



Margaret Mitchell MSP
M2.11
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

28th September 2018

Dear *Ms Mitchell,*

Professional Legal Education

Thank you for the recent opportunity to take part in a roundtable evidence session of the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee on Professional Legal Education and, for the recently published report: *'Training the next generation of lawyers: professional legal education in Scotland'*. We realise there are many demands on the Committee's time so we were grateful to you and members of the committee for prioritising this as a subject for discussion.

The report raises a number of important issues for all concerned in the delivery of legal education and training. This involves the professional bodies – ourselves and the Faculty of Advocates – but it also includes schools, local authorities, universities which provide the LLB and DPLP, entities which train solicitors, and Skills Development Scotland. There is also a fundamentally important role for the Scottish Government.

We understand the critical importance of widening access to legal education and the legal profession and welcome the discussion of how we can all, working together, ensure that all who have the skills, ability and desire to qualify as a lawyer – be that as a solicitor or as an advocate – can do so.

As the report notes, the Society has undertaken a great deal of work in this area in recent years. However, we acknowledge more needs to be done. This may well involve extending our existing work (e.g Street Law, the LawScot Foundation, our summer school, our work directly in schools) and supplementing it with new activity.

The report also notes that a legal apprenticeship should be progressed without delay. We agree although we note that this is not solely within the hands of the Law Society of Scotland and Skills Development Scotland. We know that a number of private practice firms and in-house legal teams are keen on the development of a graduate level apprenticeship and, also, that at least two universities are keen on being involved in the delivery of such. However, it is likely that funding will be necessary by the Scottish Government for such apprenticeships to operate successfully.

The report is thorough and makes a number of recommendations we will reflect on and consider carefully. To that end, we would like to return to the Justice Committee by the end of October 2018 with a fuller response. In the meantime, members of the Education, Training & Qualifications Team would be happy to meet any member of the Justice Committee to discuss the report, our widening access work, or legal education and training more widely.

Thank you, once again, for your interest in this critically important area of work. We welcome the interest of the Committee, look forward to responding when we have considered the report fully, and look forward to working with you over the months and years ahead.

Yours, as ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Marris', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rob Marris
Head of Education

CC: Gael Scott, Senior Assistant Clerk, Justice Committee