



The Law Society

The Diversity Access Scheme

Report on Applications 2016



We are very grateful to the scheme's sponsors for their generous support:



Diversity Access Scheme awardees 2016

What the award means to the awardees, in their own words:

"Being a lone mother and having the extra obstacle of multiple serious injuries to my dominant arm, which disrupted my studies and has resulted in a permanent disability, I believed my goal of becoming a solicitor was out of reach"

"After receiving the news of being a successful DAS applicant I was completely overwhelmed and humbled that the Law Society supported and believed in my potential of becoming a solicitor such that they have invested their funds, time and resources in to my future . Being granted the DAS award has restored my confidence and is truly life changing for me. For this I will always be eternally grateful to the Law Society"

"Having completed my law degree many years ago I had long since given up hope of ever becoming a solicitor. Work, family and financial commitments prevented me from realising my dream of continuing to pursue a professional legal career. Financial and practical support from the DAS scheme has given me a unique opportunity to finally realise what I assumed to be an unattainable ambition. I have started my LPC and have a solicitor training contract. Truly a dream come true. I now have a new ambition to fulfil the faith they have shown in me"

"Growing up in a family with limited means and a very disruptive home life, I was always made to believe that certain things, like university or a good job, were out of my reach. I chose to ignore the social-economic boundaries that were placed on me and persevere, but when faced with the prospect of not being able to afford the LPC, I felt as if my efforts had been wasted. The Diversity Access Scheme has given me the chance to succeed in a legal career and to break the cycle of poverty and under achievement in my family, and provide a life for myself that is far from what I ever could have imagined growing up. It is truly life changing."

"The Law Society funding my LPC has not only provided me with financial support but also has given me the added confidence of knowing that the Society has faith in my hope of becoming a solicitor, which is something that cannot be measured in monetary terms".

"Coming from a low socio-economic background and being the first of my family to go to university, raising the funds for the LPC was impossible. Without the DAS scholarship, commencing the LPC would have remained a dream and never a reality, especially when my situation worsened considerably after the completion of my law degree. The Law Society has helped me become closer to a career in law"

Through the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme, we help talented people who would otherwise be unable to pursue a career in law. The scheme provides support in four fundamental ways:

- finance through the provision of Legal Practice Course fees (LPC).
- professional contacts through invitations to events such as the Excellence Awards.
- DAS awardees are also assigned to a professional mentor
- opportunities to gain work experience with our DAS sponsors, supporting firms and organisations

Following the success of the 2015 additional DAS PLUS - which includes an LPC scholarship and a guaranteed, fully funded training contract at a National Law Centre, we offered one DAS PLUS in 2016.

Application criteria

Applicants must demonstrate exceptional financial need and the ability and commitment to become a solicitor. Applicants for 2016 were asked to confirm:

- they attended a non fee-paying school;
- they were part of the first generation of their family to have attended higher education; and/or
- they received free school meals during their schooling.

Where candidates could not confirm at least two of the above criteria, they were asked to describe any exceptional circumstances they had faced which would make it particularly difficult to pursue their ambition to become a solicitor. The circumstances could be as a result of their:

- gender
- ethnicity
- sexual orientation
- health
- disability
- education
- other personal obstacles.

DAS PLUS candidates were also asked to confirm and evidence that they were already employed by, or volunteered at, a National Law Centre.

Application process

The 2016 application process was open between 3 February and 15 April. This was then extend by a week to increase the number of DAS Plus applications.

The application form required applicants to detail:

- their financial circumstances including evidence that all other options for funding had been exhausted, and that they would be unable to pursue their studies without support from the scheme;
- why they wished to enter the profession and the contribution they thought they would be able to make;

- how experience gained through vacation placements, work experience, paid employment and voluntary or personal commitments had helped them to develop skills relevant to becoming a solicitor; and
- an understanding of current affairs and how a particular news story related to or impacted on the area of law they were most interested in.

Applicants were also required to write an essay addressing the following question:

"How can the law be used as a tool to increase diversity within the profession?"

All submitted applications were scored by five members of the Corporate Responsibility Equality and Diversity (CRED) team with each application being marked by two people and shortlisted by three members of staff ensuring that decisions were moderated . Applications were marked against the following criteria:

- able to demonstrate that other options for funding their LPC have been explored and unsuccessful;
- able to demonstrate that they face or have overcome exceptional obstacles to qualification;
- ability to become a solicitor;
- commitment to a career as a solicitor;
- ability to research and present complex issues concisely;
- ability to marshal a coherent argument and offer a clear conclusion.

Short listed applicants were invited to interview with a selection panel of three people from the Law Society governance, supported by a representative of the CRED team. Prior to the interview, applicants were given 15 minutes to consider a work-based situational dilemma (below). The applicants were questioned on the scenarios during the interview and assessed on their verbal response.

Scenario

The firm has recently won an important new client. The firm is not expecting to earn a huge amount of money from them necessarily, but they are an impressive high-profile client. You have been assigned to work on their cases. Unfortunately, they are very demanding. They expect you to be available to speak on the phone at all times, to return calls within five minutes, and to always know the answers immediately. You are finding that you are expected to do a lot of work over and above their original brief, and then they complain about having to pay for the work. They want you to take decisions for them which they should be taking themselves. What steps do you take to manage this situation?

