



January 2025

the Messenger

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Introducing Fiona Ledden: the new President of Manchester Law Society

We are delighted to introduce **Fiona Ledden**, City Solicitor, as the new President of the Manchester Law Society. Fiona’s journey to this esteemed position is as inspiring as it is diverse.



Early Life and Education

Born in Middlesbrough, Fiona is the cherished “rose between two thorns,” with two brothers. Her father was a GP and her mother a nurse, instilling in her a deep sense of care and community from an early age. At the age of five, Fiona’s family moved to Tamworth, where her father served as a village GP. Growing up in a close-knit community, Fiona quickly learned the value of connection and support, and that in a small community everyone knew what you had done before you had done it!

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Fiona pursued her passion for law at university in London, where she met her husband, Alan. The couple, both law students, have been married for 42 years and have two daughters, Ashling and Siobhan.

Siobhan is doing an MA in jewellery making, and Ashling is Fiona's carer, as Fiona now uses a mobility scooter.

Professional Journey

After university, Fiona spent eight months working in a health food shop while seeking articles. She began her legal career with a criminal law firm in the East End before transitioning to local government. Her experiences in divorce work, particularly witnessing the suffering of children, motivated her to focus on representing and helping children.

Fiona's career in local government saw her serve as an in-house lawyer in the children's department at Bromley Council, then Sutton, where she was promoted to Head

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Fiona eagerly anticipates the reopening of the town hall and values the city's open communication with its residents”

of Legal Department. She later became the GLA Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal during Boris Johnson's tenure as Mayor. Fiona's journey continued with roles at Brent Council and Stoke, before she was enticed to Manchester in 2018, a city she quickly fell in love with.

Life in Manchester

Fiona now resides in Barlaston with her two dogs (pictured), Basil, a lively blonde labradoodle, and Toby, a long-haired dachshund. (see *Pet of the Month* on page 62 where Basil and Toby appear)

She appreciates the pride and passion of Manchester's residents, the city's rich history – first industrial city, Peterloo Massacre and the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, and its fabulous buildings, cultural contributions including sport, music, art and museums and its modern innovations. Fiona eagerly anticipates the reopening of the town hall and values the city's open communication with its residents, as evidenced by the Our Manchester survey, which received over 10,000 responses.

Fiona says that Manchester's blend of historical importance, cultural richness and modern innovation makes it a unique and dynamic city in which to live, work and visit.



Vision for the Manchester Law Society

Fiona's theme for her presidency is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). She is passionate about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to compete and work on a level playing field. Fiona is acutely aware that her own team does not fully reflect Manchester's diverse communities and is committed to encouraging greater involvement from these communities.

“

Fiona's theme for her presidency is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). She is passionate about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to compete and work on a level playing field”

In her role on the senior management team, Fiona leads on EDI, a responsibility that has become even more significant as she navigates her own mobility challenges following cancer treatment, which resulted in accelerated arthritis. Her experiences have heightened her awareness of accessibility issues and the importance of asking for help when needed.

Fiona loves serving the residents of Manchester and appreciates the inclusive nature of the Manchester Law Society. She enjoys the Society's openness to change and is looking forward to working with the wonderful team of Officers, the Council, Committees and Team at MLS HQ, who play an enormous part in that. From her first day, Fiona felt welcomed and valued.



Personal Interests

Her favourite film is *The Philadelphia Story* (above), and she enjoys reading Suzanna Gregory's 'The Matthew Bartholomew Series'. Fiona's favourite food is seafood, and her five dream dinner guests would be Judi Dench, Keir Starmer, Ryan Reynolds, Mary Beard, and Mary Berry. She loves visiting Venice, exploring National Trust sites, visiting Trentham Gardens, walking her dogs, and watching crime or political dramas like *The West Wing*, *Happy Valley*, and *Dalgleish*.

Words of Wisdom

If Fiona could give her 20-year-old self some advice, it would be to stand up for herself more. This sentiment reflects her journey of resilience, advocacy, and leadership.

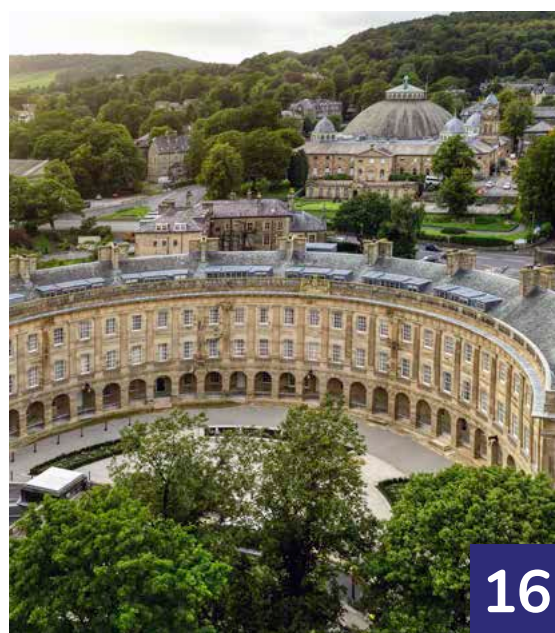
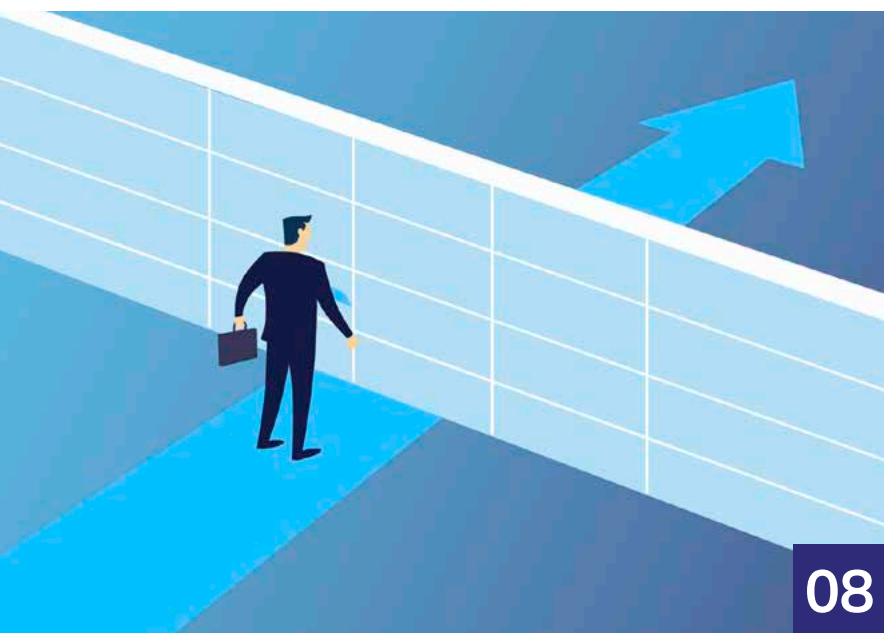
We are excited to see Fiona's impact as President and look forward to the positive changes she will bring to the Manchester Law Society.

the Messenger



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Manchester Law Society
Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871

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GREAT Legal Services Symposium

On the 28th of November, Manchester Law Society had the pleasure, along with the Ministry of Justice, of jointly hosting a GREAT Legal Services Symposium and welcoming the Minister for State at the Ministry of Justice, Heidi Alexander MP, and a team from the MoJ and the Department for Business and Trade.

