

Womble Bond Dickinson and Diversity and Inclusion



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We recognise that with more diversity we create the chance to learn something from someone different, or with a different perspective to our own and it creates a fertile breeding ground for new ways of working and operating. That makes us more resilient and sustainable as a business.

Diversity, however, is ornamental without inclusivity – we have to make sure different people are in the rooms where decisions are made and not only make sure that they feel safe sharing what is on their minds but actively encourage them to contribute.

This has been, and in many cases continues to be, a common struggle amongst law firms.



Tracy Walsh

Partner & Board
Sponsor for D&I



Angela Lopes

Associate & BAME
Network Leader



Philip Knight

Partner & WBD
Pride Leader

Some highlights from our D&I journey

Date	Highlights and future plans
May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paula Dillon, Partner, appointed to Board with specific responsibility for D&I • D&I Group formed from colleagues across our whole firm • 3 areas of focus for the D&I Group were women, social mobility, and mental health • Launch of our first Early Careers Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Inspire” – workshops aimed at GCSE students, designed to give an insight into the various careers in law and an introduction to the skills required; – “Insight” – workshops for 16 year old+ young people, focused on the career paths within law and advising on assessment centre practice, CV writing and skills presentation – “Experience” – work experience programme for 16+
Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer Large Employer of the Year at the National Apprenticeship Awards
Jan 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer by the National Apprenticeship Service
May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First D&I initiative – #BeYourself, highlighting the importance of everyone being able to be their true selves at work, encouraging an open and transparent conversation, appealing to those with protected characteristics, but those who would not identify as having a protected characteristic
July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved gold status in the Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Charter • Our firm was featured in the Lawyer’s Top 200 as a ‘Diversity Pioneer’ • Winner, Employer of the Year at the 2017 Business Leader Awards
Sept 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with 4 other law firms, we launched the North East Solicitor Apprenticeship (NESA)
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became Stonewall Diversity Champions
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP Disability Confident Employer accreditation • We published our Gender Pay Gap Report

Some highlights from our D&I journey (continued)

May 2019

- Paula Dillon retired and a new Board member was elected, Tracy Walsh
- As our thinking evolved, so did our areas of focus – these are now gender, BAME and LGBTQ+
- Became a “Cornerstone Employer” and legal sector representative.
We work with the Careers and Enterprise Company and WECA (West of England Combined Authority) to ensure that young people have the opportunity to prepare for and feel inspired by the world of work

June 2019

- 1 of only 9 firms in the UK to be awarded the new Women in Law Empowerment Forum Gold Standard
- Launch of our UK-wide LGBTQ+ and BAME Networks
- We made our first submission to the Stonewall Equality Index

July 2019

- Refreshed Appointments Committee (which considers all lateral and internal promotion and recruitment from Associate upwards) to be 50/50 male/female
- Partner appraisal forms redesigned to better capture D&I information
- We introduced our first transgender policy

Sept 2019

- Mental health was identified as more than a D&I issue and a separate Board sponsor for Mental Health was appointed (Simon Richardson, Chair).
- Launch of our Solicitor Apprenticeship programme in Bristol, collaborating with Bristol City Council

Oct 2019

- The D&I Group was joined by Samantha McLeish, a lawyer who requires a wheelchair
- Reformed the disability questions we ask new joiners to better extract information about their needs, and to help make better decisions about our built environment to meet the needs of colleagues and visitors with disabilities
- Celebrated Black History and BAME heritage month by hosting two events with external speakers that were broadcast to the entire firm by VC. The first of these was a presentation by Hashi Mohammed to speak about imposter syndrome. The second was a panel event attended by a number of our BAME clients talking about what they would like to see the legal profession do differently to support BAME diversity.

“I have a clear interest in issues for those with disabilities, but I wasn’t sure how serious the firm was about addressing more than women’s equality and mental health. I was pleasantly surprised by the shift in thinking about and commitment to BAME and LGBTQ+ and have really enjoyed being involved so far in moving our thinking along”

**Samantha McLeish –
Solicitor, Insurance team,
Bristol office**

Some highlights from our D&I journey (continued)

Jan 2020

- Senior leaders identified where there are gender imbalances and agreed targets for December 2020 and beyond
- Feedback received from Stonewall on our Equality Index submission

