



Annual General Meeting

13 January 2020

Working towards an equal profession



Black Solicitors
Network

AGM AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and introduction**
- 2. Chair-person's annual report**
- 3. Treasurer's update**
- 4. Election of directors**
- 5. Any other business**

BSN Board of Directors



Paulette Mastin (Chair)



Joe Mensah-Dankwah



Cordella Bart-Stewart



Paul McFarlane



Nwabueze Nwokolo



Kyle Blackburn



In Memoriam



Stephen Friday
(1965 – 2019)

Director and Co-founder, Black Solicitors Network

We honour Stephen's invaluable contribution to
the legal profession with deep gratitude.



Black Solicitors
Network

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

PAULETTE MASTIN

Who we are

- The Black Solicitors Network (BSN) was formed in 1995
- BSN is a not-for-profit company and gained Law Society Recognised Group (RG) status in 2003 which it held until 2012 when The Law Society removed RG arrangements
- 2006: The Law Society Equality Award – *Outstanding Contribution to promoting Race Equality*
- 2015: Inclusive Networks Award - *Inter-Sector Network of the Year*
- 2018: Inclusive Companies Award – *Outstanding Diversity Network*
- BSN comprises three region specific groups:
 - BSN City Group
 - BSN North
 - BSN Midlands

Organisation Structure

BSN Board

- Chair (Paulette Mastin), Cordella Bart-Stewart, Nwabueze Nwokolo, Joe Mensah-Dankwah, Paul McFarlane and Kyle Blackburn

Regional Groups

- BSN City Group – Steering Committee comprising law firm partners, in-house counsel and associates
- BSN North (Chair, Kyle Blackburn) & BSN Midlands (Chair, N. Nwokolo)

Committees

- BSN Diversity League Table & UK Diversity Legal Awards
- Careers (under-graduates and graduates)
- Creating Pathways for mentoring and sponsorship
- Junior Lawyers Group
- Marketing and Communications

Mission and Purpose

- Primary voice of black solicitors in England and Wales; committed to achieving equality of access, retention and promotion of aspiring and existing black solicitors
- The leading body that represents the interests of the UK's existing and aspiring black solicitors
- BSN's membership had grown markedly over the years (current membership is around 4,000) and continues to grow. An inclusive rather than exclusive organisation, our reputation is such that we attract, and welcome, members from across the cultural and diversity spectrum

CONSULTATIONS

BSN actively participates in consultations initiated by The Law Society, the SRA and other regulatory, parliamentary and government bodies relating to matters affecting BME lawyers, the profession and society. In 2018/2019 BSN submitted responses to the following consultations:

- Oct 2018: Home Secretary appointed Wendy Williams as Independent Advisor to a **Windrush lessons learned review** “to make sure crucial lessons were identified and learned as quickly as possible, to prevent something like this happening again”. Cordella Bart-Stewart led BSN’s response to this independent government review. In 2019, Cordella represented BSN at a roundtable called by the Independent Adviser updating the review and the Windrush compensation scheme
- Jan 2019: Paul McFarlane led BSN’s response to the government’s consultation on **Ethnicity Pay reporting** following a BSN roundtable at which BSN members discussed and provided input on the scope and methodology of ethnicity pay reporting

- Other consultations include BSN's response/forum participation in relation to the new SQE, SRA's Handbook and TLS/SRA roundtables on ethnic diversity in the legal profession

THE LAW SOCIETY

- BSN Board member nominated to sit on the Council of The Law Society (TLS). Through BSN's Council membership, it is able to contribute to, and observe, the work of TLS on behalf of BSN members. BSN is also represented on the advisory panel of TLS Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division.

