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Women breaking barriers Leeds



WBB LEEDS

2022/23 GUIDE



Women Breaking Barriers (WBB) is a student-led initiative supported by the University of Leeds, School of Law which aims to celebrate the successes of women whilst inspiring future female pioneers. We host regular events to empower and provide guidance for our women students about the struggles they may face, not only professionally within their legal careers, but also through motherhood and other personal challenges.

The initiative was set-up in the University of Leeds in 2015. WBB Leeds then took the initiative to launch the WBB Network in 2018 at various universities in the North of England. At the present moment we operate within the Law School and focus our message towards female undergraduates and postgraduates within the LLB Law and BA Criminology cohorts.

Our ethos has been centered around utilising our platform to inspire and uplift female students to reach their full potential. WBB allows students to discover female mentors that are instrumental in providing career support. Through creating this empowering space, WBB exposes students to powerful female allies, allowing them to grow their confidence and receive practical advice from women who were once in their position. As a result, students are able to receive essential tools, clarity to reach their aspirational goals and break through the barriers in order to become successful in their chosen field. Whilst we largely welcome female role models from within the legal sphere, we are also keen to introduce our students to successful women from a range of professions, including entrepreneurs.

Our Law School contact

Our committee for the 2022/23 year



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REASONS TO SUPPORT US

WBB is always enthusiastic about inviting inspirational female speakers and hosting empowering events. Our committee thoroughly researches each speaker before we invite them to one of our events, meaning we truly appreciate the work of those we approach.

Whether you support us as a speaker or help lead a workshop, your time will be spent for a meaningful cause. In the past we have won awards such as the 'Faculty Positive Impact (Group) Award - University of Leeds Partnership Awards (2020)' and the 'Equality and Inclusion Award (Group) - University of Leeds Law School Faculty Partnership Awards (2021).'

We have received feedback from students saying that attending WBB events has encouraged them to begin their own projects and feel more confident to pursue the career of their choice.

Awards we have won:

The Equality and Inclusion Award (Group), Special Commendation -

University of Leeds Law School Faculty Partnership Awards (2021)

Faculty Positive Impact (Group)

Award – University of Leeds Partnership Awards (2020)

Articles written about us:

Women Breaking Barriers to welcome Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

<https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1477/women-breaking-barriers-to-welcome-baroness-helena-kennedy-qc>

Women Breaking Barriers event welcomes back alumni

<https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1525/women-breaking-barriers-event-welcomes-back-alumni>

Women Breaking Barriers and Leeds Law Society mark International Women's Day

<https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1528/women-breaking-barriers-and-leeds-law-society-mark-international-women-s-day>

'Women Breaking Barriers' 2020/21 President, Imogen Haywood, discusses the highlights of their year'

<https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1360/women-breaking-barriers-2020-21-president-imogen-haywood-discusses-the-highlights-of-their-year>

'A Year of Success for Women Breaking Barriers'

<https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1142/a-year-of-success-for-women-breaking-barriers>



Our previous events

Overview

Our events range from panel discussions with solicitors and barristers, to seminars hosted by speakers who discuss their personal journey and the barriers they have overcome. In the past, we have had inspirational speakers such as Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Dame Anne Owers, DBE, Phillippa Kaufmann QC, and Funke Abimbola MBE. We have also welcomed entrepreneur and runner up on the Apprentice, Claire Young. Additionally, we have welcomed exhibitions from the First 100 Years Project, hosted presentations from the Scottish Feminist Judgement Project and have ran our own confidence workshops.

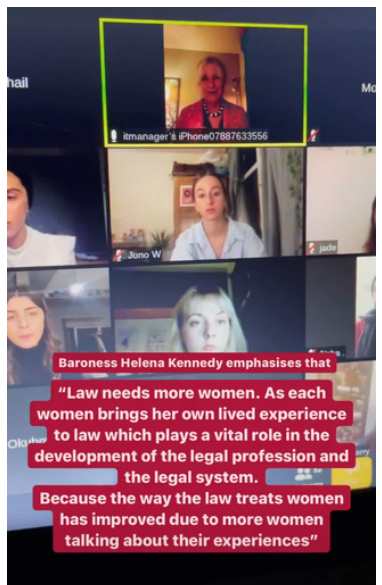
We seek to draw on a range of events and place emphasis on connecting students directly to our selected role models in order to enable them to foster personal connections with contacts they may not had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

Our events are focused around female empowerment. We aim to highlight the journey of inspirational women who have gone through struggles and have broken the barriers to be the industry experts in their respective fields.



Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

This event was led by one of Britain’s most distinguished lawyers ... Baroness Helena Kennedy QC [the author of ‘Eve was framed’]. During this event Helena Kennedy addressed very important topics – such as experiences of women, both in the legal system and daily life. She emphasised that the ‘law needs more women, as each woman brings her own lived experience to law which plays a vital role in development of the legal profession and the legal system.’, She also talked about how women are treated more now in the eyes of the law due to more women ‘coming out’ and talking about their experiences. Furthermore, Helena Kennedy emphasised how not only men, but society as a whole downgrade’s women, therefore it is important that women are supported. For instance, she states ‘it’s not only men that can be hard on women but even women can be hard on other women. As females we must support each other and help our sisters in law’.



The committee are big fans of Eve was Framed!



Imposter syndrome workshop

The workshop was led by Sarah Ismail Pupil Barrister at Trinity Chambers and Holly Challenger, Barrister Parklane Plowden Chambers. The workshop was split into two sessions. During the first session students gained an insight on how to become a more confident advocate, encouraging them to pursue a more public speaking activities such as debating and mooting. The second session discussed tactics on how to overcome imposter syndrome so that students feel more confident applying for opportunities to which they feel underqualified for - whether that is work experience, a job, a vacation scheme, a training contract, a mini-pupillage or even a postgraduate qualification!



Black women in law panel

Venandah Madanhi: Trainee solicitor at Latham Watkins- Founder of Talk About

Venandah's encounters with imposter syndrome were discussed in the context of applying for training contracts, and even the initial application to university. This made the talk all encompassing: applicable to those just starting their law degree and to those nearing the end of their education. As a trainee at one of the largest law firms in the world, her tips regarding confidence were invaluable.

Venandah's talk also featured discussion regarding her founding of 'Talk About', whose ethos centres around the use of technology to formulate engagement solutions that connect professionals with young people.

Amanda Oluwapelumi Adeola: Private Family Law Partner/Solicitor Advocate at BHP Law

'I'm not ashamed to say I did not get a training contract the first time I applied...'

Amanda's wisdom truly permeated her talk at the event. Her journey and experiences into the legal profession are unique, and her advice on perseverance and resilience were invaluable in providing reassurance.

Kishma Bolaji: Medical Negligence Solicitor at Shoosmiths- Co Chair of Birmingham Black Lawyers

Attendees were provided with a vivid account of Kishma's journey to success; working her way from trainee to principal associate. During her inspiring talk, Kishma also spoke of her experiences of moving from the British Virgin Islands to Birmingham. The barriers she faced as a black woman trying to get her 'foot in the door' in the legal profession highlighted the reality of institutional racism that still pervades the legal field.

Birmingham Black Lawyers was formed by Kishma, among others, to improve diversity in the legal sector. As an advocate for greater representation, she has facilitated many students in gaining work experience and training contracts.

WBB alumni panel event

WBB hosted five WBB alumni members for an evening of insightful discussion on diverse and unique experiences. However, as the evening progressed and discussion advanced, the range of career paths taken by each were united in common threads of advice provided: Attendees were reassured in not having a set path in mind, in being rejected, in taking time out for self-care.

It was amazing to receive messages from attendees who detailed the event as one that both struck a chord on a personal note, and empowered to feel even more passion towards their education and career path. It reflects the ethos of WBB and embodies our purpose as a group.



Dana Denis Smith Talk

As the founder of the First 100 years Project, a former international journalist and Linklater's lawyer, she spoke about the barriers and challenges she had to overcome to achieve success in her career.

The event witnessed a large turnout. Dana's presentation regarding the creation of Obelisk Support, a business which allowed ex-city lawyers to balance work with family life was truly inspirational. The talk also witnessed her motivation behind setting up the First 100 years Project which celebrated a century of women in law.



