The Law Society’s Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

2016 – 2019
# Contents

The Law Society Equality Framework 3
Executive summary 4
The Law Society Commitment 2016-2019 5
Outcomes for the Law Society members 6
Outcomes for the Law Society 6
Introduction 7
Overview 7
Drivers for change 7
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework – priorities 8
Organisational development 9
The Law Society staff 10
Delivering the Framework – the Law Society priorities 12
Managing risk 13
Next steps 14
Appendix A: Background data – legal profession 15
Appendix B : Brief picture of E & D progress from 2012 to 2015 17
The Law Society's Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Law Society of England and Wales will take necessary action to eliminate individual and institutional discrimination; to comply with its legislative obligations; to meet the needs of its members, partners, stakeholders and staff; and to make equality and equal treatment a core issue in the development, delivery and refinement of its policies, initiatives and services and the way it manages its staff.

The Equality Act 2010 provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Law Society and the legal sector have duties as service providers and employers under the act which requires the legal profession to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

The act covers discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These categories are known in the act as protected characteristics.
Executive summary

The Law Society is the representative body for solicitors in England and Wales. Employing over 400 staff across sites in London, the Midlands, Wales and Brussels, we support solicitors and law firms to deliver a high standard of service to their clients and we promote the rule of law. We also lobby parliament on issues such as legal aid and access to justice, run a variety of CPD-accredited training courses, and provide a wide range of products and services, including helplines, books, events and accreditation schemes.

Three values are at the heart of everything we do:

- **Member focus:** putting our members first and seeking to understand their needs.
- **Respect:** appreciating the diversity of our workforce and membership.
- **Collaboration:** working together and sharing knowledge and expertise to achieve the best possible outcomes.

These values guide what we say and how we act with each other, our members, our suppliers and our stakeholders.

The Law Society is the representative body of a globally respected legal tradition, and valued as a vital partner by those it engages with and serves (over 170,000 members). We must act fairly and in the interests of the legal profession at all times. We realise that our services and offerings must be designed for the benefit of our members and that our workforce needs to reflect the population we serve. We will treat all our employees with respect. The Law Society will ensure equal treatment — and by this we mean treating people fairly, providing equal opportunity while respecting people’s differences — in service delivery and employment.

Although the Law Society is not subject to the public duties on equality placed on other public bodies, senior managers and the Law Society Council have taken the extremely positive step of working as though the public duties do apply. The Law Society Equality Framework is comprised of an Equality Charter, Equality Policy, Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit, and Equality Action Plan, for the purpose of meeting legal obligations. (*links to be added in the final document*)

Each of these have been developed to prevent any unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment against its membership, representatives, partners, stakeholders, employees and job applicants, whether that treatment is intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect.

The ED&I Framework, Equality Charter and Equality Policy have been written in consultation with the Law Society’s internal Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), which includes staff from the Corporate Responsibility, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team (CREDI). In addition, the Law Society's Communities teams, Policy team and the Human Resources team have been consulted throughout its development. It builds on the Framework presented to and signed off by EDIC in January 2012.

There is now a much more powerful business case for equality in the legal profession as we move towards 2016 and beyond. A legal profession that draws on talent from different groups in society is more likely to be competitive in the long term as the UK population ages and diversifies.
The Law Society commitments 2016-19

To enable the successful delivery of our equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes, we will focus on the following areas:

- **Policy and practice** - assessing all new policies and major projects for their equality impact.

- **Working together** - with our members and our internal and external stakeholders to maximise the benefits of collaboration on equality and diversity.

- **Consulting and communicating** - with members, partners and staff on developments and achievements.

- **Monitoring** - internally and through partners, monitoring progress against our equality objectives and the impact this has on the legal profession.

- **Supporting members and partners** – we will facilitate the achievement of agreed equality goals including increasing signatories to our flagship, the Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Charter (D&I Charter) for the legal profession, as well as introducing Platinum Plus an advance level recognition in the field of equality.

- **Engagement of supplier diversity** – we will seek out methods of promoting and marketing the Law Society D&I Charter to the wider legal sector supply chain.

