



Informing Progress - Shaping the Future

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The Law Society Creates EDI Strategy to Drive Meaningful Change

The Law Society of England and Wales launched its new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy on 6 November, a move designed to deliver “*meaningful, lasting change*” within the solicitor profession. The three-year plan for 2025–2028 is central to the Law Society’s wider corporate strategy and reflects a renewed ambition to make the legal profession more diverse, open and inclusive than ever before.

Background

The launch of the strategy follows a sustained period of consultation over the past year involving more than 220 individuals, including solicitors at various career stages, in-house legal teams and diversity networks. Participants were invited to contribute to focus group discussions and interviews, where approximately 70 practitioners, spanning aspiring juniors to senior leaders, shared their experiences, challenges and aspirations.

In parallel, the Society conducted a comprehensive literature review to provide an evidence-based foundation for its objectives, underpinning its new strategy. The result is an approach that responds directly to persistent inequalities in the profession, particularly in relation to under-representation in leadership, barriers faced by disabled solicitors, and exclusionary workplace cultures.

Key Pillars of the Strategy

The new EDI strategy centres on three main priorities, each targeting specific but interconnected areas with scope for improvement.

Strengthening Diversity in Senior Leadership

The Society wants to ensure that pathways exist for individuals from under-represented groups, including women, disabled solicitors, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals and those from less affluent socio-economic backgrounds, to progress into leadership roles.

The aim is to support career progression at every stage, so that leadership teams better reflect the profession's diversity in the broader context. In 2024, for example, women held only 35% of partner-level roles, despite representing 53% of practising solicitors.

Supporting Disabled Solicitors

A further emphasis of the strategy is on addressing the “*persistent structural, cultural and intersectional barriers*” faced by disabled solicitors or aspiring solicitors. Disabled solicitors represent just 6% of those working for law firms, compared to 23% of all working-age adults.

The Society recognises that many firms struggle to provide reasonable adjustments and acknowledges that the lack of support can hinder talent acquisition, retention and progression.

Building More Inclusive Workplace Cultures

A truly inclusive legal sector requires environments in which people can bring their full selves to work, free from discrimination, harassment or chronic stress. To that end, the strategy commits to helping organisations embed inclusive practices, improve wellbeing and tackle burnout.

To support the delivery of these priorities, the Law Society has resolved to:

- Undertake impactful research, rooted in member experience, to track the barriers identified as impeding progress.
- Produce and make available practical guidance and resources for firms, in-house teams and individual solicitors.
- Illuminate diverse role models and elevate leaders from underrepresented backgrounds to inspire the next generation and encourage investment in underrepresented talent.

Why EDI Matters

The Law Society President, Mark Evans, believes inequality continues to shape the profession's career pathways and that, despite significant progress, a large number of solicitors remain under-represented at senior levels, and workplace cultures often fail to be welcoming or supportive. Evans emphasises that, beyond just fairness, greater diversity and inclusion bring resilience and vitality to the profession, highlighting that everyone benefits from a more inclusive profession.

To achieve this, The Law Society believes it can leverage its position to bring together firms, networks and individuals to be a catalyst for change. However, it also stresses that this is a shared responsibility and all industry stakeholders at all levels will need to embrace the strategy's goals if it is to succeed.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The Law Society has identified several tangible outcomes it hopes to achieve by the end of the three-year cycle. Among the priorities by 2028 is to see measurable progress in the diversity of senior roles so that more underrepresented individuals are placed in influential positions.

Through better support, adjustments and awareness, the Society wants to reduce attrition among disabled lawyers, safeguarding increased retention and progression by ensuring career trajectories are not constrained by institutional barriers.

It is hoped that by disseminating best practice, offering training and championing wellbeing and belonging, discrimination, harassment and burnout will decline, and that inclusive behaviours will become embedded in everyday working life. The objective is to create healthier, more inclusive working cultures that can withstand change and endure for the long term.

Finally, the strategy involves robust research and measurement, with The Law Society intending to use surveys, member feedback and benchmarked metrics to monitor progress, report on impact and make adjustments where needed.

Potential Challenges and Risks

The Law Society has set out an ambitious strategy, and its success will depend heavily on collaboration. The Society has been clear that it cannot deliver systemic change alone. Engagement will need to come from firms and legal teams, and they will need to sign up, utilise available resources, and embed the principles into their day-to-day practices.

There is also the risk of 'diversity fatigue', a cynicism that has developed in some quarters of the profession that EDI initiatives are merely a repeat of bureaucratic or symbolic gestures with limited impact. To convince those lawyers who remain cautiously unconvinced that this

strategy will drive meaningful change, accountability mechanisms and clearly defined follow-up plans may be welcome additions.

Another challenge is collecting data on sensitive characteristics, particularly disability and socio-economic background, which is not always straightforward. Nevertheless, the Law Society's research-led approach offers a strong foundation for tracking the impact of EDI initiatives.

Shining a Light

The Law Society's 2025–2028 EDI strategy marks a significant moment for the solicitor profession in England and Wales and throws the spotlight once again on a fundamental area of modern business. Advocating for greater representation in leadership, supporting disabled solicitors and building inclusive workplace cultures sets a clear agenda to drive tangible change.

If implemented effectively, the strategy has the potential to reshape the profession, making it more reflective of the society it serves and more accepting of diverse talent at all levels. Success will ultimately rest on collective action, with all stakeholders needing to step up to translate ambition into reality.

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