



The Law Society

The Law Society E&D Framework 2012-2015

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supporting
solicitors

Contents

Introduction	3
The Law Society E&D Framework 2012-2015 - background.....	3
Equality and Diversity Framework 2012-15 - established priorities	4
Annexe 1	6
Goal One	6
Goal Two	7
Goal Three	7
Measures of success.....	8
Annexe 2.....	10
Annexe 3.....	14
Roles & Responsibilities	14

Introduction




This document sets out the Law Society Equality and Diversity (E&D) Framework for 2012-15. This Framework replaces the Law Society's 2009-2011 E&D Framework.

The 2009-11 E&D Framework has acted as the policy document for the Law Society Group. It encompassed the vision, objectives and actions for the professional body, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) and the Legal Complaints Service, which at the time was part of the Law Society Group. The SRA's new E&D Framework with a comprehensive work plan addressing all its functions including the employment function was agreed separately by the SRA Board in July. This 2012-2015 Framework addresses the work of the representative body in all its functions.

Overall the 2009-11 E&D Framework has provided a valuable foundation for future work and has helped to highlight how much more needs to be done, as we move into an unprecedented period of change. Actions and gaps in performance against the 2009-2011 Framework have been identified and reviewed by the Law Society.

The Law Society E&D Framework 2012-2015 - background

The Law Society aims to be the leading representative of the world's best legal profession, valued as a vital partner by those it serves and engages with. To achieve this aim the Society has set three core goals:

-  Goal One - Improve the competitiveness of the environment for our legal profession
-  Goal Two - Provide exemplary services
-  Goal Three - Be an exemplary organisation

Annexe 1 sets out the equality and diversity objectives for the Law Society for the period of 2012 -15. These specific objectives have been aligned to the Society's proposed core goals. They will drive improvement in the Society's and the profession's business performance and significantly accelerate the rate of progress towards equality of opportunity, greater diversity of the profession and effective, inclusive working practices.

A review of the 2009-11 E&D Framework is attached as **Annexe 2**, this review has informed the proposed objectives.

Annexe 3 shows the roles and responsibilities of the E&D Committee and other bodies within the Law Society **Commitment to equality and diversity as an employer and professional body**

The aspirations, goals and objectives of the Law Society are inextricably linked to equality and diversity. Creating an inclusive working environment where diversity

and equality is evident is critical to being an exemplar organisation. The Law Society will seek to provide leadership to the profession on equality and diversity. Demonstrating exemplary equality and diversity practice will illustrate its business benefits, the moral case already being self evident.

Sound E&D practice is vital to a profession that seeks to be high performing. We believe that providing high quality equality and diversity services to the profession will help it to thrive in an increasingly competitive market place. It will also help solicitors to themselves promote equality and diversity and thereby meet their obligations under outcome focused regulation. Finally, in all its other work both for the profession and in the public interest, the Society will adopt exemplary equality and diversity practice.

Equality and Diversity Framework 2012-15 - established priorities

The proposed 2012-15 Framework will build on work undertaken as part of the 2009-11 Framework. As part of the 2009-11 Equality and Diversity Framework significant work was undertaken on 'Barriers to Career Progression'. This work revealed that barriers to career progression based on gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation remain within the profession. The research findings led to the Society publishing an action plan which sets out how we will work closely with the profession on ways to address the barriers highlighted by the three research reports.

Some of the priority areas identified by our work on equality and diversity with the profession include:

Flexible working

The importance of flexible working has emerged as a priority area for solicitors. Flexible working enables members to support their own work life\balance while also enabling employers to deliver equality of opportunity, to attract and retain diverse talent and enhance business performance.

Diversity & Inclusion Charter

The Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Charter is the flagship diversity initiative of the legal profession. It is an instantly recognisable public statement of commitment by its signatories and a framework of standards for action across all strands of diversity.

The importance the profession places on the Society's role in working with private practice to enhance their ability to create inclusive working environments is demonstrated by the increasing level of participation by firms in the D&I Charter and the Firms' Diversity Forum.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

The introduction in 2010 of an Equality Impact Assessment process to all the representative body's functions has greatly enhanced our ability to promote and integrate equality into consultation and service delivery. We will continue to review and improve our ability to fully utilise the EIA process to enhance the Society's decision making processes. The establishment of an E&D Unit and dedicated budget for work on E&D has enabled the Society to make good progress against agreed annual action plans and in growing the skills needed for others to improve the integration of E&D responsibilities into their roles.

Monitoring

Whilst some monitoring of age, gender and ethnicity of the profession has taken place it is important to improve the quality and the extent of data available to ensure that we have a more accurate diversity profile for the profession. Without a more accurate profile the tracking of changes will be hampered. We will therefore be looking to improve our data.

