



The Law Society

## **Career barriers action plan 2013**

January 2013

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 career barriers reports. 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.

## Key

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic - BAME

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

Legal Education and Training Review - LETR

Law Management Section - LMS

Membership Board - MB

Regulatory Affairs Board - RAB

## CAREER BARRIERS ACTION PLAN 2012 - 15

**OVER-ARCHING AIM:** To provide practical support and guidance for solicitors and firms to address the career barriers facing women, and members of minority ethnic groups or the LGB community.

### ***1. To upskill Board and Committee members at the Law Society and increase their commitment to equality and diversity for members.***

Relevant core goal	Outcome number	Outcome sought	Measures of success	Activities	Timing of activities
CG3.1 and 3.3	1.1	<i>Council, Boards and Committees have a better understanding of, and commitment to, equality and diversity issues as they relate to the Law Society and its members, so that these issues are mainstreamed throughout Board activities.</i>	<p><i>All Law Society policies, products and services take account of equality and diversity issues.</i></p> <p><i>Equality Impact Assessments for Boards regularly highlight issues that result in a change to policy/product/service/process in order to minimise negative equality outcomes and maximise positive ones.</i></p> <p><i>Representation on Boards more closely reflects the diversity of the membership.</i></p> <p><i>All Board and Committee members have undertaken training in Equality and Diversity and can confidently describe the main equality issues in respect of their work.</i></p>	<p><i>1. 6-monthly progress reports on this plan to E&amp;D Committee from Membership Board and Regulatory Affairs Board.</i></p> <p><i>2. Discuss with Board Chairs the most effective way of ensuring that equality and diversity is covered in their actions.</i></p> <p><i>3. CRED staff liaise with Board and Committee support teams to ensure that relevant items are on the agenda for meetings and appropriate briefing is supplied.</i></p> <p><i>4. Equality Impact Assessments accompany proposals for major new policies/products/services and are considered by Boards.</i></p> <p><i>5. Continue to review the way in which the Law Society communicates its commitment to eliminate inequalities and promote diversity to the profession.</i></p> <p><i>6. All Council, Board and Committee members complete appropriate Law Society E &amp; D Training.</i></p>	<p><i>Q2 &amp; Q4 2012/13/14</i></p> <p><i>Q1 2013</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Q4 2013</i></p>

**2. To develop and communicate the case for diversity in law firms as a means of enhancing robustness, performance and competitiveness.**

Relevant core goal	Outcome number	Outcome sought	Measures of success	Activities	Timing of activities
CG2.1	2.1	<p><i>Members understand and accept the business case for diversity.</i></p> <p><i>A recognition that discrimination is not acceptable within the profession.</i></p>	<p><i>Improvement in the diversity of the profession at all levels.</i></p> <p><i>Improvement in responses to follow-up career barriers research.</i></p> <p><i>Reduction in the number of Employment Tribunals related to discrimination in the profession.</i></p>	<p><i>1. Equality and diversity page on the business case for equality and diversity, including flexible working, available on the Law Society website.</i></p> <p><i>2. Identify and communicate case studies and examples of good practice in Law Society publications, eg from Excellence Awards, in D &amp; I Charter Annual Report and toolkits.</i></p> <p><i>3. Build key messages into articles in LMS, E&amp;D Section newsletters and external communications.</i></p> <p><i>4. Place articles and quotes in Law Gazette and other sector publications.</i></p> <p><i>5. Provide online support learning through corresponding webinars, including on unconscious bias</i></p> <p><i>6. Office Holders and staff to promote the business case in regular briefings and</i></p>	<p><i>Q3 2013</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p>

				<p><i>speeches at external events, including local law society events.</i></p> <p><i>7. Consult with legal practices on mechanisms for introducing targets, including definition and timescales.</i></p> <p><i>8. Report, track and publish progress on the introduction of targets.</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q1 2014</p> <p>Q3 2015</p>
CG2.2	2.2	<i>Lexcel to promote E&amp;D best practice including TLS messages and offerings, and complimentary development of new E&amp;D accreditation scheme intended to support the elimination of inequalities and to increase diversity within the profession.</i>	<i>E&amp;D best practice is highlighted in Lexcel guidance. best practice messages promoted via Lexcel communication channels. Support from Lexcel office to promote E&amp;D events and publications, including LMS E&amp;D guide and speaking at events. E&amp;D accreditation scheme initial phases started.</i>	<i>Development of E&amp;D accreditation scheme by NPD. Regular communications and consultation between CRED, the Lexcel office and NPD.</i>	Ongoing and Q2 2013
CG2.2	2.3	<i>A higher proportion of signatories committed to and implementing the D &amp; I Charter and its protocols.</i>	<p><i>Charter signatories represent 70% of all solicitors in private practice</i></p> <p><i>70% increase in Procurement Protocol partners</i></p>	<p><i>1. Develop and implement campaign to promote benefits of membership of D &amp; I Charter.</i></p> <p><i>2. Develop Procurement Protocol membership as a lever to increase Charter membership.</i></p> <p><i>3. Produce annual report.</i></p> <p><i>4. Conduct external evaluation of Charter.</i></p>	<p>Q2 2013</p> <p>Q2 2013</p>

