



SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Our commitment

- 1.1. The Sussex Law Society (**'Society'**) is committed to promoting equal opportunities among its members and creating a professional culture in which diversity and inclusion is valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (**'EDI Policy'**) sets out the Society's commitment to protecting the character, status, rights and interests of its Members and the profession generally, promoting honourable practice among solicitors, supporting legal education, and doing such other things as are incidental or conducive to these objects through the active advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion across all Society activities.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies equally to all members of the Society, including Associate Members, Affiliate Members, Corporate Members and Honorary Members (collectively **'Members'**).
- 2.2. The Society expects all members to comply at all times. You are expected to read and familiarise yourself with this EDI Policy and ensure you act in accordance with it at all times.
- 2.3. Officers, the Committee and Sub-Committees will consider EDI impacts when exercising their powers and will promote fair, transparent and accountable processes.

3. Statement of Commitment



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- 3.1. The Society will foster a professional environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect and are able to participate fully in Society activities irrespective of protected or personal characteristics, background, or status within the profession, consistent with the Society's objects and the promotion of honourable practice.
- 3.2. The Society will seek to ensure that its meetings, events, services, communications and governance arrangements are accessible and inclusive, and that barriers to participation are identified and addressed where reasonably practicable.
- 3.3. The Society recognises the importance of members' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and is committed to supporting members in relation to significant life events and health-related matters, including but not limited to menopause, mental health and caring responsibilities, so that members are able to participate fully in Society activities where reasonably practicable.
- 3.4. The Society affirms that LGBTQIA+ members are valued and respected, and that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are integral aspects of diversity that the Society will actively support across all of its activities.
- 3.5. The EDI Policy is intended to enable members to understand this commitment as well as their individual role in enabling the Society to fulfil those commitments.

4. Governance and accountability

- 4.1. The Committee shall oversee the implementation of the EDI Policy, set priorities for its delivery, and monitor progress, including through the establishment of Sub-Committees or the allocation of designated roles as appropriate.
- 4.2. The Committee may appoint from time-to-time Sub-Committees from among the Members of the Society for any special purpose and may delegate to any such Sub-Committee such powers as the Committee may determine, to support effective oversight and delivery of the EDI Policy.



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- 4.3. For the purposes of oversight, the Committee shall approve an annual EDI implementation plan proposed by the EDI Committee, setting out objectives, indicative timelines, responsible leads, and shall review progress against that plan at regular intervals.
- 4.4. The Committee shall ensure that learning and actions arising from EDI monitoring inform the planning and conduct of the Society's meetings, events, communications and governance.

5. EDI Committee

- 5.1. The Society shall maintain an EDI Committee as a Sub-Committee of the Committee.
- 5.2. The EDI Committee shall support the Committee in implementing the EDI Policy, advising on priorities, proposing action plans, and monitoring progress against agreed objectives.
- 5.3. The EDI Committee shall report to the Committee at intervals to be determined by the Committee and shall operate within such powers and delegations as the Committee may determine from time to time.
- 5.4. The EDI Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that the EDI Policy is kept up to date and shall provide any assistance required to the Committee in connection with the EDI Policy and its implementation.
- 5.5. A representative of the EDI Committee shall attend Committee meetings when EDI reports are scheduled for consideration to present key findings, answer questions, and note actions, and shall ensure that follow-up actions are tracked to completion and reflected in subsequent reports.

6. Meetings, events and services



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- 6.1. The Society will plan and conduct Annual and Special General Meetings, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, and member events in ways that are fair and inclusive, including by providing timely notices and information, considering accessibility needs where reasonably practicable, and facilitating respectful participation by all attendees.
- 6.2. Event and meeting arrangements will reflect LGBTQIA+ inclusion, including by using inclusive language in publicity and materials, offering optional pronoun sharing, and ensuring facilities and hospitality are respectful of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions where reasonably practicable.

