

Equality and diversity strategy

Consultation questionnaire form

September 2008

This form is designed to be completed electronically—in MS Word. You must save it locally before and after completing it.

You can also print the form and complete it.

Submission instructions are included at the end of the questionnaire.

About you

In order to understand your feedback, we need to know what type of stakeholder you are.

Please select the option below that best describes you.

- Consumer of legal services
- Member of the public
- Solicitor in private practice
- Employed solicitor
- Trainee solicitor
- Student studying a qualifying law degree or legal practice course
- Non-solicitor legal professional
- Other, please specify

Later, we'll ask you to tell us more about yourself, including your name and affiliation (if appropriate). These later questions are optional. You can choose to submit an anonymous response.

For alternative formats, email contactcentre@sra.org.uk or telephone 0870 606 2555.

Question 1

Our approach

Our [equality and diversity strategy](#) outlines three key areas in which we will promote equality and value diversity.

1. **Fair regulator** – we will be open, proportionate, non-discriminatory and transparent in the way we regulate a diverse profession.
2. **Inclusive, stakeholder-focused organisation** – we will recognise, value and listen to all those with whom we deal.
3. **Fair employer** – we will recruit, develop and retain a diverse, talented workforce.

Do you agree with this approach?

- Yes
- Partly
- No

If you have said that you disagree with our approach or only partly agree with it, please briefly explain why.

The LSC agrees with all the three areas identified to create an inclusive and transparent organisation. Overall, the SRA's Equality & Diversity Strategy will promote good practice and race relations within the legal profession. The proposals set out within the strategy should enhance the quality of solicitors and also support BME firms, especially new entrants into the profession. This complements the LSC's overall strategy for improving equality within the delivery of publically funded legal services.

However, we feel that the strategy could benefit from more emphasis on leadership and governance. All members of the SRA should be encouraged to recognise their responsibility to promote equality and social inclusion. From our experience, the LSC found that implementation of the strategy was more effective when leaders and senior managers were held accountable and took responsibility of the action plan. In addition, we implemented a process to ensure that the equality and diversity is mainstreamed throughout the business.

Question 2

Our values

We will put into action our [equality and diversity strategy](#) by demonstrating the following values.

1. We will be **ethical** – honest, fair, open and consistent.
2. We will be **respectful** – promoting a culture of mutual respect and acting courteously and with understanding.
3. We will be **stakeholder focused** – listening to stakeholders and responding to their needs and concerns.
4. We will **set the standards** – striving for excellence in all our activities.

Do you agree with our choice of values?

- Yes
- Partly
- No

If you prefer any of the values below to those we have chosen, please select them.

- We will deliver **good customer service** – understanding the needs of those with whom we come into contact and being polite and prompt in our responses.
- We will be **accountable** – making decisions transparently and rigorously setting and upholding standards.
- We will be **performance focused** – striving for continuous improvement and tackling poor performance early and effectively.
- We will **recognise** the value of diversity – working in partnership with all of our stakeholders and listening to and valuing their different perspective and objectives.

If you have said that you disagree with our choice of values or only partly agree with it, please explain why.

We have no further comments

Question 3

Our strategic action plan

Our [strategic action plan](#) includes a total of **nine objectives** across the three areas of our approach.

Please select a total of **three objectives** that you feel should be our highest priorities from the nine listed below.

Fair regulator (Objectives 1–6)

- 1. Develop and implement policies and practices that do not unjustifiably discriminate
- 2. Engage with key equality target groups (including black and minority ethnic groups) to understand concerns and issues
- 3. Provide support and information that is accessible
- 4. Collect, monitor and analyse delivery of our regulatory activities
- 5. Develop and implement a complaints-handling policy that is independent, objective and transparent
- 6. Ensure that equality and diversity is embedded in our procurement policy and procedure

Inclusive, stakeholder-focused organisation (Objective 7)

- 7. Work towards being an organisation that is seen by its employees, those we regulate, consumers of legal services and the wider public as being inclusive, fair and transparent in the way it carries out its work

Fair employer (Objectives 8–9)

- 8. Develop and implement human resources and development policy and practice that enables us to recruit, develop and retain a diverse workforce at all levels
- 9. Embed equality and diversity into the culture of the organisation

Please set out any other objectives you feel should be included in our [strategic action plan](#).

We have no further suggestions

Do you think it is realistic for us to attempt to achieve the nine objectives in our strategic action plan during the period 2008–2010?

Yes

No

If you have said you think it is not realistic for us to attempt to achieve the nine objectives in our [strategic action plan](#) during the period 2008–2010, please briefly explain why.

The consultation paper indicates a need to fully embed equality and diversity throughout the organisation. Hence, we feel that the first two years should be focussed on fully integrating equality and diversity into the business. The SRA may initially need to allow enough time to undertake a full equality and diversity audit of all their policies and procedures. Following this, the SRA may need to undertake a systematic review all policies and procedures, of which, will require time to filter throughout the organisation.

From our experience, we found that it was important to change the culture of the organisation and generate 'buy in' across the organisation. Failure to embed a culture that embraces diversity, and a general understanding of the business case for diversity, will have an adverse impact on all plans to improve human resources, diversity data quality and customer services. Leadership and staff members will need work together to implement the equality and diversity strategy.

