



EQUALITY FORUM – Solicitors

The Society wishes to establish a dynamic and forward-looking group to assist with equality and diversity work within the organisation and the profession as a whole. This is an exciting opportunity to become involved in a field of work that is vital to the future of the profession but through a forum that allows great flexibility over the way, and amount of time, that you contribute.

In time, it is hoped that the Forum will have a parallel membership of non-solicitors to advise on aspects of the Society's work which impacts more directly on the public (such as our information services and the handling of complaints against Scottish Solicitors).

The 'Equality Forum' will essentially be a database of members willing to become involved in these activities and share their knowledge and experience. It is likely that the Forum will start with a launch event to discuss what more the Society should be doing in this field (with the option of contributing via other methods for those unable to attend) and will be involved in offering advice and feedback on a variety of projects. We know everyone has different interests and preferred ways of contributing – so we will make sure that your views can count through a variety of methods including one-to-one meetings or phone contact, focus groups, e-mail/web/paper questionnaires and consultations, and members raising particular issues of concern.

The Equality Forum will be vital in assisting us meet the three sets of legislation that lay out equality 'duties' for public sector organisations and those, like the Society, that dispense 'public functions':

Race - The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Disability - The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Gender - The Equality Act 2006

We need to be able to demonstrate that we have used a range of techniques to build an understanding of services, policies, and methods of delivery; how they may affect different groups; and how we can ensure planning, implementation and monitoring are effective.

We are especially interested in people who can bring experience from the particular 'groups' protected by legislation:

- Age
- Race
- Martial Status
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender
- Religion and belief
- Sexual Orientation

You may be someone who feels that there has been additional barriers or hurdles for them in the profession; or you may be someone who has excelled and believes you can share your experience to help others – all experiences are of value. The areas of **Race, Disability and Gender** are of particular importance (because these are currently covered by legislation) but the Society's policy is that we should be tackling all 'strands' of equality in a consistent manner.



The Law Society of Scotland

Ensuring we meet our legal obligations also means we have to collect information about the members of the group – as we may be asked to provide figures about the profile of who we have involved. I appreciate that you will probably have filled out our recent questionnaire – but in order to ensure people were comfortable responding to this it was anonymous and went to a third party for processing. I'd therefore be grateful if you were willing to complete the first section (only seven questions) again and return them to me – a special form allowing you to do this is enclosed with this information sheet and is also available through the website at:

http://www.lawscot.org.uk/diversity/equality_further_info.aspx

For a paper-based registration form and further details, or for an informal chat (in confidence, if required) please use the contact details below.

It is vitally important that we can show we are working with our membership and we would be grateful for anyone willing to get involved.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Stevenson'.

Neil Alan Stevenson LL.B., M.Sc. – Head of Diversity

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