7. Education and professional development

- 7.1. In support of its object to promote legal education, the Society will seek to offer or support training, resources and events that develop members' awareness and competence in EDI and inclusive professional practice.
- 7.2. The Society will consider EDI Policy when partnering with other societies or organisations and when engaging sponsors, aiming to align with bodies that support the Society's objectives.
- 7.3. The Society will provide, or signpost to, information, resources and training to raise awareness and understanding of members' wellbeing, including menopause and mental health, with the aim of fostering inclusive participation and informed, respectful engagement in Society activities.
- 7.4. As part of its EDI training and resources, the Society will include content addressing LGBTQIA+ inclusion and respectful practice, including awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity considerations relevant to professional conduct and member engagement.

8. Diverse Representation and Leadership



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- 8.1. The Society will encourage diverse representation on the Committee, Sub-Committees and across Society activities, recognising the value of different backgrounds, cultures and perspectives and seeking to remove barriers to participation where reasonably practicable.
- 8.2. The Committee will promote leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups by integrating EDI considerations into appointments and delegations, and by using fair, transparent and accountable processes when exercising its powers.

9. EDI Policy Coverage

Equality, diversity and inclusion include, but is not limited to:

- 9.1. valuing and respecting differences in backgrounds, cultures, sexual orientation, gender identity and perspectives among members.
- 9.2. providing accessible facilities, materials and communications for those with disabilities.
- 9.3. ensuring that Society events and meetings are arranged to avoid barriers to participation.
- 9.4. encouraging diverse representation on Committees and in Society activities.
- 9.5. offering training and resources on EDI and inclusive professional practice.
- 9.6. recognising and supporting members who are experiencing life events and health-related matters, such as menopause and mental health challenges, including by identifying and addressing barriers to participation where reasonably practicable.

10. Discrimination

- 10.1. Members of the Society must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass others, including fellow members, staff and visitors. This applies to all Society activities,



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whether conducted within the Society's premises, outside, or during Society-related events, including social gatherings and meetings.

10.2. The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- (a) **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- (b) **Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others and is not justified.
- (c) **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- (d) **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so.
- (e) **Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

10.3. The Society maintains a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, victimisation or exclusion of LGBTQIA+ members. Any conduct - verbal, written, or behavioural - that demeans or marginalises individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is strictly prohibited and will be addressed promptly.



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11. Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

- 11.1. The Society will ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that its materials and communications are accessible, and that meetings and events are arranged to avoid barriers to participation.
- 11.2. Where reasonably practicable, the Society will provide options that support inclusion of LGBTQIA+ members in its communications and events, including the use of inclusive language.

12. Concerns and Issues

- 12.1. Concerns about conduct contrary to this EDI Policy in the context of Society activities should be raised to the Society's Operations Manager by email.
- 12.2. Members who observe or experience misconduct or unethical behaviour within the Society, including but not limited to harassment, bullying, discrimination, fraud, conflicts of interest, breaches of the Code of Conduct, safeguarding concerns, or misuse of Society resources, should report their concerns promptly.

13. Review of the EDI Policy

The EDI Policy will be reviewed periodically by the Committee and presented to the Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting if amendments are proposed to give effect to any changes.

14. Breaches of EDI Policy

- 14.1. Any breach of this EDI Policy may result in action being taken under the Society's Rules and Regulations, which may include investigation by the Committee or a



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designated Sub-Committee and, where appropriate, up to and including suspension or termination of membership.

- 14.2. The EDI Committee shall ensure that all reported or suspected breaches are considered fairly, promptly and confidentially, and that all parties are informed of the process.
- 14.3. Persons reporting breaches or participating in investigations shall not be subjected to retaliation or victimisation.
- 14.4. The following are non-exhaustive examples of conduct that breach this policy
 - (a) Making derogatory or offensive remarks relating to a protected characteristic.
 - (b) Excluding a member from Society activities due to their background, disability or personal status.
 - (c) Failing to provide reasonable adjustments for a disabled member.
 - (d) Retaliating against a person for raising an EDI concern.
 - (e) Applying a Society rule or practice which disadvantages members of a particular group without objective justification.



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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version History

Version	Date	Comments & Author	Approver
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