

# WHITESTONE CHAMBERS

*Barristers*

Whitestone  
Chambers

1 Middle Temple

London

EC4Y 9AA

## WORKING CONDITIONS POLICY

*(JUNE 2026)*

## 1. **Equality Statement.**

Chambers and members of chambers, in relation to their professional practice and the administration of chambers, do not discriminate unlawfully against, victimise or harass any other person on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, disability, age, religion or belief or pregnancy and maternity, and the affairs of chambers are conducted in a manner which is fair and equitable for all barristers and pupils.

## 2. **Scope of Policy.**

Whitestone Chambers Working Conditions policy incorporates policies on Harassment, Reasonable Adjustments, Parental and Adoption Leave, and (Appendices 1- 3).

## 3. **Implementation and Monitoring.**

Whitestone Chambers Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer is Miss Mina Heung. Chambers has a written plan for the implementation of its equality policy.

In addition, chambers regularly surveys, monitors and reviews information about diversity within chambers. Chambers' Diversity Data Officer is Miss Mina Heung.

## 4. **Recruitment and Selection.**

Whitestone Chambers does not discriminate unlawfully on grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, or age, in accordance with our Equality Policy Statement. We will also make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates, and if you believe that a reasonable adjustment should be made, you are encouraged to communicate this to the Head of Chambers or to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Subject to the need for any reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates, fair and objective selection criteria are applied in all applications for mini-pupillage, internship, pupillage or tenancy.

Readers are also referred to the Whitestone Pupillage Policy for further information.

## 5. **Fair Access to Work and the Allocation of Unassigned Work.**

The affairs of chambers are conducted in a manner which is fair and equitable to all members of chambers and pupils, including – but not limited to – the fair distribution of work amongst pupils and members of chambers.

## 6. **Harassment.**

Chambers is committed to providing work environment in which everyone is treated equally and with respect. We take very seriously, and do not tolerate, any form of unwanted conduct relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation which has the aim or effect of violating a person's dignity, or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Any person experiencing or witnessing such behaviour has a right to complain and should refer to the Whitestone Harassment Policy, at Appendix One.

## **7. Complaints and Grievances.**

Complaints of harassment may be raised informally with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer Miss Mina Heung or the Complaints and Grievance Officer Mr Peter Causton, with the Head of Chambers, or with any other senior member of chambers. Other informal complaints may be made to the Head of Chambers or to the Head of Legal Operations. Formal complaints under this policy should be made under the Whitestone Grievance Procedure/Policy.

### **Appendix One: Whitestone Chamber's Harassment Policy.**

1. The following are examples of types of behaviour which may amount to harassment:
  - Physical or sexual assault;
  - Requests for sexual favours in return for career advancement;
  - Unnecessary physical contact;
  - Exclusion from social networks and activities or other forms of isolation;
  - Bullying;
  - Compromising suggestions or invitations;
  - Suggestive remarks or looks;
  - Display of offensive materials, including on a computer screen;
  - Tasteless jokes or verbal abuse, including any sent by email;
  - Offensive remarks or ridicule;
  - Dealing inappropriately or inadequately with complaints of harassment.
2. Harassment is unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010. In addition to the above unwanted conduct, it can arise where a person engages in any kind of unwanted sexual behaviour (or gender re-assignment or sex related behaviour).
3. Complaints of harassment may be raised informally in the first instance with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer Miss Mina Heung, The Complaints and Grievance Officer Mr Peter Causton, with the Head of Chambers or another senior member of chambers, who will agree an appropriate response. Formal complaints should be made under the Whitestone Grievance Policy & Procedures.
4. Individuals may also make to make a confidential report through the Bar Council's secure online platform, Talk to Spot. If the individual so chooses, the record will be submitted to the Bar Council's Equality and Diversity team, who will provide support and guidance for next steps.
5. Harassment is misconduct for employees or a breach of the Bar Code of Conduct for barristers. Allegations of harassment will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
6. Chambers are committed to ensuring that no-one who makes an allegation of harassment in good faith should be subjected to any detriment as a result. Any victimisation of a complainant, witness or anyone else involved in the investigation of a complaint will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.
7. A copy of this policy is provided to all those for whom chambers constitutes a working environment, including members of chambers, pupils, squatters, clerks or other

employees, temporary workers, those who provide services to chambers such as contract cleaners, accountants and IT consultants, and mini-pupils and work experience students.

