



The Law Society

Law Society Diversity Access Scheme 2012/13

Report on applications

September 2012



ALLEN & OVERY



Diversity Access Scheme awardees 2012

"If it was not for the Diversity Access Scheme my dream of being a solicitor would be unattainable despite my first class law degree"

"It has been a tough journey but I never gave up. I have battled my way through the sudden deaths of my partner and son-in-law, social deprivation, sectarianism, and caring for the needs of my children.

This award has given me the chance to fulfill my potential and give back to society through my drive and ambition. It inspires those who feel they have lost opportunity to never give up."

"The Diversity Access Scheme has carved me a new path which will help lead me to a better career. Without this scheme I would still be trailing the old dusty path to an unknown and unwanted place. Thank you."

"My dream from a very young age has been to become a solicitor but I was on the verge of closing this chapter of my life. Family and social circumstances meant that without this scholarship I would not have been able to fund the LPC and my life-long ambitions would never have materialised. DAS has helped me to overcome a hurdle and take up an opportunity that I thought had surpassed me. This award has changed my life forever and for that I will be eternally grateful."

"This award means all my hard work studying whilst working and caring for my children and disabled mum has not gone to waste."

"After coming up against obstacles that made studying the Legal Practice Course an almost impossibility, the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme has given me an opportunity that I spent two years desperately wishing for. I can't express my gratitude to both the scheme and its sponsors enough."

"I had a difficult start to life as I spent my childhood in local authority care, but I have always been determined not to let this stop me from achieving my full potential".

The Law Society Diversity Access Scheme supports talented aspiring entrants to the solicitors profession. The scheme seeks to address three of the fundamental obstacles to fair access - finance, professional contacts and opportunities to gain high quality work experience - through the provision of financial assistance with LPC fees, work experience opportunities and professional mentors. Applicants are required to demonstrate exceptional financial need, the ability and commitment to become a solicitor and that they face or have overcome exceptional social, educational, or other personal obstacles to qualification.

Supporters

The scheme would not be possible without the generous support of its sponsors:

- Allen & Overy
- Aviva
- BP
- BPP Law School
- The College of Law
- De Montfort University
- Field Fisher Waterhouse
- Hogan Lovells
- Irwin Mitchell
- The Law Society Charity
- Nottingham Law School
- Reed Smith
- RBS Group
- The University of Westminster
- Withers

We are delighted that RBS Group came on board as a new sponsor this year and has committed to sponsoring six places per year on the scheme over the next three years. This medium term commitment will greatly assist with planning and enable us to work more closely together to exploit opportunities to assist the students.

We are also grateful to NCLT for offering a discount on LPC fees for successful students at two institutions.

Application process

The 2012 application for students seeking to undertake the LPC in September 2012 and January 2013 opened on 1 March 2012 and closed on the 31 March 2012.

Through completion of an accessible form, applicants were required to detail:

- their financial circumstances including evidence that all other options for funding had been exhausted and that they would be unable to pursue their studies without support from the scheme.
- why they wish to enter the profession and the contribution they think they would be able to make
- how experience gained through vacation placements, work experience, paid employment and voluntary or personal commitments has helped them to develop skills relevant to becoming a solicitor.

- exceptional obstacles to qualification that they have faced or overcome.

Applicants were also required to submit an essay addressing the question 'Are the provisions for the compulsory removal of an individual from the UK to a foreign state satisfactory?'.

Applications were scored by three members of the equality and diversity unit against criteria including evidence of:

- exceptional obstacles
- financial need and viability
- commitment to a career as a solicitor
- ability to research and present complex issues concisely
- ability to marshal a coherent argument and offer a clear conclusion.

Two people marked each application ensuring that scores were moderated before being added together. Unviable applications - those that were incomplete or failed to provide evidence of the essential criteria above - were rejected and the remainder long listed. The short list was subsequently determined by taking the highest scoring 36 applicants - the maximum number of applicants it was possible to interview over three full days. The bottom three applicants were in a band of applications with equal scores and were selected at random from that group.

