

Workforce progress report 2015

Foreword

Welcome to our second annual diversity report on our own workforce, covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2015.

A diverse organisation is an effective organisation. We know that diversity matters to each of us as individuals and as a society, but it is also important to us at work. We have a clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all we do at the Solicitors Regulation Authority and that is reflected in our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

We published our ED&I Strategy 2014/17 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/>] in November 2014 and we have made progress in 2015. I am particularly pleased that inclusive and fair are two out of the five Solicitors Regulation Authority values developed by our staff this year.

We held a dynamic programme of staff events on diversity and saw the establishment of staff networks, such as our LGBT+ network. Our major staff survey gave us real insight into the way staff feel about working at the SRA, and we will continue to monitor and act on what we hear.

2015 also saw us review our recruitment offer and candidate journey as we seek to attract a truly diverse range of people to join us.

We recognise that having a diverse workforce that feels recognised and valued for its difference will contribute to better performance and the overall success of the SRA. But it is also right for us all, creating a positive culture that is a pleasure to work in. I am pleased to be part of an organisation that takes its commitment to diversity to heart.

Paul Philip

Chief Executive

Overview

The work we do at the SRA is overseen by a Board, consisting of 15 members, seven solicitors and eight lay people. Of the 15 board members in 2015, nine are male and six are female; 13 are white and two are black and minority ethnic (BAME).

At the end of 2015, the SRA had 600 members of staff, 375 women (63%) and 225 (37%) men.

Our Senior Management Team (SMT) comprised seven people: five men and two women.

In this report, we will share information on our workforce according to:

- age
- gender
- ethnicity
- disability
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation.

Our internal grading structure is organised in the following way:

- A–D: non management roles
- E–I: specialist and management roles
- J–L: head of business units and directors. Leadership and senior management roles are included at this level.

What we have achieved

In our 2014 report, we made reference to a programme of internal staff events and the possibility of forming staff networks. We have made significant progress in both of these areas during 2015.

Our aim was to set up internal events for staff across a broad range of areas to provide an environment of open discussion and build awareness and understanding of a range of diversity and inclusion issues. The objective we set ourselves was to deliver one event per quarter. However, we far exceeded this and covered nine themes over the course of 2015.

Themes included:

- LGBT history month
- Mental Health Awareness week
- Pride
- Disability Awareness day
- Black History Month
- International Women's/Men's Day

In addition to these, a number of faith events were offered to staff.

Attendance at our events was good and the feedback was positive. We are enhancing the programme further in 2016.

During 2015, five internal networks were established by staff:

- LGBT+
- Women
- Christian
- Disability
- BAME

The staff networks fulfil a range of functions including providing a safe, inclusive and diverse working environment that encourages respect and dignity for all. They also provide opportunities to support projects, review policies, provide social interaction, peer support and personal and career development. They all support the promotion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) at the SRA. So far participation by staff in the networks has been positive and 2016 will see the networks further develop and build up their roles.

We joined Stonewall in September 2015. Prior to this we had Group membership in conjunction with The Law Society. One of our key aims is to join the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, in recognition of our work to support diversity in the workplace. The index will also provide us with a benchmark. Our LGBT+ network is involved in our work on the application and we are looking forward to progressing in 2016.

During 2015, the SRA has taken action in a number of areas to support the delivery of our ED&I Strategy and action plan. For example:

- The Employee Engagement Survey, completed in September 2015, had an excellent response rate of 80 percent. Our corporate action plan in response to the survey, and the supporting directorate action plans, will be published internally in quarter one of 2016.
- We reviewed our Corporate Social Responsibility programme to make sure it was appropriately inclusive.
- Recruitment and Selection training was rolled out to managers to ensure selection decisions were fair and inclusive. Unconscious bias was also covered as part of this training.
- We delivered training for our Employee Forum to include their role in supporting the SRA's diversity and inclusion vision and strategy.
- We have reviewed and updated the recruitment pages on our website, to help ensure we can attract a diverse range of applicants.



