



Mark Legister, Head of Employment Law

# LAW FOR ALL

## Legal advice is no longer reserved solely for major corporations, thanks to Duncan Lewis & Co Solicitors

Canary Wharf and The City are packed with solicitors' firms designed to cater for global companies willing to pay charges as high as the ceilings in the receptions of their vast offices. However, there is not a lot of easily-available, reasonably-priced advice for the large numbers of workers who need access to legal representation near their offices. For this reason, Duncan Lewis opened an office in One Canada Square with the sole aim of addressing the specialised and niche areas of employment, business immigration, property and family law.

They are particularly ideally placed to handle the significant increase

in claims brought by employees against their bosses. A growing proportion of the 132,577 claims issued in Employment Tribunals this year were for equal pay, and, with Christmas bonus time looming, that trend is likely to continue.

The marketplace for employee talent has become increasingly globalised, and many companies are seeking to recruit professional staff from overseas. This process will probably accelerate too, with a revamp of the immigration system planned for early 2008. Vicash Ramkissoon, a Director in the Duncan Lewis Managed Migration Department, explains: "Soon, registered employers will be able to issue their own work permits. The new system will allow employers to have a greater say in the decision-making

process. But there will be greater responsibility. Employers and HR professionals will need to be aware of the potential of civil penalties and criminal sanctions for failure to comply with relevant rules." Property prices in the commuter lands also continue to rise, with the consequential need for specialist property lawyers to carry out fast, cost-effective property transactions. People are also keen to protect these properties and assets in the event of the break up of a relationship. There is accordingly an increase in the use of the latest US import into English law – the pre-nuptial agreement. According to Savita Sharma, a Director in the Family Department, "although technically 'pre-nups' are not yet binding, judges are increasingly

considering the existence of these arrangements as a factor when determining the division of assets on divorce. They are not only for those who have millions in the bank, but can equally apply to those who have any assets prior to marriage that they would wish to protect in the event that the marriage breaks down."

With over 200 legal experts spread across 16 different departments and supported by state-of-the-art IT systems, Duncan Lewis has all the tools to provide Canary Wharf's working population with a quality service at a sensible cost. ■

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