Solicitors **Regulation** Authority

Workforce progress report 2020

May 2021

Foreword

Welcome to our 2020 SRA staff diversity report. This provides information about our staff and the initiatives we have done to make sure we have a diverse and inclusive workforce and workplace that reflects our values.

Diversity is important for us all and we know that diverse organisations are better organisations. It's also key for the law firms we regulate – a diverse legal profession. One that reflects the communities it serves and not only attracts the best talent from every background but makes a positive contribution to access to justice.

2020 was a very uncertain year for everyone and it will take some time for the long-term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for the workplace and for different communities to be fully understood. We moved our Birmingham and London offices to full homeworking in March 2020, making bespoke arrangements where possible for those who needed them and supporting our staff virtually.

Our staff networks and our mental health first aiders did much to help, and our staff survey shows that we have retained our sense of shared values and culture.

Like many organisations, we have learned from our experience of online recruitment, induction and training over the year. Going forward, we will use this to help us to reach and support people in different ways.

As we look ahead, we want to do more to encourage diversity and inclusion in our workplace. Our report sets out some of our thinking. Importantly, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion will continue to be at the heart of all our work.
Paul Philip
Chief Executive

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Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

The Equality Act 2010 sets out Public Sector Equality Duties. We must comply with the duties and have due regard for the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups or 'protected characteristics'. Protected characteristics are defined as follows:

    1. age

    2. gender

    3. gender reassignment

    4. ethnicity

    5. disability

    6. marriage and civil partnership

    7. pregnancy and maternity

    8. religion or belief

    9. sexual orientation.

3. Foster good relations between people from different groups.

The equality duty is about integrating consideration of equality and good relations into day-to-day business. It means organisations need to look at how they can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It also requires these considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these to be kept under review. Within this report we reflect on the progress we are making.

The mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) through all our work is a priority for us. In 2018, we set up a steering group to oversee and monitor our progress in achieving this.

During 2020, the group continued to:

- provide operational oversight of our work to make sure EDI is integrated into our core activities, as set out in our EDI roadmap

- agree measures and review performance against our annual EDI action plan, which sets out the activity that we are taking forward to support the Corporate Strategy 2017–20.

Our EDI work is linked to our staff values:

- Independent

- Professional

- Fair

- Inclusive

- Progressive.

To help to describe our work to develop a fully inclusive culture and a diverse workforce, this report is structured in three sections. It builds on our report from 2019.

Organisation

As an organisation, we expect the law firms we regulate to create and champion an equal and diverse culture, so we need to make sure we do the same. We expect our staff to consider EDI throughout their work, whatever their role.

Labour market

Our offices are based in Birmingham and London – although most staff spent most of 2020 working remotely due to the pandemic – and our workforce is broadly representative of the labour markets in in Birmingham and London. There has been little change in the overall diversity profile of our staff over the last few years. We continue to work on areas where data suggests we have more to do to ensure diversity at every level in the organisation.

Roles at the SRA

Our staff grading is structured in the following way:

- A–D: non-management roles

- E–I: specialist and management roles

- J–L: heads of business units and directors. Leadership and senior management roles are included at this level.

All data is taken as of 31 December 2020. Please note, larger percentages have been moved to the nearest whole number while smaller percentages may show more detail. Where data reflects small numbers, we have not reported them in case individuals are identifiable. In some cases, the data in this report will be presented in line with the staffing structure to express key points.

Building a diverse workplace

From the beginning of a person's interaction and engagement with us, we believe it is important that we share our commitment to EDI. We want to

encourage applicants to be individuals who are proud of their diversity, promoting equality of opportunity.

During 2020, we reviewed the recruitment and selection materials used in our management essentials training. This included incorporating the use of Curriculum Vitates from a diverse ethnic background and including personal statements that disclose sexual orientation and disability. These are designed to be reflective of the makeup of potential applicants and help us to train best practice in a simulated environment.

We continued to use the Fair Hiring Project, an online learning platform which gives all interviewees access to a range of learning materials. These are designed to help candidates to develop skills, insight and confidence before they are assessed at interview.

We have also committed to undertake a full equality impact assessment because of changes to the recruitment and selection policy. The recruitment and selection policy has also been reviewed and amended to make sure it has more emphasis on EDI.

We continued to recruit and onboard new staff virtually throughout the pandemic. To do this effectively, we used video call interviews, virtual assessments and a new online induction programme.