May 2020

- Research undertaken on our graduate recruitment activity to ensure we are appealing to under-represented groups
- Gender Neutral Drafting and Content Policy prepared and to be adopted
- We voluntarily published our Gender Pay Gap Report

June 2020

- Hosted a firmwide Black Lives Matter webinar during which our BAME colleagues shared their reflections on the George Floyd murder and their own experiences of racism. This was the best attended internal webinar we have ever hosted.
- Celebrated Pride Month

Ongoing to May 2023

- Tracy Walsh and BAME network to present a paper to the board regarding commitment to achieving more BAME diversity
- 30% of all Client Relationship Partners and deputies with diverse characteristics
- Annual D&I survey requesting that information captured can be used to improve data analytics

It is safe to say that the apprenticeship is very much hands on from day 1, getting to grips with computer software and meeting new colleagues, all the way through to attending a 3 day Trial in the High Court last year. No 2 days are identical, but the friendly, supportive and personal experience that WBD provides makes every day an enjoyable one

**Pete Black –
Solicitor Apprentice,
Newcastle office**

D&I survey results 2019

Age	16-24	26-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Prefer not to say
Partner	0.0%	0.9%	27.8%	46.1%	23.5%	0.0%	1.7%
Legal Director/Managing Associate	0.0%	12.0%	52.2%	31.5%	3.3%	1.1%	0.0%
Associate	0.0%	39.6%	40.6%	15.1%	3.8%	0.0%	0.9%
Solicitor	2.3%	79.5%	11.4%	4.5%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Trainee	34.8%	63.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Legal	21.8%	39.7%	17.9%	7.7%	10.3%	1.3%	1.3%
Secretarial/Administration	11.3%	18.7%	23.0%	30.0%	13.5%	2.6%	0.9%
Support Services	9.5%	22.0%	32.0%	24.0%	11.0%	0.5%	1.0%
Grand Total	9.4%	29.2%	27.0%	22.4%	10.0%	1.0%	0.9%

Gender	Man	Woman	Non-Binary	Trans-woman	Prefer not to say
Partner	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Legal Director/Managing Associate	43.5%	56.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Associate	35.8%	64.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Solicitor	36.4%	63.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Trainee	47.8%	52.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Legal	29.5%	69.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Secretarial/Administration	9.6%	89.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%
Support Services	37.0%	62.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%
Grand Total	35.4%	63.9%	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%



Ethnicity

Black/Black British	0.97%
Asian/Asian British	1.74%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	1.26%
White	94.39%
Other ethnic group	0.97%
Prefer not to say	0.68%

Religion

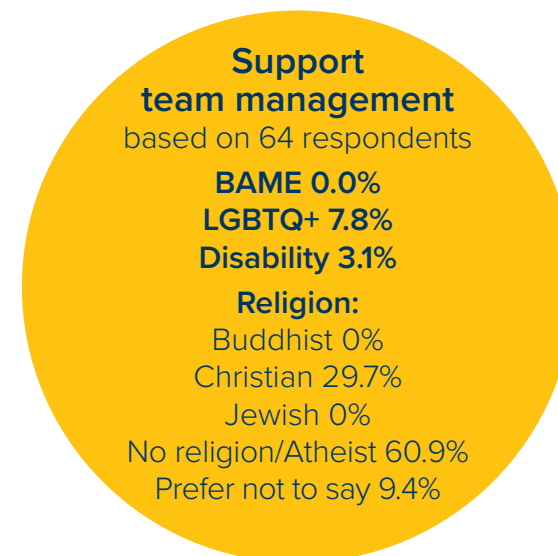
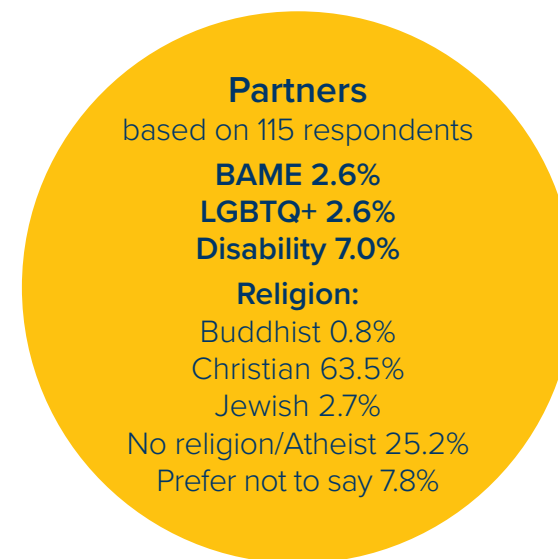
Buddhist	0.5%
Christian	43.7%
Hindu	0.3%
Jewish	1.1%
Muslim	1.0%
Sikh	0.3%
No religion or belief/Atheist	46.7%
Any other religion or belief	2.1%
Prefer not to say	4.5%

