



**Informing Progress - Shaping the Future**

## **FOIL Update 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026**



## **Measuring What Matters with the Chambers DEI Programme**

For FOIL member firms, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has moved a long way from simply being a box to be ticked in an annual report to becoming a lens through which clients assess vendor partnerships, talent makes decisions, and the world judges credibility and sustainability. In this context, how firms and the wider legal profession measure, verify, and improve DEI efforts matters, which is where the Chambers and Partners DEI programme provides invaluable support.

Insurer clients, many of whom are themselves subject to increasing regulatory scrutiny from the FCA on DEI topics, are actively asking panel law firms to evidence their DEI credentials as part of tender and formal review processes. Firms able to point to structured, independently verified DEI activity are better placed to succeed. The Chambers and Partners DEI programme offers firms this opportunity, and the barriers to participation are lower than many think.

### **Chambers' Input to the DEI Conversation**

Chambers is known to legal professionals as the publisher of independent, authoritative legal rankings, whose research contributes to shaping reputations and informing the decisions of in-house counsel around the world. As one of its core values, championing DEI forms a significant part of Chambers' work, and the depth of its research has helped it develop broad engagement with the profession.

The Chambers DEI programme operates across three interconnected areas: an Advisory function that embeds DEI considerations into Chambers' own practices and products; an External function that works directly with law firms, in-house legal teams and barristers' chambers to advance DEI across the profession; and an internal DEI and Responsible Business committee, known as INSPIRE, that safeguards robust internal practices and works to build an inclusive culture.

### **Commitment to the UK Legal Market**

The programme originated in the US, where Chambers launched its Women in Law Awards in 2012, and over the subsequent decade, the programme expanded geographically across Latin America, Brazil, Europe, Asia Pacific, and the UK Bar. It also extended its focus from gender to encompass the full spectrum of DEI considerations, as well as integrating pro bono work and sustainability. In 2023, the programme was formally rebranded as Chambers Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to reflect its expanded scope.

For the UK, Chambers' DEI research is an active and ongoing venture, with the programme currently running dedicated research focused on the UK Bar and UK Solicitors markets and using the insights gathered to produce content, identify best practice, and engage with the wider DEI community across those markets. Chambers publishes submission guidelines for UK firms on its website, and participation is open to all, from the largest City practices to specialist firms operating in areas such as insurance litigation and defendant-side personal injury work.

### **How the Research Works**

The Chambers DEI research process is built around a structured submission and awards framework where participation involves completing an application form that combines tick-box questions designed to establish a baseline understanding of DEI activity across the profession and free-text questions that allow firms to share the substance of their work, describing specific initiatives, outcomes, and the rationale behind their approach.

The information gathered feeds into the Chambers DEI Awards programme, through which the work deemed to have the greatest impact is formally recognised at an annual ceremony. In addition, it supports a broader body of research and content production that helps the profession understand its current position, where progress is being made, and the persistent challenges that remain. For those who choose not to be considered for an award, participation in the research does not obligate entry, and the research data can be contributed without entering the shortlisting process.

Participation also comes without cost, and the barriers to entry are low, a point emphasised by Chambers. Submitting for the programme has no bearing on a firm's practice area rankings, and no commercial relationship is required. The principal investment is in the time needed to submit, which involves an honest reflection on what a firm or team is actually doing to advance DEI, and to capture that work in a way that is clear and evidenced.

## What Makes a Strong Submission

FOIL members considering participating in the programme need to understand what Chambers looks for when assessing submissions. The programme evaluates entries against five criteria, each designed to move the conversation toward demonstrable action.

- **Breadth** refers to the extent to which an initiative spans different diversity characteristics and the degree to which it reaches across different parts of an organisation.
- **Commitment** asks whether DEI is embedded in the day-to-day operations rather than confined to occasional events, and what proportion of people at all levels are involved.
- **Impact** examines the evidence, such as data, outcomes, and testimony of those affected by an initiative, to evaluate whether activities are driving tangible results.
- **Advancement** assesses the meaningful changes that have been achieved in areas such as hiring practices, promotion pathways, and organisational structures.
- **Originality** invites firms to demonstrate their ideas and methodologies are innovative and that they are applying fresh approaches to long-standing challenges within the legal profession.

Taken together, these criteria constitute a rigorous standard that does not seek perfection, but for genuine engagement centred on the question of what inclusion means in practice, and honest evidence that the question is being taken seriously.

## Why This Matters

The insurance litigation sector is a varied community of defendant-side firms, commercial insurers, third-party administrators and specialist practitioners that, although featuring some characteristics that differ from traditional corporate law firms, face the same DEI challenges. The Chambers programme provides an opportunity to contribute to and benefit from a profession-wide evidence base that can drive meaningful and lasting change.

There are also practical reasons why engagement with the Chambers DEI programme matters to insurance lawyers given the increasing relevance of DEI in shaping the relationship between law firms and their insurer clients. It is becoming more common for in-house legal teams and claims departments to ask their panel firms about DEI credentials as part of their evaluation processes, so demonstrating involvement in an independent, externally recognised research and awards programme is a credible way for FOIL member firms to highlight their commitment.

The Chambers programme produces regional reports that identify key trends and best practices from across the market and offers practical guidance for firms seeking to improve,

giving it a sound professional rationale in addition to the competitive dimension. Firms that participate are contributing to that evidence base and to helping raise the collective understanding of what effective DEI looks like in the UK legal sector.

The data already shows the direction of travel, with research across the UK market showing encouraging progress on some measures. For example, the proportion of ranked female lawyers in the UK guide has shown meaningful growth over the past five years, with over 500 additional women added to the rankings in the most recent edition. However, Chambers openly highlights that progress remains uneven, and that some of the most persistent structural challenges around social mobility, ethnic diversity at senior levels, and the experience of disabled lawyers still require attention. More comprehensive data will help to address these areas properly, and the DEI research programme is the perfect means for gathering the data needed.

### **Getting Involved**

FOIL encourages firms yet to engage with the Chambers DEI programme to explore what the programme entails, consider what they are already doing regarding DEI, and assess whether they are maintaining proper documentation that can help contribute to the broader conversation. The Chambers DEI team, currently led by DEI Manager Rohan Mapara, provides [submission guidelines](#) for UK solicitors, and welcomes first-time participants and firms already familiar with the programme.

The direction of regulation, client expectations, and workforce demographics suggests the DEI agenda will become more pressing in the years ahead. Engaging with the Chambers programme is an opportunity to contribute to something that matters to the whole legal profession, and to ensure that the insurance law community's voice helps shape how DEI continues to evolve within the sector.

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