The discussion built on the recent Growth roundtable with legal sector leaders, co-chaired by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade. Legal firms and lawtech representatives from in and around Manchester discussed the key opportunities and barriers to trade and heard from Government officials what options were available to support the sector to export globally.

They also received some valuable insight into steps being taken by the Government to tackle some of the challenges faced by the legal services profession.

David Anderson, MLS President at the time, shared insights into the local legal sector and other attendees and contributors included representatives from 20 of the region's law firms, the Department of Business and Trade's Deputy Director, North of England Exports and the MoJ's Deputy Head Strategic, Communications and Campaigns Jane Buswell who provided some insight into how the UK government can help support firms' international ambitions. We also heard first-hand about lawtech projects and developments in the region from the University of Manchester Claire McGourlay and Rachel Kenyon.



Group shot of the Symposium



David Anderson and Heidi Alexander MP

“

Legal firms and lawtech representatives from in and around Manchester discussed the key opportunities and barriers to trade”

Key takeaways identified by the Minister included:

- **Importance of legal services in the Northwest:** Manchester is the largest legal community outside London and is home to a flourishing lawtech sector
- **Global growth potential:** There are significant opportunities to export legal expertise and lawtech solutions to international markets which Manchester-based firms can tap into
- **Government support:** The Government reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the sector across the UK to expand internationally.

While it will take time and more than one event to confirm the stated commitment, the meeting was very encouraging for all who attended. It was only slightly disheartening when the Minister was bumped to be Secretary of State for Transport the very next day! Fortunately, the messages and insight shared were adopted by the civil service team present and the opportunity was still valuable, with engagement continuing after the event.

FLBN Manchester x Mills & Reeve

Achieving Inclusivity in the Workplace

Tuesday 4 February 2025

08:30 - 10:30

Mills & Reeve, Manchester

To register your interest, please contact FLBN Manchester at hannah.s.jones@jmw.co.uk



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Breaking the Fear Barrier: How Denovo Help Law Firms Embrace New Legal Software

For many law firms, the idea of switching to new legal software—or introducing it for the first time—can feel overwhelming. Concerns about cost, disruption, and complexity often prevent firms from making a decision that could drastically improve their efficiency. **Graham Tidd**, Denovo’s Business Development Manager, works closely with firms across the UK, helping them navigate these concerns and make informed choices. In this Q&A, Graham shares his insights on the main challenges law firms face when contemplating a switch and explains how his people-first approach, rooted in truly understanding each firm’s unique needs, has helped build successful partnerships.



Grant Yuill (GY), Head of Marketing at

Denovo: Graham, you joined Denovo about 18 months ago and have been working closely with law firms across the UK, particularly when they're at the decision-making stage, contemplating a big change in their legal software. What have been some of the main concerns that firms have when they're thinking about making this switch, or in some cases, introducing this kind of technology for the first time?

Graham Tidd (GT), Business Development Manager at Denovo:

There are a few concerns that come up repeatedly, Grant. The first one is the fear of the unknown—especially for firms who've never used legal software before. For these firms, there's a real sense of "Will this be more of a headache

than it's worth?" They worry it will add complexity rather than simplify things. Then there's the cost factor, particularly for smaller firms. Legal software is an investment, and they're wondering whether it will truly deliver a return. Another big one is disruption—many firms have established processes, and the idea of changing those, especially during busy periods, can be daunting.

The surprising thing for me has been just how many firms, even in 2024, are introducing this type of tech for the very first time. It's not uncommon to walk into a firm and find everything still being done on paper or using basic spreadsheets. For them, the whole idea of transitioning to a digital platform can feel overwhelming.

GY: I can imagine that could be a real challenge to overcome. How do you approach helping firms move past that fear and those initial concerns?

GT: My approach is really rooted in understanding, first and foremost. Before I even talk about what Denovo can offer, I make sure to sit down with the decision-makers and get a real sense of how they're operating day to day. I spend time with firms of all sizes—from sole practitioners to larger practices—and each one works quite differently. The last thing I want to do is try to sell them something that doesn't actually fit their needs.

It's about truly listening to their pain points. For some firms, the problem is time management—they're drowning in admin work. For others, it's compliance or the ability to manage client communications efficiently. Once I've understood the specific challenges they're facing, that's when I can start to show them how Denovo can address those issues. But it all starts with genuinely hearing them out, not just pushing a generic solution.

Continued on page 10





GY: That seems like a really people-first approach. Can you share any examples of how your time spent understanding firms' unique needs has helped you tailor solutions that ultimately led to a partnership with Denovo?

GT: Absolutely. One firm I worked with recently had been running for over 30 years and had never used any type of case management software. They were a small team, just three solicitors and a couple of support staff. They had a huge concern about disrupting their workflow—they didn't think they had the time to stop and learn a new system. They are very similar to many firms I speak to who have the senior team still working at the coalface fee earning and trying to run the overall business – trying to introduce better technology, do some sort of marketing, support their team - it's a tricky balance lawyers need to get to "do it all". So, I spent a couple of days in their office, shadowing them, observing how they managed their files, communicated with clients, and handled the likes of billing.

What stood out was that they spent an extraordinary amount of time double-entering data. Everything was being recorded on paper, then typed into a spreadsheet, and then manually emailed to clients. After pointing out how much time was being wasted on those repetitive tasks, I was able to show them how Denovo could automate that process and drastically cut down on admin time. Once they saw how it could free up time to focus on client work, that's when they realised the system would pretty much pay for itself.

It was the same with a larger firm that was worried about compliance. They had this fear that switching to new software might expose them to regulatory issues during the transition. Again, after spending time understanding their processes and

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At Denovo, we don't just offer software; we offer support, guidance, and a partnership to help make that change easier”

introducing our in-house data conversion specialist to the conversation, I could show them how Denovo's tools for compliance monitoring were actually more robust than their current setup. Once they saw that we weren't just meeting, but exceeding, their compliance needs, they were confident moving forward.

GY: Listening seems to play a huge part in your role. What's the impact of truly listening to a firm's concerns, rather than just giving them a product pitch?

GT: It makes all the difference. Law firms operate in high-pressure environments, and often, the decision to change software is one they put off because they simply don't feel heard. When I listen—really listen—what I'm doing is building trust. If a firm feels like I understand their specific challenges and pain points, they're more open to the idea of change.

I think one of the biggest mistakes a lot of salespeople make is they go in with a "one-size-fits-all" mentality. They assume that just because a product works for one firm, it'll work for another. But every firm is different—different client bases, different internal cultures, different processes. When you tailor your approach based on their individual needs, they feel more confident that the solution you're offering will work for them. And that's how we turn a conversation into a partnership.

Continued on page 12

Actionstep

Reimagine your law firm's tech

Transform your law firm with Actionstep's "Blueprint for Building Your Law Firm's Ideal Technology Ecosystem."

This guide is packed with insights for law firm professionals to build a well-integrated tech ecosystem that eliminates bottlenecks, streamlines workflows, and positions your firm for sustainable growth.



Take the first step toward a smarter, more efficient practice.

Scan the QR to download your free copy.



GY: It sounds like your time spent with firms—really embedding yourself in their day-to-day—has been crucial. Has that approach helped you deal with firms that are hesitant to embrace technology for the first time?

