

WINNER

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Annette Byron, Kate Laffar

Setting the standard for City law firm CSR efforts

Freshfields work in 2013 underlines the firm's commitment to pioneering CSR initiatives. It combined with the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust to design a first-in-kind social mobility scheme – addressing the disproportionate under-representation of black and mixed-race males from low-income families in large law firms: the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship.

The scholarship is unique in that Freshfields designed and operates the entire scheme itself. It selects its own students, using a two-day assessment centre. Other scholarships use third-party providers to shortlist potential talent but here the firm takes full accountability for students' success.

Freshfields invited every UK university law school to take part in the scheme's design, nominating eligible first-year law students, for whom there was no minimum educational qualification. More than 50 Freshfields partners, lawyers and staff took part in organising and running the scheme. Six scholars were chosen and none of them had ever before considered a Magic Circle firm as a career option.



(L-R) Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer's Kate Laffar and Annette Byron with Ben Rose of The International Bar Association

HIGHLY COMMENDED

ASHURST

Piers Warburton

Ashurst handled the legal structuring, pro bono, of the new £10m Investing for Good co-mingling fund – a combination of capital from philanthropic and commercial organisations – the first of its kind in the UK. The firm has provided the Cabinet Office with documentation setting out a framework for co-mingling funds to promote the development of these new structures.

CMS and DLA PIPER

Rob Powell

These firms joined forces to compile a 400-page report (published in English and Mandarin) for the Anti-Domestic Violence Network on domestic violence laws in various key jurisdictions throughout Asia, Africa and Europe and will assist Chinese action group Beijing Fanbao to understand how to combat the issue in law.

DENTONS

Matthew Harvey

Dentons has been working with City Gateway since 2007, a charity that works with many of the most disadvantaged young people in Tower Hamlets, helping them gain the skills and qualifications they need to enter employment through both work experience and apprenticeships. In 2013, the firm offered two of its 2012 apprentices permanent positions.

HOLMAN FENWICK WILLAN

Matt Illingworth

In addition to work helping victims of piracy in Somalia, shipping and maritime specialist HFW is a founding donor to the Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust (CMMT), which is renovating Africa's oldest floating ship into a mobile clinic for the remote fishing villages around Lake Malawi, where malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS are common.

REED SMITH

Michael Skrein

Reed Smith continues to work to combat social exclusion through Create, a creative arts charity and Providence Row, a homelessness charity for which it runs a legal clinic with client BNY Mellon. These projects target those for whom employment may not be a realistic goal, but where inclusion in mainstream society would greatly improve their lives.

'The Stephen Lawrence Scholarship is unique in that Freshfields designed and operates the entire scheme itself.'



In the legal profession, there's only one thing more important than what you know.

Knowing the right people is often crucial but, when you have international clients or clients with international dealings, it can be of great advantage if your friends in high places are also in far-flung places.

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