

## News release

### *SRA Board welcomes new members*

12 January 2021

Our Board has welcomed four new members - Ann Harrison, Dermot Nolan, Vikas Shah MBE and Elizabeth Smart - who took up their places this month.

Recruitment to the Board took place throughout the autumn, with a particular emphasis on attracting interest from a diversity of candidates using social media and outreach to diversity champions within the profession and more widely. This resulted in a strong field of some 200 applicants, including many more people from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds, geographies and legal practice types.

**Anna Bradley, Chair of the SRA Board**, said: 'I am delighted that after an open and very competitive recruitment process, we have both strengthened the Board and increased our diversity. I welcome our new Board members and look forward to working with the whole Board in addressing the needs of legal service users in what is a complex and fast-changing landscape.

'We have a challenging programme ahead of us at what is an uncertain time for everyone. Vikas, Dermot, Ann and Elizabeth will help us bed in a comprehensive reform programme, transform the way that would-be solicitors qualify, anticipate change and support innovation and technology.

'During the recruitment process, we met some excellent potential future Board and senior executive members from diverse communities that we would like help develop for the future. We will therefore be exploring the creation of a programme to encourage and engage talented people in senior roles in legal regulation and build a pipeline of future candidates for the sector.'

The Board retains its lay majority, with six lay members and five solicitor members. The quartet join Anna Bradley as well as Peter Higson, Paul Loft, Barry Matthews, Geoff Nicholas, Selina Ullah and Tony Williams. More about the Board [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/our-board/>].

### *New Board members*

>**Vikas Shah**, a non-executive director of Fletchers Solicitors, is an entrepreneur, investor and philanthropist with more than 25 years of experience in diverse industries ranging from technology to textiles. He is an honorary professor at the University of Manchester's Alliance Business School, and an honorary industry fellow at the University of Salford Business School. Vikas was awarded an MBE for services to business and

the economy in 2018. Vikas is a member of the UK Government's Industrial Development Advisory Board (IDAB), and Chair of In Place of War (an international NGO operating in 30 countries). Vikas is a published author and frequent speaker and commentator on business and entrepreneurship.

**Dermot Nolan** has spent much of his professional life in regulation, both in the UK and in Ireland, including serving as CEO of Ofgem, the UK's energy regulator, and before that being executive chair of the Irish energy regulator. He has also had senior roles in telecom regulation and in the Irish competition authority. Before being a regulator, Dermot was an academic, lecturing in economics for five years at Royal Holloway.

**Ann Harrison** was a partner in North West firm Stephenson Solicitors LLP for almost 30 years prior to her retirement in April 2020. She held the role of chairwoman for more than ten years, and the role of managing partner prior to that. Ann is a former chair of the Law Society's Law Management Section (LMS), having been involved with the section for around ten years.

**Elizabeth Smart** is a professor of legal education at Sheffield Hallam University and a principal and national teaching fellow of the higher education academy. She is a director of SHU Law Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sheffield Hallam University, and a practising solicitor with 28 years' experience. She has previously worked as both a Legal Practice Course assessor and external examiner and was a member of the Office for Student Teaching Excellence Framework Business and Law Panel. She has worked in both higher education and as a consultant for a range of UK police forces, promoting equality and diversity, and is currently a member of the Independent Ethics Panel for the Police and Crime Commissioner of South Yorkshire.

The role of the Board is to oversee our work as we regulate more than 150,000 practising solicitors and 10,000 firms across England and Wales. Members' responsibilities include setting the strategic direction at Board meetings, holding the executive to account for its performance, representing the views of a wide range of diverse external stakeholders, and acting as ambassadors.

Outgoing members are Dame Denise Platt, David Heath, Elaine Williams and David Willis, who completed their tenures at the end of last year.