- **Employment** - implementing recruitment procedures that aim to attract the best available candidates from the widest possible talent pool and enabling existing staff to develop their skills in a supportive environment.
Outcomes of success for the Law Society members

The Law Society's 2014 research has identified what is important, where we should improve, and what drives our member's satisfaction. Areas important to our members are:

- understanding their needs and being more visible in protecting their interests
- communication and engagement
- meeting the needs of our diverse membership
- providing them with valued products, service, guidance and support

These measures will help raise members' understanding of our obligations and, in turn, their understanding of their role in achieving equality outcomes through the strategic relationships. A measure of success would be a year-on-year increase of law firms signing up to the Law Society D&I Charter and participation in bi-annual charter self-assessment.

The Law Society will take forward appropriate recommendation from the D&I Charter annual review reports of 2013 and 2015.

Outcomes of success for the Law Society

The anticipated outcomes include:

- service investment decisions that are free from discrimination as well as increased diversity of membership of the Law Society voluntary communities
- the Law Society will work with key strategic stakeholders such as the Bar Council and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx), in championing diversity in the profession
- increased equality for D&I charter signatories and their staff
- the D&I Charter will achieve a wider reach within the supply chain;
- the Law Society will promote, champion and work closely with more diverse legal profession networks and forums
- increased employee satisfaction
- the Law Society recruitment procedures will follow best practice, particularly in attracting candidates from the widest possible pool in order to give equal opportunity to all.

Progress on these outcomes will be monitored by the boards and committees themselves with oversight from EDIC. The Executive Board will be responsible for annual business plans (link to business plan to be provided) clearly indicating all proposed actions which are intended to deliver ED&I Framework objectives. Business plans will be agreed by the Management Board and require the approval of the Law Society Council.

We will measure our performance against other sectors and law practices through by participating in benchmarking exercises such as the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI), Opportunity Now, Race for Opportunity, the Law Society’s D&I Charter, and the Black Solicitors Network (BSN) Diversity League Tables.

We will validate our performance by competing for external awards such as Working Families’ Top Employers for Working Families.

We will undertake research into trends in the profession and the experience of members as it relates to Equality and Diversity.

We will produce an annual report measuring performance against clear goals and performance measures on recruitment, staff development, promotion and overall management of our people, against high benchmarking standards.
Introduction to the Equality Framework

Equality outcomes of success are best understood and achieved when linked to an organisation’s core functions. The Law Society is a professional membership organisation and this status brings with it legal obligations that we are required to meet. Furthermore, we are a highly respected membership organisation with a unique role in as a strategic investor in our members, and champion of the legal sector.

Through this framework, the Law Society will seek to assist the legal sector in developing a greater understanding of the equality factors that can affect member success.

We want our members to set the highest standard in fulfilling their responsibilities as a cornerstone of the legal system. We want to ensure that, both within and through our members, we maximise the impact of our work at home and internationally - using our unique position to help exert global influence in the legal profession.

Ultimately the purpose of the Equality Framework will be to show what the Law Society is doing, both as an employer and as the representative body for the legal profession.

Equality and diversity means treating people fairly and providing equal opportunity while respecting people’s differences. It is an important part of who we are and what we do. It is also central to how we treat our members, volunteers, staff and the legal profession at large.

Overview

The Law Society aims to lead and support a successful and respected profession within both the business sector and as an important part of the justice system. It is also important that solicitors are highly regarded as employers and service providers. We must encourage the profession to reflect the public it serves and lead the way in meeting current expectations around equality and diversity.

For our profession and firms to be successful we must ensure they are best placed to benefit from the widest possible talent pool and that this talent is kept within the profession. We must also make sure we offer our services to the widest possible pool of commercial and private clients. Our ED&I Framework aims to support these aspirations.

Drivers for change

There have been improvements in many areas in the sector, including the growing number of women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people entering the profession, but in certain areas there has been little progress over the last 10 years, these include issues around:

- career progression
- making partnership in a firm
- pay - differential (gender, BAME and disability)
- discrimination and bullying
- accessibility for clients with impairments
- an accurate view of the number of disabled people within the profession
- support for small business
- social mobility
- flexible working
ED&I Framework 2016-2019 priorities

The 2016-19 ED&I Framework will build on work undertaken as part of the 2012-15 Framework. Since the adoption of the ED&I Framework in 2009, significant work has been undertaken on barriers to career progression. Law Society research revealed that barriers to career progression based on gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation remain within the profession¹. We will publish an action plan setting out how we will work closely with the profession on ways to address the barriers highlighted in this framework.

