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# InterLaw Diversity Forum for LGBT Networks

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InterLaw Diversity Forum for LGBT Networks (“InterLaw Diversity Forum”)  
Career Progression Report 2012

## Overview

The InterLaw Diversity Forum is an inter-organisational forum for the LGBT networks in law firms and all personnel (lawyers and non-lawyers) in the legal sector, including in-house counsel (the “LGBT Legal Community”) and has over 1,000 members and supporters from more than 70 law firms and 40 corporates and financial institutions.

In July 2012 InterLaw published a ground breaking report covering all strands of diversity and inclusion. The report combined hard data with individuals’ perceptions of their own career progression and the operation of policies and practices in the legal sector. Compiled from almost 2,000 respondents across the legal sector, the report is the work of CMS Head of International Capital Markets and Diversity & Inclusion Partner, Daniel Winterfeldt, and Stephen Ward, Director of DC Legal, co-chairs of the InterLaw Diversity Forum.

## Business case

The InterLaw Diversity Forum was created in response to a need for an organisation to address LGBT issues in the London legal sector. InterLaw has grown in size and influence since it was founded, emerging as a thought leader in not only LGBT issues but in diversity in general. After conducting a survey for the Law Society in 2010 on career barriers for LGB lawyers, InterLaw [realized] that the results of their study were similar to results other studies. They decided to take the next step and conduct a more in depth survey, the results of which would allow comparisons between different groups to be made with confidence, as there was nothing similar available in the legal sector. For the first time the sector would be able to identify the challenges that minority groups have in common and the areas where their issues diverge. junior lawyers to our clients and CSR partners - by highlighting role models and leaders in our firm, clients and partners across UK businesses and the Government.

## Innovation

The survey looked at both lawyers and non-lawyers in law firms, analysing the responses by gender, sexuality, race, disability, faith and social background of respondents. It is unique in the breadth of its ambition. Forming recommendations, InterLaw had to look beyond initiatives and programmes that are already in place because it is apparent that are having only a limited effect and are very slow to make a difference. Instead InterLaw used the evidence from the data that identifies where change is needed and developed recommendations to address those. Analysis was carried out with assistance from an Advisory Panel of academics and D&I practitioners. This is also new to the sector and adds greatly to the weight of the report.

The report found that existing initiatives around diversity and inclusion are having a limited and slow impact. It therefore recommends that law firms set targets to improve the participation of women, ethnic minorities, LGBT and those with disabilities at all levels and to address the challenges of social mobility.

## Outputs

InterLaw identified the six specific objectives. They are listed as follows, together with their measures and outputs:

### **Develop a clear understanding of the dynamics that affect career progression**

Measure: To be able to compare the hard data about different groups and their perceptions.

Respondents completed the survey very fully, allowing comparisons between different groups to be made with confidence. Looking at hard facts – respondents’ educational background and their family’s educational attainment, salary – alongside more subjective information – career progression, management



practices, mentoring and sponsorship – we were able to see clear patterns and spot drivers and obstacles to career progression.

**Describe actual patterns of relative advantage and disadvantage**

Measure: Identify differences and similarities between the experiences of different groups.

A robust sample and good responses across all questions flushed out the information that we wanted the survey to identify: what challenges do minority groups have in common and where is there divergence? This information helps to identify the initiatives that are working for different groups and what additional activities might be helpful for them. It uncovered a trend of bias towards white, elite-educated men in some surprising areas such as mentoring and sponsorship, which are initiatives often perceived as especially useful for women and ethnic and other minorities.

**Develop evidence-based recommendations that will help drive inclusivity forward**

Measure: Secure support from the Advisory Panel for all recommendations.

This was achieved despite the fact that the over-arching recommendation might be regarded as radical –setting targets for inclusion of all groups at all levels. The evidence of the limited impact of existing initiatives and the detail of the relative advantage and disadvantage of various groups supported that recommendation unambiguously and allowed us to generate detailed recommendations to assist employers in driving towards more effective practice on inclusion and diversity.

**To generate a pool of data that can be shared with other groups representing minorities in the legal sector to take forward work of their own**

Measure: To produce more detailed analysis of responses from women and BME lawyers.

Those data sets are available and groups have been contacted with the offer of their use. The Lawyers with Disabilities Division found our perspective on the issues facing their members very helpful when we presented to their committee and they expressed an interest in doing further analysis of the findings relating to disability. We have also held a special event to look at the findings that relate to women. More detailed

analysis of the data around women and BME respondents is currently underway.

**To secure high-profile media coverage of the report**

Measure: Significant coverage in one national newspaper and two trade newspapers.

Achieved with a large feature and news piece in the Lawyer (9 July), a front-page news piece in the Law Society Gazette (19 July) and a full news piece the Times (18 July). An InterLaw spokesperson was also interviewed on the Radio 5 Live breakfast show (18 July). The report also has a good social media presence through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and major articles will shortly appear in the Equal Opportunities Review and the Law Society’s newsletter for diversity and inclusion professionals and partners in the legal sector.

**To gather support for the recommendations among leaders in the legal sector.**

Measure: Secure a leading figure to write the foreword to the report, supporting the recommendations, secure the support of the Law Society for the recommendations, secure commitment to targets by 25 firms within 12 months of the launch of the report.

Former Attorney General, Baroness Scotland, supports the recommendations in the report and wrote the foreword. The President of the Law Society, Lucy Scott-Moncrieff confirmed the Law Society’s support for the recommendations at the launch event on 19 July. Dan Fitz, Group General Counsel, British Telecommunications plc has said: ‘This report is a powerful push forward on diversity and inclusion in the legal sector. The strength of the findings, clarity of analysis and constructive recommendations make it easy for employers to absorb, understand and respond. As a major purchaser of legal services I expect BT’s suppliers to strive for better outcomes on inclusion. This report gives them new tools to do so.’ Work is now underway on securing commitments from law firms.