

Look Up & Beyond



**Diversity+**

The Art of Thinking Independently Together

*“Look Up and Beyond” is a new group formed by Diversity+ to help better understand the barriers preventing women from reaching leadership positions and to find solutions to retain and promote more female talent in the legal sector and beyond.*

# Foreword by Naeema



**Naeema Yaqoob Sajid**  
Founder and Director of Diversity+

---

“**Look Up and Beyond**” is a message and reminder to myself. Throughout my career, perhaps my entire adult life, it’s something I’ve failed to do. I’ve looked ahead. I’ve looked across. I’ve looked down. I’ve looked at myself, my family, my team, my clients, and my workplace. What I haven’t done is looked up and beyond. As such, I’ve protected and served the best interests of those around me. That was my role. I did it well. Or so I thought...

But in doing so, my vision remained narrow and self-serving or serving to those around me. What I failed to do was to look at the bigger picture. What talent was coming behind me and what I should be doing to help, protect and nurture that talent.

With over 50% of those entering the legal profession in Scotland (indeed the UK) being women for at least the last 2 decades, and more than three times as many women as men applying to study law in Scotland, we need to be thinking more closely about our future talent. How can we better embrace it and what changes we need to make to ensure this talent is rewarded and not lost. It’s an industry wide problem, needing industry wide solutions. That’s why I set up “**Look Up and Beyond**”.

What do I bring that others in the profession don’t? I bring a different perspective. A different set of skills. A different voice and a different image. All of which can contribute to a different outcome.

Look at the profession today. Despite women being the majority entering the profession for many years now, this is not translating to leadership roles. And further still, very few women who look like me, women of colour.

I remember when I helped set up SEMLA, that reality was pointed out to me. I brushed it aside, thinking ‘we’ve just not looked hard enough. Surely in the 20 years I’ve been in the profession, there have been others like me?’ But the reality is that whilst we have had the first, we have had very few thereafter making it to the top. Why it that?

That’s a legacy, together with my colleagues, friends and allies, I’d like to change. But that change won’t happen without intervention, without action and without your support.

What can you do? Support our work. Share you experience, skills and resources to understand better why more women aren’t in leadership roles. Why more women than ever before are considering leaving the profession? Why more are turning down partnership roles? Why more are choosing in-house roles? Why more are going it alone? And what all this means to the future of the profession and the retention of female talent.

Fund our project, to allow us to do more in-depth research and set up initiatives to better understand the barriers and find fitting solutions. We don’t pretend we know it all. We don’t pretend we have all the answers. But we’re willing to find out and share our knowledge, industry wide.

If you’re ready to ‘**Look Up and Beyond**’ join us in our journey for a better, equitable future. One that is ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

*Naeema Yaqoob Sajid: Founder of Diversity+, Solicitor (former partner at Drummond Miller and Aberdeen Considine), co-founder of the Scottish Ethnic Minorities Lawyers Association (SEMLA), and Member of the University of Edinburgh Law Advancement Board*

# Our Stories



## Jacqueline Moore

Consultant, Thorntons Law LLP

---

Twenty-five years ago, I joined the Scottish legal profession as a trainee at Balfour and Manson in Edinburgh. If someone had told me back then that the profession would need an organisation like '**Look up and Beyond**' twenty-five years later, I probably would not have believed them. After all, women, both then and now, make up the majority of graduates at Law Schools, annual trainee intakes and LLP memberships in many law firms.

But there is no getting away from the fact that even now in 2023, women are still underrepresented in senior decision-making positions in most law firms, and more likely to leave the profession prematurely.

I really hope that the launch of LUAB will lead to some open and frank conversations around the issues, and that everyone can come together to identify what solutions can be found to make life better for everyone working in the profession and the people that matter in their lives, whether that is partners, children, or others they have caring responsibilities for.

My experience, which I know is not uncommon, is that many of the challenges that women face in the work/life juggle come down to life's timings. Women often hit their professional stride and assume more professional responsibility at exactly the point in life when their personal time bank is at its absolute lowest, whether that's due to caring responsibilities towards children, other family members or a combination of both.

When our teenage son went through his "Fortnite" phase, a friend bought him a t-shirt which read: "Eat, Sleep, Game, Repeat". For many women who combine the responsibility of a senior role at work alongside caring responsibilities at home, life may feel like it's on "Repeat" cycle, but, without any of the "Game" part to give balance. One small, unexpected disruption to work plans often means that the "Game" time part of the day is the first thing a woman drops. This isn't sustainable over the long term and not how it needs to be for the next generation.