Diverse talent acquisition continued to be a key focus for 2020. We conducted a supply chain review for executive search and selection firms. We formed a small panel of executive search agencies to deliver quality hires for the most senior roles and support us in accessing talent within traditionally underrepresented groups. Diversity and inclusion a heavily weighted selection criterion in terms of commitment to EDI within their own organisation, as well as in practice.

Importantly, we continue to measure the recruitment process at each stage by grade and by characteristic.

An EDI working group has been formed this year, with staff from across the business, at all levels. We are committing to specific actions that, we hope, will see meaningful improvement across targeted areas. The working group have formed an action plan to take forward and our EDI steering group continue to oversee and monitor our progress.

During 2020, we reviewed and updated our recruitment policy with greater/clearer emphasis on our EDI commitment as one of the guiding principles.

Supporting progression and fulfilling aspirations through learning and development

In 2020, in light of the pandemic, we transformed our learning and development infrastructure by implementing a new, modern learning management system. We have refashioned many of our employee training opportunities that were traditionally classroom based to elearning.

This has enabled training to become more accessible. Employees can engage with training at a time to accommodate their own commitments, using recorded live virtual sessions or self-directed training. The new learning management system also accommodates different levels of ability, allowing employees to learn at a pace that works best for them.

We continue to support our staff to make our commitment to EDI a reality. All our managers attend dedicated courses to equip them with the necessary skills to support their staff, and diversity and inclusion is at the heart of these initiatives.

We are keeping all our learning and development under review to make sure we continue to deliver effectively during the constraints brought by Covid-19.

Personal and professional development remains a key part of our learning and development offering, with funding available for external courses or qualifications (subject to key criteria set out within our professional development policy).

SRA Allies

Our SRA Allies offer all staff and Board members the chance to show support for colleagues as part of their commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

As an ally, staff can demonstrate this support by getting involved in key events and initiatives. These aim to create an environment where all staff are free from discrimination and able to be open about who they are. This helps to create a working environment in which staff can fulfil their potential, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, disability, race or religion.

In August 2020, as part of our ongoing commitment to building an inclusive and supportive culture, we further promoted the scheme and encourage more staff to sign the allies' pledge. We also nominated a new SRA Allies Champion. This recognised their work on inspiring others through sharing their own experiences and raising awareness on important issues such as intersectionality and neurodiversity.

Continuous improvement based on our Staff Engagement Survey

In November 2020, we ran our short biennial in house staff engagement survey. We had a response rate of 82%, up one percentage point from the

previous year, suggesting that staff wanted to engage with the organisation and speak up about improvements. The percentage of staff who believed that action would be taken because of the survey results also increased by four percentage points (compared to 2019).

It was positive to see that two high scoring answers were about staff feeling comfortable speaking to their line manager and well informed about the SRA's Covid-19 arrangements.

Some of the things that staff said they valued about working here were our people, including support for each other, a commitment to fairness and diligence, and feeling valued. Staff also appreciated our ethos, including our aims, culture and values.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

We were pleased to be recognised as a Top 100 Employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) during 2019. This index assesses the progress employers are making on LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Although applications were closed for the WEI during 2020, because of the pandemic, we continued our work on LGBTQ+ inclusivity with a sharp focus on intersectionality. This included an online event about the concept intersectional diversity, particularly in relation to those who are on both the neurodevelopmental spectrum and the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

We continued to celebrate national LGBTQ+ days in the calendar, such as the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia and Transgender Day of Visibility.

Prior to the 2020 lockdown we had introduced gender neutral toilets in the reception floor in our Birmingham Office. The facilities were well received and have been used throughout the pandemic constraints by those staff who have continued to use the office.

We take LGBTQ+ inclusivity seriously and recognise the value of LGBTQ+ staff who bring with them different experiences and perspectives. We are currently working on our application for the 2020 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Social mobility

- In 2020, we asked staff to review and update their personal diversity data held on our HR system. We also added new questions regarding social mobility to help us to check we are being fair and that all staff are represented, supported and included. Forty-two per cent of staff provided answers to the new questions.

From the staff that have given us their diversity information:

- 38% said that they are the primary caregiver for a child under 18

- 10% look after or care for someone with long-term physical or mental ill health caused by disability or age

- 62% attended a non-selective state-run or state funded school between the ages of 11 and 16

- 66% said by the time the staff member was 18, neither of their parents/guardians had attended university

- 22% said that the occupation of their main household earner when they were aged 14 was in the category of modern and traditional professional occupations.

We will continue to raise awareness of the benefits of asking these questions during 2021 to improve response rates.

Our networks and staff activity

Our networks, established and run by staff, continued to share ideas and collaborate on events and initiatives virtually throughout 2020. They each have an internal intranet page to share messages and raise awareness.