Short listed applicants were invited to interview with a selection panel of three people from the Law Society governance supported by the equality and diversity manager. Short listed applicants were asked to bring relevant documentary evidence in support of their application including three months of bank statements, evidence of benefits entitlement, evidence of indefinite leave to remain, academic qualifications, and the offer of an LPC place from their preferred institution.

Following the interview with documentary evidence and references having been satisfied, a final decision was taken and awards made conditional on successful student enrolment with the SRA.

Marketing

The opening of applications was publicised in a press release and all individuals previously submitting enquiries to the scheme's inbox about funding options were emailed.

Direct marketing was also undertaken through the Law Society Junior Lawyers and Lawyers with Disabilities Divisions, to all LPC institutions and the representative groups within the Law Society BAME forum.

The scheme was also specifically publicised to alumni of widening participation schemes and relevant organisations including: the Social Mobility Foundation; Pathways to Law, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, accessprofessions.com; Black Lawyers Directory; the Windsor Fellowship, Brightside Trust; Pure Potential; Brokerage Citylink; Sutton Trust; Bright Network; SBA (Solicitors Benevolent Association); Citizenship Foundation; the Young Foundation; and the NUS.

Despite these efforts, applications were down on the previous year. The reasons for this are not obvious but indicates that for the next application round, marketing

should begin earlier in the year and consideration given to extending the application window from four to six or eight weeks.

When asked about where they had heard about the scheme, applicants indicated:

- 48% Law Society/Junior Lawyers Division website
- 20% University
- 16% LPC Provider
- 16% Other - including friends, Social Mobility Foundation, colleagues, web search.

Application numbers

Submitted: 113

Long listed: 76

Short listed: 36

One short listed applicant withdrew their application before interview for health reasons and was replaced by the next highest scoring applicant.

Successful: 30

Two of the successful applicants have been made conditional offers and are awaiting confirmation of SRA student enrolment. If enrolment is successful, they will begin the LPC in January 2013.

One successful applicant was unsuccessful in securing SRA enrolment and in line with the application guidance, the offer of support was withdrawn.

One successful applicant subsequently withdrew from the scheme having successfully secured a training contract but commented on the value of the scheme in helping them to do so:

"As a powered wheelchair user, I incur greater living costs than those who are able-bodied and have already accumulated a large amount of debt from my undergraduate degree.

The Diversity Access Scheme provided a lifeline. Having already secured an offer of funding by way of the bursary meant that I could concentrate on trying to secure a training contract, whether or not such an opportunity would include law school fees, which otherwise would not have been possible. This allowed me to do my best in all assessments, without constantly worrying about how I would fund the LPC."

Exceptional obstacles

While many diversity schemes focus on assisting a particular group of people or address a particular aspect of disadvantage, the Diversity Access Scheme is unique in its ability to account for multiple disadvantage faced by applicants who are asked to detail their own exceptional obstacles.

Successful applicants have demonstrated tenacity, courage, a commitment to the pursuit of law and the ability to succeed under very challenging circumstances including:

- Growing up in care and living independently from the age of 17

- Being orphaned for political reasons, forced to leave family members and seek asylum in the UK
- Working full time and completing studies while caring for children and partners with life limiting conditions
- Completing A-levels while living in a hostel
- Educational disadvantage due to absence from school for three year period as a result of severe and sustained bullying
- Homelessness as a result of domestic violence
- Working two jobs while studying in order to meet caring responsibility for siblings
- Abstraction from gang culture following the murder of a close friend
- Recovery from a life threatening accident
- Achieving a first class degree while raising a child as a single parent
- Experiences of suicide, alcoholism and mental health issues

Diversity profile and equal opportunity

All applicants were asked to complete a diversity monitoring questionnaire. In line with best practice, this information was provided voluntarily, immediately separated from the application upon submission and subsequently assessed on an anonymous basis to monitor equality of opportunity in the process.

