

## Coming soon, the new 'Equality Challenge': are you ready?

Elaine Codona, Director of Global People Solutions, is working on a joint initiative with Katherine Sheerin and the employment law team at Cains to raise awareness with Isle of Man businesses, and particularly employers, on the practical application of the proposed new equality legislation.

Right: Elaine Codona.  
Far right: Katherine Sheerin



**A**nounced by Allan Bell, Chief Minister, as being “one of the most important pieces of social legislation progressed in the Isle of Man in recent times”, consultation took place on the introduction of the Equality Bill between August and November 2014.

The Equality Bill would make it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity, building on the much more limited protection from discrimination under the existing law and introducing some new “protected characteristics”. The Equality Bill would cover the provision of goods and services in a wider sense as well as equality of opportunity in the

employment context. The Bill is largely based on the UK's Equality Act 2010, but with some adaptations specific to the Isle of Man, mainly in relation to the enforcement structure, and it provides that direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to any of the protected characteristics would be discriminatory.

There can be no doubt that the Equality Bill heralds significant changes to the current legislative landscape of Manx employment law. The potential scope of the Bill is very wide and will affect all businesses in every sector, whether large or small.

Elaine and Katherine are at the forefront of tackling the important issues of diversity and equality in the workplace. They will be hosting a series of awareness sessions in the

New Year, where they will give an overview of the proposed new equality legislation and examine what it may mean for employers; what they need to be aware of; and the extent of their obligations and the possible challenges.

The main focus of the workshops is to alert employers to the likely changes which will be required to ensure that their organisation's policies, processes, and practices are up to date and meet the requirements of the proposed legislation. Employers will receive practical advice and guidance on potential changes which will be required and on managing this change within the culture of the organisation.

Elaine is a change leader, and her previous experience in supporting businesses with the implementation of the UK Equality Act 2010 means

she is well-placed to support businesses through the changes in the Isle of Man.

Elaine has had an interesting and varied career, having worked in senior roles for many organisations across a variety of sectors and locations. Prior to setting up her own business, Elaine was a Director of Barclays Private Clients International and headed up the HR function for the Offshore Islands.

Elaine has been involved in local initiatives such as the Departments of Education and Children and Economic Development Employment Skills initiative. She is a Committee member of the Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce Education & Training Committee and has recently joined the Institute of Directors.

The response to the recent workshops on the consultation of the Equality Bill, organised by the Chamber of Commerce, and which gave businesses the opportunity to provide feedback and input to the consultation, was high and showed

that the Isle of Man business community wants to learn more about the new proposals.

Katherine heads up Cains' employment team and has many years of experience advising employers on all legal aspects of the employment relationship from recruitment through to termination. Katherine also provides advice and training on employment law developments and, in working from Cains' London office, is well acquainted with the impact of the UK equality legislation and developments in that context, which are likely to lead the Isle of Man position. Elaine and Katherine are looking forward to working collaboratively to provide both legal and practical advice, support and guidance, as well as assisting employers through this important change in the employment law landscape. It is anticipated that Elaine's consultancy and HR services together with her solid practical experience in the equality area will

be highly complementary to Cains' offering.

Katherine added, “Elaine is a highly regarded HR professional who will bring a wealth of practical experience to complement Cains' legal services which we can offer to our clients and the wider business community.”

*If you are interested in finding out more, or if you would like a “health check” of your organisation's documentation and practices in advance of the introduction of the Bill, call Elaine on 07624 365 353 or email [ecodona@outlook.com](mailto:ecodona@outlook.com).*

*For Isle of Man legal advice and support on all employment related matters, employers should contact Katherine on 0207 367 0052 or [katherine.sheerin@cains.com](mailto:katherine.sheerin@cains.com).*

*We look forward to hearing from you and to reserving your place on one of our equality seminars in the New Year.*