Denise Gannon Talk

In celebration of International Women's Day, WBB invited Denisa Gannon, the first Roma person to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales. The question-answer session followed by the presentation was an enriching experience and gave the students an insight into her personal resilience, determination and women's struggles in the legal profession.



Confidence Workshop

In November 2019, WBB hosted a Confidence Workshop aimed at first and second year female law students to provide them with practical advice for tackling lack of confidence in academia and everyday life. Talks by Jodie Fearing from Facety Coaching and Rachel O' Connor from the School of Law helped the attendees to address issues such as imposter syndrome and gave them advice on finding female role models.



Scottish Feminist Judgment Project

In February 2019, WBB proudly hosted the Scottish Feminist Judgments Project. The aim of this event was to portray how legal cases might have been decided differently if the judge had adopted a feminist perspective. The attendees witnessed an interactive afternoon of presentations and group work sessions. The project saw students and staffs attempting to apply law in a more gender equitable manner. A travelling version of the Scottish Feminist Judgments Project Artistic Exhibition was also presented.



Dr Funke Abimbola Talk

The 'Climbing Mountains' talk by Dr Funke Abimbola MBE on 27th February 2020 was one of WBB's flagship events. The event was sponsored by law firm Mills & Reeve LLP. As a practising solicitor, business leader and diversity campaigner she is committed to the cause of women empowerment. In her own words "a world of opportunity awaits the visible". In honour of her services to diversity in the legal profession and to young people, Dr Abimbola was awarded with an MBE in 2017. She is currently the General Counsel at Cycle Pharmaceuticals, a global pharmaceutical company based at Cambridge University. As a proud mother of a 17 year old son, her take on balancing work and personal life was noteworthy. A drinks and networking reception with Dr Abimbola and solicitors from Mills and Reeve was enriching.

International Women's Day Atrium Breakfast

In celebration of IWD 2020, we hosted a breakfast in the atrium. This was a heartwarming, informal event whereby we were able to chat with staff and students. Following the event, we created a montage in the atrium of the attendees' role models and the things they hoped for women in the future.



Online events during 2020/2021



**Ruth Reid – Criminal Barrister
at 3 Temple Gardens
Chambers**

Ruth discussed how her parents came to the UK as part of the Windrush generation when they were teens. She also talked about the importance of increasing diversity in the legal profession.

Mary discussed her experiences of being a corporate solicitor turned therapeutic counsellor, and now her curer role in the mental health charity for lawyers. Her talk featured topics such as: imposter syndrome, the legal brain, mental health, self-awareness.



**Mary Jackson – Coordinator
at LawCare, a mental health
law charity**

SPEAKERS



Mary Prior QC – Criminal Barrister at the 36 Group

A lawyer is someone who sees an obstacle and overcomes it. Mary's journey began with her as the youngest of five living in a council house and how she eventually became the 31st female QC in England and Wales. Mary highlighted how the key to maintaining a balance between a successful career at the bar and family life is setting boundaries.

Aqsa discussed the importance of embracing your passions to make the most out of your career. Her story is inspiring as she turned her own interest in human rights into a successful platform where people can contribute articles to raise awareness about important global human rights issues.



Aqsa Hussain – Criminal Barrister at No5 Chambers and Co-Founder of Human Rights Pulse

WELLNESS INITIATIVES

We believe that alongside career related events, it is just as important for students to keep a check on their mental health and well-being. Given how the 2020/21 academic year was particularly challenging for mental health, we organised 'Wellness November', which included initiatives such as virtual yoga and a giveaway. All together, we organised two yoga events, both of which were free for students as they were funded by the Law School.

Virtual yoga events:

- Yoga with Jamie Boder
- Yoga with Philomena Dickson

WELLNESS NOVEMBER



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
CHECK YOUR INBOX THIS MONTH!
This month's newsletter contains mental health resources & articles about wellness

MARY JACKSON EVENT
10TH OF NOVEMBER, 7PM
Mary Jackson discusses ways you can improve your mental health

VIRTUAL YOGA
*DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED
Join us for a free virtual yoga session!

