

Respect & Inclusion

Issue 2

HIGGS
& Sons
S O L I C I T O R S

Empathy / (noun): the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference.

Empathy is what underpins our understanding of, and our commitment to, Respect & Inclusion here at Higgs & Sons.

It is not simply about acknowledging our differences, but understanding them and recognising the part they play in making Higgs what it is – a vibrant, diverse organisation better able to meet the needs of its people and the communities it serves.

Respect & Inclusion committee member, Simon Bond, underlined this sense of commitment, when asked to summarise what the principles of R&I mean to him:

“Diversity is not simply about advancing the interests of certain groups (as important as that might be). It is also about fostering an environment where our individual differences and contributions are recognised and respected.”

At the heart of our Respect & Inclusion objectives is the wish to promote a greater appreciation of what makes us all who we are.

In this edition of R&I we highlight (and celebrate) some of the diversity of the Higgs community.



Higgs events

Date	Occasion	Event
June 2017		
14	Stonewall Internal launch event	Atrium drinks
September 2017		
TBC	LGBT Inclusion	Lunch & Learn
TBC	Stonewall External Launch event	TBC
October 2017		
19	Diwali	Celebration with food
November 2017		
TBC	Disability Confidence	Lunch & Learn

Cultural and religious days

Date	Occasion	Event
June 2017		
20	Summer Solstice – Litha	Wiccan
July 2017		
17	International Justice Day	Secular
September 2017		
21	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish
22	Autumn Equinox – Mabon	Wiccan
29	Yom Kippur	Jewish
October 2017		
19	Diwali	Hindu
November 2017		
4	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji	Sikh
December 2017		
3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Secular
12	Hanukkah	Jewish
21	Winter Solstice – Yule	Wiccan
25	Christmas Day	Christian
February 2018		
16	Chinese New Year	Buddhist
March 2018		
8	International Women's Day	Secular
20	Spring Equinox – Ostara	Wiccan
21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Secular
30	Passover	Jewish
April 2018		
1	Easter Sunday	Christian
May 2018		
15	Ramadan begins	Muslim
17	International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia	Secular



A diverse year

Throughout 2017, Higgs & Sons has been raising awareness of the various cultural celebrations and religious days that occur each year.

The notable dates have been marked on Higgs' internal calendar and shared with colleagues via the firm's intranet, Oracle.

"The days reflect the cultural diversity of the firm as identified through its annual Respect & Inclusion Questionnaire," stated Head of Compliance, Beverley Scriven.

"It is important that we take time to recognise, understand and celebrate the diverse community in which we work."

We have included the dates to be shared over the coming year in the Diversity calendar on the front page of the newsletter. However, if you have any dates you would like to share that are not included in the calendar, please contact a member of the Respect & Inclusion Committee.

England Rugby star reinforces network's message of openness

In February this year, Partner Paul Barker welcomed former England Rugby player and LGBT activist Ben Cohen to speak to members of OpenLand, the Midlands' network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans professionals.



Paul has been chair of OpenLand since the network was formed in the summer of 2016.

OpenLand provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBT professionals working in the region's property sector to meet regularly and share experiences and perspectives. The network is free to join and hosts several meetings throughout the year.

Ben addressed almost 100 LGBT professionals, telling them about his work with the Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation.

"It was great to see a new organisation like this with so much momentum, purpose and desire to make a difference," stated Ben.

"I lost my own father to violence when he stood up for an employee who was being attacked and I've heard from my wonderful friends in the LGBT community about the hard roads too many have travelled.

"The work of the StandUp Foundation is centred on standing up, irrespective of gender, orientation or background in order to tackle bullying and overcome prejudice and fear. It was fantastic to share my perspectives and hear other people's stories."

The OpenLand event was hosted at KPMG Birmingham with support from OpenLand founding organisations St. Modwen Properties and Court Collaboration.

Paul Barker concludes: "By being visible and providing senior role models, we hope that OpenLand will help LGBT people feel comfortable being open at work to gain confidence and be themselves.

"This not only makes for a happier, more productive workplace, but helps to create a more successful and supportive society."

