

**To:** [letrbox@letr.org.uk](mailto:letrbox@letr.org.uk)

**Subject:** Equality & Diversity Response

Please find below Freshfields' response to the discussion paper.

-We recommend greater legal sector intervention during a student's GCSE years. Given GCSE performance (more than A-Level and tertiary-level achievement), is an accurate indicator of a student's employment and social mobility prospects, we suggest deeper, sustained and more meaningful contact with students, parents and teachers, at this stage, as opposed to more superficial contact afforded by some current work-experience initiatives.

-We recommend that *The Law Society, Bar Standards Board, Solicitors Regulation Authority* and other stakeholders are also supportive of research directed at understanding the impact of disadvantage after GCSE level. If more is understood in terms of application decisions (applicants self-selecting, impact of debt), HE application outcomes, HE retention/withdrawal rates, etc, appropriate responses if any can be considered.

-We recommend *The Law Society, Bar Standards Board, Solicitors Regulation Authority* and other stakeholders, organise educational events for parents, teachers and those tasked with offering careers advice to students, so that they are better able to offer advice.

-We recommend that those schools with the ability to offer careers advice (typically those in the private/independent sector), partner with schools who may not have expertise in this area, in order to share best practice, serve as a resource to teachers, students and parents as well as facilitating work experience through their professional networks (parents of students, industry contacts).

-Given BME students are significantly more likely to study at 'post-92' universities, we recommend *The Law Society, Bar Standards Board, Solicitors Regulation Authority* and other stakeholders work more closely with careers advisors and law faculties at those universities.

-Given the number of students undertaking the *LPC* and *BPTC/BVC* and the scarcity of training opportunities available, we recommend *The Law Society, Bar Standards Board, Solicitors Regulation Authority* and *law schools (BPP, College of Law etc)*, publicly highlight the transferable skills developed through the undertaking of those courses. It is by no means certain that those outside the legal community are aware of these courses or the skills developed whilst undertaking them. If these were highlighted, those students unable to secure training contracts or pupillages would be better placed to secure alternative employment.

-We recommend that diversity training, in particular unconscious bias training, should take place at several career points including the *LPC* and *BPTC/BVC* stages and for qualified lawyers (as CPD). In addition, we recommend approved regulators require diversity training (as part of CPD), for senior staff in firms/chambers to ensure diversity principles are embedded in organisations.

-We agree that there should be a sector-wide, non-regulatory, body to co-ordinate diversity initiatives, to better inform the profession, HEI, teachers, parents and students.