



The Women in Law pledge – Barristers/Chambers

GUIDANCE FOR THE BAR

The Women in Law Pledge is a collaboration between the Law Society of England and Wales, The Bar Council, CILEx and other organisations with an interest in the legal profession.

By signing up for the pledge, organisations are committing to:

- Supporting the progression of women into senior roles in the profession by focusing on retention and promotion opportunities
- Setting clear plans and targets around gender equality and diversity for the organisation
- Making an action plan and tracking progress towards achieving these goals

How does it work?

- ❖ Look at the commitments and tips below for how the Bar can use the pledge. Decide what activity you want to make a pledge on and complete the [application form](#).
- ❖ Once we get your application, we will confirm you as a signatory within 7 days. You will be listed on our website. We will also send you a media pack with logos/banners etc. to use on your materials to promote your commitment.*
- ❖ Once you have signed up let us know the targets you've set for activities over the next year

*You can ask to be removed from the Pledge at any time by emailing Equality@BarCouncil.org.uk

Note: Only Bar Council will hold records of your activity commitments and targets - these will not be shared with any third party.

Advocates

Individuals from across the legal profession can raise awareness of the Pledge and encourage their organisations to sign it. We encourage anyone in a position of senior leadership or influence, particularly men, to become champions within their organisations. As champions of change, men can work towards the positive transformation of social norms and can act to hold others accountable and encourage them to join in.

THE PLEDGE

My organisation pledges to promote gender equality by:

1. Having one named member of our senior leadership team/management committee who is accountable for gender diversity and inclusion

This could be your Head of Chambers, a member of your management or Equality & Diversity Committee, EDO etc. Ideally this person should be a senior member of chambers - of any gender – with influence and a passion for equality who is able to hold chambers leadership to account for progress against the action plan. You could have more than one person if you wish.

2. Setting specific gender targets at leadership level and at other levels as appropriate

The type of 'targets' you put in place will very much depend on the current situation in chambers and where you want to focus your activity.

The commitments are not prescriptive of any specific activity - as long as the outcome is positive for gender equality and women. A 'target' could include for example:

- Ensuring there is at least one woman on the management committee (if there isn't one already!) or increasing the number of women on key chambers' committees (target = increase number of women on key committees)
- Increasing opportunities for junior women to be lead on stretching or high-profile cases (target = increase number of women being lead on important cases)
- Putting in place a programme which actively supports silk or judicial applications/preparation (target = number of women in silk in chambers)
- Supporting women in chambers in taking on additional 'career building'/high profile roles (target = speaking opportunities generated)

3. Considering the differential outcomes for different groups of women at all levels of the organisation e.g. their background, identity or range of experiences

It is important to recognise that women of colour, with disabilities or other protected characteristics may face additional disadvantage. The Pledge encourages chambers to include this in their thinking and take action to address any disadvantages.

If appropriate, when you are reviewing work allocation, receipts, recruitment applications etc. consider comparing the experience/outcomes of, for example, women with a disability; BAME women etc. as part of your reviewing process.

Consider outcomes for staff too.

If you can establish any meaningful differences, try and understand why - and consider if chambers needs to take any action.

4. Developing an action plan to achieve gender equality in our senior management and leadership teams

Build on the Action Plan you are already required to create to comply with BSB E&D Rules.

Look at how additional training in e.g. recruitment; education about unconscious bias in clerking practices, a focus on briefing practices, the introduction of mentoring programmes etc. could support the access to chambers and retention/progression of women in chambers.

5. Committing at senior level to tackle sex discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace

Many chambers have already reviewed their harassment policies and introduced training/codes of behaviour in chambers. Any activity around this agenda will help you evidence your commitment to this pledge.

6. Committing to tackle workplace culture and bias that may result in differential outcomes in the workplace

Any activity designed to support an inclusive culture in chambers will evidence your commitment to this pledge.

Many chambers are looking at:

- Briefing practices and work allocation to ensure women are not excluded from or missing out on certain types of work.
- Monitoring pay/billings/income for gender disparities.
- Marketing activity etc. to ensure women are included in activities which might help develop their profile or practice.
- Setting targets around the retention and progress of women following career breaks (with activity including putting in place comprehensive parental leave and flexible working plans and committing to undertake an annual audit, involving interviewing all women who are on maternity leave or who have taken maternity leave in the previous three years, to ascertain their views on how their transition back into practice has worked).

7. Making public our pledge and sharing our targets and action plan

This may simply include reference to the Pledge on your website to signal your commitment to gender diversity to your clients and prospective members. You may want to publish your action plan and targets to show you are serious about this agenda.

TIPS

Keep your actions simple - ideally they should reflect work underway.

Keep your targets achievable - small steps that suit your chambers' context, you can always make targets more stretching in future.

Remember you will need to report on progress - don't propose anything you will really struggle to achieve.

Take the time to build support for the Pledge internally - you may need to reassure other members of chambers who may feel they will be disadvantaged by any activity.

If you want to discuss ideas for your pledge and want to know if they are suitable, please contact Equality@BarCouncil.org.uk