					Q4 2012/13/14/15
					Q3 2013

### ***3. To improve the diversity of recruitment to the profession***

Relevant core goal	Outcome number	Outcome sought	Measures of success	Activities	Timing of activities
CG1.2	3.1	Promote confidence in alternative routes into the profession	Higher intake through alternative routes.  Re-entry points are established for those wishing to return to the profession.	1 RAB to continue to lobby SRA and LETR for alternative routes into the profession to be recognised.  2. Research whether any firms offer re-entry programmes to women and other returners.	Ongoing  Q1 2015
CG1.2	3.2	An improvement in accessing education and training and securing pre-qualification training	An improvement in regulation for training establishments	1. Through RAB encourage the SRA to review the requirements firms must meet in order to become registered Training Establishments offering training contracts.  2. RAB to issue a Practice Note on registered training establishments once the LETR is complete.  3. Regularly update careers in law area of website.  4. Promote best practice code on diversity and inclusion in internships to Charter members and publicise good practice identified in Charter Review and Excellence Awards.	Q3 2013    Q4 2013  Ongoing  Q2 2013
CG1.2	3.3	Improve the information available to individuals when embarking on law as a career	Career information that is realistic about the opportunities.  Greater openness and transparency in firms' recruitment processes	1. Twice-yearly event for undergraduates in support of the toolkit on 'Preparing Students for the Solicitors' Profession'.  2. Contribute annually to the Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook and Prospects Law, ensuring that careers advice is accurate and realistic.  3. Hold at least 3 events a year in London and	Ongoing    Q2 2013/14/15

				<p><i>the regions for A level students as part of the widening access programme.</i></p> <p><i>4. Strengthen existing partnerships to ensure that advice is appropriate and effectively communicated.</i></p> <p><i>5. Ensure that advice covers in-house as well as private practice.</i></p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
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#### 4. To provide practical support on career development

Relevant core goal	Outcome number	Outcome sought	Measures of success	Activities	Timing of activities
CG1.2, 2.1, 2.3	4.1	<i>Firms take a more proactive and inclusive approach to staff development.</i>	<i>Broad range of staff development on offer at both large and small firms.</i>  <i>Increase in number of inclusive staff development programmes in Excellence Awards submissions.</i>  <i>Increased take-up of our products and services in this area.</i>	1. Develop and launch portfolio of career development products and services.	Q1 2013
				2. Develop leadership programmes with new member divisions.	Q3 2013
				3. Forum and other relevant events include input on career progression	Q2 2013
CG1.2, 2.3	4.2	<i>Improvement in mentoring programmes for under-represented groups in the profession</i>	<i>Law Society mentoring programmes delivered through the divisions are actively used.</i>  <i>Range of mentoring programmes in large and small firms or across firms.</i>  <i>Appropriate training for mentors and mentees to maximise trust and rapport building.</i>	1. Review the role the Law Society could play in helping to strengthen the use of mentoring to support under-represented groups in the profession.	Q4 2012
				2. Explore potential partners for mentoring programmes, eg RfO for scheme with BAME lawyers.	Q2 2013
				3. Explore potential partners for a cross-sector mentoring programme for smaller firms.	Q2 2013
				4. Put a plan for improved and broader mentoring programme to Membership Board, with a view to expanding Law Society mentoring to new divisions.	Q3 2013
				5. Prepare a Practice Note on effective mentoring.	Q3 2013
				6. Develop communications plan to promote the benefits of mentoring for firms.	Q4 2013