A quarterly cross-network meeting also provides a good opportunity to support working together, helping to share ideas and best practice.

Our current networks are:

- Race, ethnicity and cultural heritage (REACH)

- iCare (carers)

- Christian

- Access Ability (disability, health conditions, neurological differences)

- PridePlus (LGBTQ+)

- Network of Women

- Working Parents Network

- Mental Health First Aiders.

Some highlights from 2020

Our senior management team (SMT) sponsor individual networks, taking a keen interest in and supporting the work of the network. We also have four Board members as network sponsors.

Our Black, Asian and minority ethic network was renamed as REACH (race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage). The REACH network focused on Black Lives Matter during 2020, setting up safe space coffee mornings for staff, following the death of George Floyd. The network also launched a

popular podcast club to focus on race, which members of our senior management and leadership teams regularly attended.

The Access Ability network focused on raising awareness of neurodiversity, delivering presentations to staff about neurodiversity and autism in the workplace, and sharing information and resources for Autism Acceptance week.

We continued to organise our popular staff faith events during 2020. These encourage staff from all religions and backgrounds to come together and celebrate as one. Virtual events were held for Vaisakhi, Passover, Eid, Diwali and Christmas.

Our Christian network set up a dedicated shared mailbox, which replaced the suggestion/prayer box in the office. This allowed staff to submit any questions, suggestions or prayer requests. During lockdown, the network maintained weekly prayer meetings to support each other and other members of the organisation.

Our iCare network organised briefings for colleagues, including sharing tips on accessing extra online shopping services and supporting vulnerable people during lockdown. The network signposted to the Royal Volunteer Service and other community services. In September, members of the network shared their personal stories on caring for a relative with Alzheimer's for World Alzheimer's Awareness Day.

The Network of Women celebrated International Women's Day in March. A series of events and activities aimed to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and celebrate women's achievements. This included a display in our office about representation of women in the legal sector over the last 100 years. The network also hosted a discussion about domestic abuse with a guest speaker. Members have supported each other, discussing topical issues and sharing information such as the effects of lockdown on gender equality.

Our PridePlus network held an event about intersectional diversity and the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Although Pride parades were cancelled, the network also ran external events around Trans awareness, acceptance and inclusion.

Our Mental Health First Aiders network recruited a further six mental health first aiders. The network set up a mental health and wellbeing intranet page providing support information and resources for staff. They also rolled out a programme to assist line managers in supporting staff with their mental health.

The Working Parents Network expanded its membership during the pandemic constraints. They delivered a two-week long programme of events on of the impact of the pandemic on work and family life, and to

provide practical support and resources to parents. The network also encouraged a sense of community for parents of children of all ages through regular blogs and group activities.

Rewarding and recognising our staff

We continue to provide a range of staff benefits which reflect our inclusive approach. In 2018, we introduced a digital platform, the Recognition Hub, to support timely recognition and reward for staff for embodying our behaviours and values.

During 2020, we reminded staff via internal communication of the importance of celebrating good news and success and 86% of staff were recognised via the Recognition Hub.

Some highlights from 2020

We have had 1,167 Thank You award nominations. 709 (61%) of those were submitted by management. A total of 552 ecards have been sent (such as welcome, congratulation, behaviours and our values).

On 1 May we introduced a trial of the Wellbeing Centre. We highlighted the four main sections; move, munch, mind and money. During its first month 123 staff visited at least one Wellbeing Centre page and the successful trial led to the permanent introduction of this resource.

The Hall of Fame was updated to include value award winners.

Our weekly news round-up highlights offers of the week and links to where staff can access further discounts and up-to-date information on the Hub. During 2020 staff saved £33,416 through the discount scheme in the Recognition Hub.

Our 2020 staff profile

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Gender

Key highlights and trends

Our gender split is 61% female (428) and 39% male (269). This is compared to 62% female (412) and 38% male (251) in 2019.

Of those promoted in 2020, 66% (44 people) were female and 34% (23 people) were male. This compares to 61% (40) of promotions achieved by females and 39% (26) of promotions achieved by men in 2019.

For grades J–L, there was an increase in the number of external female applicants. In 2019, 32% of external applicants were female, this increased to 51% in 2020.

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Flexible working is an area that continues to show a significant gender split. We encourage and support colleagues to work flexibly. The number of flexible working requests reduced from 86 to 42 in 2020 due to remote working during the pandemic.