GT: Definitely. For firms that are hesitant, it's all about showing them the benefits in their own context. I think there's a misconception out there that legal software is only for large firms or that it's overly complex. But that's not the case at all. For firms new to the idea, I make it a point to start small. I don't overwhelm them with every feature Denovo offers right off the bat. I focus on the core benefits—how it's going to make their lives easier and give them back time. Once they start to see those small wins, they're usually more open to exploring the wider range of tools we offer.

For example, I worked with a two-person firm that had never used legal software before. Initially, they were dead set against it because they thought it would add unnecessary complexity to their straightforward setup. After listening to their concerns, I set up a demo that focused purely on how the software could streamline their enquiry handling process. That was their main issue—they were busy, which was great news, but struggling to manage and communicate with new leads. They also required a method of separating leads from actual clients and wanted a process in place which allowed them to map out and automate specific milestones of their conveyancing process. After they saw how much easier that process became, they were sold. Now they're using the full range of Denovo's features.

GY: What advice would you give to firms that are still on the fence about making the switch?

GT: I'd say, don't let fear or apprehension stop you from making a decision that could really benefit your firm in the long run. Change is always uncomfortable at first, but the legal industry is moving forward with technology, and staying behind is going to cost more in the long run than making the switch now. Start by having an honest conversation about your concerns. When firms really dig into those worries, they often realise they're not as daunting as they thought—and more importantly, that there's a solution.

At Denovo, we don't just offer software; we offer support, guidance, and a partnership to help make that change easier. The first step is talking to someone who understands your business and can show you how technology can work with you, not against you.

GY: Thanks for your insights, Graham. It's clear you're helping to make that initial jump much easier for firms.

GT: It's been a great journey so far, and I look forward to continuing to help firms across the UK realise just how much of a difference the right software can make.

If you're ready to make the switch to a more efficient case management software let us help. At Denovo, we specialise in successful conversions, ensuring your data stays secure and your team is fully supported. Contact us today and make the change easier.

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SMALL SCHOOL, BIG EXPERIENCE



The Manchester Legal Awards are coming back for 2025!

Yes, that's right! Buckle up for another year of celebrating the achievements and brilliant work of the Manchester legal community.

We have some changes for 2025 – a new date and a new venue. The ceremony will be held on 3rd July 2025 and for the first time at the [Kimpton Clocktower Hotel](#). We are so excited to share more about the new venue in the lead up to the big day!

We are delighted to be partnering once again with [TheBusinessDesk.com](#) as our

media partner, [RMS](#) as our marketing partner and [We Love MCR](#) as our charity partner.

More details will follow in the new year including the confirmation of the 2025 categories. Applications will open on 3rd February and close on 28th March.

If you are interested in sponsoring the Manchester Legal Awards, please send an email to mlawards@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk for more details of the available packages.



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5TH MARCH 2025

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Created in partnership with, and hosted by, Mike Ode of Potential Unearthed this event will support those at the early stages of their career.



To join the mailing list for this event please email ChandreMay@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk



Treat yourself to an indulgent countryside getaway at Buxton Crescent

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As the cold nights draw in, there is no better place to escape the winter blues than [Buxton Crescent Spa Hotel](#), where a warm welcome and the best of British hospitality awaits.

Located on the edge of the Peak District National Park, in the pretty spa town of Buxton and next to the beautiful Buxton Opera House, the town's only wellness hotel is the perfect spot for exploring the nearby area of outstanding natural beauty with its dramatic landscapes and historic architecture.

Arriving at the hotel's famous 'The Crescent' is all part of the experience. Originally

built in 1789 for William Cavendish – the 5th Duke of Devonshire – as part of his campaign to establish Buxton as a fashionable Georgian spa town, there is sense of grandeur about entering this historic building for the first time.

Behind its historic façade is now one of the most luxurious destinations in the Peak District, featuring 81 bedrooms and suites, a not-to-missed spa and a modern British restaurant.

The bedrooms at Buxton Crescent are steeped in 200 years of history, offering a unique blend of Georgian architectural and modern-day comfort, with large windows overlooking the stunning Peak District hills. Guests can cosy up around their own traditional fireplace or while away the hours





in their roll top bath, sipping on champagne. A perfect night's sleep is always guaranteed in the hotel's four poster beds.

In winter the spa is truly a place of calm. Time can be spent enjoying the sauna, steam and multiple pools, including an indoor-to-outdoor rooftop pool and the original Victorian thermal pool naturally heated to 27.5C, which is refilled daily with Buxton mineral water. An array of signature beauty and holistic treatments are also on offer by the hotel's expert spa therapists.

Guests can savour the flavours of food from around the British Isles at the hotel's stylish Restaurant, with menus inspired by the best seasonal British ingredients. Dishes range



from fresh fish and shellfish, beef and lamb, vegetarian dishes, through to desserts and artisan cheese.

Fans of the traditional Afternoon Tea can enjoy sumptuous treats, including a homemade selection of freshly cut finger sandwiches, warm scones with jam and clotted cream with an assortment of cakes and artisan teas - a glass of Prosecco or Laurent Perrier Champagne always adding to the occasion. In The Lounge is a place to relax by the cosy open fires of the bar and offers an extensive wine list and creative cocktail menu.

Book now and let Buxton Crescent be your next winter retreat.

How to book

10% off any stays at Buxton Crescent Spa Hotel on all accommodation packages – valid for stays from 01.01.25 – 22.12.25.

Bookable via the website –

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Promotional code: **LAW10** to be entered into the website under 'Your Cart'

This special offer is only available to members of the Manchester Law Society. Subject to availability and date exclusions may apply.

Supporting colleagues who may be struggling with loss

Grief is a personal experience that can affect anyone at any time. There are many different ways we might grieve, which can make it challenging to recognise in the workplace, especially if people feel they have to hide their emotions. It's important to acknowledge and support colleagues who have suffered a loss, as it can seriously impact their wellbeing and performance at work.

Understanding different forms of grief and loss

Grief is usually associated with the death of someone very close, such as a parent, partner, sibling or friend. Workplaces often understand this and can offer support. However, grief can arise when we lose someone who wasn't as close, like a colleague, client, or professional contact, and the impact can be harder to recognise.

Miscarriage is a significant source of grief. This loss can be intense, yet it's often misunderstood or dismissed, particularly for men who may find it difficult to discuss their feelings.

The loss of a pet can also have a profound impact, comparable to the loss of a human family member for some. The guilt of having to make the difficult decision to euthanise a pet can add another layer of complexity to the grieving process.

Feelings of grief and loss can also arise at other times, not just when someone dies. For example, people may feel grief in advance when they know a loved one is facing a terminal illness or dementia. This kind of grief can be prolonged and particularly tough, especially if the person is also dealing with the stress of caring for that person.





No matter what causes feelings of grief and loss, it's important to create a supportive environment where everyone feels safe sharing their experiences and getting the help they need.

Insights from LawCare's helpline

LawCare's helpline provides valuable insights into how grief can impact people working in the legal sector. Common experiences include:

- **Feeling overwhelmed and exhausted:** Grief can make you feel overwhelmed, exhausted and affect your ability to handle routine tasks and responsibilities.
- **Worsening of other issues:** If someone is already feeling overworked or anxious, these feelings can intensify after a loss, making it even harder to cope.
- **Pressure and expectations:** There is often pressure to keep going, no matter what life throws at us, especially in the legal sector where expectations are high. People may feel they have to hide their emotions and push through, leading to a lack of rest or even burnout.
- **No set timeline:** Grief doesn't follow a precise schedule and it's important to know there is no "right" way to grieve. It can come and go or change over time and can be triggered by anniversaries, a favourite song, or on hearing some other difficult news.

How to support colleagues who are struggling

- Offer support: A simple "How are you doing?" or "Is there anything I can do to help?" can be comforting and shows that you care. It also gives people a chance to talk about their feelings if they want to.

- **Be considerate of personal preferences:** People react to workplace activities and interactions in different ways. Some might want to avoid social events or need time alone, while others might find comfort in joining in. Be aware of how certain situations or conversations might affect someone who is grieving.
- **Follow up:** Grief doesn't just go away after a certain time. Keep checking in with colleagues and friends, even after the initial loss. Ongoing support is important, as the way we experience grief may change over time.
- **Avoid assumptions:** Everyone deals with grief differently. Don't assume you know what someone needs or how they feel; listen carefully and ask how you can best support them.
- **Encourage professional help:** If you are worried about a colleague, suggest they talk to a GP or a mental health professional for extra support.

Find further support

If you or someone you know is having a hard time with grief, extra help is available. Counselling, therapy, and support services can offer valuable assistance during difficult times. For confidential support, consider reaching out to LawCare or Cruse:

- **LawCare:** Call [0800 279 6888](tel:08002796888) or email support@lawcare.org.uk. Live chat is available on www.lawcare.org.uk.
- **Cruse:** Call [0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677) or visit www.cruse.org.uk for more information.

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Local Authority Conference

Join us at the Local Authority Conference 2025, a joint event from Manchester Law Society and 11KBW Chambers.

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You can book your place now by emailing ChandreMay@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk with details of the attendee.

[Find out more](#)

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For what comes next

Conference Programme

09:45 Registration

10:15 Introduction from the Morning Chair

Joanne Clement KC, 11KBW

10:20 Section 114 Reports: All you need to know

James Goudie KC, 11KBW

10:50 Subsidy Control update

Joanne Clement KC, 11KBW

11:20 Q&A

11:30 Refreshments and networking

11:45 Education Update

Paul Greatorex, 11KBW

12:15 Community Care Update

Joanne Clement KC, 11KBW

12:45 Q&A

12:55 Networking lunch

13:55 Welcome back from Afternoon Chair

Joseph Barrett KC, 11KBW

14:00 Procurement Update

Joseph Barrett KC, 11KBW

14:30 Judicial Review Update

Cecilia Ivimy, 11KBW

15:00 GDPR and Information Law Update

Leo Davidson, 11KBW

15:30 Q&A

15:40 Closing Comments from the Chair

Joseph Barrett KC

15:50 Conference closes

2025 plotting and planning

Christmas seems like just a blur. The odd box of biscuits and a stray After Eight mint at the back of the cupboard acts as a reminder of the number of calories Mark ate in a 2-week window. But it's all over and now he can focus on 2025, albeit it he's a stone heavier!

Mark gets a real sense of focus around this time of year. A new year, a new start and all that jazz acts as a boost for him. Mark sits there with his new pen and pad, drinking coffee from his new 'Best Boss in the World' mug. An hour later and his page is still blank. He searches Google for ideas. He even strays to ChatGPT for some help, but still his page is empty. If he doesn't crack on soon, it'll be time to dig out his Christmas jumper again and 2026 will soon be on the horizon.

What Mark fails to realise is that the ideas he's after aren't in Google, or ChatGPT, it's actually in his own team. Here's some questions Mark could ask his team over the next few weeks to help smash 2025:

Celebrating Team Success

- What challenges have we overcome in 2024 as a team that's worth celebrating?
- What's the most significant thing we've done that has positively impacted the team/business
- What words or phrases would you use to describe the team's culture and values?
- What positive feedback have you received from clients, stakeholders, or other colleagues about the team's work?

Question for feedback and solving issues

- How can we improve our decision-making process as a team?
- If you'd recommend one thing for better team performance in 2025, what would it be?
- What is one thing we could experiment with doing differently in 2025?
- How can we better align our team goals with the company's mission and vision?
- On a scale of 1-10, rate the communication and collaboration within the team.
- How can we improve our team culture?
- What are the roadblocks you currently face in your work?

Hybrid/Remote working

- What helps you feel connected to other team members and escape the potential loneliness of working remotely?
- How could we improve our remote team management?
- How is your work-life balance right now? What would you like to change about it?
- What do you think about the company's remote/hybrid work policy? How could we improve?

You see, no need for Google, everything Mark needs is right under his nose.

Need a hand developing the managers in your team?

Contact Mike on *07825301660* or email him direct on *mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk* [↗](#)



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Bespoke & Innovative Approach

Every case we handle is unique, and our bespoke service is designed to reflect this. At McCollum we combine the expertise of our specialists with an innovative case management system (**ALLDOQ**) to deliver tailored solutions for even the most complex matters. Whether through virtual consultations or flexible report formats, our approach is designed to prioritise efficiency and accessibility. We aim to ensure our reports are of the highest clarity, reaffirming our standard for excellence in the medico-legal field.



End of year message to Manchester Law Society from We Love MCR Charity

An incredible second year in partnership between [We Love MCR](#) and Manchester Law Society saw dozens upon dozens of MLS members raise thousands for our work with Manchester's communities and young people. We're delighted to bring you some topline figures that help you understand the impact your support has made on our city!

In 2024, we awarded a massive £222,250 in grants to empower Manchester community projects and ambitious young people! Supporting our mission to address inequality, invest in positive futures and see the people of Manchester flourish.

25% of awardees from our Manchester's Rising Stars Fund identified as care experienced. Young Mancunians in the care system face disproportionate challenges, our funding can give them the belief and

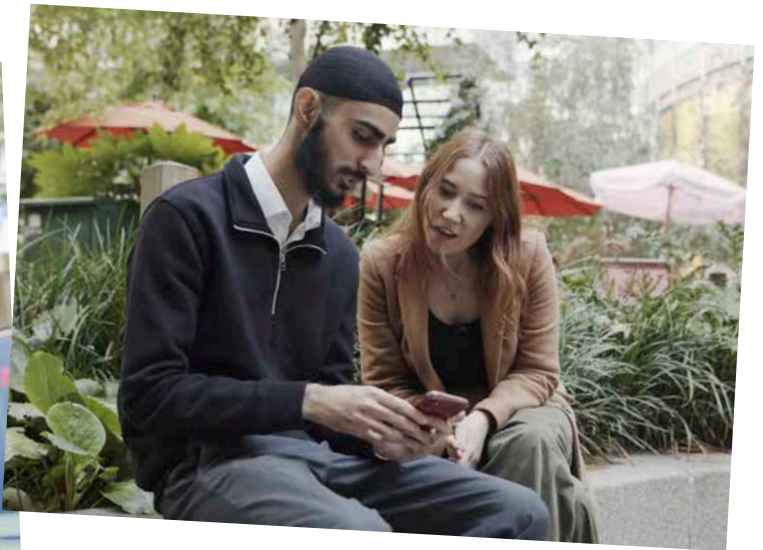
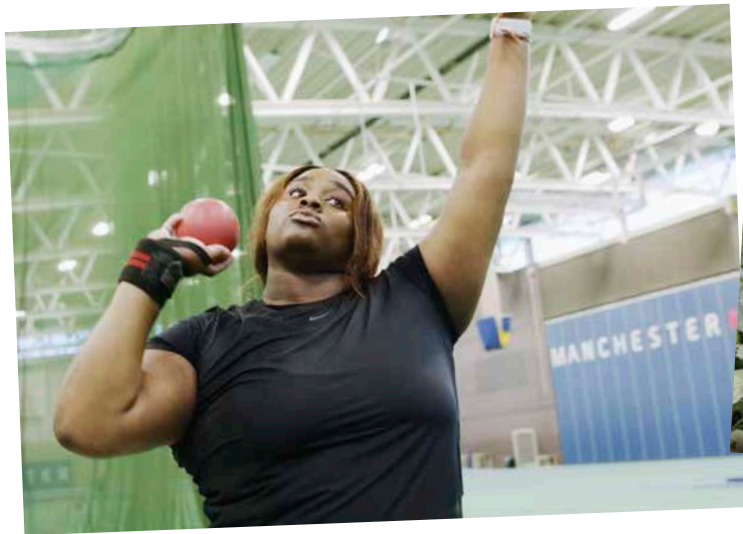
support to write their own stories.

In 2024, we supported 22 families to attend therapeutic family breaks at Ghyll Head centre in the Lake District - our longest running programme. Helping vulnerable Mancunians to strengthen family bonds and create lasting memories.

71% of our [#ManchestersRisingStarsFund](#) awardees identified as being from ethnic minority backgrounds. Both proudly reflecting our city's diversity, and acknowledging head-on the socio-economic disparities impacting young Mancunians.

60% of our Stronger Communities Fund went to groups reducing loneliness and isolation. Manchester communities still face serious challenges post-lockdown and in a cost of living crisis. Our funding of local projects aims to address this.





“

There was strong MLS representation in all three of our fundraising events this year”

None of this could be done without the support of partners like Manchester Law Society!

Another highlight of the year for us has been the creation of a video reflecting the breadth of work we support, and we're proud to share this with you [here](#) ☑.

Finally, there was strong MLS representation in all three of our fundraising events this year, from our cherished Outdoor Challenge in the Lake District, the Great Manchester Run with free tickets + VIP treatment, and the January Firewalk which saw the MLS staff team take to the coals strongly!

All three of these are now annual fixtures, so if you missed out last year don't worry - registration for our 2025 Sponsored Firewalk is open now - [you can register for the February 27th event here](#) ☑ - and if you

want to indicate early interest for the Great Manchester Run and Outdoor Challenge then you can do so at [our 2025 expression of interest form here](#) ☑!

Thanks again from the We Love MCR Charity Team to David, Fran, Carla, Chandre, and every member of MLS who has supported us this year. Looking forward to 2025 already!

Whether you're in Manchester for the festive season or elsewhere, have a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Nick Clarke - WLMC Communications & Fundraising Officer



26 Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



We hope you've had a good break. As always at this time of year, as well as our update on regulatory matters, risk and compliance, and recent disciplinary decisions, we do some horizon scanning and anticipate what's in store for 2025.

Horizon scanning/crystal ball gazing

Our top 10 for 2025, with the caveat that in view of the fast-changing world we work in this list could be out of date by the time it goes to print, is:

1. Money laundering regulations

Compliance around AML requirements will continue to be one of the key risks for 2025 for firms within scope. As we reported late last year, SRA pro-active supervision doubled in 2023-2024, with only 22% of firms being fully compliant, and enforcement increased by almost 50%, with over £1 million fines imposed by the SRA and SDT in relation to AML breaches. That will continue, and we are already seeing the next round of notifications from the SRA regarding inspections, providing 14 days to provide documents and a response to the questionnaire, including requests for copies of any audits with any recommendations or follow up action, AML-related training records and training material for the last 3 years, file review form template and list of file reviews within last 6 months. There are also questions relating to when FWRA and PCPs were first drafted, and it is expected that those documents will be requested in due course. Now is the time to review your FWRA, policies, controls and procedures and carry out an independent AML audit.

In addition, 2025 will see an SRA thematic review considering how firms deal with source of funds and source of wealth checks.

2. AML controls in high-risk third countries

Keep an eye out for updates on high-risk third countries. Changes to the high-risk third countries list continued to be a trend in 2024, the latest being on 25 October 2024, when Algeria, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire and Lebanon were added to the FATF lists, Senegal was removed but remains on the EU list.

As a reminder, EDD and enhanced ongoing monitoring is required in any business relationship with a person established in a high-risk third country or in relation to any relevant transaction where either of the parties to the transaction is established in a high-risk third country.

3. Sanctions regime

The [UK sanctions list](#) continues to grow, with countries and individuals being added on an almost daily basis. Following on from its survey mid-2024, the SRA identified a number of issues, including lack of written sanctions FWRA (not compulsory, but considered best practice by the SRA, particularly for firms at higher risk), identification/verification controls and failure to screen against designated persons lists. It confirmed that its data collection, risk profiling and proactive inspection will extend to compliance with financial sanctions.



4. Economic Crime

Large organisations have until 1 September 2025 to develop and implement reasonable fraud prevention measures, failing which they could face investigation, prosecution and an unlimited fine.

The LSB consultation on proposed draft guidance regarding how legal regulators can fight economic crime runs until 7 February 2025. It is anticipated the new legislation may lead to an increase in SRA inspections, investigations and enforcement. Following the consultation that ended on 20 September, the SRA's decision is still awaited on its proposals on financial penalties, in light of its new powers to issue unlimited fines for certain breaches of its rules under the ECCTA.

5. Consumer protection

The SRA consultation on consumer protection, covering a wide range of areas, including changes to the way firms hold client money, interest earned on client money, compensation fund changes, Accounts Rules changes etc. ends on 21 February. The Law Society and local law societies will be responding, and we would encourage solicitors and firms to review and respond to the consultation.

6. Cybersecurity

Law firms are a target for cyber criminals as firms regularly handle commercially sensitive and confidential information on behalf of clients and act on transactions involving the transfer of significant funds. The SRA AML annual report 2024 recognised this as an emerging risk, both on a firm's own IT systems but also within the law

firm's supply chain, which might have serious knock-on consequences to a firm's operations. Is there anything else you can be doing now to either prevent attacks or, in the event that you do suffer a successful attack, put you in the best position possible to respond effectively, minimise any damage, and avoid the emerging risks flagged by the SRA?

7. Use of technology

Firms need to be aware of the use of technology, and particularly AI, and potential risks relating to data privacy, client confidentiality etc. Consider what systems and processes you have in place to meet changing standards and protect reputational risk. As yet, there is no regulatory guidance or legislation, but there is likely to be in the future and this should be on a firm's radar.

8. Implications of Axiom Ince report and other firm failures

Firms should be aware of potential ramifications from findings of missed critical opportunities by the SRA, failure to heed warnings, failure to adequately assess risks associated with acquisitions, and SRA's oversight of client accounts. This may lead to increased regulatory obligations, inspections and interventions, and, as raised in the SRA consultation referred to above, a move away from client account to third party managed accounts.

The LSB stated this has shown the importance of lawyers demonstrating and maintaining professional ethics, and the area 'clearly needs significant

Continued on page 28



attention if the profession is to uphold public confidence'. It is set to consult on suggestions to uphold and support ethical decision making throughout the profession, with the 'longer-term ambition is for improved awareness among all lawyers and their lay colleagues of the ethical responsibilities of the legal profession, and for strong professional and regulatory support for the maintenance of those responsibilities, sometimes in the face of unreasonable pressure. This will be a major undertaking, requiring collective action.' It pledged to focus on how consumers may be put at risk by the developments in the legal market, such as growth in third-party litigation funding, the failure of large law firms and group claims.

9. Wellbeing within firms

With the introduction of The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 which imposes a duty on all employers to take all reasonable steps to protect their workers from sexual harassment by other workers or third parties, which includes clients, there is a clear overlap with the SRA Standards and Regulations (paragraph 1.5 of the Code for Solicitors and 1.6 of the Code for Firms, requiring solicitors and firms to treat colleagues fairly and with respect, and to not bully, harass or discriminate unfairly against colleagues), and firms will need to ensure a risk assessment is carried out, review existing policies/draft new policies, provide training etc.

10. Continuing competence

In its annual assessment of continuing competence, the SRA indicated an increase in reports in a number of areas, including Family and Landlord and Tenant law, and

will be looking into if and how solicitors in these areas are maintaining their competence. The SRA have begun to ask solicitors to submit continuing competence records during investigations.

Accountants' reports – spot checks

The SRA announced it would initiate spot checks to ensure firms are obtaining an annual accountant's report, as the number submitted to the SRA each year is falling, the requirement to deliver a report having changed to only those who receive a qualified report. The SRA did acknowledge that may mean firms are more compliant but 'could also suggest there are issues to address'. The COFAs of selected firms received an email two weeks before Christmas advising an online questionnaire would be sent in January. The questions not only relate to the report, but also ask about reviews of residual balances, percentage and total of current matters which have residual balances, total value, largest value, length of oldest residual balance, and work category with largest total value. The perfect Christmas present! It has been asked why this could not wait until the start of the year.

New practice notes and guidance

The Law Society has published the following updated guidance since our previous update:

- [Money laundering risks and threats](#)
- [Adequate consideration and proceeds of crime](#)
- [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act](#)

Continued on page 30



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Disciplinary and regulatory decisions:

While quieter than usual, there have been a few interesting decisions and judgments reported since our last update, including:

AML breaches

In the first two weeks of December, the SRA reported that it had imposed fines of a total of nearly £100,000 on 8 firms for breaches of AML, including failures to have any/any compliant FWRAs, PCPs, records etc. in place.

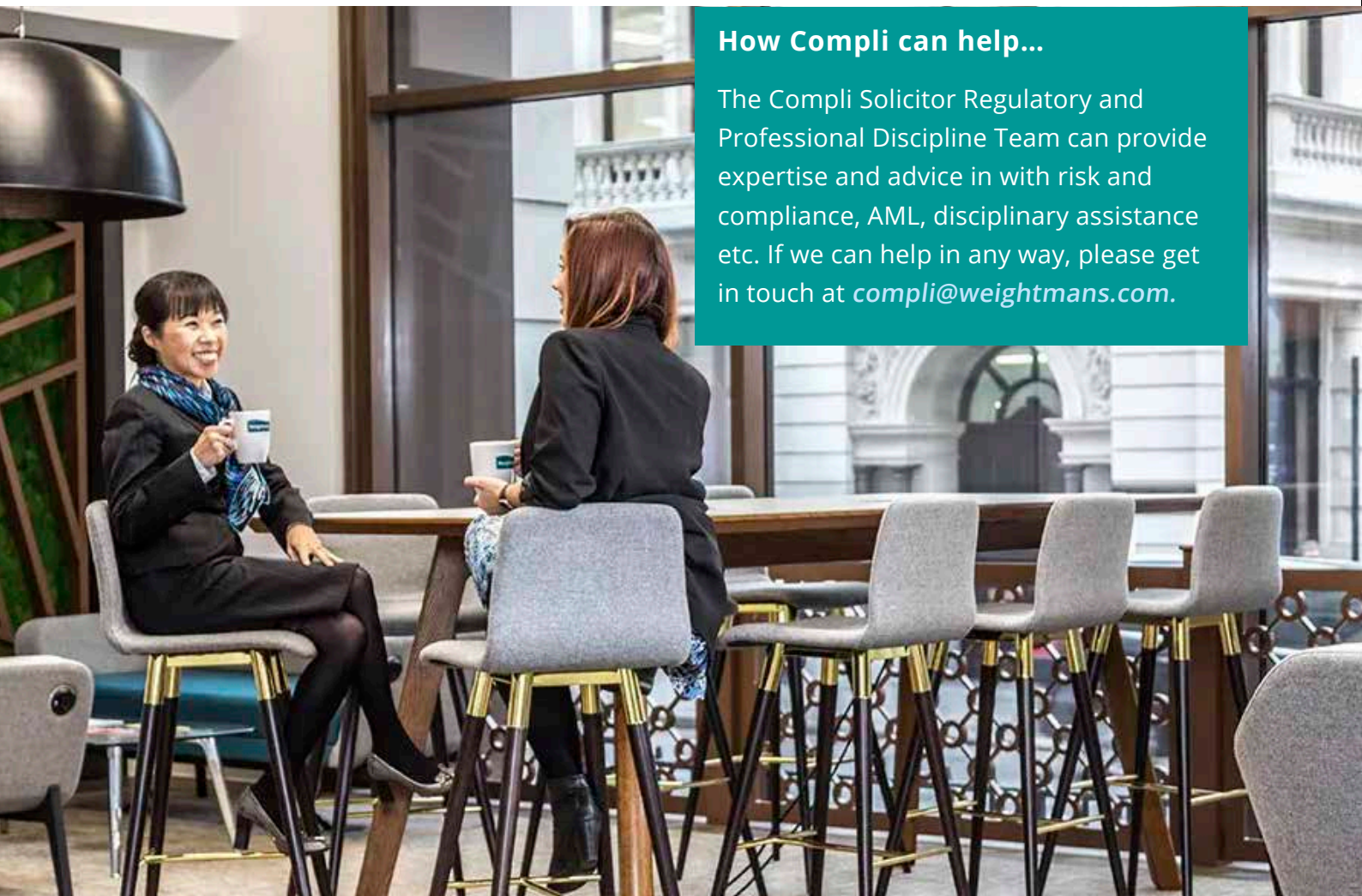
Struck off for unverified legal aid claims

A legal aid solicitor who was unable to prove her firm made hospital visits claimed for, was unable to record client money and did

not return monies to all clients, has been struck off and ordered to pay £65,000 costs. The SDT stated: 'The ongoing inability to rectify and remedy these serious breaches of the rules to ensure compliance was a comprehensive failure to meet fundamental professional obligations which could only be described as manifest incompetence.'

Struck off for forging client signature

A 44 year PQE solicitor who forged her divorce client's signature on a replacement notice of severance, having lost the original, has been struck off. The replacement was sent to the client's husband, who, not recognising the signature, refused to sign it and a complaint was made to the SRA. The SRA described the misconduct as 'deliberate and planned to conceal the fact the original document was lost'.



How Compli can help...

The Compli Solicitor Regulatory and Professional Discipline Team can provide expertise and advice in with risk and compliance, AML, disciplinary assistance etc. If we can help in any way, please get in touch at compl@weightmans.com.



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As we enter the new year, many of us will be thinking about what resolutions to set ourselves for 2025. Will it be to exercise more or eat healthily? Maybe to stop a bad habit or perhaps to look after your mental wellbeing.

Do you have a New Year's Resolution, personal or professional, and, if so, what is it and why?

David Abbott

Head of Corporate Social Responsibility and Wellness
Olliers Solicitors

I know what my resolutions ought to be: lose some weight, start "couch to 5k", pump up those mountain bike tyres, etc; but that would lead to disappointment by February when they've fallen by the wayside. So instead, I will make one that I can keep; to go for more walks at dusk, watching the barn owls which hunt nightly over the fields behind my house. It's a little local wonder which lifts my spirits.



Fiona Ledden

City Solicitor, Manchester City Council
President, Manchester Law Society

Personal New Year's Resolution

I have developed Mobility problems and in my personal life I have 2 maybe 3 resolutions. The first to ensure that I do my exercises regularly and properly as advised - no skimping! Most importantly that I ensure every weekend to go for as long a walk as possible with my daughter irrelevant of weather, and lastly that I ask for help when I need it.

Work related New Year's Resolution.

My new Years Resolution in work is to hold monthly drop, in sessions to talk to colleagues about new ideas and developments with our equalities Strategy, to listen to what the barriers and concerns are, and have been in the office. Then take action to pull away and action removing those barriers and be up to be challenged and to challenge unacceptable language and behaviour.



Sharon Adair
Practice Group Support
Manager
Eversheds Sutherland

One of my resolutions is to attend more Mike Ode training sessions. They've been incredibly insightful and beneficial for my professional growth. Plus, Mike's northern background really resonates with me, making the sessions enjoyable and relatable. By attending more, I hope to

continue developing my skills and staying motivated! Improving my work-life balance is the resolution I never keep and I suspect I'm not alone. I need to re-set those boundaries and make time for relaxation, family and friends.

Personally, I want to learn how to read tarot cards. It's something I've always been curious about and I think it will be a fun and intriguing new skill. Learning tarot will



not only be an enjoyable hobby but also a unique way to explore intuition and self-reflection. Maybe I'll predict some exciting things for 2025!

Steve Kuncewicz
Partner & Head of Creative,
Digital & Marketing
Glaisyers ETL

Much as I hate to admit that some of them may not actually come to pass, I have several:

- Lose all the weight
- Listen to more music (mainly metal) and less podcasts

- Get cast as Batman, James Bond or Ozzy Osbourne in a major motion picture
- Grow our team sustainably but ambitiously
- Make fewer resolutions



and improve my well-being by saying no when necessary and keeping time to enjoy the small things and time outside of work.

In addition to this...I really am setting a new year's resolution to make sure I take up yoga and breath work! It's a must for winding down and staying consistent rather than endless gym, repetitive training!



Lucy Cresswell
Solicitor
JMW Solicitors LLP

My new year's resolution is to improve my mental well-being. I'm going to begin setting boundaries.

It's my new year's resolution to learn how to say no when its required, not stretch myself too thin by saying yes to too much which tips the work-life balance over the edge! It is hard to not get swept up with being involved in everything, but in 2025 I want to live in the moment



Bexley Beaumont fastest growing law firm outside top 100

Bexley Beaumont has capped a unique double by topping an influential growth ranking for the second year in a row.

The firm, which only launched four years ago, has been named by Codex Edge as the fastest growing legal firm outside the UK's top 100 practices based on lawyer recruitment.

Codex Edge - an independent company specialising in market research about the legal profession - found that Bexley Beaumont had seen its partner ranks grow by 60 per cent during the course of 2024.

Bexley Beaumont's co-founder and Chief Executive, Karen Bexley, said that the findings bore testimony to the firm's unique operating model.



Anna Beaumont and Karen Bexley

She added that progress would have been even more dramatic this had it not been for Bexley Beaumont's "selective" approach to recruitment.

"We have made no secret of the fact that we have no intention of being the largest in terms of partner numbers or recruiting simply for the sake of it.

"Instead, we place a premium each year on attracting a small number of talented, ambitious partners who are looking to develop their practices.

Gateley Legal and Lowry agree partnership as venue gears up for 25th anniversary celebrations

Gateley Legal have signed a sponsorship deal with Lowry as the iconic arts and cultural venue embarks on a year-long celebration marking its 25th anniversary.

The sponsorship deal will see Gateley Legal support the Lowry's vibrant and diverse programme of events throughout 2025. Gateley Legal has also donated £2500 to support the venue's targeted outreach programme aimed at communities in Salford and across Greater Manchester.

Joint heads of Gateley's Manchester office, Stuart Evans and Hayley Sullivan, said: "We are excited to partner with Lowry as it prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary. As a responsible business, we are committed to supporting local organisations that showcase and nurture young talent, drive economic growth, and promote inclusivity and accessibility for all. Becoming a Gold level supporter of Lowry enables us to promote our shared values and support its diverse and groundbreaking programme of live performances, exhibitions, and educational initiatives."

"We then provide a higher standard of support than they might find elsewhere in order to grow those practices and deliver exceptional service to clients.

"That is tremendously easy to say but difficult to live up to. The effort entailed in facilitating those arrivals means that there is always something of a limit to how many individuals join us in any one year.

"We see ourselves very much as a boutique practice, able to offer the kind of support associated with the very best traditional law firms but a greater spirit of collaboration across a range of legal specialisms.

"An essential part of recruitment is identifying individuals who fit the Bexley Beaumont culture.

"That we therefore find ourselves topping the Codex table despite the greater competition for talent that there has been in the legal sector over recent years, shows that having a very distinct approach does pay off."

Gwen Oakden, Deputy Chief Executive and Development Director at Lowry, added: "As a charity, Lowry relies on corporate partnerships to keep making world-class art available to everyone and to continue our vital work with communities across Salford and Greater Manchester. We're absolutely delighted to partner with Gateley and look forward to working with them over the coming months."

Located in Salford Quays and named after the 20th-century painter LS Lowry, the award-winning venue was officially opened in October 2000 by Queen Elizabeth II and currently welcomes over 900,000 visitors a year. As a registered charity, every penny it earns goes directly back

The Codex Edge ranking was compiled using data from an 18-month period to June this year. Three of the firms in its top 10 were fee share practices.

Researchers concluded that strong showing highlighted "that the rapid growth early in the decade wasn't just a 'lockdown' phenomenon".

During 2024, Bexley Beaumont has appointed 15 partners following a surge in interest from across the legal industry with its Real Estate team alone expanding by 20 per cent during the summer.

Its success follows similar analysis by Codex Edge last year which discovered that the firm's partner numbers had grown by 27 per cent in 2023 while many of its competitors had struggled to attract talent.

Bexley Beaumont's achievements have also seen it claim a succession of important legal industry awards - most recently, the Law Firm of the Year Award at the Modern Law Awards in March.