Pay differentials

Salary analysis for the profession has identified pay inequalities. These inequalities create barriers to career for women and solicitors from ethnic minority backgrounds. We will seek to address some of these barriers through the delivery of the 'Careers Barriers Action Plan 2012'.

Disability and Age

People with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the profession. Issues related to age discrimination may become more apparent. We will seek to address these issues through the delivery of the 2012-2015 E&D Framework.

Annexe 1

Equality and Diversity Framework 2012-2015

Goal One

Improve the competitiveness of the environment for our legal profession

Equality and Diversity Objectives which support this goal are:

1. Influence those who shape the business environment in which solicitors work to make decisions which promote equality and diversity.
2. Promote the reputation of the profession by lobbying the regulator having in place appropriate mechanisms for enhancing and monitoring compliance and enforcement of Principle 9
3. Encourage the regulator to eliminate career barriers that undermine equality and diversity.
4. Encourage accessibility for all to regulated training and professional development provision.
5. Engage with third parties who provide quality schemes and/or panels to which solicitors have access to improve confidence among solicitors that they do not face discrimination either when applying to join or when seeking to remain as scheme and/or panel members.
6. Have a clear policy concerning the place of equality and diversity in training and professional development and work to deliver it.
7. Drive change in the profession and knowledge of equality and diversity issues through accredited standards and a robust set of performance measures.
8. Promote the profession and its services effectively to a diverse society.
9. Work with purchasers of legal services to promote effective equality and diversity performance standards.
10. Promote the equality and diversity achievements of the profession.

Goal Two

Provide exemplary services

Equality and Diversity Objectives which support this goal are:

1. Work in partnership to support the profession to promote equality and diversity.
2. Work to promote a profession which is diverse at the point of entry.
3. Provide appropriate career information which is available and accessible to all.
4. Support those of merit who face exceptional difficulty in accessing a career in the profession.
5. Promote a full range of information on career opportunities available to those seeking to change career tracks within the profession
6. Continue to identify progress, barriers and solutions to equality and diversity issues through a program of research.
7. Provide high quality training, advice and information to support the profession in enhancing equality and diversity.
8. Provide appropriate support to individual members when they are dealing with issues relating to equality.
9. Promote expertise in the profession and encourage diverse membership of accreditation schemes to reflect the society the profession serves.
10. Continue to engage law practices in the D&I Charter and drive up performance against the Equality and Diversity Standards.
11. Develop a clear policy and implementation plan for the publication of equality data for the profession.

Goal Three

To be an exemplary organisation

Equality and Diversity Objectives which support this goal are:

1. Recruit, develop, promote and manage all our people to meet the Law Society E&D Standards and recognised best practice.

2. Set clear goals and regularly measure performance against a comprehensive set of E&D management information and annually report on progress against goals.
3. Develop a clear policy and implementation plan for the publication of equality data for the Society.
4. Take steps to work to ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered in all appropriate Society activities through the Equality Impact Assessment process and that any related risk is effectively monitored and managed.
5. Aim to increase the diversity of the Society's volunteer community to more closely reflect the membership.
6. Ensure that all internal and external appointments made by the Society are made through a process which promotes equality and diversity.
7. Support all members of the volunteer community to develop their confidence and competency and enable them to demonstrate leadership in equality and diversity matters. Support the development of equality and diversity champions from this group.
8. Demonstrate our commitment to accessibility both in relation to our electronic infrastructure and the use appropriate language for the intended audience.
9. Promote a high standard of equality and diversity practices in our procurement practices amongst our suppliers and promote opportunities to be a supplier to the Law Society to a diverse range of businesses.

Measures of success

The 2012-2015 Framework objectives will be translated in to measurable actions and included in the Law Society business plans which will run from 2012 to 2015. Progress on these actions will be monitored by the Law Society Boards and Committees with oversight from the Law Society's equality and diversity committee. The Executive Board will be responsible for Annual Business Plans which will clearly indicate all proposed actions which are intended to deliver the E&D Framework objectives. Business plans will be agreed by Management Board and require the approval of the Law Society Council.

Some of the key measures of success will be:

- The performance of the Law Society will be measured against other sectors and law practices through participation against appropriate benchmarks such as Stonewall Work Equality Index, Opportunity Now, Race for Opportunity,

and the Law Society's D&I Charter. Additional external acknowledgement of standards of performance will be sought by competing for external awards on equality and diversity.