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

- **Flexible working**
  
The importance of flexible working has emerged as a priority area for solicitors. Flexible working enables members to support their own work/life balance without penalties to career progression. It also enables employers to deliver equality of opportunity, attract and retain diverse talent and enhance business performance.

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

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

  We will take forward appropriate recommendations from both the 2013 and 2015 D&I Charter annual review reports.

- **Supplier diversity**
  
  We will investigate the potential of marketing and promoting the D&I Charter to the wider business community associated with the legal profession.

- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**
  
  Introducing an EIA process in 2015 means we will be able to promote and integrate equality effectively into to all the Law Society functions has greatly enhanced our ability to promote and integrate equality into our consultation processes and service delivery. We will continue to review and improve our utilisation of the EIA process to enhance the Society’s decision-making processes.

- **Monitoring**
  
  While some monitoring of age, gender and ethnicity of the profession has taken place, it is important to improve the quality and the extent of data available to ensure that we have a more accurate diversity profile for the profession. We will strive to make better use and cross reference data gathered from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), the Law Society D&I Charter and BSN Diversity League Tables.

¹ http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/articles/diversity-survey-results/
Pay differentials

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

Disability and age

People with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the profession. Issues related to age discrimination may become more apparent. We will seek to address these issues through the delivery of the 2016-2019 ED&I Framework.

Social mobility

The Law Society is committed to ensuring that talented individuals who aspire to a career as a solicitor have fair access and opportunity to pursue their ambition, regardless of their socio-economic background. Examples of initiatives in place, such as the Diversity Access Scheme\(^2\) and Ambassador Project\(^3\) are two examples of social mobility projects already underway.

Pro bono

The Law Society want the general public to recognise the significant contribution made by the profession through pro bono work, and we want members of the profession to be able to access pro bono opportunities, as part of the Society’s wider equality agenda to help those that are socially excluded. However, we also recognise that pro bono work can never be an adequate substitute for a properly funded legal aid scheme.

While a combination of legislation and innovative action adopted in our 2009-2012 and 2012-2015 ED&I Framework has brought us a long way, our annual research, *Trends in the Solicitors Profession - 2014*\(^4\), suggests that inequality and discrimination persist, in particular in the provision of and access to the legal profession for BAME communities. These communities are poorly represented at decision-making levels, highly concentrated in the small firms sector and for a number of reasons are excluded or face a range of barriers to participation within the legal profession.

Organisational development

In order to meet our priorities we need to ensure the following:

- strengthen how we measure and review the effect of equality practice to drive improvements in the system
- work harder with partners to deliver tangible outcomes in the legal sector
- review underrepresentation by certain groups at middle and senior management levels, giving consideration to any unjustifiable reasons for this
- monitor any significant differences in employment processes and responses to staff surveys
- ensure consistency in the practical application of the human resource policy
- focus appropriately and effectively on the range of equality and diversity issues including race, gender, religion and belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and social mobility
- implement a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment

---

3 Ambassador Project link to be provided in final document
The Law Society staff

Using the 2012-15 ED&I Framework we have improved staff representation across the Law Society. We will continue to gather data, review under representation and take any necessary actions to ensure continued equality of opportunity at the Law Society.

Our staff profile in March 2015 is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Declined to state</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 - 25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>Chinese or other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 64</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Declined to state</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a slight increase in overall male appointment between 2012 and 2015 by 3 per cent and the younger age brackets (16-24 and 25-34) by around 4 per cent each. However, there was a 6 per cent decline in the 45-54 age bracket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>Opposite Sex</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>Same Sex</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to state</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More staff are declaring their sexual orientation but we need to work harder to develop an environment where staff feel confident disclosing this information and encourage better reporting.
Our current senior management (grades J-L) representation is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 64</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to state</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
<th>2012 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese or other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to state</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no change and still a major BAME representation gap at senior management level. Evidence suggests a drop of around 7 per cent in female membership and a 10 per cent drop for those aged between 35-44.