- The SRA commissioned Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEI) to hold focus groups with different teams around the business, to explore inclusive working at the SRA.
- In January 2015, four new members and two observers were recruited to the ED&I Committee. Our progress against the ED&I strategy is reported to our senior management team and ED&I committee on a bi-monthly basis, and we published updates on our website.
- Work has started on designing and developing our inclusive leadership programme, which will be rolled out in March 2016.
- In January 2015 we introduced our SRA Values:
 - Independent
 - Professional
 - Fair
 - Progressive
 - Inclusive.
- Throughout 2015 these were embedded across the organisation. They are prominently displayed in our offices and we held an annual 'values day', which was very popular with staff. We also introduced quarterly 'values awards', where staff were recognised for demonstrating the values through their work. Staff performance is evaluated against objectives, behaviours and, implicitly, our values.
- ED&I is embedded within our behavioural competencies, against which staff are evaluated. For example, under our Demonstrating Appropriate Judgement competency, directors are expected to "Set the standard for understanding how unconscious bias can influence decisions", managers are expected to "monitor operations to ensure negative biases are not allowed to influence judgement" and staff are expected to "demonstrate an understanding of unconscious bias when exercising judgement".
- Internal groups such as the staff values group, Local Employee Forum and Business Champions all support our drive for openness and our fair and inclusive values through their work on our use of language and through open discussion and leadership.
- Monthly team brief cascades, quarterly staff forums and periodic staff events all ensure staff have the opportunity to hear key messages directly and discuss important issues with the senior management team.
- Volunteering opportunities were available in key projects, such as our values work stream and Pride working group, to provide opportunities to enhance staff skills and knowledge and to get them involved across the organisation.

- During 2015 we continued to introduce the Strength Deployment Inventory to all staff. This is a self assessment tool that is designed to improve self awareness; give a better appreciation of difference; enhance skills to understand and communicate with others and build stronger relationships.

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form at the SRA and will continue to work to ensure that any practices or behaviours that could be deemed to be in any way discriminatory are eradicated.

Age

We have people across all age groups employed at the SRA.

Figure 1 illustrates our age distribution across the pay grades.

- The largest proportion of our workforce (61 percent) falls within the 25–34 and 35–44 age brackets.
- A quarter of our workforce is aged 45–54, of which 46 percent are found in Head of Business Unit or Director roles.
- Although only 5 percent of our workforce fall within the 16–24 age bracket, 27 percent of new starters in 2015 were aged 16–24. Our data indicates that we are positively attracting and appointing candidates in this age group. Over time the percentage of the SRA workforce within this age should increase.
- All age groups, with the exception of over 65s, were represented for internal promotions and flexible working applications.

Gender

The gender split at the SRA is:

Figure 2 illustrates the gender split at the SRA. This equates to 375 female members of staff and 225 male members of staff.

Figure 3 illustrates our gender distribution across the pay grades.

- The ratio of female to male employees at grades A–D and E–I is approximately 2:1.
- The ratio reduces at grade J–L, with 54 percent female and 46 percent male.
- In line with our gender split, 64 percent of new starters in 2015 were female.
- 43 percent of applicants (internal and external) were male and 57 percent were female (3 percent preferred not to state).



- For grade J–L, external applicants were more likely to be male (54 percent male to 44 percent female (2 percent preferred not to state)). However, internal applicants were significantly more likely to be female (73 percent female to 27 percent male).
- 56 percent of all promotions were secured by women.
- 80 percent of flexible working applications were submitted by females.

Women's Network

During 2015, a women's network was established at the SRA to create a forum for women across the organisation to come together on a regular basis.

The network aims to:

- Create networking opportunities
- Encourage confidence building and skills development
- Arrange for guest speakers to raise awareness of a range of topics

Ethnicity

Figure 4 reflects the ethnic breakdown of staff at the SRA.

- Within the BAME group, Asian/Asian British is the largest ethnic minority group, constituting 16 percent of the SRA workforce.
- The percentage of Asian/Asian British staff in grade A–D is 17 percent, E–I is 16 percent and J–L is 8 percent.
- As reported in 2014, there are no Black/Black British staff employed within grade J–L, The total number of staff in this ethnic group across the SRA remains small at 2 percent.

Figure 5 illustrates the ethnicity of internal and external applicants and also of successful applicants (internal and external combined).

- 34 percent of external applicants who applied for a role with us were BAME. Some 27 percent of successful external candidates were BAME.
- The majority of BAME applications (49 percent) were for a grade A–D role.
- Asian/Asian British employees made up 22 percent of internal applications. Some 10 percent of successful internal applicants were Asian/Asian British.

BAME Network

An internal network was established in 2015 for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees to provide networking opportunities and support to any employee who does not class themselves to be of White/White British ethnicity.

The network is building relationships with other external networks to share best practice and enhance support available to its members.

Disability

During 2015, 5 percent of the SRA workforce declared a disability. We are pleased that staff have shared this information with us.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of staff who have declared a disability or have declined to state across each of our pay grades.