Of the flexible working applications submitted, 81% (34) were made by females, up two percentage points from 2019, and 19% (eight) were made by males, compared to 21% (18) in 2020.

Gender pay gap

In March 2021, we published our 2020 gender pay gap figures. The figures compare positively with the national gender pay gap, which is 15.5% (ONS 2020).

	Mean pay gap	Median pay gap
SRA pay	10.6% (2019: 11.1%)	8.8% (2019: 6.8%)
SRA bonus	45.3% (2019: 38.5%)	10% (2019: 7.7%)

The mean pay gap is the difference between hourly earnings for men and women, taking the sum of all hourly rates divided by the total number of men or women in the sample.

The median pay gap is the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of hourly earnings between men and women. It takes all salaries in the sample, lines them up in order from lowest to highest, and picks the middle-most salary.

The figures reflect the female/male profile across the organisation, and the presence of more men in our senior management team. In addition, a higher proportion of females work part-time in lower-level roles.

We are committed to reducing the gender pay gap and have an action plan in place.

This includes:

- an ongoing review of our reward strategy and how we recognise staff
- continuing to review how we recruit, retain and promote females into senior roles
- reviewing our policies, processes and practices to provide an environment where everyone can flourish.

Age

Key highlights and trends

The largest proportion of our staff (31%) are within the 35–44 age bracket, followed by those in the 25–34 age bracket (26%). Just over a quarter of our workforce fall within the 25–34 age bracket (26% – 178 staff). A quarter of our workforce (174 staff) are aged 45–54, 4% (31 staff) of our workforce fell in the 16–24 age bracket and 1% of staff were aged 65 and over.

All age brackets were represented across all pay grades except for 16–24-year-olds and those aged 65 and over. Within grades J–L, there was no representation from within these two age brackets. This has not changed since 2016.

We promoted 67 colleagues during 2020. Staff aged 25–34 received the largest percentage of promotions (33%), followed by those in the 45–54 age group (25%). Both of these groups saw an increase in the percentage of promotions achieved compared to 2019. There was a decrease in the percentage of promotions achieved by staff aged 16–24, 35–44 and 55–64 when compared to 2019.

In 2020, there was an increase in external candidates aged 16–24 applying to us (27%). This suggests that we continue to be attractive to external candidates within this younger age group.

A combined total of 46% (28 staff) of successful internal applications were received by those within the 16–24 and 25–34 age brackets.

Ethnicity

Key highlights and trends

The term Black, Asian and minority ethic includes any member of staff who self-identifies their ethnicity as anything other than white British.

Our overall workforce profile reflects that of the local labour markets in Birmingham and London.

Asian/Asian British are still our largest ethnic minority group, making up 21% (145 of our workforce), up one percentage point since 2019. However, the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethic staff continues to be lower in the middle and senior management grades than in the less senior grades. This is the case with many organisations and is an area where we want to see improvement.

Of those promoted in 2020, 34% were Black, Asian and minority ethic (compared to 33% in 2019). Black, Asian and minority ethic employees made up 46% of internal applications, the same proportion as the previous year.

We welcome the progress but know we have more to do. We will build on our work to date to make sure our people have every opportunity to develop their careers within the organisation.

Overall, we have seen some welcome improvements in our ethnic diversity. But the picture is less positive at senior level and we are committed to doing everything we can to make our senior grades more reflective of our wider workforce.

Disability

Key highlights and trends

In 2020, 8% of our workforce (56 people) declared that they have a disability. This is up from 7% in 2019.

Although the numbers are small, the proportion of individuals applying who declare a disability is steadily increasing. In 2020 it was 5% of external applicants, compared to 4% in 2019 and 3% in both 2018 and 2017.

We also saw that 5% (five people) of new starters in 2020 had a disability, which is a steady uplift from 4% in 2019 and 3% in 2018, although the numbers are, again, very small.

There has been an increase from 4% to 7% of those at grade J–L reporting as having a disability.

Religion and belief

Key highlights and trends

Within our workforce, the largest group of staff identified as being Christian, 35% (246 people). The second largest group are those saying they have no religion, 34% (239 people).

Of other groups, 8% (55 people) identified as Sikh, 8% (53 people) as Muslim and 2% (16 people) as Hindu. The representation of Muslims increased by one percentage point, the representation of Hindus decreased by one percentage point and the representation of Sikhs remained unchanged at 8%.

Of staff working in grade E–I roles, 38% (194 people) identified as Christian, 33% (170 people) said they had no religion, 9% (44 people) identified as Sikh and 5% (26 people) identified as Muslim.