The challenge may be one of empowering women, but there is no doubt that men can be, and indeed ought to be, part of the solution. It pleases me to see a change in the trend of how parental responsibilities are shared, with more dads now choosing to work part-time, which brings benefits to families, employers and wider society.

The next generation of young lawyers I see coming through are noticeably passionate about being part of organisations that align with their values and organisations. The issues of retaining female talent and making things better for the next generation are subjects that I hope **Look Up and Beyond** will really get people talking about and finding solutions to.

*Jacqueline Moore is an accredited specialist in immigration law and top ranked immigration lawyer with Chambers and Legal 500. She has been an immigration lawyer in Edinburgh for 22 years (apart from a period of 7 years when she commuted to Glasgow). She is a Consultant at Thorntons Law.*



## Lesley Allan

Partner, Kennedys Scotland LLP

---

I entered the legal profession as a trainee in 1993. It was a time when there was no computer on my desk, email had not become mainstream, and no-one carried a mobile phone. Files were made of paper, and bound copies of SLT were available in a communal library, or unavailable in a colleague's desk drawer. In some rooms in the building, people were perfectly legally smoking at their desks as they worked. The "new" Ordinary Cause rules were just arriving, and pacing Parliament Hall with Counsel was a regular Tuesday morning pastime.

The world of work has changed radically over the last thirty years, and at some points has changed very quickly. Many of those changes have been for the better for all of us. Others are still a work in progress – hybrid working and relentless connectivity continue to bring their challenges.

One change has been clear and consistent – the increasing number of women in the Scottish legal profession. In 1988, when I began to study law, of the 8,023 solicitors in Scotland, 26% were female. By 2018, of the 11,699 Scottish solicitors, 53% were female. Today, that stands at around 57% - and yet we are still waiting to see the same proportions apply at senior or promoted levels. These statistics also do not tell us how many women started on a legal career path and stepped off, or why.

So of all of the changes which have taken place in the profession, which of those changes have been of most benefit to the women who entered the profession when I did? For those of us who stayed, who progressed, and who are now in senior roles, what (and who) helped us to do that? As a profession, what changes can we make for the future, which will most benefit the women embarking on legal careers, to develop and retain all of that talent? What can those in the early stages of their careers tell us about how they see the path ahead?

I entered the profession without a clear plan of what this career path might look like – there were no lawyers in my family, I had no contacts in the profession, and I was very much learning the rules of the game as I played. However, looking at the steps and turns in my particular path in hindsight, I can see where things might have been quite different, and I know that I am not alone in that.

If we are going to adequately understand the clients and the society we serve, we need our profession to reflect that society - at all levels. If we are going to adequately plan for succession in a profession where most of those entering are female, we need to understand what those entrants need from the systems they will work within, and implement change to achieve that. If we are going to exceed Mansfield Rule requirements, and achieve equal representation of both genders around partnership tables, we need to identify what stands in the way of female leadership and tackle it.

Playing a role in all of that is what looking up and beyond means to me. It is an opportunity to ask questions, to learn from lived experiences, to share ideas and to seek out possible solutions. It is an attempt to learn from the past and think about what is possible in the future. It is aiming to better understand what challenged and benefitted me, to gather information and opinions from others, and to contribute to positive change for female lawyers and leaders – to the benefit of us all.

**Kennedys**



**Naomi Pryde**  
Partner, DLA Piper

---

*“Courage calls to courage everywhere”*

It’s a famous maxim, from a famous feminist, and its message has never been more relevant. It’s been over a hundred years since women in Scotland were first able to practice law and much has been achieved, however there is still much to do and many challenges to achieve diversity in the profession. These challenges demand our courage – for ourselves, for our peers and for those who follow.

My step of courage was to share my story of getting to where I am now, and of my hopes for what’s yet to come in the biography I did for Glasgow University’s 100 years project a few years ago in a bid to help encourage others who felt that a career in law wasn’t necessarily accessible to them consider joining the profession. Diversity in law isn’t just about gender, it’s about having a profession that represents the society it serves. That includes ensuring that we have representation across different races, religions, sexual orientations, socio-economic backgrounds and neurodiversity. I’m pleased to work for a firm (DLA Piper) which has very active “people networks” which seeks to support and encourage diversity and inclusion across a range of areas.

I often say that I want to leave the profession in better shape than how I found it. I’m therefore proud of my involvement in the Law Scot foundation, the Mindful Business Charter and the **Look Up and Beyond** group. The Lawscot foundation, of which I was a founding council member, seeks to improve socio-economic provided financial support to academically talented students from less advantaged backgrounds to help them access the profession. It also provides mentoring and social support. The Mindful Business charter has sought to make the world of law a kinder and more mindful profession to work. **‘Look Up and Beyond’** is seeking to promote a more diverse Scottish legal profession.





