

Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee
Room T2.60
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Date: 31 October 2017

Dear Convener

Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide evidence to the committee at its session on 21 September. I found the discussion during both panel sessions that day to be of interest, and I wanted to follow up with some additional information about the solicitor profession, and how the Law Society of Scotland is supporting career progression, including board membership, of female solicitors.

The solicitor profession in Scotland is now over 50% female, representing a large body of highly qualified women who may be suited to board membership. Currently women make up the following percentages of the solicitor profession:

- Up to 5 years post qualifying experience (PQE) - 63%
- Between 6 to 10 years PQE - 66%
- From 11 to 15 years PQE - 61%
- From 16 to 20 years PQE - 52%
- More than 20 years PQE - 35%

Other than at the upper most level of experience, women currently outnumber men in the profession at every stage. Looking at the pool of people who will be the future board members, there is a trend towards an increasing proportion of solicitors being women. We are aware that the proportion of students starting the law degree over the last five years has been between 65-70% female. We recognise that there remain inequalities in our profession, including issues around the pay gap and progression, and we are taking active steps to address these.

We support our members by running events specifically for women focusing on career planning for progression and achieving career milestones (including board membership), and also have specific sessions on getting board room ready. Career progression options including board membership are promoted to our members through specific campaigns and through regular communications such as our email newsletter to our members, Lawscot News.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the Scottish Parliament as this Bill progresses, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Scottish Parliament and other public bodies to increase diversity on public boards.

If we can provide any further information or support on these issues, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Rory McPherson
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