Sexual orientation

Bi	1.45%
Gay/Lesbian	2.32%
Heterosexual	94.68%
Other	0.10%
Prefer not to say	1.45%

Disability

Yes	4.84%
No	94.39%
Prefer not to say	0.77%



D&I survey results 2019

School attended

School attended	UK independent/fee-paying school (bursary)	UK independent/fee-paying school (no bursary)	UK state school (non-selective)	UK state run or funded school (selective on academic, faith or other grounds)	Attended school outside the UK	Don't know	Other	Prefer not to say
Partner	18.4%	26.1%	40.0%	15.7%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Legal Director/ Managing Associate	13.0%	14.1%	56.5%	12.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Associate	5.7%	11.3%	67.0%	12.3%	2.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Solicitor	4.5%	21.6%	46.6%	17.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Trainee	4.3%	23.9%	56.5%	8.7%	2.2%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
Other Legal	1.9%	10.3%	60.3%	18.6%	7.1%	0.0%	0.6%	1.3%
Secretarial/ Administration	2.2%	3.5%	70.4%	17.0%	4.8%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services	2.0%	3.5%	67.5%	20.0%	5.0%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
Grand Total	5.1%	11.2%	60.7%	16.4%	4.9%	0.6%	0.4%	0.7%

Care responsibilities

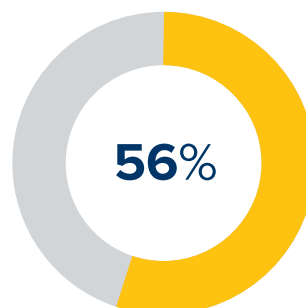
Primary carer for child under 18

Yes	34.9%
No	64.7%
Prefer not to say	0.4%

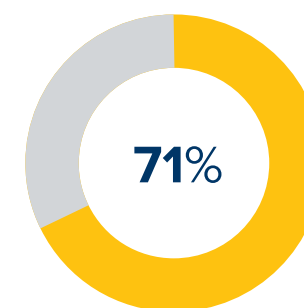
Care responsibilities: physical/mental health

Yes, 1-19 hours a week	6.2%
Yes, 20-49 hours a week	1.1%
Yes, 50 or more hours a week	1.1%
No	90.8%
Prefer not to say	0.9%

The measures which the SRA uses to test social mobility are whether someone was of the first generation in their family to go to university and/or whether they went to a fee-paying school. We set out our 2019 data against the 2017 SRA data.



SRA data (2017):
56% of solicitors from top 50 law firms went to State school, as opposed to a fee-paying school



WBD (2019):
71% of our solicitors went to State school, as opposed to a fee-paying school

Case studies: BAME network

As the D&I Group's thinking evolved, BAME was highlighted as a core area of focus. The number of BAME colleagues had grown and we had an increasing number of clients who were also BAME. Our BAME network was launched in June 2019 as a result.

Objective: Establish, launch and operate a BAME network in order to elevate WBD as an employer of choice for BAME colleagues

What we did:

- We consulted BAME colleagues who had been involved in setting up these networks in previous firms to understand their experiences to better inform our own strategy
- From this, we formed terms of reference for the network, scheduled face-to-face and VC meetings and wrote a 100-day plan as well as longer-term plans for the first year
- Plans were presented and approved by the Board and the Network was launched during our Diversity Week in June 2019 (this was a week which traditionally had been used to launch previous D&I initiatives, such as our #BeYourself campaign). We had previously celebrated Black History month, but the launch of the BAME Network and amplification of the volume on BAME as an area of D&I focus enabled us to achieve better reach and traction

What worked well:

- We collaborated with another law firm and clients, Centrica, New Look and Ikea, to share ideas and to learn from their experiences
- We also worked closely with our WBD US Inclusion Network colleagues, who have a greater proportion of BAME colleagues than we do
- Within the immediate period after launch, we had an 85% take-up of BAME colleagues wanting to join the network