GIVEAWAY
*DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED
3 bestselling feminist & justice books + a headspace subscription for 3 months

ONGOING INITIATIVES



Female Focused Fridays (FFF):

Every Friday we celebrate a woman we find inspiring through a social media appreciation post with the hashtag #fff.



Monthly newsletter

In 2020/2021 academic year we began a monthly newsletter containing insightful articles on important female related issues and an overview of our events for the month.



Event

feedback



SOME OF THE FEEDBACK WE RECEIVED
FOLLOWING OUR WBB ALUMNI EVENT HELD ON
THURSDAY 24/02/22



Thursday 20:55

Hi I just wanted to get in touch to say thank you so much for the event this evening it was one of the best one that up ever attended in the law school.

Your passion and enthusiasm came across and was very inspiring , so thank you and everything you doing 😊



IT WAS TRULY REWARDING FOR US TO KNOW THAT OUR EVENT HAD SUCH A STRONG POSITIVE IMPACT ON ALL OF YOU. WE HOPE TO CONTINUE EMPOWERING ALL OF YOU BY DEMONSTRATING THAT ALL STEREOTYPES CAN BE BROKEN.

Hi I just wanted to message to say that the presentation today was really inspiring to me on a personal level. I'm a first generation immigrant and the first daughter in my family so seeing all the empowering women who are breaking so many stereotypes today was absolutely amazing. If there are anymore roles available no matter how small I would love to be a part of what you're doing xx





Our plan for the

2022-23

academic year

2022/23 Events

COVID-19 and Events

With COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, the majority of our events will be in person this year. However, we are open to hosting some online events if this would be more accommodating for the speaker.

We want to reassure speakers coming in person that their travel expenses and stay (if required) will be paid for by the Law School.

Events plan

The poster features a red background with a white speech bubble at the top containing the text 'COME AND HEAR FROM...'. Below this, two small square photos are shown side-by-side. The left photo is of Chrissie Wolfe, a woman with dark hair, and the right photo is of Jodie Hill, a woman with blonde hair. Above each photo is their name in bold black text: 'CHRISSIE WOLFE' and 'JODIE HILL'. In the top right corner, the WBBN logo is visible. At the bottom, a red rounded rectangle contains the event details in white text: 'LIBERTY BUILDING LG 0.6', 'WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER', and '18:00-19:00'.

Term 1:

- On October 5th, we are hosting an event with Jodie Hill, founder of Thrive Law, and Chrissie Wolfe, Solicitor of the year and Woman of the year 2019.
- In November, we will have a collaboration with Bar Soc hosting a 'confidence workshop' with 2 barrister from Parklane Plowden Chambers. We also aim to host a wellness initiative to encourage students to take care of their mental health

Term 2

We have some exciting speakers planned for term 2 - please keep an eye out for updates on our social media!

Term 3

We do not usually plan events for term 3 because of exams.

A message from Louise Ellison, Head of School



It is fantastic to see that the WBB team are continuing their excellent (award-winning!) work to inspire students to reach their full personal and professional potential. The School of Law is immensely proud to support this student-led initiative which values and celebrates the achievements of women. WBB has allied with many truly inspirational women over the years who have shared their own stories, giving hope and encouragement to others, and I know the team are hugely grateful for the generous support they receive. 2022-23 looks set to be another exciting and successful year for WBB and I take this opportunity to commend the team and their unstinting commitment to making a positive difference to the lives of women.

A message from WBB Leeds' President, Kinga Rolak

Hi! My name is Kinga and I'm delighted to be the president of WBB this year! I joined WBB in my first year as an undergraduate rep and continued with WBB as Vice-president in my second year.

My main focus this year is to organise a variety of inclusive and diverse events, to encourage as many students as possible to attend. I hope that these events will continue to be beneficial to you all, and will help inform your career choices.

This year we will be hosting a mix of events, as alongside the focus on commercial law we hope to showcase and encourage many other career paths. As always, these will be suitable for all genders, and I hope that men will continue to attend our events as this is just as important in breaking barriers!

Thank you for considering speaking at one of our events, our initiative cannot continue without the support of inspiring women!

