Breaking Down Barriers to Law – A Regional Perspective

At Lester Aldridge, we are dedicated to providing a range of opportunities to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Our goal is to create an inclusive environment that allows people to thrive and reach their full potential.

We are pleased to be a part of a new initiative that aims to collaborate with regional law firms to develop a strategic and nationwide approach towards incorporating social mobility in the legal sector and actively increasing opportunities.

Breaking Down Barriers to Law – a regional perspective

A new project that will explore how social mobility in the legal profession can be improved across the country, with a focus on regional firms and the key role they play, was launched today by Chair of the Purpose Coalition and former Education Secretary, Rt Hon Justine Greening.

The project, *Breaking down barriers to law*, will bring law firms together to look at how meaningful change can be achieved across the profession. Participating law firms will take part in a series of workshops which will focus on outreach, access, recruitment and progression. A final session will present a plan of action to member law firms, featuring analysis of the challenges faced by the legal sector as well as case studies of best practice. It will also include a comprehensive set of recommendations for the legal sector and law firms that can boost social mobility and widen diversity and inclusion, all aligned with the four key themes.

The first workshop will look at outreach and how the sector can do more to proactively engage with those from under-represented backgrounds in sustained programmes to give them the knowledge they need to make the right educational choices. The second on access will discuss what law firms can do to ensure that those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and from groups that are under-represented in the legal sector are adequately equipped to access the opportunities that it has to offer, including routes into work experience and

Tel: 0344 967 0793 | Email: info@LA-Law.com | www.lesteraldridge.com

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insights into legal practice. The recruitment workshop will focus on practices that will ensure a level playing field in the recruitment process, such as the adoption of name blind recruitment and contextual recruitment practices. The fourth on progression will look at how those from the most under-represented and least privileged groups can be supported to stay in the sector and thrive throughout their careers.

Speaking at the launch of the project, Chair of the Purpose Coalition and former Education Secretary, Rt Hon Justine Greening, said: "The law sector is still too often seen as a profession for those who went to the right schools and universities and who have friends or family who can give them a helping hand to get in and get on. That perception means that too many with the right talent simply don't apply. Those that do are often left without the support that would allow them to reach their potential. That is a loss on so many fronts – for the individuals who have the ability to make something of their lives in rewarding and well-paid careers, for law firms which should reflect and support their local communities and for the wider economy which, in the current economic climate, needs to harness all available talent, wherever it is.

"Many law firms are already doing fantastic work to deliver equality of opportunity and this project will be looking at their best practice and seeing how it can become the sector norm. Society now has much higher expectations of how businesses should operate and it is increasingly the case that those that demonstrate the most effective social impact will attract the largest talent pool. This project will build on our original project, *Levelling Up Law*, in 2021 which worked with City law firms and led to the development of a talent platform with The Adecco Group, called FindMyPurpose, that will be launched later this year. It can connect students from non-Russell Group universities to companies in our Purpose Coalition, including law firms and allows them to align with businesses that share their values.

"I am looking forward to working with participating law firms on this new project to develop a strategic and countrywide approach to embedding social mobility in the legal sector and playing a proactive part in boosting opportunity."

Social Mobility at Lester Aldridge

You can find out more about our initiatives to increase access to the profession and nurture talent here.

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