CG1.2, 2.3	4.3	<i>Promote networking as a means to assist career progression</i>	<i>Range of effective networks across profession providing support to under-represented groups</i>	<i>1. Work with LGB Steering Group to review LGB networks.</i>	Q2 2013
				<i>2. Work with Race for Opportunity to develop BAME networks in the legal profession.</i>	Q3 2013
				<i>3. Expand the positive action programme to increase the number of solicitor judges from BAME solicitors to include women and disabled solicitors too.</i>	Q2 2013
				<i>4. Set up a regional programme to promote diverse networks in association with the LDD, LGB advisory group, women and minority lawyers divisions.</i>	Q3 2013
				<i>5. Utilise celebratory days and events, such as Black and LGB History Months, Pride and International Women's Day to encourage networking and role modelling.</i>	Ongoing
CG2.1	4.4	<i>Consistent and fair measurements of career success within law firms</i>	<i>Open and transparent promotion processes in at least 50% of Diversity and Inclusion Charter members. Greater focus on quality rather than quantity of work. A recognition of talents across a full range of competencies.</i>	<i>1. Review LMS HR toolkit to ensure that there is clear guidance on effective and inclusive career management.</i>	Q1 2013
				<i>2. Integrate good practice examples into the work of the LMS.</i>	Q1 2013
				<i>3. Identify which top 100 firms use competency based measures and develop case studies for wider dissemination.</i>	Q1 2014
				<i>4. Explore with JLD the content of the preparing for partnership course.</i>	Q2 2014

**5. To support firms in improving the working conditions of staff as a means of attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce.**

Relevant core goal	Outcome number	Outcome sought	Measures of success	Activities	Timing of activities
CG2.1, 2.3	5.1	Widespread understanding, acceptance and promotion of flexible working practices	Flexible work not affecting career or promotion prospects. Reduction in number of people leaving profession for want of flexible working practices. Take up of flexible working by men/women and other groups at all levels in firm as indicated in responses to D & I Charter annual survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. EDC Flexible Working sub-group to advise on further actions</li> <li>2. Update Lexcel and LMS toolkits to provide clear guidance on flexible working practices.</li> <li>3. Develop package of information and training on flexible working for individuals, HR and people managers, covering Law Society support and external options.</li> <li>4. Disseminate information about flexible working best practice and role models as widely as possible, including at regional events, through the Disability, Women and Minority Lawyers divisions, and through the Firms Diversity Forum, tailoring content and messages to suit the audiences</li> <li>5. Communications campaign to raise the profile of flexible working in the legal sector, through articles in the legal press, comment pieces, and features to showcase good practice.</li> <li>6. A programme of engagement with senior and managing partners, including at</li> </ol>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q4 2012</p> <p>Q1 2013</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q3 2013</p>

				<p><i>Presidential breakfast and direct letters/emails on good practice.</i></p> <p><i>7. Work in partnership with leading groups on flexible working, such as Working Families and Opportunity Now, so that their expertise can be better promoted to legal practices and to individuals.</i></p> <p><i>8. Encourage the SRA to include established flexible working practices as an indicative behaviour under Principle 9.</i></p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Q1 2013</i></p>
CG1.2, 2.1, 2.3	5.2	<i>The elimination of pay differentials between men and women and lawyers from BME backgrounds</i>	<p><i>Evidence from the D &amp; I Charter and the omnibus survey that firms have put in place measures to address the pay gap between men and women and lawyers from BME backgrounds.</i></p> <p><i>Transparent pay structures and pay scales across the sector.</i></p>	<p><i>1. Analyse pay data in the omnibus survey and D&amp;I Charter review.</i></p> <p><i>2. Develop Law Society communications plan to promote equal pay in the profession.</i></p> <p><i>3. RAB to receive regular reports from SRA on monitoring and enforcement of principle 9 in general and particularly in relation to equal pay.</i></p>	<p><i>Q4 2012</i></p> <p><i>Q2 2014</i></p> <p><i>Q2 2013</i></p>

				<p>4. Encourage pay audits through LEXCEL, D &amp; I Charter standards and LMS.</p> <p>5. Promote events and training on equal pay issues.</p>	<p>Q2 2013</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
CG1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3	5.3	A safe environment for dealing with grievances and complaints	The elimination of harassment against those who raise a legitimate grievance or complaint to challenge discrimination.	<p>1. Membership Board to review the support currently available for those experiencing harassment, bullying and discrimination.</p> <p>2. Collect and monitor data through the Law Society Practice Advice Service and the Diversity and Inclusion Charter</p> <p>3. Review guidance and skills development opportunities available to firms on effective management of complaints and grievances.</p> <p>4. Introduce guidance in this area to the LMS toolkit and the D &amp; I Standards toolkit.</p> <p>5. Review the appropriateness of provisions with SRA for support for solicitors in raising complaints.</p>	<p>Q1 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q1 2014</p> <p>Q1 2014</p> <p>Q1 2014</p>