The Inspirational Women of the Law exhibition (and its sister event, held at Newcastle Law School on 5th March 2015) celebrates and promotes the achievements of just a small number of the inspirational women who have worked with the law, or who have used the law, to make a significant contribution to society. The exhibition aims to increase the visual representation in public spaces of leading women and to inspire the next generation of women engaging with the law. The portraits are of women renowned for their work internationally, nationally, and regionally, here in the North East of England.

Developed by Prof Kathryn Hollingsworth and Dr Nikki Godden-Rasul and 2 Newcastle University student interns, (one law student and one fine art student), the exhibition was officially launched with a full day event at the Law School. The event involved eight high-profile speakers, including Lady Hale, the only woman Justice of the UK Supreme Court; Vera Baird, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, and Shauneen Lambe who established London-based Just for Kids Law (JfK) with Aika Stephenson.

The exhibition has moved from its original site in the Hatton Gallery, and is now a permanent feature of Newcastle Law School where it can be seen by students, staff and visitors. Example comments from the visitor’s book include ‘a wonderful exhibition; thought-provoking’; ‘inspiring and beautiful’; ‘truly inspirational – a great asset for the university’. The Inspirational Women of the Law website has attracted 1594 sessions and has been viewed by visitors from UK, US, China, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Qatar, UAE, Vietnam and Ghana), and has a popular following on social media. The aim of the exhibition is to celebrate and promote the achievements of the featured women as well as the work and lives of the many other women who are, in spirit, represented by our inspirational women. They demonstrate how, and instil hope that, structural barriers to women’s progression can be navigated and resisted; because despite the fact that a high proportion of law students and those entering the legal professions are female, there is a low proportion of women in more senior positions in legal academia, law firms, at the bar, and in the judiciary.

‘This event was the most inspiring and motivating experience which made me realise the kind of lawyer I want to be’

Feedback from a student