



The Law Society

The Law Society equality and diversity policy and strategy

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Introduction

The Law Society serves a diverse society. It regulates and represents a diverse profession. It provides leadership to the solicitors' profession. It seeks to protect and promote access to justice for all sections of the diverse communities that make up our society today and employs staff from many different backgrounds. The Law Society values and respects this diversity and will strive in all of its activities to take account of and reflect the interests of all the people it serves.

Our Equality and Diversity policy and strategy is influenced by a number of factors including our statutory obligations under the anti-discrimination legislation and changes in the demographic profile of the population, the profession and client base. We will, of course, want to comply with our statutory obligations (summarised in Annex 3). More importantly, as a body representing and regulating a profession, which supports individuals in asserting their legal rights and accessing justice, we want to go beyond compliance and be at the forefront of embracing equality and diversity. We want to promote best practice in the profession and encourage the profession to be sensitive to the specific needs of the different communities to which it provides legal services. We want to promote the profession as one whose members are required to treat each other, clients and others in a fair, equal and non-discriminatory manner.

Investing in equality and diversity also provides a number of business benefits, for example, improving staff retention rates, widening markets and improving services. The Law Society aims to make the most of such opportunities.

We have a twin track approach to equality and diversity – tackling inequalities and valuing diversity.

We recognise that many groups are discriminated against on grounds such as disability, gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation and social, economic and educational background. This discrimination has led to patterns of inequalities and disadvantage and impact on the life chances of many individuals. Some of these patterns of inequality are also reflected in the solicitors' profession, for example, in access to and progression within the profession. We aim to tackle such inequalities.

Alongside addressing the impact of discrimination on some groups, some of the Law Society's policies are designed to respect, value and celebrate the strengths of a diverse profession and workforce. We want to promote the creation of policies and environments in the profession and the Law Society, which are inclusive of the different needs, aspirations and contribution of each individual, whether or not they are protected by the anti-discrimination legislation.

The aim of the Equality and Diversity policy, strategy and action plan is to provide a framework that will help support our commitment to equality and diversity and help us to make progress towards achieving our goals.

Our commitment

The Law Society has a commitment to:

“ Playing a leading role in the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality and diversity in all its activities as a regulator, representative body and an employer”.

Strategic objectives

In order to make progress towards fulfilling this commitment, we aim to become an organisation that:

- **Works towards a more inclusive profession which:**
 - Is able to provide sensitive, appropriate and high quality professional services to diverse clients
 - Is a fair employer
 - Also has the reputation of a profession which treats everyone in a fair, and equal manner

- **Strives to carry out its regulatory responsibilities fairly and consistently - in compliance with the anti-discrimination legislation and the Law Society's equality and diversity policies by:**
 - Ensuring that its regulatory policies, processes, procedures do not discriminate unjustifiably
 - Undertaking regular monitoring and evaluation of its regulatory activities and decision making
 - Ensuring that its Consumer Redress Scheme is accessible to all who wish to make a complaint

- **Ensures that any proposed changes in relation to the regulation of the profession and arrangements for providing professional (non regulatory) services take full account of the impact on all sections of the profession and clients by:**

- Undertaking full equality and diversity assessments of the implications for the profession and the public of any proposed changes
 - Effective presentation to /lobbying of decision and policy makers of the impact of proposals on minority and under-represented groups in the profession
 - Raising awareness within the profession of new opportunities arising from proposed changes
- **Is a fearless champion of a diverse profession by taking into account and promoting the interests, views, needs and aspirations (commensurate with the Law Society's equality and diversity commitment) of all sections of the profession by:**
 - Understanding the needs and issues of the different groups within the profession
 - Actively consulting the different Groups in the profession
 - Challenging views and policies which either fail to take account of or are silent on the impact on different groups in the profession, users of legal services and the Law Society
- **Uses its influence and position as an authoritative voice to promote equality and diversity issues by:**
 - Ensuring that our law reform and legal policy work identifies and takes into account implications of policies and legislation for different groups in our society, users and potential users of legal services and in the profession
 - Campaign for access to justice for vulnerable and excluded groups
 - Make more effective use of our procurement policies to promote our commitment to equality and diversity
- **Is a fair employer who:**
 - Has a diverse workforce at national and regional levels and all grades
 - Ensures that all employees have equal access to benefits and opportunities commensurate with their jobs and grades
 - Provides an inclusive and flexible working environment
 - Ensures that all employees are provided with the opportunities to develop and maintain skills and competencies to enable them