The tables below indicate the number of applications at each stage and the conversion rate between each stage. A conversion rate for any group which is less than third of the overall rate between stages (indicated on the bottom row of each table) may point to an obstacle or potential bias in the process.

The results indicate a robust process with broad parity across the majority of groups.

However the conversion rate for Black African applicants (36%) and those attending school outside the UK (39%) between submission and long listing was markedly lower than the overall conversion rate (67%). This means that a much higher proportion of applications within these groups were rejected either for failing to meet essential criteria or because they were incomplete. While we cannot identify the specific reasons for this group, one of the major reasons overall for applicants failing to meet essential criteria was evidence of financial viability. This meant that the monthly outgoings of applicants exceeded their income and savings to the extent that even if they were successful in securing support with tuition fees through an award, they would be unable to support themselves and dependents during study. There was no evidence of either African applicants or those attending school outside the UK being disadvantaged at any other stage of the application process.

| Age | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-------------------|-----------|------|-------------|-----|--------------|------|------------|
| Unanswered | 2 | 100% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| 18 – 24 | 50 | 68% | 34 | 41% | 14 | 79% | 11 |
| 25 – 34 | 37 | 59% | 22 | 55% | 12 | 92% | 11 |
| 35 – 44 | 17 | 82% | 14 | 71% | 10 | 70% | 7 |
| 45 – 54 | 5 | 40% | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| 55 - 64 | 2 | 100% | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| Gender | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-------------------|-----------|------|-------------|------|--------------|-----|------------|
| Unanswered | 2 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 2 | 50% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Male | 38 | 68% | 26 | 46% | 12 | 83% | 10 |
| Female | 73 | 66% | 48 | 48% | 23 | 83% | 19 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| Sexual orientation | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|--------------------|-----------|------|-------------|------|--------------|------|------------|
| Unanswered | 8 | 25% | 2 | 100% | 2 | 50% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 7 | 86% | 6 | 33% | 2 | 50% | 1 |
| Heterosexual | 94 | 68% | 64 | 45% | 29 | 86% | 25 |
| Homosexual | 2 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| Lesbian | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Bisexual | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0% | 0 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| Disability | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-------------------|-----------|-----|-------------|-----|--------------|------|------------|
| Unanswered | 4 | 75% | 3 | 33% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 6 | 67% | 4 | 25% | 1 | 0% | 0 |
| Yes | 22 | 73% | 16 | 75% | 12 | 83% | 10 |
| No | 81 | 65% | 53 | 43% | 23 | 83% | 19 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| Ethnicity | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|---|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 4 | 100% | 4 | 75% | 3 | 67% | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 6 | 50% | 3 | 67% | 2 | 50% | 1 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Indian | 3 | 67% | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Pakistani | 12 | 50% | 6 | 50% | 3 | 67% | 2 |
| Other Asian background | 10 | 80% | 8 | 38% | 3 | 100% | 3 |
| African | 22 | 36% | 8 | 50% | 4 | 100% | 4 |
| Caribbean | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0% | 0 |
| Other Black/ Caribbean | 2 | 50% | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| British/ English/ Welsh/ N.Irish/ Scottish | 37 | 92% | 34 | 44% | 15 | 80% | 12 |
| Irish | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Gypsy or Irish Traveller | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Other white background | 6 | 33% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| White and Black African | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| White and Black Caribbean | 5 | 40% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| White and Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Any other mixed/ multiple ethnic background | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Arab | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Any other ethnic background | 2 | 100% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| The tables below shows the aggregated data for ethnicity above. | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|----|-----|----|------|----|
| Asian or Asian British | 31 | 61% | 19 | 42% | 8 | 75% | 6 |
| Black or Black British | 25 | 40% | 10 | 50% | 5 | 80% | 4 |
| Other ethnic group | 3 | 100% | 3 | 67% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| Mixed | 6 | 50% | 3 | 67% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| White | 44 | 84% | 37 | 46% | 17 | 82% | 14 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| Religion/ belief | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 5 | 80% | 4 | 50% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| None | 28 | 82% | 23 | 57% | 13 | 85% | 11 |
| Buddhist | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Christian | 54 | 59% | 32 | 44% | 14 | 86% | 12 |
| Hindu | 3 | 100% | 3 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Jewish | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Muslim | 22 | 59% | 13 | 62% | 8 | 63% | 5 |
| Sikh | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| School type | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 2 | 100% | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Prefer not to say | 4 | 75% | 3 | 100% | 3 | 67% | 2 |
| UK State | 78 | 76% | 59 | 47% | 28 | 79% | 22 |
| UK Independent/ Fee-paying | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Attended school outside UK | 28 | 39% | 11 | 45% | 5 | 100% | 5 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

