

London Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

“Our commitment to justice, antiracism, humanity and diversity has been a core principle since our founding. But it is also time to reimagine what we can do with the special responsibilities and privileges we hold as part of the legal profession.”

– Kim Koopersmith
Chairperson



Akin Gump is committed to a diverse and inclusive work environment where all members of the Akin Gump community can thrive and grow. We maintain a culture that sees differences as strengths and we believe the diverse perspectives and experiences of our lawyers and staff help us achieve exceptional results for our clients and bring important insights into all aspects of the firm.

Our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts are aligned to our firmwide DEI strategic plan which has the following four goal areas: **leadership commitment and engagement**, **recruiting and the diversity pipeline**, **professional development and inclusion** and **strategic partnerships**. We also have the following structures which support the execution of our strategy.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Councils

Akin Gump has DEI councils that operate at both the firmwide and office level. Our firmwide DEI council was restructured in 2020 and is now led by our firm chair, Kim Koopersmith, in partnership with our chief diversity, equity & inclusion officer and includes some of the firm’s most senior partners, including two from our London office, to ensure leadership commitment and drive accountability.

Our office DEI councils foster inclusion and build community, partner with our hiring committees to recruit exceptional and diverse talent, and engage with the broader legal community. Our DEI council in London, which is chaired by London partner Emma Simmonds – who also co-leads the firm’s women’s initiative – together with London partner-in-charge Sebastian Rice, provides an opportunity for lawyers and business services team members to proactively communicate questions, concerns and ideas to firm management and is also responsible for the development and implementation of local DEI-related initiatives. Our London DEI council also promotes diversity within the legal community through partnerships with clients and targeted outreach to lateral candidates, law school students and the not-for-profit community.

Firmwide and Local Office Resource Groups

Our Firmwide Resource Groups (FRGs) provide a forum for our lawyers and business services professionals to meet at both the firmwide and office level to discuss their shared interests and engage with firm leaders. In London, we currently have resource groups focused on women, parents and caregivers, BAME, abilities, LGBTQ+ and social mobility. With subcommittees often led by counsel and associates, FRGs are an opportunity to forge strong bonds with colleagues while sharing ideas to support the effective inclusion of all groups related to recruiting, professional development and advancement.

Recruitment

Recruitment for our trainee solicitor programme is supported by events with the leading diversity platforms, Bright Network, Interlaw and Aspiring Solicitors. We utilise blind screening and have removed our minimum A-Level requirements.



*Excludes partners

Figures correct as at Jan 2023

Current London Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives

WOMEN'S INITIATIVES

The women's resource group seeks to maintain a supportive and collaborative environment for the firm's women lawyers. The committee ensures London office policies relating to women are supportive and competitive and also actively supports the retention of women lawyers and their promotion to leadership roles. Some of our recent women's initiatives include a business development programme for our senior women associates, entitled "Grow Big" and the introduction of a London office menopause policy. In 2022, the Women's network launched a programme of monthly business development focused training for all London female lawyers. In June 2023, the firm will host its fourth Women's Leadership Conference. We are proud that, in the last five years, 75% of London partner promotions have been women and 100% of female London lawyers have returned to work from maternity leave.

SOCIAL MOBILITY INITIATIVES

The London office holds an annual summer internship, interview skills day and CV workshop for students from the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF). Lawyers from the London office also volunteer as mentors with SMF and Aspiring Solicitors (a leading diversity platform that supports diverse individuals with their vacation scheme and/or training contract applications). We are also gold level sponsors of the AS Foundation (which offers financial support for disadvantaged students pursuing a career in law in the form of study resources, business attire and travel costs), Inspiring the Future (where our lawyers are encouraged to speak at school events) and City Year (a leading youth and education charity, whose mission is to empower young role models to help children from disadvantaged communities to succeed in school). We are proud to be a 'Top 75 employer', having been ranked 62nd in the SMF's employer index in 2022. The office has also signed the Social Mobility Pledge.