to play their part in promoting equality and diversity in the organisation

- **Develops the Law Society's governance structure and organisational capacity to deliver its equality and diversity commitment by:**
 - Working towards ensuring that the Council, Boards and Committees reflect and represent the diversity in the profession and the communities it serves
 - Ensuring that organisational structures are designed and reviewed regularly to enable the effective implementation of equality and diversity policies
 - Ensuring that organisational resources are adequate and used effectively to support equality and diversity activities
 - Providing those involved in the governance and management of the organisation with opportunities to develop and maintain awareness, skills and competencies so that they have the knowledge and the confidence to deal with equality and diversity issues in an inclusive and robust manner

- **Works towards developing the Law Society as a model of good practice on equality and diversity issues by:**
 - Moving beyond compliance to best practice in all its activities
 - Leading by example
 - Actively promoting equality and diversity with its partners and stakeholders
 - Regularly reviewing and assessing progress toward achieving our equality and diversity goals

Our approach - guiding principles

The implementation of equality and diversity policies will be guided by the following principles:

Mainstreaming

We aim to ensure that equality and diversity issues are integral to all our activities – a routine part of our organisational and business planning activities. This will apply to all work, not only those areas where there are obvious equality and diversity dimensions. This means that we will systematically ensure that equality and diversity aspects and perspectives are

considered in all our work by identifying the impact and consequences for different groups. To this end, we have taken steps to build equality and diversity mainstreaming into our corporate planning system.

Identifying and tackling inequality

In parallel to mainstreaming, we will also take account of the fact that a number of groups have historically been discriminated against and the impact of this discrimination still affects their life chances today. We also recognise that some of these experiences are common and shared by groups of people. We will, therefore, develop and take measures to address disadvantage arising from such circumstances in the profession and in the provision of services by solicitors.

Working in partnership

The Law Society can make better progress on equality and diversity issues by working together with our partners – the profession, users of our services, Government, other professional bodies, and other stakeholders, for example organisations working on equality and diversity issues such as the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission (and the Single Equalities Commission when it is established). We will work with partner organisations to add value to our equality and diversity work.

We also recognise that the Law Society is in a strong position to use its authoritative voice to promote equality and diversity beyond its immediate areas of activities, for example, influencing the national and regional agenda in areas such as education and access to public services. Wherever appropriate, we will seek to make a constructive contribution to promoting equality and diversity in such spheres.

Effective use of resources

We plan to make sure that our resources are used effectively to promote equality and diversity. Sometime, this will mean investing additional resources but this will not always be the case. In many instances, it will mean looking at how better use can be made of existing resources.

Impact assessment

Monitoring and evaluation will be regular feature of our equality and diversity work so that we are confident that our resources are properly prioritised and targeted at the right activities and that the Law Society is in compliance with its obligations arising from the anti-discrimination legislation. To help us undertake robust evaluation, we have developed a basket of indicators which

we will use to help us assess our progress and the impact of our activities
These are set out in Annex 1.

Implementation

Action plan

The Law Society will develop an action plan which will translate the objectives set out above into action, activities and initiatives. The action plan will be developed taking into account the wider legislative and policy context, the business needs of the Law Society and the resources available. A draft action plan for 2004 - 2006 is attached as Annex 2.

Responsibility

The Law Society Council has overarching responsibility for equality and diversity - this includes providing strategic direction, setting policy and monitoring progress. Each Council member has responsibility for complying with and promoting the Law Society's equality and diversity policies.

The Council has delegated the responsibility for ensuring that progress is made on equality and diversity issues to the Main Board. It is supported and advised on this by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

Other Boards and Committees have a responsibility to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken into account fully in respect of their responsibilities and spheres of activity.

The Chief Executive and Senior Management Team have the responsibility for implementing agreed equality and diversity policies.

The Director of Equality and Diversity (supported by the Heads of Equality and Diversity in Representation and Regulation Directorates) is responsible for advising on and developing equality and diversity policies, co-ordinating equality and diversity activities and detailed review of progress.

Heads of Business Units and managers have an important and key role to play in ensuring that equality and diversity policies are translated into action in their Units.