## Rachel Williams

Senior Legal Counsel, NatWest Group

---

I have followed Naeema's journey over the past few years and I am always inspired by her drive and determination to bring about change in the legal profession. When the opportunity came up to join the **Look Up and Beyond** group, I jumped at the chance and look forward to seeing what we can achieve as a group. Coming from an in-house legal team, I am also hoping I can bring the in-house perspective into discussions.

As a young trainee lawyer, a female partner once said to me that her daughter had asked her to be home that evening to read a book to her. She said to her daughter that she could have Mummy at home in the evenings or she could have her pony. That conversation has always stayed with me and to keep females in the profession, mindsets such as those need to change. Females in the legal profession shouldn't have to give up their career to also be able to care for their families or live their lives.

However, I am also conscious that it is perhaps easy to assume that struggling to find the right balance is why many women leave the profession. Therefore, I am looking forward to finding out as part of our work whether there are other major factors which are being overlooked. As a group, I hope we can inspire change and encourage open, honest and sometimes uncomfortable conversations from the top down to drive the change needed.





## Ruth Croman

Managing Partner, McNabs

---

I have worked in Perth and Perthshire for my whole legal career, although deal with clients all over Scotland and indeed outwith our jurisdiction. I wear two hats within my firm, heading up the family law team and undertaking client work, but also being managing partner of Macnabs LLP. I am married and have two teenage girls. Parenting them is waaaaay more challenging than navigating a financial provision on divorce action!

When I started my traineeship back in 1997, eyebrows were raised about me wearing a trouser suit to the office. That was 26 years ago now, and we are now in a “dress for your day” era that would have seemed unimaginable back in 1997. Our younger team members are horrified at the idea that wearing a skirt or dress at all times was necessary, and it has made me reflect back on the differences there are now from then. And whilst times have undoubtedly moved forward in terms of dress expectations, and the number of female solicitors entering the profession, there still appears to be a glass ceiling. Despite larger number of female practitioners qualifying than males, females are horribly underrepresented in partner numbers, at board level, and in the judiciary.

Looking back, there were few female partner role models visible to me, and those that there were unmarried, and did not have children or caring responsibilities. I think we all have a responsibility to pause and reflect on why that might be, and work together to explore what we can do to help those that are walking in our footsteps.

# Our Goals



Bring together those working in the legal sector to support women better in their workplace.



Understand better what factors are limiting women's progression or causing loss of female talent.



Explore why at senior leadership level we are not more gender diverse.



Study the structural and organisational obstacles which impede the retention and advancement of women.

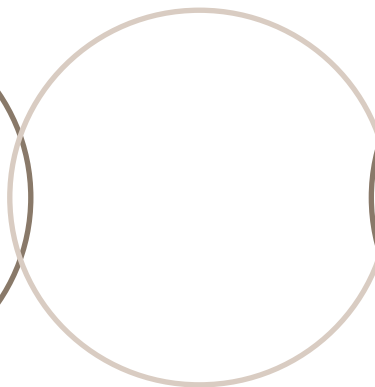


Assist organisations to explore, identify and implement solutions to remove structural and organisational obstacles that impede women's retention and advancement.

## How Do We Reach These?



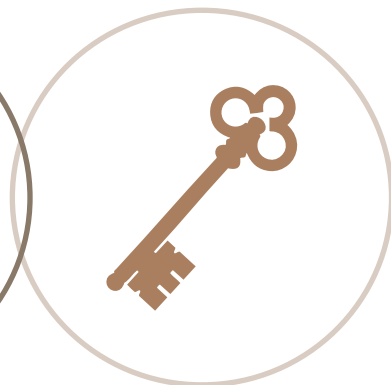
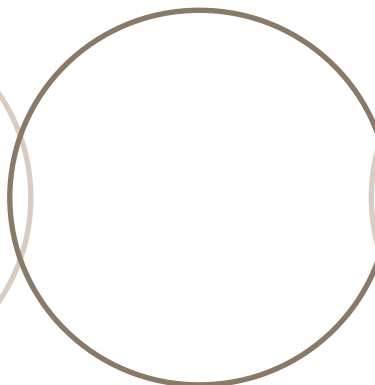
By listening, researching and learning



