

## Code of Conduct rules on Equality and Diversity – is your chambers compliant?

Important revisions were made to the Code of Conduct on issues relating to equality and diversity. These came into force on 1 September 2012.

It is now the responsibility of *every* self-employed barrister, and not merely Heads of Chambers, to take reasonable steps to ensure that their chambers complies with these requirements. The steps which it is reasonable for a barrister to take will depend on all the circumstances, including the arrangements in their chambers for the management of chambers and the role which they play in those arrangements.

Since **1 September 2012** all Chambers have been required to

- have in force a written statement of policy on equality and diversity
- have in force a written plan implementing that policy
- have at least one Equality and Diversity Officer
- use fair and objective criteria in their recruitment and selection processes
- monitor by race, disability and gender the number and percentages of staff, barristers, pupils and assessed mini-pupils; applications for assessed mini-pupillage, pupillage, staff and membership of chambers and the allocation of unassigned work and take appropriate remedial action
- ensure that the affairs of chambers are conducted in a manner which is fair and equitable for all members of chambers and pupils, including in relation to the fair distribution of work
- have a written anti-harassment policy
- have a parental and adoption leave policy and, where rent is paid on a flat rate basis, must offer members taking a period of parental/adoption leave, a minimum of 6 months free of chambers' rent
- have in force a flexible working policy
- have in force a reasonable adjustments policy
- have a Diversity Data Officer, whose name and contact details are notified to the BSB and whose role is to collect, process and publish data relating to certain characteristics of all members of the workforce, including barristers, pupils, clerks and staff.

Since **1 January 2013** the members of chambers with lead responsibility for committees or panels responsible for the selection of members of chambers, pupils, clerks or assessed mini-pupils and at least one member of the selection panel, must have been trained in fair recruitment and selection processes (except in unforeseen and exceptional circumstances).

From **1 July 2014**, save in exceptional circumstances, every member of all such selection panels must be trained in fair recruitment and selection processes.

Further guidance on the new rules is available from the BSB.

There is also guidance on the collection and processing of diversity data, the role of the Diversity Data Officer and data protection issues.

The BSB has produced a webinar on the new rules which is accessible from the BSB's website. Watching the webinar attracts 1 CPD point.