All members of staff have responsibility to ensure that equality and diversity policies are put into practice commensurate with their jobs and responsibilities. Staff are also responsible for making sure that they have read and understood equality and diversity policies, follow the policies and ensure that their managers are informed of any instances of potential discrimination in relation to the Law Society's responsibilities.

All other parties, for example, contractors, recruitment agencies, consultants, and others acting on the Law Society's behalf are expected to adhere to the relevant equality and diversity policies.

Communication

We will communicate our equality and diversity policies and activities both internally and externally using a variety of methods and formats. This will include communicating with the profession on a regular basis and providing information to staff and potential employees. We will also include equality and diversity information in tender documents.

In addition to providing information on specific equality and diversity issues, we will also strive to ensure that all our communication (including consultations, publications, leaflets, reports, advertising etc) is accessible and reflects our commitment to equality and diversity.

Evaluation and development

Assessing the impact of our policies is an important part of our aim to make real and practical changes. We will assess the impact by regular internal and external evaluation of progress against agreed objectives. To this end, we will develop performance indicators, which will help us, measure and monitor progress.

We will also use other activities such as research and customer satisfaction surveys to help us review progress.

We expect to develop our policies further in light of monitoring and evaluation information, our experience of implementing the policy, national legislative, policy and social developments and changes in our business needs.

Measures of progress and impact

To help us undertake meaningful evaluation of the progress towards our Equality and Diversity vision and objectives, we have developed a range of indicators which we believe will signify progress. Many of the indicators will require establishing baselines in the first instance. We will keep the indicators under constant review.

Strategic objective

- **Works towards a more inclusive profession which:**
 - Is able to provide sensitive, appropriate and high quality professional services to diverse clients
 - Is a fair employer
 - Has the reputation as a profession which treats clients and potential clients, employees and potential employees and others (for example, opponents, barristers, agents, contractors) in a fair, equal and non-discriminatory manner

Measures of progress

Internal indicator

- Number of activities undertaken by the Law Society to influence, support and encourage the profession to embrace equality and diversity policies and the number of solicitors involved in such activities

External indicators

- Tracking trends in the demographic profile of the profession to assess if it is broadly comparable with that of the working population, and is reflective of this profile at all levels and in all types of practice
- An increase in the proportion of solicitors who feel that the profession is more inclusive (to be assessed every 3 years)
- Tracking the proportion of the public who think that the profession behaves in a fair and non-discriminatory manner (to be assessed every 3 years)
- Increase in the proportion of firms which have adopted equality and diversity strategies such as family friendly policies, more transparent and open recruitment and the provision of equality and diversity training

(Family friendly policies is a term used to define a whole range of organisational policies which allow staff to balance their work commitments with alongside their family obligations.

Typically, this can include arrangements for flexible working, working from home, term time working, carers leave and so on.)

- Increase in the proportion of solicitors who take up CPD accredited equality and diversity training. In the short term, the Law Society will monitor take up of equality and diversity training offered by the Law Society with a view to monitoring equality and diversity training provided by others in the long term
- Fewer and smaller pay differences between male and female trainees and solicitors

Strategic objective

Strives to carry out its regulatory responsibilities fairly and consistently - in compliance with the anti-discrimination legislation and the Law Society's equality and diversity policies by:

- Ensuring that its regulatory policies, processes, procedures do not discriminate unjustifiably
- Undertaking regular monitoring and evaluation of its regulatory activities and decision making
- Ensuring that its Consumer Redress Scheme is accessible to all who wish to make a complaint

Measures of progress

Internal indicators

- Number of activities that promote the implementation of the Solicitors Anti-Discrimination Rule and the number of solicitors involved in them
- Assessment of whether regulatory activities impact on certain demographic groups more than others
- Tracking changes in the number of discrimination complaints received by the Law Society
- Tracking the changes in the % of individuals who are satisfied with the handling of their discrimination complaints by the Law Society

- Whether complainant satisfaction rates are broadly comparable across all demographic groups
- Whether the demographic profile of complainants is broadly comparable with the profile of the population

External indicators

- Tracking the proportion of firms collecting equality monitoring information on their recruitment and selection process and making the analysis available to the Law Society
- Changes in the number of Firms or individuals seeking advice on equality and diversity issues from the Law Society through the Professional and Ethics Unit