Please enter any comments you wish to make about the priorities, scope and timing of our strategic action plan.

The professional context of the Equality and Diversity Strategy focusses on issues related to BME Solicitors and implementing Race Equality within the organisation. This may be a result of a direct response to Lord Ousely 's report and responses from key BME stakeholders. However, Section 6.3 mentions that the implementation of a Race Equality Scheme in October 2006 was 'problematic'. This suggests that the SRA have a statutory duty to produce an equality scheme for Race, Gender and Disability. Within the LSC, we found it useful to amalgamate our individual equality schemes (Race, Gender & Disability) and develop a three year Single Equality Scheme. This enabled us to pool our resources on cross cutting issues across all the equality strands, tackle multiple discrimination and look at a person as whole.

Hence, the SRA Equality and Diversity strategy could be translated into a blueprint or interim strategy/plan for developing a full three year Single Equality Scheme. The developing the scheme would provide a tangible 'pilot' to test all the principles and values identified in the strategy. This will enable the SRA to determine the level of resources required, initiate engagement with staff and stakeholders and develop leadership within the organisation.

The strategic action plan should allow for an initial internal bencharking audit of its equality and diversity policies and procedures. Benchmarking against another comparable organisation will set realistic and acheivable targets according the required level.

Within the LSC, when reviewing all policies and procedures, we found it useful to detemine a rating of high, medium and low relevance to equality. This will enable you to establish priority action and set clear milestones.

The SRA may need to outline the critical success factors that will determine its succes or failure of the strategy, i.e. what success looks like, and then establish a clear framework for monitoring/reviewing the strategy.

More about you

We want to improve our consultation process, and welcome your support in doing this. It would be helpful if you would complete this equality monitoring questionnaire.

The information you provide is strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of equality monitoring. No individual will be identified. The analysis will provide details on the diversity of respondents in addition to being used for improving the SRA's future consultation processes.

Sex

- Male
 Female

Age

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16–21 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 51–60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 22–30 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 61–65 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 31–40 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65-plus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 41–50 | | |

Ethnicity

White

- British
 Irish
 Any other white background (details)

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
 African
 Any other black background (details)

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
 Pakistani
 Bangladeshi
 Any other Asian background

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
 White and Black African
 White and Asian
 Any other mixed background

Chinese or other ethnic background

- Chinese
 Any other ethnic group

Disability

The [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) defines a disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

Do you consider yourself to be disabled as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act?

- Yes
 No

If you have answered “yes”, please select the type of impairment that applies to you. People may experience more than one type of impairment, in which case, you may select more than one. If none of the categories apply, please select “other” and specify the type of impairment.

- Physical impairment, such as difficulty using your arm or mobility issues
 Hearing impairment, such as being deaf or having a serious hearing impairment
 Visual impairment, such as being blind or having a serious visual impairment
 Learning disability or difficulty (such as Down’s syndrome or dyslexia) or cognitive impairment (such as autistic spectrum disorder)
 Mental health condition, such as depression or schizophrenia
 Long-standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy
 Other (please specify)

Sexual orientation

- Lesbian or gay woman
 Heterosexual or straight
 Bisexual
 Gay

Religion or belief

- Christian
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Jewish
 Muslim
 Sikh
 Any other religion
 No religion

More about you

For the purpose of analysing responses to this consultation, we ask you to answer several more questions about yourself and—if appropriate—about your firm or other place of work.

Who you are

Surname

Carr

Forename(s)

Dawn

Your SRA ID number (if applicable)

Name of the firm or organisation where you work

Legal Services Commission

Your email address

Please enter your email address below. We will use your email address if we need to contact you about your response.

dawn.carr@legalservices.gov.uk

Email updates

Would you like to receive email alerts about Solicitors Regulation Authority consultations?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Confidentiality

We may publish a list of respondents and a report on responses. Partial attributed responses may be published. Please advise us if you do not wish us to attribute your response or for your name or the name of your firm or organisation to appear on any published list of respondents.

- Attribute my/our response and publish my/our name.
- Do not attribute my/our response and do not publish my/our name.
- I have a specific confidentiality requirement that is detailed below.

I am responding to this consultation...

Please select one option below.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as a consumer of legal services | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as a member of the public | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on my own behalf as a solicitor in private practice | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on my own behalf as an employed solicitor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as a trainee solicitor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as a student studying for a qualifying law degree or legal practice course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on my own behalf as a legal professional who is not a solicitor | Please specify your profession/role. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of a firm of solicitors | Please enter the firm's name. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of a Law Society board or committee | Please enter the board's or committee's name. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of a representative group | Please enter the group's name. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of a local law society | Please enter the society's name. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as an academic | Please enter your institution's name. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | in another capacity | Please specify public sector body |

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Returning your completed questionnaire form

Thank you for completing the **Consultation questionnaire** form.

Please save a copy of the completed form.

Please return your completed form as an email attachment to consultation@sra.org.uk, by **23 December 2008**.

Alternatively, print the completed form and send it to

Policy (Inclusion) Unit
Solicitors Regulation Authority
8 Dormer Place
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV32 5AE

or

Policy (Inclusion) Unit
Solicitors Regulation Authority
DX 292320
Leamington Spa