

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2022-24

Chair's foreword

I am delighted to introduce CILEx Regulation's first strategy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). As a Board, we cherish the huge diversity of those we regulate and are firmly committed to fair access for all those who work within the legal services market, as well as those who use legal services.

In our most recent research (on our website) over 4/5 agreed that "without CILEX, I wouldn't have a career in the legal profession".

So for us, promoting EDI is not an optional extra but at the heart of all we do as an employer, as a regulator, and as a partner with others working on legal issues.



This strategy sets out what we have already accomplished and what we plan to do over the next three years. In implementing this, we want to work closely with those we regulate as well as many others. So, if you have ideas of what we could do better, do please let me know.

Jonathan Rees, Chair of CILEx Regulation (pictured)
January 2022

Our commitment

We are committed to fair access for all within the legal services market.

We believe that capable individuals should be able to enter and progress their legal careers, or grow their firm, as far as their ambition and talent will allow. They should not be limited by barriers formed from prejudice, unconscious bias or discrimination and should be recognised, valued, and rewarded for the contributions they make. A diverse legal workforce, where people are valued for their abilities and encouraged to thrive, is central to developing a legal sector which best serves consumers and supports innovation.

Our commitment is underpinned by legal obligations from the Legal Services Act 2007, equalities legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the Legal Services Board.

As evidence of our commitment, we have made equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) one of our three strategic priorities for 2022-24.

We will:

EDI Strategy 2022-24

Improve the ability of aspiring lawyers to enter and progress in the profession:

- based on merit
- regardless of background
- whatever their diverse characteristics

by focusing on areas where we can make a difference and working in partnership with CILEX, other regulators and stakeholders.

Use data effectively to better understand outcomes for consumers and our regulated community by:

- setting goals
- measuring impact
- charting progress, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of actions.

Identify barriers faced by consumers from diverse backgrounds, work to remove these and improve their access to legal services.

Lead collaboration across stakeholders where appropriate.

CILEx Regulation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We recognise and value the benefits of understanding, experience and expertise that diverse individuals can bring to our organisation and our values reflect that.



Our values guide everything we do



Efficient



Firm



Fair



Flexible



Focused



As an inclusive regulator, we endeavour to ensure that our staff and individuals reflect our regulated community, as far as is practicable in a small organisation.

In 2021, we completed the first diversity data collection from our staff and individuals on our panels, committees, and Board. We have committed to updating this data once every three years to monitor their diversity and to track any changes.

92% of our panellists, committee members, Board members and staff completed the survey and the results showed:

- ⇒ 65% are female
- ⇒ 11% are non-white
- ⇒ 11% declared a disability
- ⇒ 77% attended a state school

Full details can be found on our [website](#).

Our commitment as an employer

We want all our staff to feel included and comfortable at work and able to give of their best.

We therefore provide EDI training for our staff both at induction and annually, with other training available to our various panels, committees, and our Board.

We provide support to our staff through:

- ⇒ flexible hours and homeworking
- ⇒ regular appraisals
- ⇒ equal opportunities for individuals on parental leave
- ⇒ reasonable adjustments for protected characteristics
- ⇒ a safe and secure workplace where complaints are taken seriously, and
- ⇒ access to wellbeing resources

In 2022 we will:

Introduce questions relating to EDI and wellbeing into our annual staff survey to help us to understand staff views on our commitment to be an inclusive employer and to enable us to make continuous improvements.

Our commitment as a regulator

We want all those we regulate, whether individuals or firms, to be valued for their abilities and supported to thrive.

We therefore ensure our education standards facilitate a route to becoming a legal professional which does not require a university degree, instead providing options to create 'earn as you learn' training and assessment, enabling study to degree level and authorisation as a qualified lawyer.

We support and guide our applicant firms to ensure they have in place at the outset a structure with policies and procedures proportionate to the size of their firm and the work they do. Having this structure at the start, with ongoing support, helps our firms grow and mature.

In 2022 we will:

1. Understand and explore differential impacts of our enforcement processes

a. Analyse the data

We will explore further our initial findings, which identified that reports from other regulators may have a differential impact on some protected groups.

b. Develop our understanding of fully balanced panels

We already have good representation across a range of protected characteristics and are committed to maintaining this diversity as well as developing our understanding as to what actions we need to take to provide fully balanced decision-making panels.

This is because we recognise that decision-making panels which are made up of people with a range of diversity characteristics, experience and understanding and who reflect the individuals who may come before these panels, can improve outcomes for diverse members.

2. Work with our regulated firms to develop their commitment to implement EDI policies

We will work to promote the EDI debate to encourage and support our firms, through events and our website resources. We are committed to ensuring that our regulated firms increase their focus on EDI good practice, including developing an understanding of the importance of effective EDI policies.

3. Understand and support our regulated individuals to progress their legal career

We will continue with our work to establish a benchmark for the diversity characteristics of our regulated community and we will track changes over time, publishing a [report](#) on our findings biennially.

We will work to define and better understand progression of our regulated individuals compared with the wider legal workforce. We will develop a fuller understanding of what progression looks like within firms and other work settings by:

- working with other regulators, and
- tracking role progression.

We will challenge discrimination using our work on identification and evidencing barriers to progression. Our regulated individuals sent a clear message, both in response to our 2019 data collection as well as in CILEX's Member Insights survey, that they are looked down on by some other legal professionals who consider them to be lesser lawyers. This creates detriment, impedes career progression and cannot be ignored.

Our commitment as a partner

We want those that we work with to help us champion EDI as a goal across the legal sector.

We therefore contribute actively to the cross-regulator EDI Group, and we discuss EDI regularly with fellow regulators and consumer representatives.

In 2022 we will:

1. Commit to the LSB statement on counter-inclusion and EDI

We will commit to the principles set out in the cross-regulator statement led by the LSB to mitigate discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

2. Participate in cross-profession research to understand professional progression barriers more broadly

We will participate in cross-profession research to identify barriers to professional progression, and we will use the outcomes of the research to challenge, both individually and as part of a wider group of professional bodies, outdated attitudes to progression for diverse groups.

3. Improve our understanding of the potential differential impact on diverse consumers of legal services

We will improve our understanding of the consumer experience of individuals from diverse backgrounds through engagement with the Legal Services Consumer Panel. We will develop this work and contribute to sector understanding of this issue through identifying and undertaking relevant research and exploring and developing opportunities to work collaboratively with other regulators and stakeholders, including consumer groups.

4. Host a legal sector roundtable

We will host a sector wide roundtable to develop the conversation and explore opportunities to understand and act on our key priorities for 2022.

Reporting our progress

The CILEx Regulation Board discusses our progress on EDI issues at each meeting, and we will regularly report on progress including through our Annual Report.

We intend to work with CILEX to improve our knowledge of members of our regulated community and will publish the results annually.

We will also update this Strategy once a year reporting on progress and updating our action plan.