8. Apart from the chambers' informal and formal complaints procedure, chambers also encourages its members to make use of 'Talk to Spot', an artificial intelligence tool provided by the Bar Council. 'Talk to Spot' is available to anyone working in and around the Bar to report inappropriate or abusive behaviour, including:
  - Sexual harassment and serious abuse
  - Patronising, belittling, overbearing and demeaning behaviour, including by judges.
  - Sexist, racist and ableist behaviours
  - Online abuse
  - Failure to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled barristers and difficulties faced by those with caring responsibilities.
  
9. Talk to Spot enables individuals to create a date-stamped record of the incident, which can be kept private or, if the individual chooses, submitted (anonymously or with their name) to the Bar Council's Equality and Diversity team. This allows the Bar Council to provide signposting and offer support where necessary. Further details, including how to access the platform are available on the Bar Council website (<https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/support-for-barristers/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/talk-to-spot.html> )

## **Appendix Two: Whitestone Chamber's Reasonable Adjustments Policy.**

Chambers are committed to making reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce substantial disadvantage for disabled people working within chambers or receiving legal services within chambers, and this policy is implemented to achieve that aim. This policy covers all employees of chambers, barristers, clerks, pupils, mini-pupils, interns and visitors to chambers.

This policy is circulated to all members, staff, pupils and those who are required to read and understand it.

- For the purposes of this policy the definition of disability follows that set out in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010. A person is therefore disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. "Substantial" means more than minor or trivial and "long-term" means likely to last 12 months or more.
- This policy does not provide an exhaustive list of the reasonable adjustments that chambers will make for staff, barristers, pupils or visitors, however examples of the types of adjustment may be made, where reasonable, are:
  - The provision of information in alternative formats (e.g. large print);
  - Paid leave for disabled employees of chambers;
  - The provision of auxiliary aids;
  - The provision of accessible conference room facilities in the local area. Chambers is limited by being on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of a listed building but Ground Floor facilities can be made available through Middle Temple for all members or guests of Chambers.
  - The provision of a reader or interpreter.
- Staff or barristers with specific requirement should make requests to the Head of Chambers, for reasonable adjustment decisions. All requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis with the advice and assistance of chambers' Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer and where it is not possible to make the adjustment requested the Head of Chambers, the Head of Legal Operations or the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer will discuss alternatives with the applicant.
- Head of Chambers is responsible for considering whether or not disabled staff, barristers or pupils requires assistance during an emergency evacuation and if so whether or not a personal emergency evacuation plan is required for the individual/s concerned. If so, the plan will be developed in partnership with the individual concerned in order to ensure that adjustments to the emergency evacuation procedure may be made.
- Barristers are responsible for considering reasonable adjustment requests for their visitors. They are also responsible for anticipating any likely reasonable adjustments that will need to be made for visitors whom they know to be disabled and are likely to require assistance. Visitor requests for specific reasonable adjustments are made by contacting the Head of Legal Operations - Robert Pidgeon.

- In no circumstances will Chambers pass on the cost of a reasonable adjustment to a disabled person.
- This policy is reviewed every two years. This policy will be reviewed in June 2028.