- We will use the D&I Charter Annual Review Report to measure increase in the performance of D&I Charter signatories against the E&D Standards, and utilise other appropriate Law Society accredited schemes such as Lexcel.
- Research undertaken into trends in the profession and the experience of members as it relates to E&D.
- Framework objectives will be agreed and published annually as part of the business planning process.
- A comprehensive annual report measuring performance against clear goals and performance measures on recruitment, staff development, promotion and overall management of our people, against high benchmarking standards.

Annexe 2

Law Society Equality and Diversity Framework 2009 - 2011		
Improve the Society's equality and diversity performance as a policy-making body	Measures of success	2010 Update
1. Establish an effective equality and diversity team in the Law Society	Head of Equality, Diversity and Corporate Responsibility will be in place by mid-2009	CRED Unit in place working to support progress and skills development in the profession and within HRD and the Law Society
2. Provide E&D training for all Council, Board and Committee members through a rolling program	All Council Members and committee chairs trained by end 2009. Program in place to train remaining members mid-2010	New E&D e-learning rolled out to all Council and Committee members and is a prerequisite for those who want to stand for re-election and reappointment. Training Needs Analysis completed to inform the 2012 provisions
3. Deliver a robust Equality Impact Assessment program for policy decisions	EIA implemented and staff and volunteers trained in its use by end 2009	EIA Training and Workshops delivered. EMB review progress against EIA Schedules. EIA's underway or completed in line with Schedule.
4. Launch the Diversity Charter and Protocols on procurement and employment in 2009	100 law firms sign up to Charter and protocols. 10 FTSE 250 firms sign up to procurement protocol.	Over 200 law firms signed up to Charter representing 1/3 of all solicitors in private practice and 34 clients sign up to procurement protocol. Annual reporting established and monitoring protocol established
5. Review pay inequalities across the profession and consult on removing	Complete and publish research by SRU on pay of solicitors across all seven diversity strands	Research published and additional research completed on BME, GLB and Women solicitors

6. Establish a Corporate Equality Group (CEG) for TLS Representation to implement E&D work across the business	CEG Work plan & programmed initiatives agreed and reviewed by June 2009	E&D Committee decided not to establish this group. The lack of this overarching CEG weakened the reporting and development structure.
7. Continue to lead the City Firms Equality & Diversity forum and support the development of regional diversity forums	Four meetings of the City Firms Forum in 2009 with 30 members attending two regional forums launched	6 meetings of the Firms Diversity Forum annually, 4 Regional Forum events will be delivered in 2011, attendance at single meetings are between 35 to 50 firms.
8. Develop and deliver a project that seeks to assess and tackle the barriers to access and progression for BME candidates in the City commercial sector	Project delivered with BME representative groups through 2009	Research with BME Groups concluded and published. Have to work with BME lawyer groups and Firms Diversity Forum in 2011 to deliver on recommendations.
9. Deliver the work programme of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Work plan agreed in December 2008 delivered according to timetable	Work plan annually delivered as agreed
10. With Membership Services, provide comprehensive advice on E&D compliance (Rule 6 and legislation) to law practices	Revised compliance advice published to the profession by end February 2009	Equality Act 2010 Practice Note, Book and guidance developed. Client Care and Lexcel Handbook updated to reflect Equality Act 2010
11. With Membership Services deliver products and services to support improved E&D performance by profession	Programme agreed Q1 2009 and delivered to timetable	Equality and Diversity Standards and Toolkit developed and published. Equality and Diversity Conference successfully delivered EIA's completed for Membership Services Accreditations and updates to guidance completed
12. To deliver a programme of events for BME members across a range of issues such as training, regulation and careers	Programme agreed Q1 2009 and delivered to timetable	BME PII Workshops delivered, BME Research delivered, BME Forum active until end 2010 in consultations move to direct engagement with the creation of an in-house Minority Lawyers Division underway moving away from the RGA.

		Black History Month Events delivered successfully. Minority Lawyer Conference delivered.
13. Deliver a series of events aimed at those wishing to enter and progress within the profession	End 2009	Information and events delivered by membership services: Diversity Access Scheme expanded to support more students and offer work experience and mentoring. Work through Gateways to the Profession and monitoring protocol on social inclusion.
14. Work with JAC Diversity Forum members and solicitors' representative groups to secure greater participation and success in judicial appointments by minority and women solicitors	Joint objectives agreed with Diversity Forum Q1 Programme of training rolled out to minority solicitors from Q2 All opportunities widely advertised to solicitors and especially to those from under-represented groups	BME training session delivered in 2009 and 2010. A minimum of two more sessions will be delivered in 2011. Additional program of activities to support BME potential judicial applicants delivered with BSN.
15. Work with HR to develop a group HR diversity strategy	Strategy agreed by the three Chief Executives end Q1	Annual E&D activities are included in business plan. EIA completed on HR policies.
16. Support HR review of employment policies for equality impact assessments	All HR policies reviewed and equality impact assessed as necessary by end 2009	This has been completed and Support for a new E&D Policy covering all new legislation has been received by HR. New E&D Procurement provisions developed for Procurement Policy. Revisions to Reasonable Adjustment Policy developed and implemented.