BSN JOBS BOARD

- Online portal for employers seeking to recruit diverse talent in the legal sector.
www.jobs.blacksolicitorsnetwork.org

STUDENTS

- **Careers workshops** – developed by BSN and hosted in conjunction with leading firms and other institutions, including Jones Day, Linklaters, DAC Beachcroft, Debevoise, Hogan Lovells, these interactive workshops and insight sessions provide undergraduate and graduate BSN members with tailored advice on applying and interviewing for training contracts and placements, with measurable success.
- **BSN/Accenture summer internship programme:** a week's structured work experience and professional skills development for up to 14 BSN graduate and undergraduate members (without training contracts) with Accenture's legal team covering IP/Technology, transactional, litigation, ethics and compliance.

JUNIOR LAWYERS GROUP

Launched in Spring 2018

Led by:

Jaya Handa

Cherie Samuels

Ofei Kwafo-Akoto

Natalie Carter (- Dec 2019)



Primary objectives:

- Connecting junior lawyers across the legal sector to facilitate relationship building
- Providing a forum for support, inspiration and guidance for junior lawyers

JUNIOR LAWYERS GROUP

Building Career Capital seminar series:

➤ *How to build client relationships*

Tuesday 5 March 2019

Hosted by Norton Rose Fulbright, moderated by Ofei and involving law firm partners and general counsel

➤ *Engaging clients and building business relationships*

Wednesday 3 April 2019

Hosted by Allen & Overy. Speaker: Richard Odumodu – Visiting Fellow Finance Faculty, Cass Business School

Inspiring leadership dinner series:

➤ 13 June 2019 – networking dinner for JLG members

➤ 26 September 2019 – In conversation with Jennifer Mbaluto, Partner, Clifford Chance – an evening of networking, collaboration and group mentoring with a leading City firm partner

➤ February 2020 – ‘In conversation’ networking and group mentoring dinner with two partners from Latham & Watkins

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Creating Pathways

Empowering diverse talent

Creating Pathways for mentoring and sponsorship programme for mid-level BME lawyers is an initiative of **BSN City Group** and is led by:

Pamela Dusu
Akima Paul-Lambert
Paulette Mastin
Sedina Aidam
Nana Prempeh

www.creatingpathways.co.uk



L-R: Sedina, Nana, Pamela, Paulette, Akima and Sophie Smith

Creating Pathways programme 2018/2019:

- Following the pilot in 2014/15, Creating Pathways and BSN were featured in the Times newspaper
- 2018/2019 Programme: 20+ successful applicants paired with senior lawyer mentors
- Professional development seminars supplement candidates mentorship
 - 15 January 2019: Seminar event entitled **Impact & Presence** – sponsored and hosted by Shearman & Sterling. This was an extremely well attended and interactive session.
 - 1 May 2019: Seminar event entitled **Navigating the organisational landscape - getting started with positive 'office politics'**. This informative event was hosted by Linklaters LLP.
 - 14 October 2019: Seminar/panel event in partnership with **Facebook's** legal team - **"Working in Companies of the Future"**.
 - 13 November 2019: Seminar/panel event on **Authenticity – bring your whole self to work** – hosted by Debevoise & Plimpton, moderated by Akima Paul-Lambert with senior lawyers and thought leaders.
- This 3rd rotation of Creating Pathways' mentoring and sponsorship programme was concluded with a closing dinner sponsored by Kirkland & Ellis. The feedback from mentees on 2018/19 programme has been extremely positive and mentors reported gaining useful insights into issues facing junior BME lawyers in the City.
- 2020 programme has now launched with good uptake so far and the committee will be matching successful applicants with senior lawyer mentors in the coming weeks.