Last year we incorporated two work- based scenarios. In order to focus more time on the interview with the judges, this year we decided to have only one work based scenario. This would give more time to ask direct questions following on from their application as well as judge each candidate's commitment to the profession and eligibility for the award.

Marketing

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

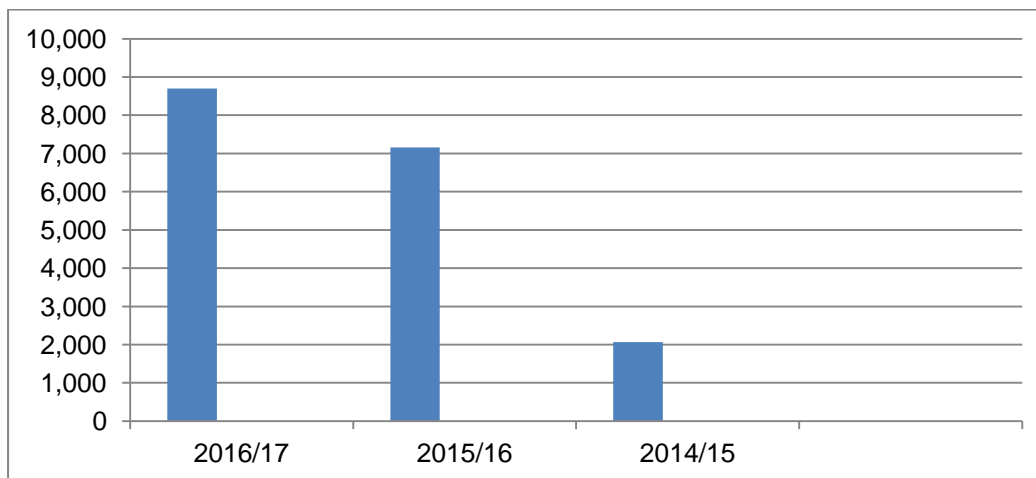
Marketing was also undertaken through:

- Twitter
- adverts in the junior legal press
- pamphlets and posters sent to universities
- direct mail to final year law students at a number of non Russell group universities
- the Law Society Divisions' newsletters
- Email sent to university societies

The scheme was also specifically publicised to alumni of widening participation schemes and relevant organisations including: the Social Mobility Foundation; Pathways to Law; accessprofessions.com; Pure Potential; and the Sutton Trust.

All forms of marketing and all promotional materials contained a prominent link to the DAS website, which saw an increase by over 18% in traffic compared to the same period over the last year. This increase has been attributed to direct contact with universities, including the distribution of posters and pamphlets in law faculty libraries; requests to law faculty members to promote the scheme during lectures; and site visits to careers fairs by the Law Society Social Mobility Adviser.

Website Hits

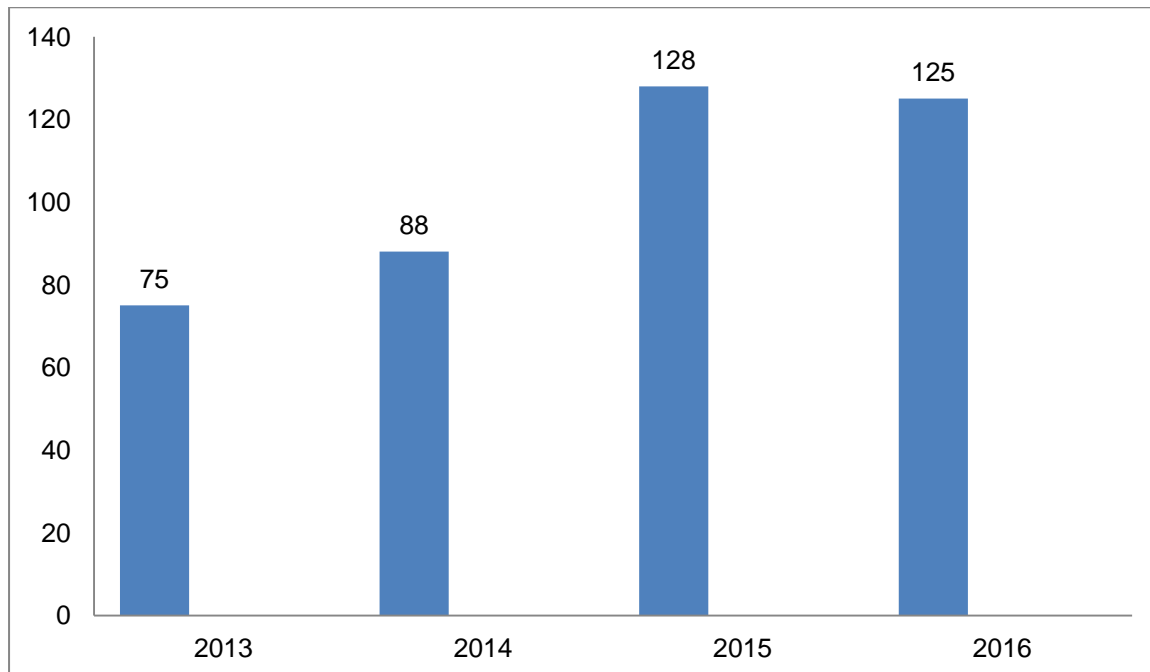


The most effective means of promoting the DAS has been through direct contact with universities and LPC providers and searching on the JLD / Law Society website. The number of people searching on the website has increased by 22% from last year.