Strategic objective

- **Ensures that any proposed changes in relation to the regulation of the profession and arrangements for providing professional (non regulatory) services take full account of the impact on all sections of the profession and clients by:**
 - Number of equality and diversity assessments of the implications for the profession and the public of any proposed changes
 - Effective presentation to /lobbying of decision and policy makers of the impact of proposals on minority and under-represented groups in the profession
 - Raising awareness within the profession of new opportunities arising from proposed changes

Measures of progress

- Number of activities undertaken and opportunities used to identify, highlight and address any differential impact on specific groups within the profession and the number of solicitors involved in them

(for example, providing and seeking information from the profession using the Gazette and other media, seminars, meetings, consultation exercises, conferences, briefings for stakeholders and responses to external consultations by the Law Society)

- Assessment of awareness across the different demographic groups within the profession of the new business opportunities arising from changes to the regulations of the profession

Strategic objective

- **Is a fearless champion of a diverse profession by taking into account and promoting the interests, views, needs and aspirations (in line with the Law Society's equality and diversity commitment) of all sections of the profession by:**
 - Understanding the needs and issues of the different groups within the profession
 - Actively consulting the different Groups in the profession
 - Challenging views and policies which either fail to take account of or are silent on the impact on different groups in the profession, users of legal services and the Law Society

Measures of progress

- Number of activities undertaken to promote the interests of the different sectors of the profession with the Government and other key stakeholders and the number of solicitors involved in such activities
- Number of alliances developed and used to promote the interest of the different groups in the profession
- Number of consultations and dialogues with representative groups across the profession
- Increase in the number of groups or individuals currently under-represented in the Law Society's governance or consultation arrangements contributing to consultations

Strategic objective

Uses its influence and position as an authoritative voice to promote equality and diversity issues by:

- Ensuring that our law reform and legal policy work identifies and takes into account implications of policies and legislation for different groups in our society, users and potential users of legal services and in the profession
- Campaign for access to justice for vulnerable and excluded groups
- Make more effective use of our procurement policies to promote our commitment to equality and diversity

Measures of progress

- Increase in the involvement of and consultation with appropriate individuals and groups to ensure that consideration of equality and diversity issues in the legal policy and law reform areas is strengthened
- Increase in the use of procurement procedures by the Law Society to promote equality and diversity issues

Strategic Objective

• Is a fair employer who:

- Has a diverse workforce at national and regional levels and all grades
- Ensures that all employees have equal access to benefits and opportunities commensurate with their jobs and grades
- Provides an inclusive and flexible working environment
- Ensures that all employees are provided with the opportunities to develop and maintain skills and competencies to enable them to play their part in promoting equality and diversity in the organisation

Measures of progress

- Increase in the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic and disabled staff in the workforce at all levels and grades against benchmarks
- Track changes in the number of Law Society staff discrimination complaints and their outcomes
- Increase in the proportion of staff who feel that the Law Society is a fair and inclusive employer
- Increase in awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues by all Law Society staff

Strategic objectives

- **Develops the Law Society's governance structure and organisational capacity to deliver its equality and diversity commitment by:**
 - Working towards ensuring that the Council, Boards and Committees reflect and represent the diversity in the profession and the communities it serves
 - Ensuring that organisational structures are designed and reviewed regularly to enable the effective implementation of equality and diversity policies
 - Ensuring that organisational resources are adequate and used effectively to support equality and diversity activities
 - Providing those involved in the governance and management of the organisation with opportunities to develop and maintain awareness, skills and competencies so that they have the knowledge and the confidence to deal with equality and diversity issues in an inclusive and robust manner

Measures of progress

- Increase in the proportion of under-represented groups involved in Law Society governance arrangements
- Increase in the awareness and understanding equality and diversity issues of Law Society Council, Board and Committee members

Strategic objective

- **Works towards developing the Law Society as a model of good practice on equality and diversity issues by:**
 - Moving beyond compliance to best practice in all its activities
 - Leading by example
 - Actively promoting equality and diversity with its partners and stakeholders
 - Regularly reviewing and assessing progress toward achieving our equality and diversity goals

Measures of progress

- Track the proportion of the public and stakeholders who view the Law Society as taking a leading role in promoting equality and diversity
- Increase in the number of instances where the Law Society takes a leading role in equality and diversity activities with its partners and stakeholders
- Regular reviews of progress towards implementing the Law Society's equality and diversity strategy
- Media coverage of the Law Society's equality and diversity work
- Number of requests for the Law Society to participate in equality and diversity activities