For more information on OpenLand, go to: openland.org.uk/



International Women's Day

On March 8 the firm gathered to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD). The theme for IWD 2017 was #BeBoldForChange in which organisers asked people to help forge a more gender inclusive world by not being afraid to ask for change to bad practice.

The event, at which colleagues enjoyed tasting food from around the world, focussed on a keynote speech given by Partner Julia Lowe. She spoke passionately about the need to each play our part in ensuring parity in our own spheres of influence.

Here are some excerpts from Julia's inspiring speech.

It is undeniably possible for women to get to the very top echelons of power, at least in the Western free world: Theresa May, Angela Merkel, and Hillary Clinton – whatever their politics and whatever your views of them, they are powerful women of achievement.

In the UK, in every walk of life, we now have women such as Professor Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer and Cressida Dick, Metropolitan Police Commissioner who are at the top of their chosen careers. But what about our own profession?

The history of women in the law is a relatively short one. In 1902, Gray's Inn accidentally admitted Bertha Cave to the bar. They later corrected this mistake, stating that: 'males, and males alone, were to be admitted to practise at the bar'.

In 1913 Gwyneth Bebb went to the Court of Appeal to demand that the Law Society allow her and three other women to take exams. The courts ruled against her on the basis that women were not 'persons'.

Women were first able to enter the profession in 1919 with the introduction of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. In 1922 Ivy Williams was the first woman to be called to the Bar, and in the same year, Carrie Morrison became the first woman to be admitted as a solicitor. It took another 43 years before the first female High Court Judge – Elizabeth Lane – was appointed and a further 44 years before Baroness Hale was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2009.

As at 2015, the last published gender data from The Law Society set out that 62.8% of trainees were women and 61.1% of those admitted to the roll upon qualification were women.



Overall, the proportion of Partners who are women is 29% and only two of the 100-plus firms surveyed by Chambers & Partners had a partnership of more than 50% women.

Female lawyers have made up over 50% of new entrants to the profession since 1993, but it is clear that not enough are progressing to the highest roles.

International Women's day is about recognising the achievements of women. We have some fabulous women here at Higgs so let's celebrate them.

I look forward to a future when there will be no need for an International Women's Day.

It will come.

For further information on International Women's Day 2017 go to: www.internationalwomensday.com/

Did you know?

68% of our total workforce are female

89% of current Higgs Trainees are female

84% of all staff within Business Support are female

41% of all current Salaried Partners are female

52% of our Solicitors and Legal Executives are female

71% of Associates are female

Higgs proud to be Black Country Champions

Higgs & Sons has become one of the first organisations in the Black Country to become an accredited member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme.



Reece Pope

Stonewall is a national organisation primarily focussed on supporting equality for the lesbian, bisexual, gay and trans community (LGBT).

"Becoming a member of Stonewall and signing up to its Diversity Champions programme sends a strong message," comments Managing

Partner, Paul Hunt. "It underlines our ongoing commitment to Respect & Inclusion and our desire to create a working environment in which everyone can be themselves."

Membership of Stonewall allows Higgs to access a range of resources in order for the firm to benchmark its diversity work and develop a bespoke plan to underpin its best practice in terms of workplace equality. Higgs will also be able to participate in the Workplace Equality Index (WEI) which provides a framework for improving the experiences of LGBT employees by surveying staff and offering a structure that will drive improvement across all diversity indicators.

"Higgs & Sons has shown a commitment to its diversity practices by signing up as a Diversity Champion, states Stonewall's Reece Pope. "Its pledge to be an LGBT inclusive workplace and the work it carries out in this area is a clear recognition that people perform better when they can be themselves."

Higgs has outlined an ambitious programme to embed the principles of the Diversity programme into its practice over the next 12 months. One key focus for this year will be an Atrium Drinks session on Wednesday 14th June to publicise the firm's Diversity Champion status.

"This will be an important event for the firm," comments Simon Lord from Higgs' R&I Committee. "Not only will we be celebrating our status as a Diversity Champion, but we will be publicly re-affirming our commitment to the principles of equality and diversity at what is a key time for the LGBT community."

For more information on Stonewall go to:
www.stonewall.org.uk/

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