For staff working in grade A–D roles, 30% (39 people) identified as Christian, 26% (34 people) said they had no religion, 20% (26 people)

identified as Muslim, 20% (26 people) identified as Muslim, 7% (10 people) identified as Sikh and 3% (four people) identified as Hindu.

The majority of staff working in grade J–L roles, 61% (35 people) have no religion. There were also 23% (13 people) who identified as Christian, 4% (two people) who identified as Buddhist, 2% (one person) who identified as Muslim and 2% (one person) who identified as Sikh.

Sexual orientation

Key highlights

Our diversity data shows that 3% of our staff (20 people) disclosed their sexual orientation as gay/lesbian or bisexual.

During 2020, 2% of staff declared they were gay or lesbian an increase of 0.6 percentage points since 2019. A further 1% of staff declared they were bisexual, the same as in 2019.

In addition, 7% (seven people) of new starters declared that they were gay/lesbian or bisexual, an increase of four percentage points since 2019. While 5% of external applicants declared that they were gay/lesbian or bisexual, compared to 3% in 2019.

Gay/lesbian and bisexual members of staff were represented across all grades.

Our next steps

Leadership

We continue to use the employee lifecycle to support our leadership teams. We are developing a revised suite of HR related management information to inform the SMT better and to aid role modelling inclusive leadership behaviours.

We have revised our approach to developing our leaders, introducing a leadership pathway taking the journey of leadership from being an aspiring manager to executive leader. This pathway will introduce fully inclusive mentoring support, in particular, tailored for under- represented groups of staff.

Resourcing

We will continue to review and update diversity content in recruitment marketing materials and available online platforms, as well as any relevant

training content. We will also analyse recruitment data to identify trends and make positive changes.

In addition, we will undertake a full equality impact assessment on the recruitment and selection policy, to identify any barriers and make any necessary changes to the policy.

Learning and development

We will be designing a leadership development course for implementation in 2021 to support progression and fulfil career aspirations.

We will also be reviewing our suite of EDI eLearning modules to embed unconscious bias throughout all our learning.

Other initiatives

We will continue to review our progress against our staff survey and action plans, including those areas relating to EDI, effective leadership and managing change.

- **Recruitment** – to make sure the process is fair, impartial and based on merit and to identify where unrepresented groups are being rejected at all levels to facilitate next steps to address potential issues.

- **Talent** – to develop a pipeline of talent throughout our organisation that encourages opportunities for all staff, where appropriate to be identified by providing a range of tools that are fully inclusive.

- **Data** – to encourage an environment for all staff so that they feel confident to fully complete our annual diversity data collection exercise.

- **Intersectionality and Inclusivity** – to determine what intersectionality means to our organisation alongside satisfying the criteria of our current work on the WEI.

During 2020, we conducted equality impact assessments on our sickness absence policy and recruitment policy and some of our training programmes. These assessments make sure that our processes and decisions are fair, meet the needs of our people, and do not inadvertently discriminate against any protected groups. We will be completing equality impact assessments on other relevant HR policies, where appropriate.

We will continue with our membership as a Disability Confident level two employer and build on this to work towards becoming a Disability Confident Leader. This will involve further training for line managers, some of which can be incorporated into the recruitment and selection training.

We are working closely with Stonewall on developing our next application for the top 100 employers in their annual WEI.

We will build on our experience over recent years, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, to introduce more agile working, including more home working and increasing the scope for flexible working.

We will create a wellbeing strategy to provide a healthy, agile, inclusive, and purposeful environment, where individuals can be supported to take responsibility for their own ideal work/life balance.

Reward

The findings within our Gender Pay Gap report will allow us to engage with staff to make progress in this area.

We will continue to use the Recognition Hub more widely to celebrate and communicate success with others. We will promote a greater level of peer-to-peer nomination and recognition and encourage nominations that recognise achievement in line with our behaviours and values.

Networks

We will build on network sponsorship work to increase visibility of our SMT and the wider leadership team in actively endorsing and promoting each of the networks. This will help to embed and strengthen their position within the SRA and encourage further diversity and new ideas.

In turn, we believe this will have a positive impact on attraction and retention of those with a protected characteristic.

Some next steps for our staff networks include:

- our mental health first aiders will hold informal online drop-in sessions for staff for time to talk day
- the Network of Women will promote 'choose to challenge' as part of International Women's day
- the Prideplus network will run a virtual quiz for LGBT History Month
- all our staff networks will continue to work together to provide useful information, videos and online intranet content to support all staff.

We will continue to endorse and promote our staff networks further to embed and strengthen their position within the SRA.