Case studies: BAME network

Objective: Establish, launch and operate a BAME network in order to elevate WBD as an employer of choice for BAME colleagues

Outputs:

- Wellbeing and Faith rooms have been created in each office
- Changes have been made to our catering and drinks policies for internal and external events to accommodate cultural preferences
- Refinements have been included in our D&I questionnaires for new joiners, to help us capture better D&I information
- The content of our new induction sessions was revamped to include a presentation from our BAME network leader
- We collated an international languages' directory as opposed to the previous one which had been biased more towards European languages
- To cascade our learnings with other organisations, we have recently contributed to a round table discussion between North East law firms and Chambers, the Law Society D&I Committee and Durham University on the subject of BAME diversity, sharing what we have achieved under our social mobility initiatives and how this could be translated to BAME initiatives
- A representative from our BAME Network was invited to attend the inaugural diversity event held at Cardiff by the Cardiff University Law Society
- Celebrated Black History and BAME heritage month by hosting two events with external speakers that were broadcast to the entire firm by VC. The first of these was a presentation by Hashi Mohammed to speak about imposter syndrome. The second was a panel event attended by a number of our BAME clients talking about what they would like to see the legal profession do differently to support BAME diversity. We have seen renewed interest from other BAME colleagues in joining the network and allies have joined the network too
- Tracy Walsh and BAME network to present a paper to the board regarding commitment to achieving more BAME diversity

Case studies: Social mobility

Having established a series of social mobility initiatives, our longer term aim was to increase the appeal of both our graduate and apprenticeship programmes.

It is our apprenticeship programme, which is designed for college leavers in collaboration with law firms and clients, of which we are most proud of.

Objective:

Establish, launch and operate a collaborative apprenticeship programme to unlock our colleagues' and others' full potential



What we did:

- We were one of the first firms to make solicitor apprenticeships available
- In 2017 we recruited between 2-3 solicitor and paralegal apprentices in each of our Newcastle, Southampton, Plymouth and Bristol offices
- In total, we have now 40 apprentices including roles in business critical functions such as HR, business development, facilities and IT
- For the solicitor apprenticeship, we rolled out a tailored recruitment process involving an online application, co-ordinated by CILEX Law School, an open evening at the relevant university in the above cities for candidates and parents, shortlisting and assessment days, work placements and formal interviews at each recruiting office. Offers were then made to selected candidates for an early September start followed by the start of their university course from mid-September
- Our solicitor apprenticeship includes a qualifying law degree, SQE 1 and 2 exams in years 5 and 6, 6 years of experience, a minimum of 2 years rotation and a competency portfolio for candidates to complete throughout the 6-year apprenticeship
- Using the experience we gained as a NESAs founding member, we went on to collaborate with Bristol City Council to launch our Bristol Solicitor Apprenticeship programme in September 2019. We recruited 2 apprentices, and the Council recruited 1 apprentice in that cohort

Case studies: Social mobility

Objective: Establish, launch and operate a collaborative apprenticeship programme to unlock our colleagues' and others' full potential

What worked well:

- In 2017, we worked with a consortium of 4 other law firms to introduce the North East Solicitor Apprenticeship scheme. This has given our firm greater appeal as a firm of choice and access to a wider group of candidates
- We led on the development of the assessment process, as we were the firm with the most established and sophisticated graduate assessment process. Northumbria University and CILEX Law School were, and continue to be, key partners in the success of the apprenticeship programme
- We have developed our lessons learnt from the NESAs scheme and have built two key differences into the programme with Bristol City Council:
 1. **better networking:** through networking with our apprentices, the Council's apprentice is better connected to groups across our firm, and involved in various networking, and learning and development initiatives, and
 2. **apprentice exchange element:** once the programme is further progressed (we are only 7 months into a 6 year programme), we will run an apprentice exchange with the Council so that the apprentices have the benefit of experience in both the public and the private sectors

Outputs:

- Our collaboration with NESAs has so far led to the creation of 15 new career opportunities in total. We are similarly very excited about the potential of the Bristol City Council collaboration



“We are pleased to be working with Womble Bond Dickinson to launch our first solicitor apprenticeship programme, which will be a rolling programme year on year. We are keen to recruit dynamic people from a diverse range of backgrounds who will have the opportunity to contribute to the life of the city and who want to pursue an alternative to University”

Nancy Rollason –
Head of Legal Services,
Bristol City Council

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