

Diversity and Inclusion policy

Overview

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge aim to have the highest reputation for integrity, respect for the individual and to provide an organisation culture which attracts and retains a diverse range of clients and staff.

Policy statement

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge values the diversity of its staff and clients. We aim to make our services as accessible and responsive as possible to all existing and potential clients, and to provide a service to them which recognises and respects their differences. We recognise that our ability to meet their needs is improved by having a diverse workforce which generally reflects our client base. We also seek to provide the best opportunities to all of our employees based on their abilities and potential.

This policy covers all aspects of employment, including advertisements, recruitment, induction, pay, conditions of service, staff development, change management, promotions, grievance and disciplinary procedures, training and development and assessment. It applies also to relationships with suppliers and contractors, as well as to potential employees. It is non-contractual and seeks to set out the way in which we aim to manage diversity.

Whilst we fully accept all of our responsibilities under current legislation and Solicitors Code of Conduct (rule 6), we also aim to go beyond the strict confines of the law and provide equality of opportunity for all. We will continue to formulate and review policies to that end.

We aim to:

- recognise that everyone has a right to their distinctive and diverse identities
- have a workforce which generally reflects the clients we serve
- understand how diversity can improve our ability to deliver better services
- provide services which are responsive to our clients' needs
- provide all employees with the necessary training and development they need to contribute to our goals
- provide a supportive, open environment where all employees may use their talents fully, and where employees and clients are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, in an environment free from abuse, offensive behaviour, harassment, intimidation, bullying or prejudice, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin,

marital status, age, disability, religion or belief, impairment, responsibility for dependants, social background, appearance or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect a person's opportunities in life.

Furthermore, we recognise the benefits to them of helping our employees to balance the responsibilities of their work and private life.

Learning to work with peoples' differences, visible or not, enables us all to work together effectively and helps us to anticipate and meet the needs of all of our clients; recruit, retain and develop the best people; act responsibly in the communities of which we are a part; and also fulfil our legal obligations.

The policy in practice

The actions we will take to make this policy work include:

- providing training and communications to raise awareness and understanding of diversity and equal opportunities issues, to show their impact on the business and individuals
- through the above, ensuring that decisions on recruitment, access to training and promotion are made only on the basis of ability, expertise and experience
- regularly reviewing our employment policies to ensure that people are treated fairly, equitably and consistently with their skills and abilities
- developing patterns of work which are consistent with the need of all staff to maintain an appropriate work-life balance
- reviewing working arrangements to ensure that they do not restrict the opportunity for employment or career progression of members of disadvantaged groups
- monitoring the composition of our workforce to provide us with robust data to evaluate the effect of our policies
- routinely monitoring all actions under the grievance and disciplinary procedures by gender, race, disability and age

providing opportunity for employees who think they have been treated in a way contrary to this policy, to raise and resolve issues.

Equal opportunities

We seek to provide equality of opportunity for all applicants and employees via our recruitment, selection, development and promotion policies. In addition to this Diversity Policy, we also have a separate Equal Opportunities policy which aims to ensure everyone receives treatment that is fair and consistent.

Partners' and Directors' responsibility

The HR Director has overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this policy. As employers we are liable for the actions of our employees and therefore all of our Group Practice Heads and Support Directors are responsible for this policy's successful implementation within their own departments and should take steps to ensure staff working for them understand and follow this policy.

Employees' responsibility

This policy applies to all employees, who are required to understand and follow this policy, together with our associated policies on equal opportunities and harassment.

The working environment

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that our working environment does not prevent people from taking up positions with us for which they are suitably qualified. This may include physical adaptations or more flexible ways of working.

Employment policies

Our employment policies and procedures will be continually reviewed to ensure compliance with this policy, to reflect current best practice and to ensure no barriers are experienced by members of disadvantaged social groups in seeking employment with us, and working for us

Recruitment/work experience

We will provide full and fair consideration for all job applicants, based on ability, expertise and experience. All managers involved in recruitment will be trained appropriately.

We will review and develop our recruitment procedures to encourage applications from, and the employment of, people from a range of backgrounds reflecting our client base. Procedures for testing or assessment will be reviewed so as not to disadvantage any applicant.

We will ensure that the advertising of vacancies, both internally and externally, both in placement and content is compatible with the terms of this policy. The wording of any

advertisements will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that any inadvertent discrimination is avoided.

We aim to ensure that our recruitment practices are free from unlawful discriminatory criteria. Questions relating to applicants' race, ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or beliefs, gender, colour, sexuality, marital status, current or future family responsibilities will not form part of the selection process.

We will ensure that other opportunities such as work experience, where available, are open to people from a wide range of backgrounds and we will work to create good educational links in order to achieve this.

Induction training for all new recruits will be tailored to individual needs, but will in all cases include awareness of our diversity policy and how it applies to individuals.

We will then continue to take specific steps to raise awareness of diversity throughout the business, initially particularly targeting employees involved in recruitment and selection processes.

Publicity will be developed and disseminated in ways which bring diversity issues to the attention of all employees and people who have dealings with our business. A wide range of cultures will be displayed and celebrated in our publicity material.

Career development/training

We recognise that our ability to meet our clients' diverse needs is improved by having a diverse workforce which has the skills and understanding to achieve our service objectives. We will take all appropriate steps to ensure that all staff receive fair consideration of their training and development needs and promotion opportunities to enable them to develop their full potential within Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge.

Promotion will be based solely on merit without regard to sex, marital status, parental status, race, age, religion beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

Standard training modules, reference manuals and training manuals will be updated where necessary.

Retention, retraining and redeployment

Any employees whose circumstances change whilst employed by us will be given full support by the business to maintain or return to a job appropriate to their experience and abilities.

Flexible working

We will consider requests for flexible working under our policies in a way which fairly balances the needs of the individual and our business.

Involvement

We will take appropriate steps to encourage the participation of all employees to ensure that, wherever possible, our employment practices recognise and meet their needs and will involve our staff in determining what can be done to make sure they develop and use their abilities at work.

Harassment

Harassment includes behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing. We have a separate policy on dignity at work, harassment and bullying which makes it clear that such behaviour is totally unacceptable.

Client care

We undertake to listen to our clients and involve them in the development of services which recognise and value their diversity.

External agencies

In order to ensure that we follow best practice and keep ourselves up-to-date, we will liaise with external organisations and charities to help develop a policy of continuous improvement.

Positive action

Positive discrimination on grounds of age, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability is unlawful. It is, however, lawful to provide specific training or development opportunities aimed at under represented groups to enable them to compete equally for job opportunities with the remaining workforce and we will do these wherever we feel it may be necessary to promote our diversity policy.

Monitoring performance

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge will monitor its progress towards diversity by doing the following:

- monitoring of the ethnic, gender, age and disability profile of our employees to enable us to understand the composition of our workforce to identify any areas of inequality

- monitoring of applicants for jobs, training and development, grievances, disciplinary hearings, dismissals and other reason for leaving
- monitoring of employee opinions and comments through employee forums and feedback via the appraisal system.

Breach of this policy

Any employee who feels they have been treated in a way which is contrary to this policy should raise this either formally through the grievance procedure, or informally with a senior manager, or a member of HR.

Any breaches of this policy by employees will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.

Review and queries

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary. Any comments on its operation should be made to the HR Director.

Updated: July 2009