<p>17. Establish group employee diversity networks where there is employee agreement</p>	<p>Networks established by end Q2 on the basis of assessment of employee agreement</p>	<p>Networks not established due to lack of employee interest thus far. Black History Month has been run using the expertise and commitment of a staff steering group which may provide the basis for a BAME staff group.</p> <p>There is an employee consultation group which HRD use for the development of policy and it provides a forum for E&D issues to be raised.</p>
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Annexe 3

Roles & Responsibilities

Equality & Diversity Committee (EDC)

1. The E&D Committee's approach has been to work with the Boards of the Society to help them taking responsibility for delivery of E&D work and services in their areas of activity.
2. The delivery of E&D activity has been mainstreamed across the Society's overall work supporting members.
3. Under this approach, the EDC role is to make recommendations for action to the Law Society (through the Membership, Management, Regulatory Affairs, and Legal Affairs & Policy Boards). Those Boards are best placed to integrate E&D issues and activities into their mainstream work and ensure that they are making the desired impact.
4. The EDC assists the Law Society Council in discharging its responsibility for equality and diversity issues and setting the direction and framework for diversity issues. It also monitors the actions and objectives set by the Law Society Council and various Law Society Boards and committees which support attainment of our equality and diversity aspirations. The EDC is also responsible for advising on equality and diversity training for Council, board and committee members and identifying emerging trends for the profession and engaging directly with the profession on such issues.
5. The EDC will seek to ensure research, where necessary, is conducted to establish how the profession is changing in terms of equality and diversity. The role of the committee is to challenge the relevant parts of The Law Society to stretch them and make ambitious, yet realistic, action plans to address inequality. Where it believes it is helpful to do so it can offer advice and has the power to make direct formal recommendations to the Council, its Boards and Committees.
6. EDC will monitor the performance of the various Law Society Boards and Committees in supporting the Society's overall aim to be an exemplary employer, to eliminate discrimination itself and to support the profession to do likewise. It will report progress to the Council and publish a public report annually.
7. The Executive Board is responsible for the delivery of the Law Society Strategy, the effective and efficient management of resources and the accurate and timely production of accounting and reports. It enables all the Society's functions to work in a unified and effective way to maximise the influence and effectiveness of the member's investment. It facilitates the delivery of equality and diversity objectives through effective resource management and reporting structures.

Management Board

8. The Management Board is responsible for all matters relating to the finances and the effective management of resources, including human resources and the Society's personnel policies and the staff pension scheme, as such has an important role in relation to achieving exemplary standards in equality and diversity best practice. It also scrutinises the performance of the SRA against their business plan and the SRA Equality and Diversity Framework.

Membership Board

9. The Membership Board is responsible for setting and overseeing the implementation of policy for managing relationships with the profession, including (but not limited to) local law societies, Law Society groups, associations, sections, networks and divisions; for setting and overseeing the implementation of policy relating to services for members and others to include, but not be limited to, family members, potential entrants to the profession, non-solicitor employees of firms and to the public; and for setting and overseeing the implementation of policy to support Council members in their work. Clearly a major proportion of the work to achieve E&D objectives which relate to membership products and services will be the responsibility of this Board.

Regulatory Affairs Board (RAB)

10. The Regulatory Affairs Board is responsible for setting and overseeing the implementation of policy for the promotion of solicitors' interests in all regulatory matters. A number of E&D objective and subsequent related actions will be owned by RAB

Legal and Policy Board (LAPB)

11. The responsibility of the Legal Affairs and Policy Board is to set and oversee the implementation of policy to promote and protect solicitors' interests in all matters other than those covered by the Society's other boards. It is through the work of the LAPB committees significant progress can be made in addressing the diversity profile of those working in a voluntary capacity to mainstream E&D considerations into policy which effects the profession.

The Council

The Council is responsible for setting the overall policy of the Society and for holding the Chief Executive to account for its delivery. In particular it approves the budget for the Society, settles the Society's position on major policy issues and its priorities for its representative work. It provides a forum for debate on issues of significance to the

profession and provides a framework within which supporting structures can work which is largely through delegation to the Boards. In line with the Council's clear leadership role it is vitally important for the credibility and integrity of the Society's reputation that Council members are able to deal confidently with this area of work and where appropriate champion the Society's work in this area.