



**THE LAW SOCIETY  
of SCOTLAND**  
www.lawscot.org.uk

# **ENGAGING TOMORROW'S LAWYERS TODAY**

**The New Lawyers Conference 9<sup>th</sup> June 2007  
Summary Workshop Report<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The full Conference report is available on the Society's website at [www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers)

# INTRODUCTION

The Society recognises the importance of connecting with and engaging the next generation of solicitors (whom we call “new lawyers”), for their benefit and for a sustainable Scottish legal profession.

As part of the Society’s work developing an engagement strategy for the next generation of Scottish solicitors, a conference was held in June 2007 to engage major stakeholders. This exercise was a critical step in ensuring the “**New Lawyers’ Engagement Strategy**” was effective, meaningful and achievable.

This Conference was a forum for a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss and debate the following:

- current levels of engagement with new lawyers, compared with aspirational levels of engagement.
- the types of support the Society should provide to “new lawyers” – what “engagement” means.
- why it is important for the *entire profession* to take an interest in the Society’s work in this area, for the project to be successful.
- possible “barriers” to effective engagement with new lawyers.
- the role of the Scottish Young Lawyers Association

Represented at the conference were:

**Academics and other law school representatives** - from LLB and Diploma providing institutions

**Dual qualified solicitor** – Spain and Scotland

**Dundas & Wilson CS LLP** – HR

**HBJ Gateley Wareing LLP** – trainee solicitor

**The In-House Lawyers Group of the Law Society of Scotland** - Chairperson, and committee member

**Lawcare** - Coordinator for Scotland

**Macdonalds Law** – Partner

**Maclay Murray & Spens LLP** – trainee solicitor

**MTM Solicitors** - trainee solicitor

**The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors** – Careers Education Manager

**The Scottish Legal Aid Board** – trainee solicitor

**The Scottish Legal Services Ombudsman**

**The Scottish Young Lawyers Association** - President and Co-Vice President (trainee solicitor and recently qualified solicitor)

**Skene Edwards** – Partner

**Students** – from LLB and Diploma providing institutions

**The Trainee and Newly Qualified society (TANQ)**

**Trainee Solicitors Group of England and Wales** – Chairperson

**The University of Edinburgh** - Student Recruitment and Admission Service (Widening Participation)

**Young Solicitors Group of England and Wales** – Chairperson

The Conference programme was comprised of short presentations, two workshop sessions and a closing session which mixed the groups. The full workshop report can be downloaded from the Society's website - [www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers).

A summary of **key themes** follows.

# KEY THEMES

There were four separate discussion groups. Many similar points were raised across the groups, suggesting the following were key themes for consideration by the Society in developing the New Lawyers Engagement Strategy<sup>2</sup>:

- Engagement should not be limited to those studying law, but should include those considering embarking on the study of law. This is critical to ensure people make informed decisions. Delegates felt that engaging new lawyers later in the route to qualification, and leaving engagement until Diploma level, was “too late”. LLB students often confuse the Law Society of Scotland with their own, student-led “law society” and this should be addressed. There are certain critical stages of the qualification process which the Society should focus on.
- There should be more work with relevant third parties to achieve engagement (the SYLA, careers advisers, law schools)
- There should not be a reliance on new lawyers to be proactive in approaching the Society for assistance. The responsibility to be proactive lies with the Society as students often misunderstand the Society’s purpose and functions.
- The Society should monitor other jurisdictions and professions in benchmarking good practice in this area.
- Wider involvement from the profession should be encouraged in order to make this project a success. Examples given were of firms offering work shadowing or work placements to new lawyers, which would be well received by students.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that this list is simply a list of some of the main recurring themes at the Conference. This is not the full transcript of the event, nor is it an action plan. The eventual New Lawyers Engagement Strategy will include a list of objectives and an action plan for the period 2007-2010.

- Statistics relating to new lawyers should be used to help inform future engagement.
- The Society should focus on its website as the main communication tool for new lawyers. Information can become quickly outdated and therefore web/email communications are preferable. Face-to-face engagement does have its place and the Society should consider when this is most appropriate. Existing communication tools (Journal, Journal Online, Firm Magazine) should be promoted to new lawyers as well as new ones developed.
- Promoting diversity in the profession should continue to be an important priority for the Society. This Society should continue to build on the good work it has already done in this area. This is in relation to minority groups, and also in relation to widening participation.
- The concept of “associate membership” of the Society for new lawyers should be considered by the Society (albeit this could require structural change within the Society).
- There is merit in engaging solicitors with less than five years post-qualification experience through this strategy, and the term “new lawyer” should not cease to be relevant upon qualification. For example, CPD specifically tailored to newly qualified solicitors, which may also be of interest to trainee solicitors, should be progressed by the Society.

# CONCLUSION

Engaging different groups of stakeholders was an essential part of launching an engagement strategy which is effective, meaningful, achievable and which new lawyers themselves believe in.

The full New Lawyers' Engagement Strategy, comprising three year action plan, can be downloaded from the Society's website at [www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/training/newlawyers).

Anyone wishing to comment on this summary report should contact the Society's New Lawyers' Coordinator Collette Paterson – [newlawyers@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:newlawyers@lawscot.org.uk)