Action plan 2005 – 2006

Annex 2

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Working towards an inclusive profession		
<p>Continue to monitor statistics on access to vocational training and acquisition of training contracts to identify and address obstacles in the way of some groups entering the profession. In 2005, particular emphasis will be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying barriers face by disabled people on entering the profession • gathering data on the allocation of training contracts 	Director of Regulation, Standards	Ongoing
Publish and take any necessary action on the findings and recommendations of the research into performance at the LPC stage	<p>Director of Regulation, Standards</p> <p>Director of Strategic Policy</p>	May 2005
Address and take appropriate action on issues related to career progression of women, Black and Minority Ethnic and disabled solicitors including progression to partnership and Equal Pay	Director of Equality and Diversity	End of 2005/Early 2006
Undertake research into the career experiences of lesbian, gay and bi-sexual solicitors with a view to identifying and addressing any barriers and obstacles	<p>Director of Equality and Diversity</p> <p>Director of Strategic Policy</p>	December 2005
Further develop the Diversity Access Scheme to provide a long term strategy for funding the scheme	Director of Equality and Diversity	February 2005
Provide support and guidance to Firms on complying with their anti-discrimination obligations and implement best practice through the provision of information, training	Director of Regulation, Standards	December 2005

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
materials, learning opportunities and seminars. Key priority areas will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and selection services to clients and communication with clients arising from different cultural, language or disability needs (including interpretation and translation)		
Ensure that the CPD review considers the option of making equality and diversity training for all solicitors mandatory	Director of Regulation, Standards	TBC
Review the criteria for Accreditation Panel membership to ensure that those accepted are competent to deal with equality and diversity issues	Director of Regulation, Standards	May 2005
Review entry requirements to the profession to ensure that requirements do not discriminate against any specific groups	Director of Regulation, Standards	May 2005
Explore the feasibility of establishing a process/mechanism to collate and publish monitoring information on the recruitment of trainees and qualified staff by Firms	Director of Regulation, Standards	March 2005
Revise and update targets for the recruitment of trainees and qualified staff to better reflect the profile of the profession and the population	Director of Equality and Diversity	March 2005
Striving to carry out regulatory activities fairly		
Enhance the current monitoring and analysis of regulation decision making to provide information and data on the impact of regulation activities on different demographic groups	Director of Regulation, Standards, Director of Regulation, Compliance,	May 2005

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
	Director of Consumer Complaints Service	
Review procedures and criteria for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions to undertake investigations • Referrals to SDT • Criteria for monitoring visits 	Director of Regulation, Standards Director of Regulation, Compliance	June 2005
Review Firms' equality and diversity policies as part of the Practice Standards Unit monitoring programme	Director of Regulation, Standards	Ongoing
Collate and analyse complainant satisfaction data to establish the levels of satisfaction across specific demographic groups	Director of Regulation, Standards	May 2005
Establish a complainant database which will provide information on the profile of complainants	Director of Consumer Complaints Service	TBC
Review the Consumer Complaints Service to ensure that it is compliant with the anti-discrimination legislation and good practice	Director of Consumer Complaints Service	Throughout 2005
Provide specific training for all staff who handle discrimination complaints	Director of Equality and Diversity	February 2005
Review the Anti-Discrimination Rule once age anti-discrimination regulations are published	Director of Regulation, Standards	Mid 2006

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Championing the views, needs and aspirations of a diverse profession		
Review and enhance the Law Society's current arrangements for consultation and dialogue with these representing the interests of specific groups in the profession	Director of Representation and Law Reform	March 2005
Establish common information resources around equality and diversity issues and assess the implications for making these resources accessible to internal and external stakeholders	Director of Representation and Law Reform	End June 2005
Review the role, function, membership of the Diversity Forum	Director of Representation and Law Reform	March 2005
Develop and disseminate best practice guidelines which will assist Law Society Staff in planning inclusive consultation	Director of Representation and Law Reform	March 2005
Further develop our understanding of the different and specific needs and aspirations of minority and under-represented groups in the profession so that we can improve our assessment of equality and diversity implications	Director of Representation and Law Reform	Ongoing
<p>Assess, communicate and ensure that policy and decisions makers take into account equality and diversity implications of key developments in 2005/6, which will impact on the profession and the services it provides to the public. For 2005, we will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed changes to the regulation of the profession (Clementi Review) • Review on the professional) non-regulation) services • Legal Aid 	Director of Equality and Diversity	Ongoing

