



The Law Society



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## **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN LAW: GUIDANCE**

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[www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

# Running your roundtable

Roundtables are meetings focused on consensus-building to explore specific issues and identify creative solutions, in a safe and non-judgmental environment, where all participants have equal standing and can speak freely on the subject. Roundtables confront issues, not people, and aim to create a win-win scenario. It is not a public meeting, so a set of participants are selected according to the interest and/or expertise in the subject matter.

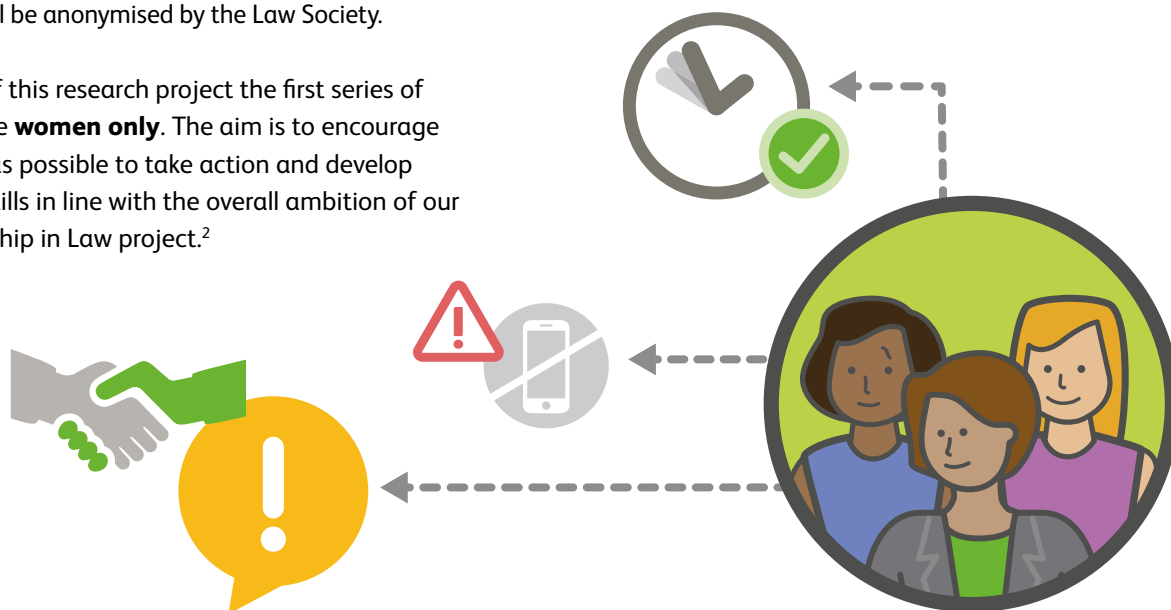
## The discussion is covered by the Chatham House rule<sup>1</sup>

As these roundtables will feed into the qualitative part of the research conducted by the Law Society on Women in leadership in Law, it is important that the structure of all the roundtables is consistent and follows the guidelines set out in this document.

Although there is no 'leader' in a roundtable, it is important that there is a facilitator to ensure equal participation, to maintain focus, and to ensure that a record of the process is taken in accordance with the agreed methodology.

Allocated notetakers are required at each roundtable to maintain a thorough record of the perceived barriers, examples of best practice and solutions and to capture the agreed calls to action, they should use the template in the Appendix for this. All content will be anonymised by the Law Society.

For the purpose of this research project the first series of roundtables will be **women only**. The aim is to encourage as many women as possible to take action and develop their leadership skills in line with the overall ambition of our Women in leadership in Law project.<sup>2</sup>



## Participants

We encourage hosts to do everything they can to ensure **diversity of participants**, including attendees outside of your organisation. We also recommend aiming for at least 30% of participants to be from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, and to have a variety of ages and levels of seniority.

## Basic ground rules

We recommend discussing these ground rules or even handing out a sheet with them on at the beginning of the session:

- a No mobile phones
- b Open, frank and fruitful discussions in a polite manner
- c Listen to others, no interruption of speeches
- d No one-to-one conversations: it is a group discussion
- e Respect of the agreed time schedule and speaking time
- f Consensus oriented meeting (no domination)
- g Active participation of everyone
- h Differences in opinions will not be taken personally
- i Voluntary participation

<sup>1</sup> This means that participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed relating to the information shared. We are invoking the rule to encourage openness and the sharing of information.

<sup>2</sup> We are engaging men in this project and will also hold men only roundtables. The purpose of separating the discussions is to focus on the different challenges that face men and women in achieving gender equality in the profession.

## Effective roundtables

For the facilitator...

### Before the roundtable:

- a Identify a maximum of ten women to take part in the roundtable
- b Allow at least 3-4 weeks in advance to give your chosen participants enough notice to prepare, asking for confirmation, and sending regular reminders – set up a system to collect confirmations
- c Identify a separate notetaker who will ensure that all notes – in particular the experiences and solutions – are accurate, clear and comprehensive, and relevant paperwork returned to the Law Society accurately and promptly
- d Share the toolkit with the participants at least two weeks before the roundtable and ask them specifically to think about actions they think can be taken to address the challenges highlighted by the toolkit
- e Introduce the project's overall goals as well as the specific objectives of the roundtable event

### At the roundtable:

- a Introduce yourself and your role as facilitator and introduce the notetaker
- b Explain the ground rules
- c Inform about the process of taking notes and how they will be used as part of the Law Society research into Women in leadership in Law
- d Give participants the opportunity to introduce each other to establish rapport
- e Keep the discussion moving using the questions and time limits outlined below
- f Ensure that people are comfortable to ask questions, challenge issues, and adopt a non-judgmental approach to participants' viewpoints
- g Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and that no one person dominates the discussions

*Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and that no one person dominates the discussions*

- h Watch for non-verbal behaviours<sup>3</sup>
- i When possible, end the discussion on a high point and remind the group of the actions agreed and commitments made moving forward

### After the roundtable:











- a The facilitator will circulate notes to all roundtable participants to agree amendments
- b Within two weeks from the date of the roundtable, the facilitator will share the notes and call to action commitments with the Law Society
  - For national roundtables please send all details to: Lauren Thornton, Project Coordinator  
**lauren.thornton@lawsociety.org.uk**
  - For international roundtables please send all details to: Lizzette Robleto de Howarth, International Programmes Manager  
**lizzette.robletodehowarth@lawsociety.org.uk** and cc **lauren.thornton@lawsociety.org.uk**
- c Three months after the roundtable the facilitators will be contacted by the Law Society to find out about the initial progress made
- d Six months after the roundtable the Project Coordinator will collate all progress made by the groups and assess the level of impact made by each group and by individuals in their organisations and wider communities
- e We strongly encourage you to send us a group photo from your meeting and evidence of change in action can also be sent to the Project Coordinator

<sup>3</sup> Non-verbal behaviour is where someone responds to something that someone else has said with actions rather than words. This can hinder the discussion, for instance if someone disagrees with a statement and responds by disengaging with the discussion. You can spot indicators, for instance if someone is leaning back in their seat, staring into space because they are internalising the conflict of ideas or has an uncertain facial expression. To re-engage them with the discussion, put a question to them to sound out what they think about the current focus of the discussion and to remind them that all contributions are welcome.

### Roundtable structure:

We recommend holding a roundtable for **two consecutive hours**.

The recommended timetable and activities are as follows:

<h4>Welcome (facilitator) – 5 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce yourself and your role</li><li>• Introduce the notetaker and explain their role</li><li>• Explain the background of the project and the purpose of the roundtables</li><li>• Outline ground rules and expectations for the meeting</li><li>• Explain purpose and goal of the roundtable</li></ul>	   
<h4>Participants introductions – 5 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each person to state name and position in their organisations</li></ul>	
<h4>Group discussion on research findings – 45 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss the research questions allocating 10 minutes for each question</li></ul> <p><i>TIP: We recommend printing several copies of the next page and bringing them to the roundtable so participants have the questions for their reference</i></p>	
<h4>Transition to discussion on key areas of action – 5 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitator to thank for insights offered and explain that the conversation will now move into exploring the tools and potential actions using the toolkit</li></ul>	
<h4>Group discussion on the toolkit tool(s) on calls to action – 45 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The group or individuals may choose to focus on and commit to actioning one or more of the toolkit tools, but there is no expectation that tangible solutions will be identified during the roundtable meeting</li></ul>	
<h4>Summarise key points and identify agreed actions – 10 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The facilitator (with the help of the notetaker) summarises the key points which emerged during the discussion and confirms the calls to action committed to</li></ul>	
<h4>What happens next? – 5 minutes</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The facilitator reminds the group that the outcomes of the discussion will be fed back to the Law Society and that there will be follow up three months and again six months after the roundtable to follow up on progress and to assess the level of impact made</li></ul>	

# Research questions

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Have you faced challenges and identified solutions in the following areas?:

## 1 Unconscious bias

The Law Society's survey identified unconscious bias as the main barrier hindering the progression of women in the legal profession. Worryingly, only 11% reported any visible steps being taken to address these areas.



## 2 Gender pay gap

The new government reporting revealed a significant gender pay gap in the legal profession. Worryingly, only 16% of those perceiving a pay gap reported any visible steps being taken to address these areas.



## 3 Flexible working

A substantial majority (91%) of survey respondents agreed that a flexible working culture is critical to improving diversity in the legal profession.



## 4 Best practice

Finally, some of the best practice examples that emerged from the survey were mentoring (including reverse mentoring), sponsorship, role modelling and involving more men in the equality debate.



### How have you measured success in each area?

It is very important that the same questions are used during all roundtables to ensure consistency and comparability of the data in line with our research methodology. An example of how the notetaker may like to capture the data can be found in the Appendix.

# Calls to action

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Once you have discussed the guiding questions, please use the toolkit to discuss the key priorities and actions that feel most relevant to your group and organisation.

The toolkit contains guidance and resources to help you and the group cover five topics our research showed as being of key importance to help progress in the journey towards full gender equality:

- 1 Unconscious bias
- 2 Gender pay gap
- 3 Women's history
- 4 Male champions for change
- 5 International advocacy for global sisterhood

All participants (and you as a group) should feel free to choose one or all of the toolkit topics (or any part of any toolkit). We encourage everyone to commit to and implement at least one (and hopefully more!) tangible action within six months from the roundtable. Agreeing to tangible actions will help each roundtable group to be collectively accountable for the resulting positive change. Individuals within the group may also want to commit to a specific action and that is also encouraged.

Of course, the group may decide to focus on topics which have emerged for the first part of this discussion. This of course is absolutely fine, but please keep us informed about your efforts to help us identify other emerging trends and areas of action.

Whilst the identity of roundtable attendees will be published through the use of photos, their comments and feedback will not be affiliated with them, or subsequently associated with the roundtable group's photo.

*Thank you so much for agreeing to facilitate and the best of luck in making change happen in your organisation!*



# Appendix

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	Examples of barriers to progression and leadership	Examples of best practice solutions to barriers and measures of success
<b>Unconscious bias</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Gender pay gap</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Flexible working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Other barriers preventing some women from reaching leadership positions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>

**The Law Society**

113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1PL

Tel: 020 7242 1222

Fax: 020 7831 0344

DX: DX 56 London/Chancery Lane

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