

Thematic study of compliance with Principle 9

April 2013

Introduction

With the introduction of the SRA Handbook at the end of 2011 and our move to outcomes-focused regulation, we introduced 10 mandatory principles for the profession. The principles embody the key ethical requirements on firms and individuals who are involved in the provision of legal services.

Principle 9 requires the regulated population to "run your business or carry out your role in the business in a way that encourages equality of opportunity and respect for diversity" and is supported by five equality and diversity outcomes set out in chapter 2 of the Code of Conduct in the SRA Handbook.

In the latter part of 2012, we carried out thematic supervision visits with firms to find out what arrangements they had in place to meet Principle 9. As we only visited 90 firms, the findings are not statistically representative of all firms regulated by the SRA but indicate broad trends.

Also part of the supervision visits, was a review of how firms were responding to the new requirement to comply with the workforce diversity data survey we conducted in the latter half of 2012. This was a new requirement on firms, introduced to meet the Legal Services Board's expectations and designed to promote transparency and ultimately to increase diversity and social mobility in the legal workforce. We see this as an integral part of compliance with Principle 9 and the supervision visits were an ideal opportunity to engage with firms about the new requirements.

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