

Diversity & Inclusion Policy



Document control

Current version:	2.0
Document title:	Diversity & Inclusion Policy
Date of publication:	15 February 2015
Document owner:	HR Services Manager
Document approver:	Head of HR
Last review:	28 August 2026
Review schedule:	Annual

Document version control

Version/status	Release description	Date of issue
1.7	Reviewed and new format	17/08/2020
1.8	Reviewed and updated	05/08/2021
	Reviewed	31/07/2022
1.9	Reviewed and updated	03/08/2023
	Reviewed	06/08/2024
	Reviewed	05/09/2025
2.0	Reviewed and updated	28/08/2026

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1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Weightmans is fully committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and unfair treatment and values the different perspectives that a diverse workforce brings to the organisation. Our aim is for our firm to be truly representative of all sections of society and our clients, and for everyone to feel respected and able to give their best.
- 1.2 Weightmans does not discriminate because of sex, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, and sexual orientation. These are known as the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, which applies to England, Scotland and Wales. Weightmans does not discriminate also on the basis of other factors beyond anti-discrimination legislation (for example, socio-economic background, qualification route, etc.) and we endeavour to build a culture that values meritocracy, openness, fairness and transparency.
- 1.3 In addition, Weightmans opposes and avoids all forms of unlawful discrimination including; pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, selection for employment, promotion, training or other development opportunities.
- 1.4 Everyone at Weightmans is responsible for the promotion and advancement of this policy. Behaviours, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the organisation's disciplinary policy.
- 1.5 The policy is applicable to all employees, Partners, secondees, agency staff, clients, the communities we work with, suppliers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. The policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with customers and clients. Decisions relating to customers and communities will be based on business-related criteria only and any irrelevant information will not form part of the process.
- 1.6 Progress relating to the policy will be recorded annually and a report will be presented to the Board.
- 1.7 There will also be a review of progress in relation to the diversity targets and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Roadmap.
- 1.8 This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the policy review process.

2 Business case

- 2.1 Weightmans' aim is to be an employer and service provider of choice, characterised by recruitment and retention of highly talented people who are committed to the success of the firm and quality service to their clients. To achieve this, we recognise that we need to engage everyone in the firm. Promoting and supporting diversity and inclusion is a fundamental aspect of our policy, and will enable us to attract and retain the best people. Inclusion enables our people to feel valued and supported, bring-their whole selves to work, and perform at their best.
- 2.2 The firm's core values which underpin this aim are:
 - Teamwork and respect
 - Integrity
 - Collaboration and Innovation
- 2.3 The benefits of being a diverse and inclusive employer are;

- Reputation as a brand for clients
- Talent attraction, retention and progression
- Operational effectiveness
- Return on investment
- Risk reduction and management
- Organisational growth
- Business opportunity

3 Principles

- 3.1 We will work towards best practice rather than just statutory compliance. Our aim is for the principles set out in this policy to become the lifeblood of the firm.
- 3.2 Equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion will be progressively integrated throughout our people management practices and procedures.

4 Diversity and Inclusion in Practice

- 4.1 This policy has been developed with regard to statutory framework, and best practice. Information and guidance will be sought regularly from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Law Society of England and Wales, The Law Society of Scotland, the Ministry of Justice and other relevant organisations for best practice developments. Weightmans is member and signatory of Stonewall UK, The Black Solicitors Network, Business in the Community's Race at Work Charter, Business Disability Forum, The Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Charter, The Mindful Business Charter and Social Mobility Index, among others. Weightmans will use these networks and charters to support all our Diversity and Inclusion Strands in order to embed best practice throughout the business.
- 4.2 Our recruitment and selection processes are designed to ensure that all candidates are assessed objectively against standard, job-specific criteria to ensure a clear and transparent selection process has been followed. The process is managed by people trained in equal opportunities and diversity best practice. Everyone involved in recruitment activity adheres to this policy and receives appropriate training and guidance in fair and objective selection methods. Our policy statement is issued to recruitment agencies who supply permanent, contract and temporary staff.
- 4.3 Opportunities for training, development and career progression are open to everyone. Everybody in the firm has access to a comprehensive programme of training, including core and additional learning, job-related courses and other professional development. The firm also supports further education, and opportunities for formal qualification are open to all on the application of objective measurable criteria. All training and development needs are identified on the basis of individual skills requirements and business needs.
- 4.4 The firm supports flexible working, and operates a flexible working policy, which enables everyone at Weightmans to apply for flexible working practices. The HR team are fully trained in the implementation of this policy and provide guidance and training to managers as appropriate.
- 4.5 Performance is managed based on objective and measurable criteria, related directly to the success of the firm. Measures to support and tackle underperformance focus on these criteria. Team Managers are trained in the use of constructive feedback and performance management techniques.

