

the Equality Act and can easily be sidelined, excluded, and forced to work harder than their male equivalents.'

'Unfortunately, the statistics speak for themselves, and it is the impact of employment tribunal fees and not a reform in society that is most likely responsible for the 83 per cent drop in sexual discrimination claims and 77 per cent drop equal pay claims that are being received by the tribunals since 2013.'

Poulter says he's hopeful the First 100 Years will shine a light on equality in the profession, the image of which is not reflective of business today.

'There is no place for prejudice and discrimination in a modern profession which is still striving to shake off its male, pale, and stale image,' he says. 'Fair treatment from recruitment to retirement, promotion, and partnership must be at the core of all we do. The First 100 Years should remind us all of this responsibility.'

A call to arms

The First 100 Years is now calling on lawyers, law firms, and individuals connected to the profession to support the project by donating £100 to mark 100 years since women were allowed to practise law.

The profession's money will then make legal history – paying for a new digital museum, made up of 100 video stories that will be donated to the British Library in 2019.

Denis-Smith says there is an undertone present throughout the stories covered so far, which is that these women were persistent and

not afraid of making choices at critical moments in their careers: 'There is a sense of fearlessness that come what may, they would stand by their choices even if, as was the case often with having children, they didn't progress in their careers.'

'A career is not just a series of tactical steps; it involves longer-term vision and a desire to check in and see whether the choices still work for you, to tweak and change to get to the overall result desired. By showcasing these stories, we hope to create a library of role models, to help future generations be inspired in how they manage their careers.'

You can research the First 100 Years project online by visiting first100years.org.uk, and make an all-important donation to their crowdfunding project by typing in www.indiegogo.com/projects/first-100-years.

In addition, First 100 Years will host its inaugural conference, Spark21, on 2 November at Simmons & Simmons's London base. Sparking a 21st-century debate, the day-long conference is being chaired by Dame Jenni Murray of BBC Woman's Hour, with confirmed keynote speaker Dame Stephanie Shirley, a successful entrepreneur turned philanthropist.

'By focusing on the personal stories and journeys of successful women in law,' remarks Denis-Smith, 'we hope to show future lawyers, women and men alike, that it was the choices they made, not their gender, that were critical to their career success.' **SJ**



Dorothy Livingston takes centre stage at the Herbert Smith partner dinner in 1982