

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme of work 2017-18**

We are mainstreaming our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and this means taking diversity into account in all that we do.

Our EDI work over the next three years is included in our [Corporate Strategy](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/) and embedded in our strategic aims.

We have expanded on the EDI work included in our [Business Plan for 2017-18](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/business-plans/business-plan/archive/sra-business-plan-2017-2018/), with an overview of our activities under six headings.

### **Our people**

We have set out our aims and objectives to develop and support our workforce in our People Strategy, which is overseen by the People Strategy Committee. We are guided by our values in all that we do, with a fair and inclusive approach to delivering common goals.

We will support and promote an inclusive culture through a wide range of staff engagement activities, celebrating diversity throughout the year and promoting our values through awards and events.

We will monitor and publish our staff diversity profile and our report on the gender pay gap. We will consider how we can widen employment opportunities for under-represented groups.

We will encourage the growth and development of our staff networks to promote and encourage diversity.

We will implement further EDI training to improve how we provide reasonable adjustments, to help us become more trans inclusive and to reinforce knowledge of our legal responsibilities under the equality legislation.

### **A diverse profession**

We will continue to build a clear and thorough understanding of the diversity profile of the profession we regulate, to identify where greater diversity in the workforce needs to be encouraged and how this changes over time.

We will publish the diversity data collected in 2017, showing trends since our first collection from firms in 2014. We will review the diversity



questionnaire ahead of our next collection exercise in 2019 to include new social mobility measures and consider how we might encourage more people to respond.

We will raise awareness of our research into career opportunities for female and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) solicitors and follow up the recommendations. We will publish a paper setting out the business benefits of diversity in the profession and add to the suite of good practice guidance.

We will keep stressing the importance of health and wellbeing in the profession, and work closely with the Legal Professions Wellbeing Taskforce. We will work with law firms and others to understand the experience of disabled lawyers and the barriers which disabled people face in accessing legal services.

We will collaborate with firms, in-house solicitors and others to find innovative ways to increase the impact of our work to encourage a diverse workforce and promote social mobility. We will continue to talk about diversity in our conversations with others, including our parliamentary and other public affairs work.

## **Fair decision making**

We will continue to make sure our decision-making guidance and processes are clear and transparent, and we treat people fairly. We will consult on our Enforcement Strategy and monitor the impact of the new strategy, including on the proportionality of regulatory outcomes across the whole range of protected characteristics.

We will take forward our work to mainstream EDI in the organisation and carry out further work to make sure we are providing our Board and Committees with the right information to assess the EDI implications of the decisions they make.

We will improve how we respond to people with a disability, health or wellbeing issue, so they are not disadvantaged in our investigation and disciplinary work. We will continue to promote our 'Your health, your career' campaign to encourage solicitors to seek help with their regulatory issues before they get out of hand.

## **EDI implications of our regulatory reforms**

We are reforming our regulatory model to help provide affordable legal services, reduce cost and reduce the burden of regulation on law firms. We will support this work by using data, evidence and intelligence about the diversity to inform the development and effectiveness of our regulatory arrangements and operational processes.

We will consult on phase two of our Handbook reforms and develop guidance on compliance with the requirements on firms and solicitors to promote EDI.

We will continue to involve the public and groups representing the public in our regulatory reform programme, in particular our work to make better information available to the people about solicitors and their services.

We will continue with our work to implement the Solicitors Qualifying Examination, which will provide an opportunity to promote diverse pathways into the profession when introduced in 2020. We will monitor the diversity of those in legal education and will continue working with firms and the Government in both England and Wales to encourage legal apprenticeships.

We will support small firms, where we know there is over representation of BAME solicitors, by sharing information about our regulatory reform programme, better understanding some of the difficulties they may face and encouraging innovation.

## **Inclusive engagement**

We will be innovative in our approach, offering a wide range of opportunities for people to engage with us and holding events across England and Wales. We will continue to build our virtual communities including Diversity Matters, involving its members in our EDI work and increasing its membership over the year.

We will work in partnership with firms and others to support their work in promoting diversity, for example holding a joint event to mark Black History Month, supporting an innovative mentoring scheme for firms who want to improve their approach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues, and working with the Social Mobility Business Partnership to provide opportunities for students from less privileged backgrounds.

We will build on our engagement with in-house solicitors and small firms. We will improve our visibility in Wales by building on our engagement with solicitors and the public in Wales.

We will work with equality groups, networks and organisations which focus on EDI to promote and encourage diversity across the legal sector and to make sure these groups have a voice in our programme of regulatory reform.

We will consult on a strategy for engaging with the public, so it is easier for people to communicate with us and use our services.

## **Accessible IT and business systems**

We will build good EDI practice into our business systems and IT – making sure we are accessible and inclusive. Our customers are at the heart of this development and we are involving them through research, joint development, user testing and consultation events. This includes the public, representative groups, law firms of every type and individual solicitors.

We are building the systems we need to collect and monitor the diversity of people we regulate so we can monitor the impact of our work and decisions.

We are introducing a more sophisticated approach to managing sensitive data that we hold about people we regulate, including diversity data to make us fully compliant with the General Data Protection Requirements when they come into effect.