BSN City Group

- **Autumn 2018:** Artificial intelligence and the legal profession – seminar hosted in association with Linklaters. Plenary was led by EY associate partner in forensic technology, Linklaters partner and Lloyds Bank senior lawyer.
- **August 2019:** collaborative summer event entitled **BAME City Link-Up** and hosted by Linklaters. This provided an opportunity for BAME networks across the City to come together to share best practice, successes and challenges in driving change in the area of diversity and inclusion. This event featured a talk on Networks as change agents by Justine Lutterodt, director of the Centre for Synchronous Leadership
- **18 September 2019:** Inaugural '**Dinner Stories**' event as part of a dinner series for senior lawyers. Our guest speaker was Dr Margaret Casely-Hayford CBE. The idea behind this series is to build a stronger sense of community among senior leaders. Organised by Paulette Mastin, Akima Paul-Lambert and Ariel White-Tsimikalis, the dinner was attended by 20 Partners and Counsel. Margaret shared her inspirational career journey with our guests and great connections were made and conversations ensued. Further quarterly or semi-annual Dinner Stories events are planned for 2020 to encompass other parts of the profession, including In-house Legal.
- Our 2019 Black History Month events kicked off with a star turn from **Trevor Faure, former GC of EY, and CEO of Smarter Law Solutions** who gave a very engaging and inspirational talk on his career journey and insights on how to transform busy lawyers into business leaders, and gave away a copy of his new book, Smarter Law, to a junior attendee! This event was held on **1 October** and hosted by Linklaters.

BSN City Group

- BSN City Group partnered with Linklaters to host our most successful **Black History Month event** on **October 9 2019** to date which featured the incomparable, **Gina Miller**. There were hundreds of guests in attendance so much so that the auditorium showcase of Gina's in-depth interview was streamed to other meeting rooms in the building.
- **31 October 2019**: The final instalment of our Black History Month series was BSN's annual **Big Conversation** event in partnership with Bloomberg. This was the second instalment of BSN's Big Conversation events on race equality. The theme last year was "**Race Equality in higher education (the attainment gap) and in the legal profession (the leaky pipeline)**" which topic was debated by a stellar panel of speakers, including Dr Nicola Rollock and moderated by Paulette Mastin. This event was sponsored by Paul Hastings (Europe).
- **6 November 2019**: BSN City Group collaborated with Accenture (UK) Limited on a seminar event entitled **Blockchain: Under-hyped, Flatlined or Dead and Buried?** An expert panel guided attendees through the evolution of this digital technology and how it is revolutionising the way we do business, travel and execute financial transactions. We are working on further developing the relationship with Accenture, particularly around supporting BSN students and junior lawyers.

BSN North

- BSN North (based in Manchester) was relaunched in April 2016 with the aim of raising awareness of the region's talented BME legal community; and provide a platform for those with an interest in equality to come together to share and advocate equal access, retention and promotion of BME's within the profession.

- 2018/2019 activities and events included:
 - Summer 2019: BSN North embarked on collaborations with local black diversity groups, including 'Arizon Network', 'Black Women in Business & Professionals' 'Manchester Africa Business Network' and the 'National Black Crown Prosecution Service'. This included several members of BSN North's committee being invited to attend the National Black Police Association 20th Anniversary Dinner at Old Trafford, Manchester.

 - October 2019 saw BSN North launch its annual essay competition for students during Black History Month, with the winning entrant receiving a weeks' placement at an international law firm. The next essay competition will be launch in the second half of this year.

BSN North

- Mental Wellbeing is a focus for BSN North in 2020, with a series of events being planned, with the aim of working with regulators and notable mental health experts, law firms and universities.
- BSN North is seeking to expand over to the other large cities, including Leeds and Sheffield. Discussions are on-going with representatives from each city with a view to exploring this exciting prospect more formally later this year.
- Plans are also underway to recruit additional solicitors to BSN North's committee to enhance the group's presence and offering in the larger law firms. This will also allow BSN North to expand its projects, both at the junior and more senior levels of the profession.
- The student-focused Grassroots team will be continuing their successful initiatives to connect our student members with real opportunities to gain placements and tailored, career enhancing insights. This will include advocacy workshops, social gatherings with junior lawyers, CV workshops and talks aimed at improving black students' exposure to life in law.

