



The Law Society

Career Barriers Action Plan 2012

January 2012

supporting
solicitors

Background

As a result of disparities in pay identified in the 2008 Law Society salary survey the Law Society commissioned research into the experiences of women, black and ethnic minority (BME) and lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) solicitors. In part the research was undertaken to shed light on the contributing factors to pay differentials between women and men and BME solicitors and white comparators.

The three pieces of research were published as one report in November 2010. A number of reoccurring themes emerged from the research which identified a wide range of barriers to access and career progression. The Law Society announced that it would devise an Action Plan to implement work to address the issues raised in the Diversity - Career Barriers report. The three research reports can be downloaded from the [Law Society website](#).

The Law Society equality and diversity committee (EDC) reviewed the findings from the reports and agreed next steps. It was decided that as a result of the research the Law Society needed to review work it does with the profession and identify ways in which the adverse findings in the research reports might be addressed. The EDC referred the reports to the different Boards of the Law Society so that changes to the work of the Law Society to address the issues raised by the research are best informed and delivered by those with governance responsibilities.

The Boards of the Law Society have considered the reports in order to inform the work they are undertaking on behalf of the profession and were asked to consider a draft Action Plan. The Action Plan agreed is reproduced as a table below and has details of a proposed timetable.

This Action Plan has been prepared by a cross functional Law Society staff advisory group as it will be delivered by a number of Society teams working together.

The relevant elements of the Action Plan will be owned by the corresponding Law Society Board and that each Board will report on progress to the E&D Committee. Schedule for implementation of the elements of the Action Plan will be agreed as part of the Framework review and development of the 2012-15 E&D Framework.

Key

Corporate Responsibility, Equality and Diversity Team - CRED

Equality and Diversity Committee - EDC

Education and Training Committee - ETC

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual - LGB

Junior Lawyers Division - JLD

Legal Policy Directorate - Legal Policy

Law Management Section - LMS

Law Society Services - LSS

Membership Board - MB

Regulatory Affairs Board - RAB

Small and Medium Size Employers - SME

Action Plan for addressing Careers Barriers research findings

The E & D Committee commissioned research into the experiences of groups with protected characteristics working in or studying to enter the profession. It did so in order to better inform the work of the Law Society. The research identified a number of issues and the table below identifies the actions the Law Society will take to address the issues identified.

	Issue	Board	Delivery teams	Commencement	Action
1.	The EDC recommends that all Boards should take steps to ensure that all Law Society commissioned research into the nature and quality of the working lives of solicitors is brought to their attention	All Boards	Research Policy CRED LSS	Q3 2011 Q4 2011 Q1 2012	Staff will take responsibility to refer research and E&D relevant information to Boards with advice and recommendations. Boards will have the E&D and the Framework as a standing item on agendas. It is proposed that the Action Plan and its review will be owned by the Membership Board and report on progress to the E&D Committee.
2	Problems in accepting diversity as a means of enhancing robustness and performance of a	MB	LMS CRED LSS	Q1 2012 Q1 2012	The Membership Board should ensure that all its work promotes both the ethical case as well as the business case for the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of diversity. It should also consider whether it is doing sufficient to communicate, promote and reward good examples of helpful behaviours adopted by Law Practices.

					standards. 1 st level conforming to SRA E&D outcomes and indicative behaviours.
4	Failure to provide proactive support for career development	MB	JLD LMS CRED LSS	Q1 2012	Working with the JLD the Membership Board will produce a clear guide on inclusive and effective career management.
				Q3 2011	A wide package of career development is being explored as part on the Blueprint customer offer.
				Q3 2011	Work on career and professional development supported by customer offer research. BME and Women Lawyer leadership programme under consideration. Both programmes could sit within the new members divisions.
		RAB		Q3/4 2012	RAB explore introduction of a paralegal route into the profession in conjunction with the member services in the context of the Education Review.
5	Difficulty in accessing education and training and securing legal training contracts both pre- and post-qualification	RAB	JLD LMS CRED LSS	Q1 2012	The RAB will encourage the SRA to review the requirements firms must meet in order to become registered Training Establishments offering training contracts.
				Q1 2012	It should consider inviting the SRA to consider whether mandatory training in equality and diversity should be completed by firms who are selecting trainees for contracts.
				Q3/4 2012	Address through the Education and Training review beginning
		MB		Q3 2011	Promote best practice in work experience and internships. Keep information on access to careers under review.
		RAB		Q2 2012	Consider issuing a practice note.