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Press the Department for Constitutional Affairs to take appropriate action to improve diversity amongst the judiciary, through responding to the DCA consultation paper and follow up action	Director of Strategic Policy	July 2005
Ensure that the new arrangements for identifying QCs address equality and diversity issues and operate fairly to applicants from all backgrounds	Director of Strategic Policy	April 2005
Review the provision of pastoral care to ensure that those who feel discriminated against and/or wish to take further action are provided with support and guidance	Director of Representation and Law Reform	June 2005
Using the Law Society's authoritative voice and influence		
Strengthen the identification and consideration of equality and diversity implications in law reform and policy work so that these issues are routinely identified and considered in policy work	Director of Representation and Law Reform	Ongoing
Ensure that the Law Society makes a full response to the review of current and proposed anti-discrimination legislation by participating actively in public debates and consultations about discrimination law and the proposals for a single equality and human rights commission	Director of Representation and Law Reform and Director of Strategic Policy	Ongoing
Develop a corporate strategy to promote equality and diversity through the procurement of goods and services by the Law Society	Director of Finance and Resources	March 2005

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Develop and disseminate guidelines on the adherence to the Law Society's equality and diversity policies and expectations of behaviour for third parties such as contractors, consultants, users of and visitors to Law Society premises etc	Director of Equality and Diversity	March 2005
Ensure that equality and diversity issues are integral to the Law Society's relationship with external partners and stakeholders	All Directors and Heads of Business Units	Ongoing
Working towards becoming a fairer employer		
Undertake and make available a comprehensive analysis of the Law Society's workforce profile to provide basic management information so that potential areas of concern can be identified and addressed	Director of Finance and Resources	January 2005
Undertake and make available an analysis of the recruitment and selection process of recruitment in 2004	Director of Finance and Resources	February 2005
Review the collection, collation and analysis of equality and diversity monitoring information	Director of Finance and Resources	April 2005
<p>Review the following policies to ensure that they are compliant with the Law Society's obligations as well as best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Opportunities in Employment policy • Recruitment and Selection • Dignity at Work • Disciplinary procedures <p>Provide a swift method of resolving individual concerns related to equality and diversity issues</p>	Director of Finance and Resources	December 2005

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Ensure the next staff survey includes assessment of equality and diversity issues	Director of Finance and Resources	2006
Develop and implement a flexible working policy	Director of Finance and Resources	2005
Undertake an Equal Pay Audit	Director of Finance and Resources	December 2004
Provide specific equality and diversity training to HR staff and managers on managing a diverse workforce	Director of Finance and Resources	June 2005
Develop guidelines for supporting staff groups such as the Disability Staff group	Director of Finance and Resources	March 2005
Develop and implement an equality and diversity competency framework for staff and a training plan to help staff attain and maintain these competencies	Director of Finance and Resources	March 2005
Provide flexible function specific training opportunities for all Law Society staff	Director of Finance and Resources	Ongoing
Review current communication on equality and diversity issues and enhance arrangements where necessary	Director of Equality and Diversity	December 2004
Developing governance structures and organisational capacity		
Undertake an audit of the diversity profile of Council, Board and Committee members with a view to setting targets which will better reflect and represent the diversity of the profession	Director of Legal Services	Audit to be completed by February 2005 with follow up work to be completed by end of 2005
Provide 2 equality and diversity training opportunities annually for new Council Members in compliance with bye-law 67A	Director of Equality and Diversity	End of December 2004
Plan and deliver equality and diversity training opportunities for Board and Committee members via training sessions, seminars and lectures	Director of Equality and Diversity	Ongoing in 2005