| First to university*? | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 2 | 100% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 5 | 20% | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Did not attend University | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Yes | 83 | 75% | 62 | 50% | 31 | 81% | 25 |
| No | 23 | 48% | 11 | 45% | 5 | 80% | 4 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

* If you went to University (to study a BA, BSc course or higher), were you part of the first generation of your family to do so?

| *Caring child under 18 | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 5 | 80% | 4 | 25% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| Yes | 31 | 81% | 25 | 52% | 13 | 85% | 11 |
| No | 75 | 63% | 47 | 49% | 23 | 78% | 18 |
| Don't know | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

*Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

| *Caring responsibility | Submitted | to | Long listed | to | Short listed | to | Successful |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Unanswered | 3 | 67% | 2 | 50% | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 5 | 60% | 3 | 67% | 2 | 50% | 1 |
| Yes, 1 - 19 hours p/w | 24 | 79% | 19 | 47% | 9 | 78% | 7 |
| Yes, 20 -49 hours p/w | 7 | 86% | 6 | 33% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| Yes, 50+ hours p/w | 5 | 80% | 4 | 50% | 2 | 100% | 2 |
| No | 69 | 61% | 42 | 50% | 21 | 81% | 17 |
| | 113 | 67% | 76 | 49% | 37 | 81% | 30 |

*Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either (do not count paid employment):

- Long-term physical or mental ill-health / disability
- Problems related to old age

Mentoring and work experience

In addition to financial assistance, awardees are offered the opportunity for being matched with professional mentor and work experience placements during study.

Volunteer mentors for the 2012 intake have undertaken a training session at the Law Society and will be matched with DAS students to provide guidance and support on a range of issues from CVs to training contract applications to approaches to interviews. Where appropriate, they will also extend their professional networks and broker introductions.

22 students have asked for work experience placements over the full range of practices from small practices to the Government Legal Service and corporate global law firms. Work experience placements will be brokered to take place over Easter and summer of 2013.

Impact assessment

Excluding this year's cohort, over 113 students have been supported to date by the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme and former bursary scheme. The most significant obstacle to assessing the impact is maintaining contact with the individuals supported many of whom understandably use the opportunity to distance themselves from difficult circumstances. For others, it may not be deliberate but the contact details are not updated and become redundant making it impossible to get an update on progress. To address this issue going forward, the SRA numbers of successful students have been collected and in future we will be able to monitor progress even if they choose not to remain in direct contact. We are also building an alumni network to encourage peer support through a closed Linked In group where information about careers fairs and networking opportunities are regularly posted.

Diversity Access Scheme 2013

As options for financing the LPC become more limited, we believe that the Diversity Access Scheme offers a vital opportunity for extraordinary students and helps deliver diversity to the profession and we will be seeking to expand it further in 2013.

A video about the scheme including containing interviews with past students is available on the website at www.lawsociety.org.uk/das.

If you would like to support exceptional talented individuals and help widen access to the solicitors profession by sponsoring the scheme, offering work experience opportunities or acting as a mentor, please contact Kate Walmsley on 020 7316 5792 or kate.walmsley@lawsociety.org.uk.