BSN Midlands

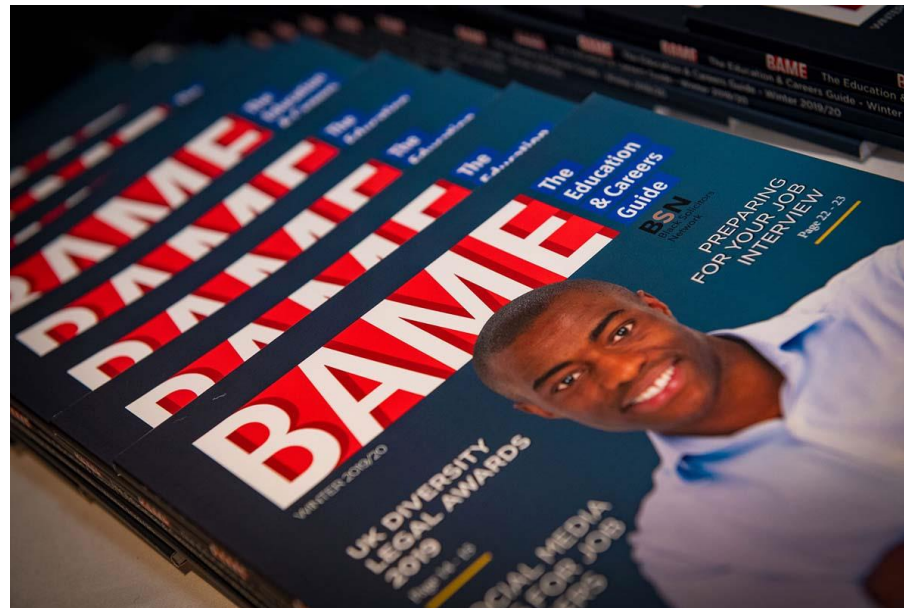
- BSN Midlands (based in Birmingham) was initially launched in 2004 and was BSN's first regional group.
- Historically, the group has worked with the Birmingham Law Society and the SRA to engage BME lawyers in the region who are primarily operating or operating through small firms and sole practitioner firms.
- In 2020, we plan to collaborate with local BME groups to engage the junior and mid-level demographic in the region, including working in association with local universities on outreach programmes to support BME talent into the legal profession.

Publications

Diversity League Table (DLT) – The Law Society sponsored DLT is a diversity survey report of leading firms and chambers in the UK covering gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disabilities. Widely considered to be one of the profession's leading diversity reporting initiatives and publications. The 10th edition of the DLT/Diversity Survey was published in June 2017 and covered: *Barriers and Drivers of Diversity: 10 year study*. Planned launch of 2020 DLT Diversity Case Studies



BAME Educational & Careers Guide – annual publication edited by BSN that helps to bridge the gap between the majority and the minority when seeking a career path in any industry.



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UK Diversity Legal Awards

UK Diversity Legal Awards – the only industry awards which focus solely on recognising and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the legal profession. Submissions may cover one, some or all aspects of diversity, including gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, social mobility, mental health & wellbeing and access to justice. The awards are open to firms, chambers, in-house legal teams, suppliers to the legal profession and individuals within the profession.

UK DIVERSITY LEGAL
AWARDS 2019
RECOGNISING AND PROMOTING
DIVERSITY ACROSS THE LEGAL PROFESSION

10th YEAR ANNIVERSARY



Going forward....

- **Membership engagement and marketing review / strategy**
- **Strategic alliances**
- **Enhance and expand outreach programmes for undergraduate and graduate student members: BSN Grassroots goes national**
- **Sponsorship and fund-raising**
- **BSN Directory online**
- **Get involved.....**



Any questions....



Paulette Mastin
Chair, Black Solicitors Network



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TREASURER'S UPDATE

JOE MENSAH-DANKWAH



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DIRECTOR RE-ELECTIONS

- Paulette Mastin - Chair
- Cordella Bart-Stewart - Secretary
- Joe Mensah Dankwah - Treasurer
- Paul McFarlane
- Kyle Blackburn
- Nwabueze Nwokolo

NEW DIRECTOR ELECTION

Liam Symonds





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ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR QUESTIONS?



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**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

Black Solicitors Network

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