

Richmond Legal Advice Service

Equal opportunities policy

Statement of intent

Richmond Legal Advice Service (RLAS) declares its intention not to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, age, political or religious belief or lack of it or trade union activity.

Richmond Legal Advice Service declares that it will take positive steps, in line with financial and person resources, to promote equality in the following areas of:

- the running of RLAS;
- the use its volunteers in the provision of advice and assistance;
- the provision of advice and assistance by its volunteers to clients;

Implementation and review of equal opportunities policy

To ensure that this equal opportunities policy is implemented RLAS will undertake the following steps:

- monitor and review the implementation of this policy;
- require that all volunteers who are to provide advice and assistance are qualified lawyers (or if not fully qualified, provide advice and assistance only under the supervision of a qualified lawyer);
- require the trustees of RLAS to support this policy and to communicate it to volunteers;
- require volunteers to accept and comply with this policy and the statement of intent;
- require volunteers and/or trustees who are involved in the recruitment of new volunteers to understand the policy and the relevant legal requirements that arise; and
- take appropriate action where any volunteer fails to follow the policy and/or the statement of intent.

Provision of services to clients and the equal opportunities policy

RLAS will make this policy known to clients by including reference to the policy in the information leaflet provided to all clients, and by including the policy on the RLAS web site. A copy of the policy will be available at advice sessions.

If a client is unable to read or understand the content of this policy, then a RLAS volunteer will read it and explain it to the client.

The information leaflet will mention that RLAS has a complaints procedure. A copy of the complaints service is available at each advice session held by RLAS and on the RLAS web site.

A volunteer shall inform a trustee of RLAS (or another trustee if appropriate) of any breach of the policy by a client. It will be the responsibility of the trustees to make a decision on whether there should be a withdrawal of service provided by RLAS to that client. The client involved will be informed of the reason for the withdrawal and their right to make a complaint under the complaints policy.

To publicise and ensure the widest possible take up of the service provided by RLAS, in line with the goal of, and the resources available to, RLAS, RLAS will

- publicise its services to relevant charities, voluntary groups, local and central government organisations, primarily via e-mail and the RLAS web site, and the provision of leaflets;
- carry out surveys of its clients at regular intervals, analyse the results and take any appropriate action where possible;
- monitor the take up of service on a regular basis;
- record statistical information concerning clients (including, subject to a client providing consent, details of gender, age, ethnic origin, postcode, and type of enquiry);
- maintain a directory of organisations and lawyers which can be provide further or more detailed advice and assistance to clients (this list will be also available on the RLAS web site).

Recruitment and selection procedure of volunteers

RLAS will recruit volunteers in accordance with this policy. The recruitment procedure will be reviewed by the trustees of RLAS to ensure it is effective and updated.

Potential volunteers will be given a copy of this policy with the volunteer application form. During RLAS consideration of a potential volunteer's application to become a volunteer, there will be a question as whether the potential volunteer understands this policy and the statement of intent. Volunteers will be expected to agree to, and be bound by, this policy and the statement of intent.

RLAS will publicise that it seeks volunteers by notifying applicable organisations which work to promote the volunteering of qualified lawyers, as well as local voluntary organisations, charities and other places such as libraries.

Management of RLAS (through its trustees) is open to all volunteers in accordance with the constitution of RLAS. Volunteers who become trustees will also in addition agree to, and be bound by, this policy and the statement of intent.

Monitoring and reviewing the equal opportunities policy

The policy identifies who is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the policy in particular areas. Where not stated, it is the responsibility of the trustees of RLAS. The policy and its implementation will be monitored and reviewed annually by the trustees of RLAS. Where necessary the trustees or one or more of its number and/or one or more volunteers will deal with any issues which might arise.