

Organisations of between 51 and 250 Staff 2014 Winners ~ Muckle LLP

Muckle LLP is a leading commercial law firm providing specialist legal services to small to medium sized businesses, large corporates, as well as public sector and third sector bodies. They have developed a specialist practice that provides business people with first-class expert advice. Their clients are largely based in the North East but also span the UK.

Muckle LLP focuses on the individual needs and characteristics of employees, clients and the local community. Innovative policies, coaching and mentoring programmes help team members balance work responsibilities with home-life and personal circumstances. They treat all employees equally and create a working environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of their team.

They have also introduced maternity and work-life balance coaches in anticipation of the changes to flexible working legislation and shared parental leave. This initiative

allows them to anticipate employees' needs in terms of support and guidance. It is a common issue for people to feel disconnected from their workplace if they choose to work flexibly and are not always based in the office. This initiative gives these employees the support and guidance they need during any transition and re-integration process.



Claire Atkins, Muckle LLP, Winner of Organisations of between 51 and 250 Staff with Liz Reay, former CEO of ENE



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NORTH EAST EQUALITY



Furthermore, their new support network of coaches demonstrates the importance they place on employee engagement and helping with managing work-life balance.

Following feedback from employees (Generation X, Baby Boomers and Generation Y) they recognise that flexible innovative working practices and coaching programmes will help retain high performing employees. This ensures they remain productive and valued during times of significant change in their personal lives.

Access to justice is a significant problem for claimants at the moment, given the introduction of administrative fees in the tribunal system which means that a claimant seeking to have a discrimination case heard by a tribunal panel would have to pay £1,200 in administrative fees in addition to their legal advice costs. They have adopted this approach to enable employees to have the opportunity to redress any unlawful and discriminatory treatment by employers irrespective of financing issues.

Their inclusive and flexible approach to working with clients has enabled them to work on more complex discrimination cases. These clients require more guidance and support and more flexibility by Muckle when accepting instructions.

Furthermore, they also make adjustments to charging rates thereby increasing

inclusivity. With this in mind they also dedicate a significant amount of time to pro bono initiatives to help address access to justice issues for those who are unable to afford legal advice.

Muckle promote a culture of open communication, encouragement and support. They achieved an 87% response rate to the Law Society diversity and inclusion questionnaire (compared to the average response rate of 42%). This demonstrates a very high level of engagement within their team.

Muckle also work in partnership with Momentum UK to provide work placements and permanent employment opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently and to gain access to employment. These people are often excluded from the workplace.

For more information about the North East Equality Awards, please visit our website, www.equality-ne.co.uk/awards or contact Equality North East on 0191 426 4399 or email info@equality-ne.co.uk.

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