers undergo interviewing training in respect of the selection of new staff.

Monitor numbers of applicants/appointments in different categories when the Law Commission runs recruitment campaigns.

Ensure reasonable provisions are made for staff with special religious needs.

Arrange internal meetings and events at a time convenient for those with responsibilities for caring for others.

GENERAL MATTERS

The Commission will:

Ensure that its management plan takes account of the Commission's equality and diversity undertakings.

Give information about equality and diversity policies to those tendering for contracts, if and when this arises for the Commission.

Ensure that physical facilities and catering for visitors to the Commission are suitable for them, wherever possible.

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