6	Career progression being directed for some groups towards less prestigious practice areas or less lucrative work	MB	LMS CRED LSS	Q1 2012	The Membership Board will consider whether to establish a human resource development and/ or training to support firms looking for top quality advice on how to develop their staff.
				Q4 2011	LMS are looking to develop and host a HR Forum
				Q3 2011	Some interest shown by City Firms in the development of an initiative to bring BME lawyers into firms. Could be taken forward as part of the top 100 package.
				Q4 2011	Work to develop a response to the issue could be undertaken by TLS with the Women Solicitors Division, GLB advisory group and Minority Lawyer Divisions.
		RAB		Q1 2012	RAB to ask LMS for recommendation on how to support change such as a practice note and/or recommendations to the SRA. RAB to consider options
7	Individuals being ill-informed when embarking on law as a career	MB ETC	JLD LMS CRED LSS	Q4 2011	The Membership Board working with the JLD and Education and Training Committee to keep under review the career advice the Law Society has in place and work with partners organisations to take any necessary action to provide a career information that is realistic.
				Ongoing	<p>Work with established relationships to ensure that the advice is appropriate and effectively communicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to Law • BLD • Women Lawyers Division • Minority Lawyers Division • JLD • LDD

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway to the Professions • LGB Advisory Group <p>Advice to be wider than private practice and include in house.</p>
8	The importance of being mentored and advised at an early stage in legal training	MB	LMS CRED ETC LSS	Q2 2012 Q2 2012 Q3 2012 Q1 2012 Q1 2012 Q3 2012	<p>The Membership Board to review and the role the Law Society might play in helping to strengthen the use of mentoring to support under-represented groups in the profession.</p> <p>Develop a Law Society mentoring programme.</p> <p>Encourage and facilitate legal practices engaging in voluntary mentoring.</p> <p>Looking at possible partnership approach and the work of the National Mentoring Consortium and Race For Opportunity.</p> <p>JLD to be consulted on their contribution.</p> <p>Membership board to review a plan on the above.</p>
9	Networking possibilities to assist career progression	MB	JLD LMS CRED Members Divisions	Q3 2012 Q4 2012 Q2 2012 Q2 2012	<p>The Membership Board to develop a policy which supports lawyer networks and partnership organisations to improve career development for under-represented groups.</p> <p>Programme to be agreed with regional managers in conjunction with the LDD, Women, LGB advisory group and Minority Lawyers Divisions.</p> <p>Work with established lawyer networks to develop greater opportunities for mentoring to support career progression.</p> <p>Agree a positive action programme of activities as part of the joint working with JAC to increase the number of solicitor judges.</p>

				Q1 2012	Development of strong national LGB network/s and Law Society to hold more LGB events and to communicate on LGB issues.
				Q1 2012	Identify ways of informing trainees/new entrants about LGB network groups and support and information available.
				Q3 2012	Utilise LGB history month for the delivery of focused LGB equality awareness (February).
				Q1 2012 Q3 2012	Utilise International Women's Day and Black History Month to encourage and promote networking.
				Q2 2012	Continue to actively participate in Pride and promote participation in the profession.
10	Current measurements of career success within law firms	MB	LMS CRED	Q2 2012	The Membership Board through the Law Management Section should provide clear guidance on an inclusive and effective career management which is then communicated to the profession utilising the LMS toolkit and D&I protocols. Commence
				Q1 2012	The Board should ensure that the best practice examples are built into the Law Society mechanisms for improving law practice management.
				Q1 2012	Work with top100 firms to identify where competency based measures are being used and utilise them as case studies. Identify what client's value and disseminate. Commence Qtr 3 2011
				Q1 2012	Explore with JLD content of the preparing for partnership course.
11	Billing practices	MB	LMS	Q2 2012	Incorporate collection of data on billing practices into the omnibus survey.

	and the remuneration policies of partnerships		CRED Research		
12	Failure to embrace flexible working as a positive feature of working life	MB	LMS CRED	<p>Q3 2011</p> <p>Q1 2012</p> <p>Q 2 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q 3 2012</p> <p>Q1 2012</p> <p>Q4 2011</p> <p>Q2 2012</p> <p>Q3 2012</p>	<p>Flexible working protocol publication.</p> <p>The Membership Board should position the Law Society as the repository of knowledge in the field of developing flexible working styles which support family friendly working practices. Clear guidance on an inclusive and effective career management need to be published and communicated.</p> <p>An awareness raising programme for firms will be introduced. This will be done through the Flexible working protocol and action recommended through the sub-group including how to work with clients to influence change.</p> <p>EDC Flexible working sub group in place.</p> <p>Develop a package of information and training on management of flexible working.</p> <p>Information on flexible working and key messages to be incorporated into Lexcel and LMS toolkits.</p> <p>Through the D&I Charter - as a specific protocol of the Charter Model tender questionnaire for procurement protocol to be expanded to include flexible working measurement.</p> <p>Flexible working indicators to be built into E&D standards,</p> <p>Co-ordinated and aligned dissemination of information and key messages</p>

