

News from the Board

Reflections on our January Board - Anna Bradley

04 February 2022

Our Board started 2022 with a face-to-face meeting. I hope this is a good sign for the future! It certainly meant we were able to properly welcome our two new Board members – Lisa Mayhew, Co-Chair of Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, and Nicola Williams, who is Legal and Compliance Director and Company Secretary of Welsh Water.

As we looked ahead to what the year will bring, we spent some time in workshop mode, talking about key issues, including continuing competence and our enforcement work. In particular, we picked up from our September discussions on the increasing number of investigations and cases that are over 12 and 24 months old, recognising the impact that delays can have on all those involved. The Covid-19 pandemic has, of course, played a part in this but we are clear that more now has to be done to address the issues. Board will be closely monitoring progress through the quarterly performance reporting.

Our meeting took place on the same day that we published the results of our latest biennial firm diversity data publication, so it was timely that our formal meeting saw us discussing the next steps for our work on diversity in the profession. We have a key role to play, not just through our regulatory requirements and major changes such as the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), but also through leadership and collaboration. We will be focussing on making the difference we all want to see in the larger firms, where we know diversity at senior levels is a real difficulty.

We went on to talk about some proposed changes to our Standards and Regulations, addressing the treatment of colleagues in the workplace and underpinning some soon to be published guidance and a thematic review on workplace culture. As part of our forthcoming consultation on these rule changes, we'll also be looking at how we can best address those situations where a solicitor's health might affect their fitness to practise. Coming back to my earlier point on enforcement, we think these particular proposals could also, in future, reduce the delay, uncertainty and stress that can be generated for everyone involved where a health concern affects the progress of a case.

Finally, we did of course update on the recent SQE 1 assessment sitting (you can [read the detail here](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/results-sqe1-assessment/1) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/results-sqe1-assessment/1]) and reminded ourselves that we have two current consultations in their last few weeks. One is on options for

[the future of post six-year run-off cover and the Solicitors Indemnity Fund \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/solicitors-indemnity-fund/?s=0\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/solicitors-indemnity-fund/?s=0), with the other on proposals for [our fining powers \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/financial-penalties-2021/?s=0\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/financial-penalties-2021/?s=0) (which, again, will help to reduce the time taken for many cases in our disciplinary processes). I urge you to respond if you haven't already done so – there is lots of information on our website to help you get involved.