



**Law  
Commission**  
Reforming the law

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# **Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-22**

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23 June 2021

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# **The Law Commission of England and Wales**

## **Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-22**

June 2021

## Foreword



I am pleased to introduce the Law Commission's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Much as I recognise that this Strategy should be a high-level statement of our values and approach, it is of particular importance to me that it is also a practical document, which sets out realistic and measurable actions we are taking to make progress as an organisation.

It is essential that the Law Commission champions inclusivity and respect. There are a number of reasons:

- First, we want our staff to feel that we provide an inclusive environment, where their views – no matter their background or position in the organisation – matter.
- Second, we want to attract the brightest talent from the broadest range of backgrounds. Primarily, our staff are from legal backgrounds, so we must raise awareness among those who might not traditionally have seen us as a viable career option. This applies to Research Assistants, lawyers and Commissioners of the future.
- Third, we can use our position as a public body to help support those from under-represented communities embark on a career in the law and tap into this fresh talent and diverse range of perspectives.
- Finally, raising awareness among our staff will help us to ensure that the law reforms we recommend to government are grounded in the experiences of different communities.

I think the Law Commission has a positive story to tell about work we have already done in this area, largely focused on outreach and awareness raising. Of particular note is our Commissioner Diversity Scheme, Research Assistant outreach work and sessions to help our teams understand issues affecting different parts of society. But, there is more we can do, especially as we emerge from the pandemic, which unfortunately has limited opportunities for outreach activities.

This plan is designed to be a statement of our intent. Leadership will be important: from me, the Board and Senior Management Team. At the same time, however, I ask that everyone at the Commission familiarises themselves with this strategy and takes an active role in delivering the objectives contained within it.

**Philip Golding**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**The Law Commission of England and Wales**

## Introduction

A diverse workforce brings a range of experiences and perspectives, which strengthen our performance and impact as an organisation. It also ensures that the recommendations we make to Government are grounded in the experiences of different communities.

By way of context, the Commission's workforce is largely made up of staff who are either legally qualified or who are hoping to pursue a legal career. Many of our staff are not career civil servants and will spend a fairly limited period at the Commission before moving onto other legal roles. The Commission has a strong reputation in legal circles and so time spent with us is seen as an excellent career experience. We recruit staff who are in the very top echelon of their peer group, whether they are Research Assistants, lawyers or Commissioners. We want to ensure that we continue to reach the best talent from the broadest range of backgrounds - and continue to support the future talent pipeline.

The Commission is affected by the fact that there are barriers to some communities in pursuing a career in the law. As a result, this strategy does not only focus on actions where the Commission itself may benefit from a more diverse workforce, but also how we can best use our public position to offer opportunities to those at the start of a possible legal career. Funding has been put aside with this very much in mind, despite the fact that we may never benefit from the results (although, of course, we may do so if an individual we support applies successfully for a future role at the Commission or encourages others to pursue with us).

It is also important to recognise that the Commission's role is to make law reform recommendations to government. These cover a broad range of social issues, for example, weddings, surrogacy, and hate crime laws. In making such recommendations, it is vital we understand the issues affecting different communities living in England and Wales. One mechanism for doing so is to complete robust and well-informed Equality Impact Assessments where they are needed. A group has started to look at this area of our work and it forms a key part of this strategy.

We have also put in place funding to ensure that the Corporate Services Team have a permanent administrative resource to support the actions set out in this strategy, however, they cannot do it alone. We have already appointed a diversity champion, who acts as a role model and spokesperson for diversity and inclusion across the Law Commission. We will consider how best to get others involved in this work at all levels of the organisation.

## Our goals are:

1. To create a more diverse workforce across all levels of the organisation.
2. To create a workplace where everyone feels included and valued.
3. To use our position to help people from those communities under-represented in the law to pursue a legal career.
4. To ensure our law reform recommendations are grounded in a strong understanding of the different experiences of communities across England and Wales.

## What we have done so far

**Raising awareness:** To help increase understanding of diversity and inclusion issues that will affect our own staff as well others in society, we've published various blogs and articles on our intranet. Given the recent focus on Black Lives Matter we have focused much of our recent attention on race issues and have accordingly forged strong links with the PROUD Network. In addition to this we have been participating in race allies training workshops with other parts of government, such as the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

**Law Reform Recommendations:** The Law Commission makes recommendations on legal and policy reforms across a wide range of areas, including hate crime, online harms, surrogacy and weddings. Many of these recommendations will affect a wide range of communities in different ways, so we have commenced work designed to strengthen our approach to Equality Impact Assessments.

**Outreach:** We have undertaken outreach work in universities aimed at our annual intake of Research Assistants. We specifically target universities with a higher proportion of students from those communities under-represented in the law with a view to raising awareness of the opportunities at the Commission.

**Commissioner recruitment:** We already have a Diversity Scheme targeted at Commissioners. This was due to be relaunched in the Spring of 2020. However, Covid-19 has delayed the relaunch because many of those who may be interested have been focused on the response to the pandemic. We will relaunch this initiative as part of this strategy. We will also add lawyers to the scheme so that all levels of legal career at the Commission will now be covered by some form of outreach activity.

**Funded internships:** We have launched work to explore the possibility of funding several placements to enable law students from under-represented communities to spend time at the Law Commission experiencing our work. This may help the future pipeline of lawyers and researchers but, more than that, we believe it is part of our responsibility as a public body to offer such opportunities, regardless of the potential future benefit to our organisation. We have held discussions with Bridging the Bar and the Sutton Trust and are now exploring the practicalities of pursuing a sustainable scheme.

**GLD Diversity Vacation Scheme:** The GLD Diversity Vacation Scheme gives students from disadvantaged backgrounds an introduction to the legal profession and the work of government lawyers. We have participated in this scheme for the past 3 years, with the Chair and other Commission staff giving talks about our work and the career opportunities that are available at the Commission. We have also offered work experience and members of the Commission's staff have acted as "buddies" to students on the scheme.

## Action plan going forward

Over the financial year 2021/22, we will undertake the following actions to achieve the goals of this strategy. As mentioned, we will recruit a Diversity Inclusion Coordinator to support and oversee the delivery of the strategy.

Task	Timeline
Relaunch the Commissioner diversity work shadowing scheme to help find our Commissioners of the future.	Autumn 2021
Expand the diversity work shadowing scheme to include team lawyer roles.	Autumn 2021
Continue to provide tips, blogs and facilitate discussion on diversity and inclusion issues.	ongoing
Continued engagement with legal organisations and universities to raise awareness about Research Assistant opportunities at the Commission.	ongoing
Organise a Programme of internal learning and development events promoting diversity and inclusivity.	Autumn 2021
Review the provision of mandatory diversity and inclusion training at the Commission.	By Autumn 2021
Continue to participate in race allies training workshops.	ongoing
Offer placements to enable law students from under-represented communities to spend time at the Law Commission experiencing our work.	Winter 2021
Undertake a review of our approach to Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that our law reform recommendations are ground in the experiences of different communities across England and Wales	Winter 2021
Discuss with MoJ how best to ensure that Law Commission recruitment exercises positively target those from under-represented communities	Winter 2021
We will consider how best to get others involved in this work at all levels of the organisation	Autumn 2021
Continue participated in Government Legal Department Diversity vacation scheme	ongoing