LGBTQ+ INITIATIVES

Our LGBTQ+ resource group provides support to the LGBTQ+ community in the London office and works to ensure the firm is a place where all people feel comfortable being who they are, being out and proud and bringing their whole self to work. The firm holds Global Diversity Champion membership with Stonewall; they made their second submission to the Stonewall Equality Index in September 2022 and looks forward to submitting again in 2023. In honour of LGBT History Month in 2023, the group will be speaking with Rachel Reese, trans ambassador. The London office is proud to have launched a standalone transitioning policy for our UK-based employees and offers staff the option to include pronouns in their signature blocks.

BAME INITIATIVES

Our BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) resource group focuses on improving the BAME community's access to our firm and ensuring that there is continued diversity from vacation scheme students through to partners. In support of this, the BAME group has strategic partnerships with Bright Network and Aspiring Solicitors and is looking forward to participating in 10,000 Black Interns this summer. It also focuses on inclusivity efforts once people are at the firm. As part of our commitment to racial justice, the London office marks Black History Month which includes guest speaker events & initiatives that further the firm's theme of self-education. In 2022, the London office took part in the firm's charitable initiative 'Stand Against Hate', which called for people across the firm to collectively walk, bike or run 25,000 miles to Stand Against Hate between 25 June and 25 July. The firm donated a \$ for every mile recorded, shared equally between nominated racial justice and human rights charities.

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS INITIATIVES

The goals of the Parents & Caregivers resource group in London include seeking to maintain a supportive and collaborative environment for those members of the London office balancing parental and caregiving responsibilities with the demands of a work environment. The London office offers parental leave coaching sessions including return to work support, a shared parental leave policy and a flexible working policy. We have also introduced "ramp down and up" periods to support parental leave, which help to reduce stress when both exiting from and returning to the office. The group has joined WorkLife Central, a London-based company that provides expertise and support to working parents and caregivers in corporate organisations.

ABILITIES INITIATIVES

The Abilities FRG is committed to increasing awareness within the firm of the issues faced in the workplace by people with both visible and invisible disabilities. The group holds educational lunch and learn' sessions annually to mark awareness days such as Autism Awareness Month and International Day of Persons with Disabilities. In 2022, the group invited Alex Manners (Asperger's Champion, motivational speaker, presenter and author) to deliver his talk 'My Life Living with Asperger's'. The firm has introduced a set of interview best practices for candidates with disabilities and is partnered with Lexxic, a specialist psychology consultancy who provide neurodiversity workplace assessments, training and support.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

The London office offers a one-to-one mentoring programme and internal career coaching for lawyers to ensure support and connection to the Akin community. The firm also has a strong focus on well-being and three years ago launched its "Be Well" programme which supports all firm personnel in their efforts to achieve or maintain a healthy, productive and balanced life. In London, we have an in-house mental health advisor who is available seven days a week to all London office personnel. The London office has also signed up to the Mindful Business Charter – a collaboration between banks and law firms committed to driving change in how we work.

DIVERSE LAWYERS SUMMIT

In 2022, the firm hosted its inaugural Diverse Lawyers Summit in Washington, D.C. where they brought together all of their racially/ethnically diverse and LGBTQ+ lawyers from all over the world, for one and a half days of networking and substantive programming. Attendees also included the management committee, the partner admissions committee, practice group leaders and the chair of the firm.

London Office Resource Groups

- Abilities
- BAME
- LGBTQ+
- Parents and Caregivers
- Social Mobility
- Women

London Strategic Partnerships and Mentorships

- AS Foundation
- Aspiring Solicitors
- Bright Network
- City Year
- Inspiring the Future
- InterLaw (including UK MDS)
- Lexxic
- Pirical
- Social Mobility Foundation
- Social Mobility Pledge
- Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme
- Vital Voices
- WorkLife Central
- 10,000 Black Interns

"There is a real passion and enthusiasm for incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion in all that we do, both on a firm and office level. In London, we are immensely proud of the progress we have made in just a few years and we are excited to continue to build upon that momentum."

– Emma Simmonds
Partner, London

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