*Figures for sexual orientation and religion or belief for senior managers are not published due to low numbers and the potential for identification*
Delivering the ED&I Framework

The Law Society priorities

We should deliver equality and diversity through our business priorities. The Law Society is bound by the Equality Act 2010 that provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

Our strategic objectives and priority actions for 2016-19 to:

Lead improvement in the legal sector by:

- carrying out EIAs on all our policies, programmes and projects*
- measuring the progress made by our partners against key areas of best practice which will help identify areas of support as they implement the Law Society D&I Charter
- analysing business outcomes to assess equality needs in respect of the Law Society business strategy
- disseminating good practice and providing the platform for exchanging information

This will help set priorities and enable us to make informed decisions when deploying resources and providing support.

Inspire confidence among our partners and the UK legal profession by:

- making sure we have a balanced approach between working with our members, partners and stakeholders and carrying out our own specific equality work
- developing, communicating and delivering our equality objectives across all of the protected characteristics, creating opportunities to raise awareness of diversity issues and to celebrate our differences

Build a reputation for people development, career opportunities and the commitment and skill of all our people by:

- including equality and diversity training in our people development programmes
- reviewing recruitment policies and practices to identify any opportunities for improvement
- monitoring equality and diversity in employment processes
- maintaining robust employee complaints and grievance procedures with a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment

Continuously strengthen our ability to deliver by:

- building a greater understanding of the factors that affect different groups of members and adjusting services in the light of these findings
- addressing the requirements in the new legislative areas of sexuality and religion or belief
- developing guidance for staff and the legal sector which prioritises the areas of lowest representation

* Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) offer an opportunity for the Law Society staff and their teams to think carefully about the impact of their work on the legal profession. The EIA process is not just a legal requirement, it is best practice and it actually helps to improve policies, procedures, projects and reviews.
Managing risk

There are a number of risks to the successful delivery of the ED&I Framework. We will prepare and monitor an organisational risk map for equality so we can respond to changes and challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Mitigating action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure to identify equality and diversity outcome measures in our planning and performance management systems leading to legal challenge with the related financial and reputation damage this would cause.</td>
<td>EIAs are carried out on all major investment, practice notes and project decisions to minimise risk and maximise effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Failure to set up essential systems to monitor and manage information leading to less well-informed decision-making. | Monitoring data will be gathered for all members, law firms and their make-up, job candidates, staff and the Law Society funded programme participants.  
Using 2016-2019, business plan and by monitoring progress against the business plan, we will build a body of evidence of our progress and achievements.  
We will work with our D&I Charter forums, networks, the Law Society communities and stakeholders to maintain a watching brief on our equality commitments. |
| Failure to have an effective engagement strategy with members of diverse groups can also lead to lack of awareness of their needs. A good example is the vote of no confidence in the Council’s handling of the legal aid reforms and its relationship with the government. The Council assumed a course of action without properly engaging/consulting with its diverse membership. The result was a misreading of what members want – which had a large cost implication and created reputational risk. | Programme of events to actively encourage underrepresented groups join our volunteer community.  
Mentoring and coaching to demystify the process.  
Setting targets for recruitment of underrepresented groups on Council which would be published annually. |
| Failure to consult, communicate and engage with diverse members; this could lead to an unwillingness to take an active role in the decision-making process of the Law Society. This is already evident in the make-up of the Law Society Council and committees. | Encourage and support more local networks.  
Tap into regional manager local intelligence.  
Encourage diverse Council members to raise their profile - by meeting their members through local law society networks / promoting their role through newsletters.  
Encourage community committees more actively through participation at EDIC |
Assumptions that the legal profession may not yet need to consider the impact of a changing demographics and the potential talent currently unable to access the legal sector.

Through the D&I Charter we will support charter signatories in building greater understanding of barriers to legal profession.

We will also work with the Law Society Communities and CREDI teams to build solid pathways to ensure the work undertaken helps to widen access to greater pool of talent within the legal profession.

