

**Stephensons**

**Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion Annual  
Report 2025/2026**

Equality, diversity and inclusion activity during the last year, has focused on achieving greater equity and embedding inclusive practice, informed by colleague feedback and engagement with wider stakeholders.

Activity throughout the year focused on embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into policies, systems, training and day to day practice, alongside visible engagement with colleagues and the wider community.

The committee met on a quarterly basis, providing structured oversight of progress and enabling action planning across policy development, learning, accessibility and awareness activity.

## **Governance, Focus and Data**

During the year, the committee adopted quarterly focused themes and priorities, shaped by feedback from the firm's annual equality, diversity and inclusion survey and by areas where the firm identified an opportunity to enhance understanding or practice. This approach ensured activity remained relevant, targeted and capable of being reviewed meaningfully.

Equality, diversity and inclusion data has continued to improve throughout the period. The firm now holds ED&I data for over 70% of colleagues who have provided this information, helping to build a clearer picture of workforce diversity and informing future areas of focus.

Pronouns were further consistently applied, supporting respectful communication and reinforcing inclusive practice across the firm. Stephensons also published its Gender Pay Gap Reporting on the website, demonstrating transparency and accountability in relation to gender representation and pay.

## Policy Development and Inclusive Practice

A key area of activity during the period was strengthening and refreshing the firm's policy framework to support inclusive behaviour and consistent application in practice.

In May 2025, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was reissued, reaffirming the firm's commitment to equality of opportunity, compliance with the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustments, dignity at work and ongoing review. The policy clearly sets out accountability and the oversight role of the ED&I Committee.

During the reporting period, further operational policies were introduced and embedded. This included the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy, which was issued through Bob, the firm's internal HR system.

The IVF Support Policy was also introduced and communicated internally, formalising support for colleagues undergoing fertility treatment and reflecting the firm's wider commitment to inclusive and family friendly working practices.

In addition, maternity, paternity and family leave policies were updated.

To further support professional understanding, colleagues were provided with the Law Society's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Guide, reinforcing best practice.

## Training, Learning and Awareness

Training and education have remained a central strand of ED&I activity, with a strong emphasis on lived experience, communication and practical inclusion.

A Lunch and Learn session was delivered by We Are Explorers CIC, a Wigan based organisation supporting neurodiverse LGBTQ+ communities. The session was led by founder Jam Hirata Smith, supported by a community volunteer, and explored:

- Intercultural communication, focusing on how culture, identity and lived experience shape communication
- The double empathy problem, examining why communication challenges can arise between neurodivergent and neurotypical people
- Intersectionality and minority stress, highlighting how overlapping identities can impact wellbeing and experiences

This session supported greater understanding of neurodiversity and LGBTQ+ identity, grounded in lived and local community experience.

A specialist session titled “Living with Asperger’s: Experience, Understanding and Inclusion in the Workplace”, delivered by Alex Manners, was also completed during the period. The session focused on lived experience of Asperger’s and practical ways employers and colleagues can create inclusive working environments.

Unconscious bias training was delivered to support colleagues in recognising and challenging assumptions in decision making and everyday interactions.

In addition, a Lunch and Learn session was delivered internally by Shahina Sakeria, Partner in Personal Injury, focusing on Ramadan, its significance, and practical considerations for supporting colleagues observing Ramadan in the workplace. This session reinforced awareness, inclusion.

To guide external speakers, we introduced and have started providing an Inclusive Language Guidance document for External Speakers, aligned with the firm’s internal “Language Matters” framework. This guidance is now shared ahead of external training and events.



## Accessibility and Inclusive Tools

Alongside awareness activity, the firm introduced practical tools to support accessibility and inclusive communication.

A name pronunciation tool was launched within Bob, the firm's internal HR system, allowing colleagues to record and hear name pronunciations to support respectful communication.

In addition to internal initiatives, we have enhanced our public accessibility by providing clear accessibility indicators on our Google listings. By making accessibility information visible online, we aim to remove barriers and foster a welcoming environment both digitally and in person.

The firm also offers SignVideo, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation service, enabling deaf and hard of hearing clients to access legal services using BSL. This supports inclusive access and removes communication barriers for clients.



## Awareness Campaigns and Engagement

The committee led and supported a range of structured awareness and engagement activities, including:

- Race Equality Week, delivered as a five day internal challenge, supported by daily communications, video content and reflective materials
- International Women's Day, marked through internal Q&A content and colleague engagement
- Neurodiversity Celebration Week, supported through communications, external blogs, internal content and dyslexia guidance
- Autism Awareness Month, supported through internal communications and external employment guidance
- Black History Month, marked through internal communications encouraging learning and reflection
- World Down Syndrome Day, with colleagues taking part by wearing odd socks to raise awareness

Wigan Pride, where the firm acted as a sponsor, supported internally through visible engagement including cakes in the office, reinforcing allyship and local community support.



These initiatives fostered learning, engagement, and a strong sense of inclusive culture throughout the organisation.



## Community and External Engagement

The firm actively attends external training events and forums, engaging with specialist speakers to broaden its understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion topics. In addition, we invite external speakers and trainers to deliver sessions in-house, ensuring that colleagues benefit from expert insights and fresh perspectives.

### Summary of Impact

Across the reporting period, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has:

- Embedded quarterly focused ED&I themes informed by colleague feedback and learning priorities
- Improved ED&I data understanding
- Strengthened and refreshed inclusive policies and workplace practices
- Delivered lived experience led training, unconscious bias learning and culturally focused sessions
- Introduced practical accessibility tools and inclusive services
- Published transparent gender pay gap reporting
- Supported community engagement and nationally recognised awareness initiatives

Overall, the period reflects sustained progress in embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into systems, culture and everyday practice, aligned with the firm's wider people strategy and social value objectives.

Stephensons is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of the organisation and within the communities we support. Our approach provides a clear and practical framework for driving meaningful change, embedding inclusive practices, and ensuring everyone is treated with fairness, dignity and respect. Through ongoing commitment and action, we aim to create lasting, positive outcomes and support inclusive growth.



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Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum

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