

PRESIDENT'S AWARD
AWARD 2021

SHAMA GUPTA



❖ How did you feel winning the President's Award in 2021?

- Pleasantly surprised, as what I have been doing is something I am passionate about and enjoy and feel it is natural and personally rewarding to give back in whatever way I can in a world where a small act of kindness can help someone's legal career journey, as mine was when others helped me on my journey.



You represent Nottinghamshire, East Staffordshire & Derbyshire on The Law Society Council, what does this involve and how does it benefit the members of local law societies?

- The Law Society's strength is its representative function to support aspiring and practicing solicitors.
- To name some activities:
 - Practical guidance & training
 - Lobbying for changes in the law
 - Advising the government on maintaining the rule of law & access to justice
 - Promoting a diverse and inclusive profession
 - Wellbeing of its members.
- Understanding issues affecting members is key to its functions and my role as Council Member is to ensure that my constituency members can have the opportunity to engage effectively with the Law Society and vice versa, on key issues which impact on member's business, such as Covid and SIF.



**The Law
Society**

❖ What made you decide to follow a career in law?

- I have always loved reading and analysing issues to find solutions; I wasn't sure what career to follow until my father suggested law as it was perceived to be a prestigious and valuable degree/qualification.

I have never looked back as it has opened doors to a varied career portfolio and the opportunity to follow my passion to help others.

❖ What do you think of social mobility in the legal sector?

- Traditionally there were challenges for many from a lower socio-economic background to access or progress in a legal career, due to the cost of education, lack of role models, connections and adequate career guidance, amongst other factors.
- Fortunately, since my days, there are initiatives which have gone some way to addressing these, such as The Law Society's Social Mobility Ambassador Scheme (I have been an Ambassador since 2016):
- [Shama Gupta - The Law Society](#)
- The Pathways to Law programme and contextualised recruitment by some law firms, to name a few.
- There are still challenges of course, such as competition for training contracts, but if those involved in recruitment and promotion adopt policies which try to create an even playing field for all candidates, that will go some way to reducing equality.

❖ Diversity & Inclusion are increasingly important in the legal profession & elsewhere, what do you think we can do in Nottinghamshire to improve on these areas?

- I feel forming a network or group within firms to promote D&I is the first step; this engages individuals to run with initiatives they are passionate about or have lived experience of, or to assist others with their initiatives.
- If this is not feasible, joining an external network such as the Nottinghamshire Law Society's Equality and Diversity Committee or The Law Society's large selection of committees (I am a member of its Lawyers with Disabilities Division):
- [Lawyers with Disabilities Division Committee Members - The Law Society](#)
- This is an effective way to support promotion of all under-represented groups.

❖ If you could give some useful tips to aspiring female lawyers, what would they be?

Anything is possible if you want it badly, but it may require some creative thinking (in my case I decided to work part-time).

Don't forget work-life balance it makes everything more rewarding!

❖ What is the funniest thing you have seen working in law?

- This wouldn't be funny now, but I knew no better in the 80's as an articulated clerk (now called a trainee contract), when my supervisor joked, pointing to me, "that article is my clerk"!

❖ What else do you enjoy outside of the law & how do you achieve a work/life balance?

- Music, dancing, walking, sun, sand, sea, sangria and sleep - the list is endless!
- I achieve a work life balance by working part time since my second child was born, so that I have time to follow my passions.

