Upholding Professional Standards – Diversity Monitoring, Supporting Report

14 December 2020

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Introduction

We take our commitment to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) very seriously. As part of this, we have made good progress in recent years to promote EDI in the legal profession, develop and support our own workforce and embed EDI considerations in all the work we do.

A vital part of embedding EDI in the work we carry out is reviewing our systems and processes to make sure they are free from bias and non-discriminatory. We not only do this because we have a public duty to do so, as set out under the Equality Act and Legal Services Act, but because it is the right thing to do.

This year, our Upholding Professional Standards report looks at the diversity characteristics of the people involved in our enforcement processes. Although previously an annual exercise, we paused this reporting in 2015 because of an increasing focus on the role of law firms in maintaining high professional standards. This meant we were recording a growing proportion of our enforcement work against firms, rather than individuals. This, and the falling number of newly enrolled solicitors providing their diversity data to us through our online portal (following our move to an online admissions process), meant that monitoring the diversity of individuals in our enforcement work was a challenge.

We have now resumed this monitoring and, to do so, undertook a resource-intensive, manual review of the reports we received in 2018/19 to identify information about the individuals involved. New systems and processes we are putting in place will allow us to better extract and analyse data about our enforcement decisions in the future.