Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

Kirwans are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and valuing the diversity of both our staff and the communities we serve.

The policy is based on the legal requirements to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the anti-discrimination legislation protecting people from being discriminated against on the grounds of their:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

Kirwans wish to create and sustain an organisational culture which values people from all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to Kirwans work.

Kirwans are committed to promoting equality throughout the organisation and require all staff, and partners to participate fully in achieving our aims.

Kirwans will ensure appropriate training, guidance and advice are provided to meets these aims and commitment.

Policy

The policy provides a framework for monitoring performance and achieving best practice across the organisation in all business areas including employment, service provision and governance.

Kirwans will ensure equality and welcome diversity in all aspects of employment policy and practice including:

- Recruitment and selection.
- Training and development.
- Consultation and participation.
- Pay and benefits/pensions and benefits.
- Grievance and employee welfare.
- Appraisal and promotion.
- Membership of a recognised trade union.
- Non members of a trade union.

The Procedure

Our Commitments

Through effective governance and management we are committed to:

- Promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion amongst our clients, staff and partners and all those we work with.
- Challenging and eradicating discrimination wherever we encounter it on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Treating everyone with dignity and respect at all times.
- Providing responsive and accessible services that meet individual needs.
- Reviewing and auditing our equality, diversity and inclusion activities.
- Ensuring we keep our approach up to date with changes in society, legislation and regulation.
- We take seriously our legal duty to provide all our services and employment opportunities fairly and without discrimination, and we keep to all relevant codes of practice.

Meeting Our Commitments

Our Services - we meet these commitments by:

- Promoting an environment that provides all our clients a service a free of discrimination and prejudice.
- Removing any barriers that limit access to services and where possible tailor service delivery to meet individual needs.
- Providing accessible information and a variety of ways in which our client can have their say on all our services.
- Building on good practice.
- Our governing bodies and staff - we meet these commitments by working towards:

    - Being an inclusive employer.
    - Positively valuing the contribution of staff.
    - Challenging and eliminating all discrimination.
    - Developing and promoting recruitment policies and practices that give everyone equal access to employment opportunities.
    - Having in place a Workplace Harassment Policy which exercises a zero tolerance of bullying and harassment and ensuring that everyone knows about their rights of protection.
    - Making sure that all partners and staff know and understand the purpose of this policy.

- Any complaints of discrimination should be pursued through the firms Grievance Policy and Procedure which can be found above at 2.12.

Monitoring and Reviewing

It is the responsibility of all Partners and the Practice Management Department to ensure that our equality, diversity and inclusion aims are kept under review and are implemented throughout Kirwans.

The Kirwans' management team has a specific accountability for monitoring the implementation of this equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

The policy is reviewed every year, and earlier in the event of significant social, legal or regulatory changes.

Not adhering to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy may lead to disciplinary action and the possibility of dismissal.

Monitoring Diversity and Handling Sensitive Data

We collect and monitor equality and diversity information, such as data relating to protected characteristics to promote equal opportunity, prevent discrimination, and assess the fairness of our policies and practices. Any diversity data is handled in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025), and our data protection policy.

Lawful basis and safeguards: Where we process special category personal data or monitor equality outcomes, we identify an appropriate lawful basis and special category condition, apply data minimisation, and maintain appropriate safeguards.

Safeguarding and preventing harm: Where permitted by law, we may process personal data under recognised legitimate interests or statutory provisions, such as safeguarding vulnerable individuals or preventing and detecting unlawful acts, in a proportionate way that protects individuals' rights and dignity.

Fairness and automated tools: Where data analytics or automated tools are used in recruitment, performance, or service delivery, we take steps to identify and mitigate bias so outcomes remain fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory.

Access and complaints: Individuals may request access to their personal data, subject to proportionate search rules under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and may raise data protection or equality concerns through our established complaints and grievance processes.

Commitment

Kirwans are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures.

This applies to our professional dealings with clients, staff and partners, other solicitors, barristers, and third parties.

Meeting Clients Needs

General Statement

As a provider of publicly and privately funded legal services Kirwans will treat all clients equally and fairly and not unlawfully discriminate against them. Kirwans will also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equal opportunity in relation to access to the legal services that we provide, taking account of the diversity of the communities that we serve.

Identifying Clients Needs

Kirwans is committed to meeting the diverse needs of clients. We will take steps to identify the needs of clients in our community and develop policies and procedures setting out how we will meet clients' needs and for entering the services we provide are accessible to all. We will take account, in particular, the needs of clients with a disability and clients who are unable to communicate effectively in English. We will consider whether particular groups are predominant within our client base and devise appropriate policies to meet their needs: including men and women; carers; children; the elderly; members of religious groups; ethnic groups or nationalities; and lesbian, gay or transgender people.

We publish our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy also on our website to show our dedication to equality and diversity at all times for our clients. We also publish our annual diversity data on our website to show our approach to Equality and Diversity in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025), and our data protection policy.

Accessibility for the Disabled and Training

We endeavour to ensure that accessibility for disabled clients is covered at all times.

We consider disabled clients access when we have moved offices, renovated or opened a new office. All our offices have disabled access either via a ramp, lift or with no steps at all. All Reception desks are DDA complaint for clients in wheelchairs or with mobility impairments.

Our large signs outside our Prenton and Moreton offices assist the visual impaired to find us.

We also consider all disabilities when designing and updating our website and have the following in place to assist with accessibility –

- We use larger font size and colour which assists those with impaired vision.
- We also use alt tags where possible which assists those with impaired vision.
- Our action buttons are larger which again can assist those with impaired vision.
- We text colour - standard navy and white - which again is easier to read for those with impaired vision.
- We also have a mobile compatible website which ensure the site is user friendly on all devices.

Dealing with Third Parties

General Statement

Kirwans will not unlawfully discriminate in dealings with third parties. This applies to dealings with other legal service providers and general procurement.

Dealings with Barristers/Counsel/Other Experts

Kirwans will instruct barristers/counsel/other experts on the basis of their skill, experience and ability and not unlawfully discriminate, or encourage barristers' clerks/counsel/other experts to unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of their age;

gender; marital status; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation or on the grounds of disability.

Clients' requests for a named barrister/counsel/other expert should be complied with, subject to the firm's duty to discuss with the client the suitability of the barrister/counsel/other expert and to advise appropriately.

Working with Other Organisations

All those who act on Kirwans behalf will be informed of this equality, diversity and inclusion policy and will be expected to pay due regard to it when conducting business on Kirwans behalf. In all its dealings, including those with partners, any consortium members, suppliers, sub-contractors and recruitment agencies, Kirwans will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity.