



**Pictured:**

Watson Esam receiving their award from Lord Chancellor and TV presenter, Nicky Campbell.

Left to right: Trevor Phillips, Janet Paraskeva, Lord Chancellor, Michelle Cooper, Jay Bhayani, Paul Szabo, Richard Barlow, Julian Smith, Nicky Campbell)

Photos available to be sent by Email

## Sheffield firm scoops top national award

WATSON ESAM SOLICITORS, based in Paradise Square, Sheffield, have been awarded 'Best Employer' (25 Partners or less category) in the Law Society Solicitor's Race Equality Awards 2005.

The award ceremony took place on 24th May in London and the team from Watson Esam proudly collected their trophy from the Lord Chancellor, Lord Falconer and BBC Watchdog presenter Nicky Campbell.

It was an outstanding achievement for the firm as the awards were judged nationally and Watson Esam were the only Yorkshire winner to receive this prestigious title.

Jay Bhayani, Partner at Watson Esam explained " Essentially, our firm's ethos is about being fair, not only in relation to racial equality but fairness across the board. Watson Esam's established client base is mostly white, despite this we recognise the need for the firm to represent a cross section of society.

Well before equal opportunities policies were common practice the firm had incorporated them. We have not undertaken positive discrimination strategies and we have sought to avoid tokenism in recruitment. We have been motivated by a desire to build a modern forward looking firm which recognises the strength and energy which racial diversity in the workplace provides.

Sheffield does not have the same level of ethnic diversity prevalent in other Yorkshire towns and cities. For that reason we feel that it is even more important to provide genuine opportunities to candidates from different backgrounds. We are therefore very pleased to note that approximately a quarter of our staff are from ethnic backgrounds ranging from senior partners to administrative staff."

Janet Paraskeva, chief executive of the Law Society, said "...the winners have taken innovative approaches to making equality and diversity integral to the way they operate and all of them are leading the way for the profession.'