### **Appendix Three: Whitestone Chamber's Maternity & Parental Leave Policy.**

#### INTRODUCTION.

1. This policy applies equally to members of Chambers who are parents or carers of children and other dependents.
2. Chambers will ensure that its staff are familiar with this policy through appropriate training.
3. **“Parental Leave”** refers to leave taken from practice by a carer of a child following birth or adoption. This could be the mother, father or adoptive parent of either sex, and includes the married, civil or de-facto partner of a biological or adoptive parent.
4. The term “parent” will be used in this policy to cover those who are applying for leave because they are about to become a parent through pregnancy, adoption or surrogacy.
5. The term “carer” will be used to describe an individual, whether male or female who applies under this policy for time to care for a dependent.
6. A “dependent” for the purposes of this policy will include an infant, child, young person or an adult with a disability.
7. “Shared Parental Leave” simply refers to a situation in which more than one parent are carers for the same dependent during the same period of time or during consecutive periods of time.
8. Any barrister member is entitled to up to twelve months leave of absence from Chambers for the purposes of Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave to care for their dependent. They must be the primary carer of the dependent other than in comparison to the other parent during the period of Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave. The period of Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave may be extended on application.
9. Such leave is to be commenced within twelve months of birth of the child or the child entering a family (either as a result of, or with a view to the adoption of, that child).
10. During the period of any Maternity and Parental Leave, a barrister member shall be entitled to a period of up to twelve months of rent payments waiver. Chambers will continue to take 23% plus VAT of any payments received in this period.

## PRE-LEAVE

11. Any barrister member of Chambers intending to take time off from Chambers for the purpose of Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave must give written notice to the Head of Chambers. Such notice shall be given at least one month prior to the expected date of birth or adoption of a child (or of a child joining the family with a view to adoption) although Chambers may exceptionally agree to a shorter period of notice. Chambers recognises that there will be circumstances in which it will not be possible to give any notice (for example, a premature birth).
12. Chambers (and in particular Chambers' clerks) will accommodate time-off for fertility treatment, antenatal care and related medical and other appointments.
13. Prior to the commencement of leave, the barrister should meet with the Head of Legal Operations to discuss and where appropriate agree:
  - a) The level and type of contact s/he would like to have during Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave;
  - b) Any outstanding cases and appropriate cover;
  - c) Any outstanding billing;
  - d) A proposed return date;
  - e) How, when and by whom solicitors will be informed of the start and end date of Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave;
  - f) Arrangements for the forwarding of post and paying in of cheques;
  - g) Whether s/he should suspend her/his practising certificate. It should be borne in mind that while suspension means that the barrister member will be free from CPD obligations for the period of suspension, it also means that s/he will not be able to take on any work during the period of leave; and
  - h) Whether s/he will be undertaking work during Maternity and Parental Leave or Shared Parental Leave.

## DURING LEAVE

### **Contact with Chambers.**

14. Chambers through the Head of Legal Operations (or other appropriate person) will ensure that the barrister member is kept informed of chambers meetings, important chambers decisions, seminars or conferences to be held by chambers relevant to the barrister's practice and, where possible seminars held by outside organisations.
15. Where possible and with the agreement of the barrister member concerned, seminar materials can be sent to the barrister.
16. Unless otherwise informed by the barrister member, it should be assumed that s/he cannot attend chambers and team meetings and apologies for absence should be reflected in the minutes of those meetings. Minutes should be e-mailed to the barrister member where appropriate.

### **Management of Pigeon-Hole.**

17. The barrister Member's pigeon-hole should be monitored by the clerks on a regular basis. Where necessary the contents should be posted to the barrister at least monthly at no cost extra cost to the barrister.
18. Any cheques received during maternity and parental leave should be dealt with in accordance with the arrangement reached under paragraph 13.f above.

### **Preparation for Return to Practice.**

19. The below measures are aimed at ensuring the member's return to Chambers after leave of absence is properly managed and planned and that steps are taken to ensure work is available for the member upon their return and to assist in every way practical in rebuilding the member's practice. This is the responsibility of both the barrister member and Chambers through the Head of Legal Operations.

### **Keeping in Touch (KIT) days.**

20. KIT days can be used for any work-related activity e.g., training or team events. The content, frequency and number of KIT days should be designed to make the return to work following leave easier for the barrister member. They are taken during leave.
21. Prior to the commencement of leave, the barrister member in consultation with the Head of Legal Operations should agree the number of KIT days to be used subject to a maximum of 10 days. Agreement should also be reached as to the dates of the KIT days, although this should remain flexible.
22. During the period of leave, the barrister member should be reminded by the Head of Legal Operations by e-mail of the dates of KIT days. These days should not affect the calculation of chambers parental leave benefit.
23. Where possible the agenda for the KIT days should be planned in advance. There should be at least one meeting with the Head of Legal Operations which would be similar in content to a practice review. Consideration should be given to arranging a meeting with one or more barrister members of the relevant practice team.

### **Pre-return to Practice Meeting.**

24. At least three months prior to the barrister member's return to practice consideration must be given to the following:
  - a. Identification and appointment of a mentor who will assist the barrister member in settling back into practice and generally;
  - b. The likely working hours, the type, duration and location of any hearings that the barrister member may undertake. This should include any request for flexible or part-time working;
  - c. Any need for the barrister member to attend a "refresher" course in their relevant practice area;
  - d. Review the barrister member's website profile in conjunction with the Head of Chambers and Chambers and where necessary update the profile;
  - e. Announce the barrister member's return to practice on chambers' website; and
  - f. Identify a list of solicitors and write to each of them announcing the barrister member's return to practice.

## RETURN FROM LEAVE

25. On return to work each barrister member may work part-time or flexible hours or have restrictions on travel to enable them to manage their family responsibilities. Chambers recognises that some members may have a greater need for flexible working than others – for example, where a child has a disability or a medical condition.
26. Charging Structure, upon returning to work, the waiver from paying rent will be extended for the first three months. For 12 months after returning to work, members will pay a reduced rate of 15% plus VAT on receipts for months 4-12, members will return to paying a standard monthly rent of £1200 plus VAT but in top up payments due will be based on 15% plus VAT instead of 23% plus VAT.
27. Barrister members are responsible for ensuring their practising certificates and insurance are current upon return.
30. Positive action measures to support returners will be considered by Chambers.

## PUPILS

### **Prospective Pupils.**

31. Upon application, Chambers may defer the commencement of pupillage of prospective pupils who become pregnant prior to the commencement of pupillage for a period of up to 12 months.
32. Prospective pupils with existing childcare commitments may discuss with the Pupillage Committee how their working hours during pupillage can accommodate such commitments and should be advised of their entitlement to flexible working hours in accordance with this policy.

### **Current Pupils.**

33. This part of the policy applies to all first and second six pupils who are parents or guardians or carers of dependents. Flexible working hours also applies to third six pupils.
34. Pupils who become pregnant during pupillage may defer completion of the remainder of pupillage, subject to the requirements of Part V of the Bar Training Regulations.
35. In the event that an exemption from the Bar Training Regulations is required, the pupil's supervisor shall be responsible for obtaining written permission from the Bar Standards Board.
36. Such a deferral shall not affect the overall pupillage award which shall be paid monthly during the period in which the pupil is undertaking pupillage. In the event of a rise in the pupillage award following deferral and prior to commencement of the deferred period the pupil shall be paid at the increased rate during the deferred period.
37. In the event of deferral and during the pupil's 'break' period, the pupil's supervisor shall be their point of contact with Chambers.
38. Chambers shall accommodate pupils' requests for flexible working hours in order to allow for childcare commitments. Such working hours should be discussed with the pupil's supervisor in order to ensure that the pupil is able to complete the work that is required of him or her.

39. The need to work flexible hours for this reason should not, as far as possible, affect the allocation of court work during the practising period of pupillage. Pupils should, however, be aware of the demands of the court schedule and the necessity for evening and last-minute briefs and should arrange childcare with this in mind wherever possible.
40. Pupils should be assured that any need to work flexible hours for reasons of childcare will not in any way affect their prospects of being recruited as a tenant pursuant to the Chambers' policy on recruitment of tenants from pupils.

#### MISUSE OF THIS POLICY.

41. It will be a disciplinary offence under to abuse this policy. Any individual found to have misused this policy will be referred to the Bar Standards Board on the basis that Core Duty 3 will have been breached.

#### REVIEW OF THIS POLICY.

42. The Chambers' Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer will review annually the effectiveness of this policy, and where appropriate will make proposals for change to Chambers Policy Officer Mr William Rees Mogg.

#### **Helpful Information.**

- Barristers should be made aware of Practising Certificate discounts for those on
- Maternity and Parental Leave
- Bar Council Checklists and other links
- Information about 'keeping in touch days' can be accessed via the Direct.gov website
- Information regarding maternity allowance can be found at the Direct.gov website

**This policy will be reviewed in June 2028.**

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