To gain understanding of who is accessing legal services through working with our members and analysing their data.

External factors.

External factors, such as further restrictions on the scope and funding of legal aid, affecting the diversity of the supplier base and the access of communities to legal assistance.

As set out in the Law Society Equality Policy, accountability for the delivery of this Framework lies with the chief executive. Operational delivery will be the responsibility of team leaders and the equality manager will provide the necessary information, guidance and support to facilitate this delivery.

Next steps

This Framework will be submitted to EDIC for approval in September 2015, followed by senior management team in October 2015 and to the Council by end of the year. Subject to this approval we will then publish the framework in January 2016 on our website and develop a one-year action plan which sets out the priority actions, lead responsibility and timescales for delivery.

Regular progress reports will be submitted to EDIC and senior management. An annual report presented to the Council. Quarterly reviews will be led by the Law Society EDIC.
Background data - legal profession of England and Wales

The UK population is projected to increase by a total of 4.3 million to reach 65.6 million by 2018. This increase is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.7 per cent. If past trends continue, the population will continue to grow, reaching 71.6 million by 2033. This is due to natural increase (more births than deaths).

Women

Women now account for 48.2 per cent of solicitors with practising certificates (PCs). Whereas since 2004 the total number of solicitors holding practising certificates has grown by 34.8 per cent, the number of women holding practising certificates has increased by 60.3 per cent. The Law Society 2008 salary survey identified a pay gap for women solicitors.

The March 2010 obstacles and barriers to the career development of women solicitors study revealed that organisational culture, outdated perceptions of women, resistance to present-day management practices such as flexible working, and perceptions of client expectations meant the legal sector was still very male dominated.

People with disabilities

In 2014 around 11.9 per cent of the working age population (16-64 years) in England and Wales in employment were disabled. This estimate of the proportion of people with disability covers both Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) disabled (someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities) and those work-limiting disabled.

Around five per cent of Practice Certificate (PC) holders in the 2014 PC holder survey reported having a long-term illness, health problem or disability. Of these, 41.3 per cent reported that they were ‘limited a little’ and 29.8 per cent said they were ‘limited a lot’. Therefore five per cent should be treated as the bottom limit of the proportion of solicitors.

Ethnic minorities

The Law Society’s 2008 salary survey identified a pay gap for black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) solicitors.

The March 2010 obstacles and barriers to the career development of BAME solicitors study revealed that access and entry to the profession, transparency of pay structures and measurement of performance, and the criteria and opportunities for career progression meant the legal sector was still predominately from a white background, causing real issues for the retention and advancement of top BAME talent.

13.7 per cent of solicitors with practising certificates are from BAME backgrounds, and 12.5 per cent of all solicitors in private practice.

BAME solicitors are mainly represented in London (16.7 per cent); West Midlands (17 per cent) and the East Midlands (12 per cent).

BAME solicitors are overrepresented as sole practitioners (8.4 per cent) and in practices of one to four partners (32.5 per cent).

6 file:///I:/mydocs/Downloads/BME%20solicitors_final.pdf
Almost 24.1 per cent of roll admissions were solicitors from BAME backgrounds.

**Social mobility in the legal profession**

The PC Holders Survey 2013 found that 28.6 per cent of solicitors interviewed attended independent or public schools compared to around 7 per cent of the population of England and Wales, suggesting that solicitors from privately educated backgrounds are overrepresented compared to society in general.

The survey found that over half (53 per cent) of solicitors in the PC holders survey were the first generation of their family to go to university.

Research published in 2009 by the Sutton Trust\(^7\) shows that social mobility has worsened across all professions over the past 30 years.

In 2013, the Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission stated that 'social class is a more significant barrier than gender to obtaining a top job'.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender equality**

The 2012 study commissioned and co-authored by the Interlaw Diversity Forum\(^8\) found:

- 3 per cent of the profession is lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- 70 per cent of LGBT lawyers think that there is prejudice within the (judicial) selection process.
- 50 per cent of LGBT lawyers do not apply for judicial office because they do not think they would be appointed.