- 14 percent of staff working at the SRA declined to state whether or not they had a disability. We would like to see this percentage reduce with everyone feeling able to share this information with us.
- Staff who have declared a disability are fairly evenly spread across each of the pay grades.
- 4 percent of applicants, both internally and externally, had a disability. Some 3 percent of internal applicants with a disability were successful, compared with 2 percent of external applicants.
- We continue to work with our staff who have a disability to provide information and guidance on reasonable adjustments and flexible working. We have a range of supportive tools to assist all employees including: an employee assistance programme; occupational health support; counselling; stress management training; private healthcare; access to gym membership and health screenings.

Access Ability Network

Formed in 2015, the network seeks to:

- Support in the promotion of equal opportunities in terms of policies, procedures, practices, recruitment and career development for SRA employees to ensure disabled employees are treated equally.
- Work towards ensuring a safe and inclusive working environment, to enable disabled employees to feel more comfortable in the workplace.
- Offer support to all disabled employees or those affected by disability issues in a professional and confidential manner.
- Promote the SRA as a disability friendly organisation, both as a regulator and an employer by supporting with implementation of the ED&I strategy and action plan.
- Raise awareness of disability issues in and around the local area.

Religion and Belief

The religious demographic at the SRA is more diverse than statistics report for the general population in the West Midlands.

Figure 7 illustrates the main religious groups represented at the SRA.

- A significant majority, 43 percent, of our workforce are Christian.
- Each religious group is represented at the SRA with the largest groups, after Christian, being Sikh (7 percent), Muslim (4 percent) and Hindu (2 percent).
- In 2015, 10 percent of new starters were Muslim.
- Grade A–D attracted the largest proportion of applications (internal and external) by candidates from religious groups other than Christian.
- During this reporting period, we had no successful candidates from any of the main religious groups other than Christian for grade J–L. Some 44 percent of successful applicants at this level were Christian and 38 percent stated no religion.
- A number of faith events were organised during 2015 to raise the profile of significant religious events in the calendar, which were well attended.

Christian Network

Established during 2015, the network aims to:

- Provide an opportunity for colleagues to learn about the Christian faith.
- Provide support and encouragement to all staff, not just Christians.
- Provide specific support and encouragement to Christians within the SRA in order for them to be themselves at work and share their faith with their colleagues.
- Inform and influence policy and other company decisions to be understanding of Christian needs.

Sexual orientation

- 4 percent of staff have disclosed to us that they are gay or bisexual.
- 16 percent of staff chose not to specify their sexual orientation. We will continue to work to promote our inclusive culture to encourage more staff to feel comfortable to state their sexual orientation in future data collection exercises.
- During 2015, 6 percent of new starters were gay or bisexual, which is a higher proportion than the current workforce.
- At present, grade J–L is the only grade bracket that is not represented by the LGBT population.
- For the last two years we have collected data on transgender staff. We are unable to report on this data due to the low numbers of staff within this category.

SRA Nexus – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Network

Also established in 2015, the aims of the network are to:

- Support the promotion of equal opportunities in terms of policies, procedures, practices, recruitment and career development for SRA employees to ensure LGBT employees are treated equally.
- Work towards ensuring a safe and inclusive working environment to enable LGBT employees to feel more comfortable in the workplace.
- Offer support to all LGBT employees or those affected by LGBT issues in a professional and confidential manner.
- Promote the SRA as an LGBT friendly organisation both as a regulator and an employer by supporting with implementation of the EDI strategy & action plan.
- Raise awareness of LGBT issues in and around the local area.

The network has played an active role in promoting internal events during the year and had a strong presence representing the SRA at Pride.

Next steps

2015 has seen some positive progress against our ED&I agenda, which has put us in a strong position to embed and develop our work further during 2016.

Some of the activities that we are planning include:

- Endorse and promote our staff networks further to embed and strengthen their position within the SRA.
- Monitor and review our progress against our post September 2015 staff survey corporate and directorate action plans, including those areas that address issues arising in relation to ED&I. Review progress of process with an interim engagement survey in September 2016.
- Undertake promotional work internally to support a future diversity data collection exercise to maximise response rates, thereby improving the accuracy of our diversity data.
- Promote ED&I at all levels across the SRA with 'unconscious bias' training for all staff.
- Start to roll out our Inclusive Leadership programme across all levels of the SRA.
- Work closely with Stonewall on developing our application for the top 100 organisations in the annual Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

- Deliver internal events on key topics relating to ED&I and to mark national and international initiatives throughout the year, raising the awareness and understanding of staff.
- Continue to monitor and review our policies and practices to ensure that they are not discriminatory and are in line with best practice relating to ED&I.
- Regular analysis of our diversity profile to identify areas of concern or positive changes within the staff demographic.
- Review our attraction strategies to attract a diverse pool of applicants, to ensure that each protected characteristic is appropriately represented across all grades at the SRA.