- 4.6 The reward policy and practices ensure that the firm's reward package is benchmarked externally and that internal comparisons are fair by a process of annual audit.
- 4.7 Our people are supported in bringing claims of bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination. All claims are treated sensitively and confidentially by HR and others in the firm who are trained in dealing with such matters. Cases are resolved as quickly as possible. Where acts of harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination are found to have taken place, they will be subject to disciplinary proceedings. Please refer to our 'Dignity at Work' policy for further information.
- 4.8 All employees and Partners are expected to understand that they, as well as Weightmans, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination in the course of their employment, against colleagues, clients, suppliers and the public.
- 4.9 Furthermore, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
- 4.10 At Weightmans, we nurture a positive working environment which is supported through people management policies and practices and respectful and inclusive working relationships.
- 4.11 When considering any alterations to any of the firm's premises, HR, alongside the Health & Safety Manager, will consider how to improve access for disabled clients, visitors and employees, where reasonably practicable.
- 4.12 If any of our people, including employees and partners, has or acquires a disability, wherever possible reasonable adjustments will be put in place to support their needs, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.13 All of our people are required to adhere to this policy and principles in all aspects of their working life, including service to clients, and relationships with clients, suppliers and others outside the firm.

5 Responsibilities

- 5.1 Weightmans has a responsibility to all people in the firm to ensure that they are treated fairly and not discriminated against on grounds of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.
- 5.2 The firm will lead by example and ensure that it provides a positive working environment for all.
- 5.3 Team Managers will communicate with their teams the requirements of this policy. They will create positive working relationships and a culture of teamwork and respect within their teams. They will ensure that all members of their teams act professionally and appropriately.
- 5.4 Everyone in the firm has an individual responsibility to ensure that they adhere to the policy and the spirit of equality, diversity and inclusion. Individual employees and partners are encouraged to come forward and raise, in confidence, any concerns they have about behaviours or practices they have witnessed or experienced which are contrary to this policy.
- 5.5 The HR team will maintain this and associated policies, monitor the implementation and impact and perform regular reviews. The team will communicate the policies and provide training. They will keep up to date with the statutory framework and best practice developments.

- 5.6 The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager will work closely with HR and the Strand Leads, and will oversee the day-to-day delivery of strategic priorities aligned to this policy and the firm's objectives.
- 5.7 The Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss updates from each Strand and review progress against this policy and the firm's DE&I Roadmap.

6 Communication and Awareness

- 6.1 This policy is published on the Intranet and is accessible to all of our people. In addition, the policy is available externally on our website to clients, suppliers, job seekers and other interested parties.
- 6.2 At induction, new joiners across roles receive training on the firm's commitment to equal opportunities, diversity, equity and inclusion, and their rights and responsibilities. Similarly, newly promoted partners and managers are trained in their changing roles and responsibilities.
- 6.3 Diversity awareness training will be incorporated into the annual training calendar. Team Managers will be trained in people management practices such as inclusive recruitment, flexible working, absence leave, reasonable adjustments, psychological safety, and so on.
- 6.4 DE&I items will feature regularly in our weekly newsletter and other internal comms. Such items may include thought leadership pieces, blogs, podcasts, awareness raising initiatives, information on international days and other diversity campaigns, and events such as webinars, panel discussions and firm-wide events with internal and external guest speakers.
- 6.5 Individuals who are in breach of this or associated policies and working practices will receive appropriate awareness training and guidance, in addition to any disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed.

7 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 Information on the diversity of our Board and our firm is updated and published on our website annually. This is to comply with regulatory requirements and to ensure transparency with the way we set our diversity targets, monitor progress and benchmark in our sector.
- 7.2 At recruitment stage, applicants and successful candidates are asked to complete a voluntary diversity questionnaire. This is treated confidentially and used solely for monitoring. This information is regularly reviewed to ensure that diverse candidates are attracted to Weightmans. Appropriate action is considered to tackle under-representation and support our DE&I Roadmap and diversity targets.
- 7.3 The firm treats personal data collected for reviewing equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection in accordance with the Data Protection Privacy Policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the firm's HR Privacy Policy.
- 7.4 Feedback on equality, diversity and inclusion is gathered through the biannual staff engagement survey and ongoing engagement with the Strand Leads and others. This enables us to assess the effectiveness of our policies and procedures and address gaps where needed. Staff forums such as networks and peer support groups are established across locations, providing a further opportunity for collecting feedback.
- 7.5 Cases of bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination are reviewed in terms of number and nature to assess implications and determine whether practice-wide actions need to be taken.
- 7.6 This policy and associated people management policies are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain relevant, appropriate and effective.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.