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
Review equality and diversity staff arrangements	Chief Executive and Director of Representation and Law Reform	September 2005
Agree a process by which equality and diversity issues are integral to the corporate and operational planning and review process	Director of Strategic Policy	End of December 2004
Produce and publish a Race Equality Scheme by 31 May 2005	Director of Equality and Diversity	31 May 2005
Becoming a model of good practice		
Establish a network/forum which will enable the identification and sharing of best practice on equality and diversity issues in the legal professions.	Director of Equality and Diversity	March 2005
Commence monitoring or establishing baseline data in line with agreed indicators	Director of Equality and Diversity	Throughout 2005
Establish external evaluation arrangements	Director of Equality and Diversity	December 2004
Provide quarterly progress reports to the Main Board and an annual report to Council and at any other time as necessary	Director of Equality and Diversity	January 2005 March 2005 June 2005
Explore the feasibility of establishing a good practice forum for the profession	Director of Equality and Diversity	May 2005
Develop and launch Annual Race Equality Awards in the solicitors profession in conjunction with the Commission for Racial Equality Awards presentation	Director of Equality and Diversity	December 2004

Activity	Lead responsibility	Timescale/ target date
		June 2005
Review the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Framework for Action	Director of Equality and Diversity	December 2005

Relevant legislation

Under the anti-discrimination legislation, the Law Society has a number of statutory obligations to its members, the profession, the public and its employees. These obligations are set out mainly in the

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Race Relations Act 1976(Amendment) Regulations 2002
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003.
- Equal Pay Act 1970

And any associated codes of practice

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002
- Part – time Workers (Prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2000 and 2002
- The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2002
- Maternity and Parental leave regulations 1999, 2001 and 2002
- Paternity and Adoption leave regulations 2002

Law Society obligations

i) Law Society obligations to staff

The Law Society must ensure that it does not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of racial origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religious/belief in any employment and training related issues. For example, the arrangements for recruiting and selecting employees, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotion and transfers, grievance and disciplinary procedures, demotion, selection for redundancy, dress code, references, bonus schemes, work allocations and any other benefits (except pensions) must apply equally to everyone. The legislation covers permanent employees as well as agency staff and contract workers, and extends to post-termination employment situations as well. The Law Society is also subject to the specific duty concerning employment under the Race Relations (Statutory Duties) Order 2001, which requires it to undertake extensive monitoring of a

number of employment related matters including staff profile, grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisals, training and dismissals.

ii) Law Society obligations to the profession

All the obligations owed to employees under all the legislation are also owed to members of the profession. This applies especially to the exercise of the regulatory function. The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 places an additional duty to ensure that the Law Society, in undertaking its regulatory function, does not discriminate against solicitors on the basis of racial, ethnic or national origin or colour.

iii) Law Society obligations to its members

In its capacity as a trade or professional organisation, the Law Society must also ensure that it does not discriminate unlawfully against its members. This also applies to the arrangements and procedures for appointing some (non-elected) office-holders such as Chairs of Tribunals and Company Secretaries.

iv) Law Society obligations to the public

The Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial origin and disability in the delivery of services. This includes services provided by any profession, trade or organisation. In the main, this will apply to areas such as consumer complaints and commercial services.

With respect to disability only, there is also an anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices and procedures to ensure that disabled people (as defined by the DDA) can access Law Society services. For example, making sure that the Law Society website is accessible to disabled people.

These provisions are enforceable by individual action in the County Courts.

There is also an additional duty arising from the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. This applies to the regulatory functions only. The Law Society must ensure that it does not discriminate in the discharge of its public functions (i.e. regulatory functions).

v) Law Society obligation on race equality

Following the amendment of the Race Relations Act 1976 (by the Race Relations Amendment Act in 2000), the Law Society regulatory functions are now subject to Section 71 of the Race Relations Act. The amended Section 71 places a general duty and specific on the Law Society.

General duty

The general duty is set out in Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act and requires the Law Society (public functions) to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

The general duty to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations is monitored by the Commission for Racial Equality and is enforceable through judicial review as distinct from the individual rights and remedies above.

Specific duty

In December 2004, the Law Society also became subject to the specific duties under Section 2(2) and (3) of the Race Relations (Statutory Duties) Order 2001. This requires the Law Society to produce a Race Equality Scheme by the end of May 2005.

vi) Law Society Obligation as a Qualifying Body

As a qualifying body, which confers and authorises qualifications needed to practise as a solicitor, the Law Society must ensure that it does not discriminate on grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation and religion or belief. This will be extended to include disability from October 2004.

This will include, for example, recognition, registration, enrolment, approval and certification as well as the setting of competencies and standards required to gain qualification.