FOREWORD

This blueprint distils the main recommendations of the Law Society's Women in Leadership in Law project, collated from almost 250 roundtables in 20 jurisdictions, conducted nationally and internationally with women and men working in the legal profession.

It sets out the practical steps to develop your strategy for gender balance in your organisation and should be read in conjunction with the Women in Law Pledge. The blueprint includes particular actions for private practice and in-house practitioners, and for organisations of different sizes.

I want to thank you for your ongoing support for this project. I very much hope you will continue being a leader, advocate and, most importantly, a campaigner working together with us to help us achieve equal representation of women in senior positions in the legal services sector.

Christina Blacklaws President

A BLUEPRINT FOR GENDER BALANCE:

1. An overarching guide

Sign up to the Women in Law Pledge and implement it:



The Law Society conducted a survey between November 2017 and January 2018 to understand better the key issues that affect women working in law. Of 7,781 respondents, almost 5% identified as LGBT+, 13% identified as BAME and 4% identified as disabled.



Only 11%

reported

unconscious

organisation

bias training being consistently

carried out in their

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TOP REASONS REPORTED

- Unconscious bias (52%)
- Unacceptable work/life balance demanded to reach senior levels (49%)
- Traditional networks/routes to promotion are male orientated (46%)

More people than ever think flexible working really works for everyone of respondents felt that a flexible working culture is critical to improving diversity in the legal profession (86% in 2012)

On a more positive note

41% felt that they benefit

from regular performance

and development reviews;

and 43% reported having diversity and inclusion

training consistently

enforced



a flexible working policy is consistently enforced
 37% work in organisations where there's provision, but not consistently enforced

11% work in organisations with **no provision** for flexible working

everyone improving diversity in the legal profession (86% in 2012)
52% of respondents work in organisations where Both men and women

Both men and women share this opinion (88% and 93% in favour respectively)



2. Steps to tackle bias

Deliver unconscious bias training to all within the organisation

 Training should be compulsory, ongoing and include senior leadership

Review and amend recruitment processes to remove unconscious bias

• Ensure that all those involved in recruiting have recently completed or revisited unconscious bias training

Support women in the workplace by ensuring policies are in place to prevent bias

- This includes work allocation, programmes of sponsorship, mentoring and reverse mentoring, and internal and external networking
- Regularly analyse these policies to identify whether any particular groups of staff are adversely impacted

Review the culture and working practices within the organisation

• Take action to address gender bias and other inappropriate behaviours that may exist

Place diversity and inclusion at the centre of business planning

• Ensure that this forms the basis of business and operational functions within the organisation

Create an open and supportive environment

- Form networks or groups that encourage collaboration
- Include and enable men to champion gender equality within the workplace by ensuring they play an active role in these processes

3. Steps to promote fair remuneration, equal pay and closing the gender pay gap

4. Steps to make flexible working mainstream

Make flexible working available to everyone by having a clear policy for the whole organisation that is communicated to all staff

Ensure that senior leaders within the business use flexible working to demonstrate that



Review remuneration policies

- Ensure that the different contributions women make are financially recognised and rewarded, and that they count towards promotions
- Ensure employees are paid equally for equal work

Measure the ethnicity, disability, sexual-orientation and socio-economic pay gaps within the organisation

• This will create a clearer picture of the overall diversity and inclusion within the organisation and will help to measure the progress that is made

Use technical and digital solutions for work allocation and involve more women in work allocation decisions

- Ensure managers and supervisors do not make assumptions about staff members' circumstances when allocating work
- Ensure work is distributed evenly so that all staff are given access to high profile work, irrespective of who they are or how they work

- it can work for colleagues at all levels
- Implement objective performance measures so that flexible workers' performance is not judged more or less favourably than their peers
- Ensure that IT equipment and support is available to enable staff to work effectively







Consider how flexible working can be used by those with

• Ensure that assumptions are not made about what those with caring responsibilities want or are able to do

caring responsibilities

- Ensure that existing maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave policies do not adversely impact any specific group of staff
- Regularly monitor parental leave policies and the support given to returning staff to ensure that provisions are being used and fit for purpose

Consider introducing or enhancing alternative sourcing offerings for clients to enable lawyers with the right skills and experience to return to the workforce

• Enabling experienced lawyers to work for fixed periods or on a contract basis would allow those wishing to manage their working time to transition back to full-time work

Identify how working practices and the culture of the organisation may impact those with caring responsibilities, part-time employees and people with disabilities

- Consider how the timings of meetings or social gatherings may impact different groups of staff
- Identify work that could be completed from alternative locations or outside the usual office hours to enable staff to work flexibly

SECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. Smaller firms

1. In-house



3. Larger firms

Develop 'Returner Programmes' for all staff

• Target both male and female staff who have been out of the profession for three years or more to increase the willingness of women to return to frontline work after career breaks

Ensure work allocation is fair and non-billable work is financially recognised and rewarded

• Ensure women and men are consistently given the opportunity to secure high impact assignments over a long period of time, irrespective of their working pattern

Ensure all work is taken into account when considering promotions and rewards

• Conduct appropriate and well-rounded assessments encompassing all the contributions made towards the business. This includes non-chargeable but important work, client and practice development, corporate and social responsibility and knowledge management

Encourage staff at all levels to use policies aimed at helping to achieve gender equality

- Encourage men to use parental leave
- Encourage all staff to work flexibly and adapt the working culture to ensure those who do work flexibly are included and supported



We hope this blueprint gives you insights, ideas and practical steps to start taking action for gender equality today!

As we have seen throughout the Women in Leadership in Law project, change often starts with a conversation. So please do talk to your senior leaders, managers and colleagues about this and discuss what actions you can implement together.

The Law Society remains committed to carry on with this important work, so keep in touch and let us know about your progress: www.lawsociety.org.uk/get-in-touch





The Law Society

113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1PLTel: 020 7242 1222Fax: 020 7831 0344DX: DX 56 London/Chancery Lane

www.lawsociety.org.uk



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Women in Leadership in Law: Blueprint for Gender Balance