**Managing Unreasonable Behaviour Towards Staff**

Having learned of the overt racism experienced by a Manchester-based lawyer at the hands of a client, and of the total failure of that firm to take effective action, I asked my own firm whether we had a policy that would deal with managing unreasonable behavior – we don’t.

As a committee, we feel this is something Manchester firms should be addressing with urgency. We are now able to share a summary of what a policy might look like. We hope it is useful in encouraging your firm to create a formal policy.

1. Introduction: setting out the purpose of the policy and the importance of ensuring staff do not feel intimidated, threatened or unable to communicate effectively with a client or other party. It also reminds of the need to consider whether a person might be vulnerable or have a disability and the need to offer/make reasonable adjustments in our communication with them.
2. What constitutes unreasonable behaviour?: Sets a definition as behaviour including that which is aggressive or abusive, which seeks to place unreasonable demands on staff or which makes us unable to communicate effectively with them. Gives a list of examples which includes threats, verbal abuse, derogatory comments, discriminatory remarks, expressing offensive views, unnecessary personal remarks etc.
3. Available response: this will obviously be dependent on each firm but our list of available responses includes stipulating that the person may only speak with one designated staff member, restricting the form of communication with the person, ending telephone calls after a warning where aggressive or abusive behaviour continues, directing threats of violence or actual violence to the police, and ultimately ceasing to act and communicate with the person where these measures are not effective.
4. Specific considerations re people with disability or mental health issues: sets out that we will consider whether unreasonable behaviour may relate to those issues and whether any restrictions on communication will affect that person more than they would affect a person without those issues.
5. What to do if dissatisfied with a decision made under this policy: refers to complaints procedure.