Below are the various ways in which people heard about the programme.

How did you first hear about DAS?	Responses
Searching the Law Society/ JLD website	30%
LPC provider / university	30%
Social media	2%
Other / Did not answer	26%

Applications to the DAS increased by nearly 50 per cent from 2014. Our target for 2016 was to increase applications by 5 per cent, however we saw a slight decrease in the number of applications received in comparison to 2015. We believe that this may be attributed to the recent introduction of the Government's post graduate loans for masters degrees. Although the LPC is not a masters programme, many institutions offer the LPC with the LLM, which in turn would mean applicants would qualify for the postgraduate loan.



Application numbers

Submitted: 125

Long listed: 125

Short listed: 25

Successful: 11 (one DAS PLUS award and 10 DAS awards)

Mentoring and work experience

In addition to financial assistance, awardees are offered the opportunity to be matched with a professional mentor and work experience placements during their studies. Work placements varied, depending on student interest with regards to the type and area of practice. Host organisations for 2016 included:

- Eversheds
- Bindmans
- Kinglsey Napley
- Oxfam
- Government Legal Service
- BP

Diversity profile and equal opportunity

All applicants were asked to complete a diversity monitoring questionnaire. In line with best practice, this information was provided voluntarily, immediately separated from the

application and assessed on an anonymous basis to monitor equality of opportunity in the process.

The results point to a robust process with broad parity across different groups and are well aligned with our core social mobility objectives, with 91% of successful applicants having attended a state school, 82% having claimed free school meals and 55% being the first in their family to attend higher education.

Age	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/Prefer not to say	8	1	0	9%
Under 18	1	0	1	9%
18 – 24	62	12	4	36.5%
25 – 34	26	7	4	36.5%
35 – 44	17	4	1	9%
45 – 54	10	1	1	9%
55 - 64	1	0	0	0%
	125	25	11	

Gender	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/Prefer not to say	11	4	2	18%
Male	29	4	1	9%
Female	86	18	8	73%
	125	25	11	

Ethnicity	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Asian or Asian British	37	9	0	0%
Black or Black British	31	8	3	27%
Other ethnic group	2	0	0	0%
Mixed	4	2	0	0%
White	44	12	8	73%
Unanswered	10	0	0	0%
	125	25	11	0%

Religion/belief	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/Prefer not to say	14	1	1	10%
No Religion	27	5	3	30%
Buddhist	0	0	0	0%
Christian	47	15	4	40%
Hindu	1	0	0	0%
Jewish	0	0	0	0%
Muslim	30	2	0	0%
Sikh	2	0	0	0%
Other	4	2	2	20%
	125	25	11	0%

Sexual orientation	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered	15	1	1	0%
Heterosexual	107	23	10	91%
Homosexual	2	1	1	9%
Lesbian	2	0	0	0%
Bisexual	0	0	0	0%
	125	25	11	35%

School type	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/ Prefer not to say	9	0	0	0%
UK State	90	19	10	91%
UK Independent/ Fee-paying	3	3	1	9%
Attended school outside UK	24	3	0	0%
	125	31	11	%

Free school meals?	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Prefer not to say	11	0	0	0%
Yes	9	1	9	82%
No	76	14	1	9%
	16	3	1	9%

Don't know				
NA	14	6	0%	0%
	125	25	11	0%

Part of the first generation to attend university?	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered	11	2	1	9%
Did not attend University	3	0	0	0%
Yes	96	18	6	55%
No	15	5	4	36%
	125	25	11	

Disability	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/ Prefer not to say	17	3	1	9%
Yes	21	6	4	55%
No	87	16	6	36%
	125	25	11	%

Caring - child under 18	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/ Prefer not to say	9	0	0	0%
Yes	25	7	4	36%
No	91	18	7	64%
Don't know	0	0	0	0%
	125	25	11	0%

Caring responsibility	Submitted	Short listed	Successful	% Successful from Short list
Unanswered/ Prefer not to say	26	4	1	9%
Yes, 1 - 19 hours p/w	14	5	4	36%
Yes, 20 -49 hours p/w	3	1	1	9%
Yes, 50+ hours p/w	0	0	0	0%
No	82	14	5	46%
	125	25	11	

Funding is urgently required to ensure the continuation of the DAS.

If you would like to support exceptional talented individuals and help widen access to the solicitors profession by sponsoring the scheme, offering work experience opportunities or acting as a mentor, please get in contact with Sarah Alonge or Reece Pope on:

diversityaccessscheme@lawsociety.org.uk