---


\(^8\) [https://dl.dropbox.com/u/57013097/InterLaw/Career%20Progression%20in%20the%20Legal%20Sector.pdf](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/57013097/InterLaw/Career%20Progression%20in%20the%20Legal%20Sector.pdf)
**Appendix B**

**Brief picture of progress between 2012 and 2015**

**Volunteer community**

Following changes to the number of non-geographic Council seats, there are now three seats each for candidates from the Women Lawyers Division and the Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division. There continue to be three seats for the Junior Lawyers Division, one for the Lawyers with Disabilities Division and one for the Black Solicitors Network. Of the geographic seats on Council, 12 are held by women, three by BME solicitors and two by solicitors with disabilities. Diversity on boards and committees, there are now 122 women, 239 men, 28 BME representatives and one person with a disability.

For the last three years the Law Society has made proactive efforts to improve the diversity of the volunteer community by introducing initiatives such as anonymising applications for membership of committees.

**D&I Charter**

The D&I Charter is a flagship initiative of the Law Society and a major area of engagement with the membership. Year-on-year we have seen an increase in number of charter signatory and as of April 2015 we have recorded 453 firms of all sizes.

The charter is a high profile commitment by legal service providers to pursue best practice on all aspects of diversity and inclusion across all areas of their business. The charter reflects well on the Law Society, being seen as innovative beyond the legal sector.

**Working with Partners**

Lexcel version 6 was launched in October 2014. CREDI worked with the Accreditation Schemes team to strengthen the diversity and inclusion elements of Lexcel and also provided detailed guidance to help firms and assessors.

**Engaging with members**

The regular programme of Firms Diversity Forums have proved very successful, bringing together diversity managers and practitioners to learn about key issues and network together. Speakers pick up themes identified in the D&I Charter Annual Report and in the Career Barriers Action Plan.

**Speed networking**

One of the most successful initiatives of 2014 was the speed networking programme. At these events senior partners in private practice and in-house lawyers act as host on a table of four to six delegates and discuss their career experience and provide business tips.

**Pay gap**

Law Society data shows that the pay gap between male and female solicitors has increased and, at 30 per cent, is larger than in the general working population. A pay gap is present at all levels of practice between female and male solicitors and between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) solicitors and their white counterparts (14 per cent).

**Social mobility and wellbeing**

In 2014 a closed roundtable discussion on blind recruitment was attended by more than 50 people. Blind recruitment refers to the practice of removing key information about a candidate, such as type of school attended, name of university and A level grades.

In the last 12 months the Law Society has stepped up its work on wellbeing in the profession as
data shows that this is an increasing area of concern. The Society has worked with LawCare to raise the profile of the organisation, both with City firms and with those solicitors who might want to access their services.

**Transgender**

In February 2014 a roundtable was held with a number of transgender members. This was the first time we had actively tried to engage with this small, but important section of our membership.

**Widening access activity**

Events held for those considering a career as a solicitor as a mature student/career changer had a total of 476 students attend five careers in law events which are aimed at inner city A-level students.

The team provided webinars on equality and diversity issues including shared parental leave, developing a wellbeing strategy for your firm and equal pay.

**Networking and celebrating**

The Law Society has continued to maintain a strong profile of its commitment on diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. This has been highlighted in a programme of events to champion diversity in the profession and to spread good practice, including Pride parade, Black History Month, Diwali, LGBT History Month, and International Women's Day.

**Equality Impact Assessments**

A practice note on Sharia Succession Principles was published in March 2014 and drew significant negative public and media attention. The EDIC worked with the Wills and Equity Committee to amend the note, but it was eventually decided to withdraw the practice note in November 2014.

**Organisational development**

Over the last 12 months, the HR team has achieved the following:

- delivered recruitment and selection training for managers with a focus on unconscious bias
- launched a diversity and inclusion policy in August 2014, which clearly sets out our overall approach to diversity and inclusion
- updated and published a dignity at work policy in November 2013, making our policy much clearer about our commitment to eradicating discriminatory and bullying behaviours
- delivered a diversity and inclusion e-learning module to all managers and staff and to all new starters when they join. The training helps everyone understand what is meant by being inclusive at work