**Running your Women in Law Roundtable**

Roundtables are meetings focused on consensus-building to explore specific issues and identify creative solutions in a safe and non-judgemental environment, where all participants have equal standing and can speak freely on the subject.

Roundtables must confront issues rather people and aim to create a win-win scenario. Interested participants come freely and it is not a public meeting

The discussions are covered by the Chatham House Rule[[1]](#footnote-1): ***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.***

These roundtables will give the Law Society of Scotland qualitative data to complement the quantitative data of *Profile of the Profession[[2]](#footnote-2)*. It is important that the structure of all the roundtables is consistent and follows the guidelines set out in this document.

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 it taken in accordance with the agreed methodology.

Similarly, a notetaker should be allocated at each roundtable to maintain a record of perceived barriers, examples of best practice and solutions; and to capture the agreed calls to action they should use the template in the Appendix. All content will be anonymised by the Law Society of Scotland.

**Participants**

We encourage hosts to do everything they can to ensure a diversity of participants. For instance, if a law firm is hosting, we would encourage organisers to seek attendees from various stages of their career (e.g. trainee through to partner) and seek attendees from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Feel free to invite participants from outwith the organisation also (i.e. clients).

**Ground rules for the roundtable**

1. No mobile phones.
2. No side conversations: it is a group discussion.
3. Open, frank and fruitful discussions in a polite manner.
4. Listen to others, no interruptions.
5. Respect of the agreed schedule and speaking time.
6. Consensus-oriented meeting.
7. Active participation of everyone.
8. Differences in opinion will not be taken personally.
9. Voluntary participation.

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| **Before the roundtable** | **At the roundtable** | **After the roundtable** |
| Identify a maximum of ten women to take part in the roundtable. | Introduce yourself and your role as facilitator and introduce the notetaker. | The facilitator will take circulate notes to all roundtable participants to agree amendments |
| Allow significant time to give your chosen participants/volunteers to prepare, asking for confirmation, and sending regular reminders | Explain the ground rules. | Within a fortnight from the date, the facilitator will share the notes and calls to action with the Society via: [diversity@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:diversity@lawscot.org.uk) |
| Identify a separate notetaker who will ensure that all notes are accurate, clear and comprehensive and subsequently returned to the Society. | Inform about the process of taking notes and how they will be fed into the Society. | Three months after the roundtable the facilitator will be contacted by the Society to find out about initial progress. |
| Share the toolkit with the participants in advance of the roundtables and ask them | Give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. | The Society 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. |
|  | Keep the discussion moving using the questions. Limit time where necessary. | 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 Society. |
| Ensure that people are comfortable to ask questions, challenge issues and adopt a non-judgemental approach to fellow participant viewpoints. |
| Make sure everyone has a chance to speak and that no one person dominates the discussions. |
| Watch for non- verbal behaviour. |
| Try and end discussions on a high and remind the group of agreed actions. |

**Roundtable structure**

We recommend holding a roundtable for two hours. The recommended timetable and activities are as follows.

1. Welcome (facilitator) – five minutes
   1. Introduce yourself and your role
   2. Introduce the notetaker and explain their role
   3. Explain the background of the project and the purpose of the roundtables
   4. Outline ground rules and expectation for the meeting
   5. Explain purpose and goal of the roundtable
2. Participants introductions – five minutes
   1. Each participant states their name and position
3. Group discussion on research findings – forty-five minutes
   1. Discuss the research questions allocating around 10 minutes for each question.
4. Transition to discussion on key areas of action – five minutes
   1. Facilitator to thank for insights offered and explain that the conversation will now move into exploring the tools and potential actions using the toolkit.
5. Group discussion on the toolkits on calls to action
   1. 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 tanglibel solution will
6. Summarise key points and identify agreed actions – ten minutes
   1. The facilitator (with support from the notetaker) summarises the key points which emerged during the discussion and confirmed the calls to action committed to.
7. What happens next? – five minutes
   1. The facilitator reminds the group that the outcomes of the discussion will be fed back to the Society and that there will eb follow-up in three- and six-months’ time after the roundtable to follow-up on progress and to assess the level of impact made.

**Guiding questions**

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

**1. Unconscious bias**

The Society’s *Profile of the Profession* survey identified unconscious bias as a major barrier hindering the progression of women in the legal profession.

* Has your organisation implemented any specific action to tackle bias?
* Are you seeing any visible results?

**2. Gender pay gap**

The gender pay gap in the profession reporting revealed a significant gender pay gap. There has been progress in recent years.

* Has your organisation identified tangible solutions? And are these working?

**3. Flexible working**

A substantial majority of survey respondents agreed that a flexible working culture is critical to improving diversity in the profession, but the prevalence of flexible working seems to be falling.

* Do you agree that flexible working helps?
* Has your organisation implemented flexible working?
* If so, are you facing challenges?

**4. Bullying & harassment**

A significant number of responses to our *Profile of the Profession* survey noted that they had suffered or witnessed bullying and harassment in the last five years.

* Has your organisation bullying and harassment policies?
* How does your organisation deal with such issues?

**Calls to action**

Once you have discussed the guiding questions on page 5 please use the toolkit to discuss the priorities and actions that feel most relevant to your group and organisation

The toolkit contains guidance and resources to help you and thre group cover topic areas our research showed as being of key importance to help progress in the journey towards full gender quality.

1. Unconscious Bias (and other forms of bias)

2. Gender Pay Gap

3. Flexible working

4. bullying and harassment

5. Engaging men

All participants should feel free to choose one or all the toolkit topics (or any part of the 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. This is entirely encouraged!

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

Whilst the identity of roundtables will be published through the use of photos, their comments and feedback will not be attributed to them or subsequently associated with the photo.

**APPENDIX**

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|  | **Examples of barriers to progression** | **Examples of best practice solutions to barriers and measures of success** |
| Unconscious bias |  |  |
| Gender pay gap |  |  |
| Flexible working |  |  |
| Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment |  |  |
| Engaging men |  |  |

1. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.lawscot.org.uk/media/361498/lss-pop-report-final-december-2018.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)