By raising awareness, sharing ideas, and find solutions



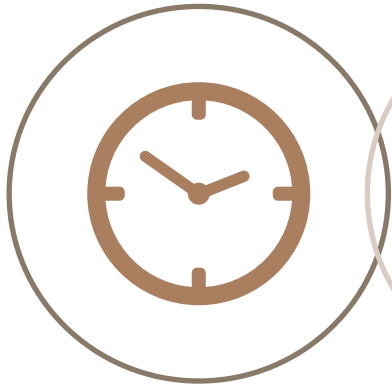
By challenging our own and other's mindsets and behaviours



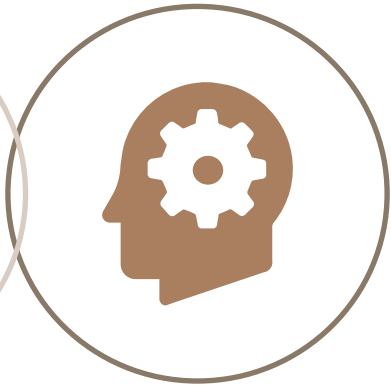
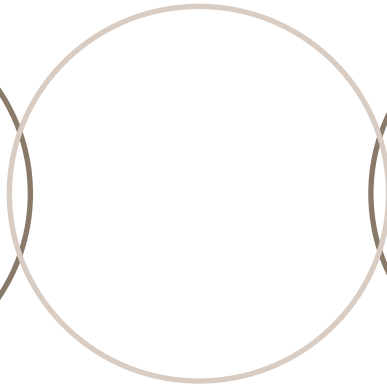
By removing cultural and structural barriers



# What Do We Need From You?



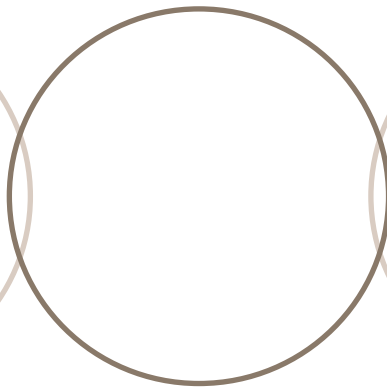
Your Time



Your Knowledge



Your Commitment



Your Resources

# How Can Firms and Other Legal Organisations Help Us?



Become annual sponsors to help fund our activities



Collaborate with us and hold LUAB events



Share your expertise and people to help raise awareness

# What's in it For You?

As a profession we're good at giving out advice but not necessarily good at taking it. We tell other professions and industries to get their house in order. We warn them of the risks of not planning ahead, of the dangers of not future proofing their businesses. We advise them to forecast, seek advice and find solutions to avoid problems later. But what are we doing about our future and what does it look like?

## Here is Our Current Outlook:



Over 50% of those entering the legal profession in Scotland over the last 20 years have been women. Currently women make up approx. 57% of the profession overall

**x3**

More than three times as many women as men are applying to study law in Scotland.

## And Yet...



only 35% of partners in law firms are female (7% for female equity partners a few years ago...)



only 21% of Sheriffs are female



Approximately 25% of Senators of the College of Justice are female

Like it or not, the majority of our talent lies in women, and that's increasing year on year. We either embrace and nurture it or ignore it and lose it.

Finding solutions and acting needs the willingness to work and learn together. It needs more people (not only women) sitting at the table, listening to the stories and finding a more fitting ending. We must **'look up and beyond'** if we wish to retain and promote female talent, our future depends on it.

---

## Find Out More

Visit our website at:

<https://www.diversityplus.info>

Read our article at:

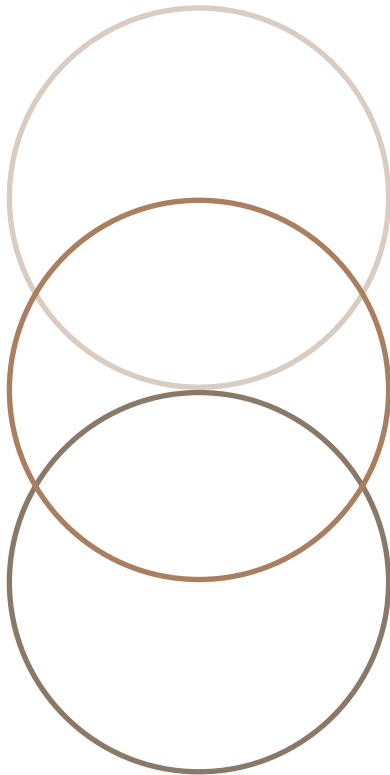
<https://www.diversityplus.info/post/look-up-and-beyond>

Email us:

[hello@diversityplus.info](mailto:hello@diversityplus.info)

Connect with us on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/naeema-yaqoob-sajid/>



[diversityplus.info](http://diversityplus.info)

