

Legal Services Board Consultation on a Draft Statement of Policy – Anonymous response 4

Insight Summary: Organisational Respondent (Large Legal Services Provider)

Overview

While broadly supportive of the proposed policy direction, this response offers a number of practical reflections that extend beyond the policy itself. The emphasis is on ensuring that regulatory interventions are proportionate, evidence-led, flexible and capable of delivering meaningful change rather than compliance-driven activity. The response is particularly focused on implementation, data quality, stakeholder engagement and maintaining a balance between diversity objectives and professional standards.

Key Learning Themes for Regulators and the Sector

1. Improve Data Quality, Consistency and Granularity

The strongest and most distinctive theme concerns the quality and usability of diversity data.

Potential learning

- Develop common data taxonomies across the legal sector where feasible.
- Improve consistency of data collection between regulators.
- Use more granular data analysis where appropriate, including consideration of regional variations.
- Ensure data collection supports targeted interventions rather than simply sector-level reporting.

Why this matters

The respondent suggests that better quality and more consistent data would allow regulators and firms to identify specific barriers more effectively and design more tailored responses.

2. Make Stakeholder Engagement a Foundational Requirement

The response argues that engagement should sit at the heart of regulatory development rather than being treated as an enhanced activity.

Potential learning

- Involve affected stakeholders when designing regulatory interventions.
- Build feedback mechanisms into policy development from the outset.
- Test proposals with regulated communities before implementation.
- Use stakeholder input to ensure interventions remain relevant and proportionate.

Why this matters

The respondent sees stakeholder involvement as a way of improving regulatory effectiveness and ensuring interventions are appropriately targeted.

3. Address Cost Barriers Earlier in the Talent Pipeline

The response highlights financial barriers as an important but potentially under-emphasised factor affecting diversity of access.

Potential learning

- Explore how qualification and training costs affect different groups.
- Consider interventions that reduce financial barriers to entry.
- Improve awareness of legal careers among younger audiences.
- Promote outreach activity aimed at widening access before career choices are formed.

Why this matters

The respondent identifies both affordability and awareness as factors influencing who enters the profession. Early intervention may therefore be needed alongside regulatory reforms.

4. Strengthen Support for Returners

The response places particular emphasis on professionals returning after career breaks.

Potential learning

- Develop minimum expectations around return-to-work support.
- Encourage structured return programmes.
- Promote good practice guidance for re-entry to practice.
- Monitor the effectiveness of support provided to those returning after caring responsibilities, illness or other prolonged absences.

Why this matters

Improving retention and supporting career re-entry may help prevent loss of talent and improve long-term diversity outcomes.

5. Prioritise Culture, Leadership and Retention

The respondent views workplace culture as a critical determinant of whether diversity gains are sustained.

Potential learning

- Increase focus on inclusive leadership.
- Strengthen expectations relating to workplace culture and wellbeing.
- Consider whether leadership and inclusive workplace practices should, over time, become baseline expectations.
- Focus not only on attracting diverse talent but also on retention and progression.

Why this matters

The response highlights that long-term culture change depends on leadership behaviours, wellbeing and inclusive environments, not solely recruitment initiatives.

6. Focus on Outcomes Rather Than Activity

A notable theme is the importance of evaluating success over the long term.

Potential learning

- Recognise that meaningful diversity outcomes may take years to materialise.
- Build evaluation and review mechanisms into interventions.
- Assess the effectiveness of activities rather than simply recording delivery.
- Monitor both intended and unintended outcomes.

Why this matters

The respondent cautions against measuring success solely through implementation milestones, arguing that genuine impact may only become visible over an extended period.

7. Avoid Performative or "Tick-Box" Approaches

The respondent repeatedly stresses the importance of authentic engagement with EDI objectives.

Potential learning

- Design requirements that encourage genuine organisational ownership.
- Avoid overly bureaucratic compliance regimes.
- Focus on meaningful outcomes and organisational learning.
- Encourage organisations to understand the value and purpose of interventions rather than treating them as mandatory exercises.

Why this matters

There is concern that poorly designed requirements could encourage procedural compliance without delivering substantive change.

8. Build Stronger Understanding of Intersectionality

The response encourages greater consideration of overlapping characteristics throughout regulatory activity.

Potential learning

- Apply intersectional analysis across diversity data.
- Consider how barriers can compound across multiple characteristics.
- Ensure interventions reflect the complexity of lived experience rather than examining characteristics in isolation.

Why this matters

The respondent suggests that a better understanding of intersectionality will improve both evidence gathering and intervention design.

9. Maintain Focus on Fair Access and Professional Standards

A distinctive feature of this response is its emphasis on linking diversity objectives with professional excellence.

Potential learning

- Frame interventions around removing barriers and widening opportunity.
- Reinforce that diversity initiatives should support, not dilute, professional standards.
- Focus on ensuring the best talent can thrive regardless of background.
- Assess interventions for unintended impacts on other groups.

Why this matters

The respondent advocates for an approach that combines inclusion, fairness and professional standards, while carefully monitoring for unintended consequences.

Supporting Effective Implementation

The respondent identified several ways the LSB and regulators could improve implementation.

Potential learning

- Develop standard templates, frameworks and action planning tools.
- Provide technical assistance and shared resources where possible.
- Explore shared technology or infrastructure solutions.
- Support regulators with limited capability or capacity.
- Create greater consistency in approaches across the sector.

Why this matters

The response recognises that implementation challenges may arise from varying levels of resource, capability and technological maturity across organisations.

Strategic Reflections for the Sector

Taken as a whole, this response advocates for a diversity and inclusion framework that is:

- Evidence-led and data-driven.
- Based on common standards and shared definitions.
- Grounded in stakeholder engagement.
- Focused on removing systemic and financial barriers.
- Alert to unintended consequences.
- Centred on long-term culture change and retention.
- Evaluated through outcomes rather than activities alone.
- Designed to avoid performative compliance.

- Explicitly linked to maintaining professional excellence and public confidence.

Overall, the response points towards a regulatory approach that is practical, measurable and sustainable, with particular emphasis on data quality, implementation support and ensuring diversity initiatives produce meaningful long-term outcomes rather than short-term compliance gains.