				Q1 2012 ongoing	through the soon to be established Law Society's divisions (Disability, Women and Minority Lawyers divisions) Delivery of a programme of training, webinars and workshops through LMS and the Firms Diversity Forum (FDF), with content and messages tailored to specific audiences (HR, middle managers in law firms and senior/managing partners where relevant).
				Q3 2011	Encourage the SRA to include established flexible working practices as an indicative behaviour under Principle Nine.
				Q3 2010 ongoing	Work with regional managers to help disseminate relevant information to regional and small practices through regional E&D network events.
				Q3 2010 ongoing	Establish a programme of engagement with senior and managing partners via Law Society Office Holders including direct email/written communications to senior partners from the president of the Law Society and presidential dinners and/or breakfasts focusing on the flexible working discussion.
				Q4 2011 ongoing	Law Society to raise the profile of flexible working in the legal sector through a co-ordinated communications campaign which includes articles in the legal press, comment pieces, and features including showcasing those practices that are doing it well.
				Q4 2011 ongoing	Reach out to legal practices through joint working with external stakeholders considered to be 'leading voices' on the issue of flexible working and/or more generally on issues of E&D e.g. Working Families, and Opportunity Now.
				Q1 2012	Membership Board to receive a work plan on flexible working.
13	An apparent acceptance that	RAB	LMS CRED	Q1 2012	The RAB should encourage the SRA to strengthen regulatory enforcement and of Principle Nine Chapter 2. RAB will consider the appropriate way of

	discrimination is embedded within the profession	MB		Ongoing	regulating this issue. Utilize LMS, D&I Standards and LEXCEL to demonstrate and communicate best practice.
14	The vulnerability of those wishing to 'whistle-blow' raising a grievance or complaint and fear that actions taken to challenge discrimination could limit career opportunities or threaten job security	MB RAB	LMS CRED	Q3 2012 Q3 2012 Q4 2012 Q2 2012	Membership Board will review support currently available for 'whistle blowers' and ensure the support is adequate and well publicised. It should do likewise in relation to services supporting solicitors experiencing harassment, bullying and discrimination. It should also review guidance and skills development opportunities available to firms in effective management of complaints of discrimination. Solicitors Assistance Scheme and Law Cares work with the Law Society is under review with the intention of strengthening provisions in this area Board to receiver recommendations. Introduce guidance as part of the LMS toolkit and D&I Standards toolkit. RAB will review the appropriateness of provisions with SRA for support for solicitors in raising complaints.
15	Pay differentials between men and women and lawyers from BME backgrounds.	All Boards RAB	Legal Policy CRED Research	Q1 2012 2013 2013	All Boards should ensure that the Law Society has the quality of data necessary to inform itself of the rate at which pay differentials based on gender and ethnicity are being eliminated within the profession. RAB to encourage the SRA to publish an annual equal pay audit and report on actions being taken to address inequality. Establish the reporting as being an indicative behaviour under Chapter 2 of the new Code. The RAB should encourage the SRA to monitor compliance with Chapter 2 of the new Code and, in particular, to monitor how firms ensure equality in relation to whether all their employees both as regards the areas and type of work they undertake and their consideration for promotion to other roles

					within firms.
		MB		Q2 2012	The RAB Education and Training Committee be asked to consider what steps it believes can be taken to address the disadvantage experienced by people with protected characteristics poor socio-economic backgrounds in accessing careers with large firms. RAB to receive recommendations.
				Q4 2011	Membership Board Review all its communications with the profession through the Gazette and otherwise to ensure that it gives adequate opportunity for the members to understand what the Society is doing to eliminate inequalities and promote diversity as well as to support those who need to change their current business practices. Review in communications plan for 2012.
				Commence Q4 2012	Encourage pay audits through LEXCEL, D&I Charter Standards and LMS, also as part of risk and compliance management.
				Q2 2012	The Board should also ensure that all its subsidiary bodies, such as the various accreditation panels, can demonstrate that they are also working to eliminate inequalities and improve diversity within the profession. Board to receive recommendations.