(L-R) Hayley Sullivan (Gateley), Gwen Oakden (Lowry) and Stuart Evans (Gateley)

into the community, nurturing local talent and fostering the creative professionals of tomorrow through its diverse program featuring theatre, dance, musicals, music, comedy, visual arts, and more.



Glaisyers ETL expands Liverpool presence with Quinn Barrow merger

Glaisyers ETL has expanded its offering in Liverpool by merging with the city centre firm Quinn Barrow Solicitors.

As part of the transaction staff at [Glaisyers ETL's](#) [Liverpool office](#), which opened last year in The Plaza on Old Hall Street, have relocated to Quinn Barrow's office in Horton House, Exchange Flags.

The merger has increased Glaisyers ETL's headcount in Liverpool to 20, with turnover of approximately £1.5 million. Overall, Glaisyers ETL, which is headquartered in Manchester, now employs 85 people and has turnover of £9 million.

Quinn Barrow, which was established in 2005, is a commercial law firm with particular expertise in commercial property, conveyancing and family and matrimonial law. The merger further strengthens Glaisyers ETL's well-respected property, corporate and commercial and private client offerings, and adds capability in family and matrimonial law.

Glaisyers ETL, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, became part of the ETL GLOBAL network of professional firms in 2018. ETL GLOBAL, members of which employ 24,000 people worldwide, has its headquarters in Essen, Germany, and its UK arm, which is primarily known for its profile in the audit, accounting and tax sector, has its head office in Bolton, Greater Manchester.

Paul Barrow, partner at Quinn Barrow, said, "Glaisyers ETL have been making waves in the North West legal market for the last few years, and joining forces with them will open up a range of growth possibilities for all of us. Becoming part of the ETL GLOBAL



(L-R) Adrian Rogers, Paul Barrow and David Jones

network, in particular, will provide access to a raft of new opportunities to collaborate with our professional peers across the UK and around the world."

Corporate partner Adrian Rogers joined Glaisyers ETL in 2023 to establish its Liverpool office. Commenting on the acquisition he said, "Quinn Barrow are a highly respected firm, and I am excited to work with all of my new colleagues to push forward and become the pre-eminent firm for independent businesses and their owners around Liverpool and beyond."

Glaisyers ETL was ETL GLOBAL's first investment in the UK legal market, and Quinn Barrow is its fourth. In 2021 Glaisyers ETL led a transaction that saw the City of London international commercial firm Laytons join the network and in 2022 it acquired a minority stake in Wealth Recovery Solicitors (WRS ETL), which specialises in helping the victims of cryptocurrency and traditional investment scams recover their lost assets.

The legal aspects of the transaction were handled in-house by the corporate teams at Glaisyers ETL and Quinn Barrow.



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Browne Jacobson honoured for innovation at enei's 2024 Inclusivity Excellence Awards

Browne Jacobson has been honoured for its innovative approach to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) by a leading employer network.

The firm won the Innovative Approach to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion category at the **2024 Inclusivity Excellence Awards**, held at the Institute of Physics in London on Wednesday 28 November.

Run by the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei), the awards celebrate organisations and individuals that are making a significant contribution to promoting inclusivity and diversity in their companies and industries.

The award by enei is the latest recognition for Browne Jacobson, which last month secured the number one position alongside PwC as best employers for social mobility in the UK, in the Social Mobility Foundation's

Social Mobility Employer Index for 2024.

The firm was recognised for its **REACH** mentoring scheme, a six-month programme aimed at addressing the disproportionate under-representation of Black lawyers working in UK law firms, which stands at just 3%, by growing, nurturing and creating a sustainable pipeline of future Black talent.

Oliver Holmes, Head of DEI at Browne Jacobson, said: "Following our joint-top ranking in the Social Mobility Employer Index, this award is another fantastic recognition Browne Jacobson's unwavering commitment to creating a truly inclusive and representative legal sector."

"Being at the forefront of society's biggest issues often requires new thinking, which is why we are particularly delighted to be recognised for the innovative, holistic

Oliver Holmes and Bridget Tatham



approach we have taken to tackling the under-representation of Black talent in the legal profession.”

The REACH mentoring programme pairs students with a mentor from Browne Jacobson or one of its partners. Mentors share their skills, knowledge and insights to help the student gain an understanding of what it is like to work in the legal profession. The scheme also includes a two-week work experience placement in one of Browne Jacobson’s seven offices.

It has achieved significant success since being piloted in 2022/23 and then launched fully in April 2024, with 54% of its mentees securing employment with the firm in the first year and increasing to 75% in year two.

Bridget Tatham [✉](#), Partner and Executive Sponsor for Race and Ethnicity at Browne Jacobson, added: “We’re very proud of our REACH programme, which continues to develop a diverse pipeline of talent joining Browne Jacobson. Diversity of background, lived experience and thought is critical to truly reflecting our society, and therefore the needs of our broad range of clients.

“Evaluating the success of DEI initiatives is vital, and we were able to demonstrate the impact this scheme has had on our students and mentees, as well as our own employee engagement and collaboration with our client BUPA.”

Applications for the 2025 REACH mentoring programme will open in January. For more information, click [here](#) [✉](#).

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Unit Chambers Wins Family Law Chambers of the Year (Regional) at the 2024 Lexis Nexis Family Law Awards

Unit Chambers [🔗](#) is delighted to announce that they have been named Family Law Chambers of the Year (Regional) at the 2024 Lexis Nexis Family Law Awards. This marks their second major accolade this year, following their success at the Lexis Nexis Legal Awards, where they were honoured as Chambers of the Year (Regional) at the Lexis Nexis Legal Awards earlier in 2024.

The recognition from the Family Law Awards reflects the dedication, expertise, and passion of Unit's barristers and team. It also highlights the trust placed in them by their clients and solicitor network, whose

continued support has been instrumental in their success.

The judges commended Unit Chambers as a "regional powerhouse" and highlighted their "steady growth, award nominations, and impactful reported cases." They also praised their strong commitment to community engagement, pro bono work, and supporting future lawyers, as well as their focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and well-being. These principles are at the heart of who Unit Chambers are, and they are proud to see them recognised on such a significant platform.

What This Means for Their Clients

For their clients, these accolades are a reflection of Unit's ongoing commitment to delivering the highest standard of representation and support. From complex public and private law cases to financial remedy disputes and beyond, the team at Unit remain focused on achieving the best outcomes while providing compassionate, client-centred service.

As a young and dynamic chambers, they are dedicated to creating a culture of excellence and inclusion that directly benefits the individuals, families, and professionals they serve.

A Word from Head of Chambers, Lisa Edmunds

"It is truly humbling for Unit Chambers to be recognised once again by Lexis Nexis in 2024. Winning Family Law Chambers of the Year (Regional) is a reflection of the





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incredible efforts of every member of our team and the trust placed in us by our clients, solicitors, and wider network.

At Unit Chambers, we are proud to stand out not only for our legal expertise but also for the values we champion—community, inclusion, and well-being. These awards inspire us to continue striving for excellence while remaining true to these principles.

On behalf of the entire team, I want to extend my deepest thanks to everyone who has supported us on this journey. We are committed to working even harder to serve our clients and contribute positively to the profession.”



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Manchester Law Society

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To find out more, visit:

www.chamberspace.co.uk If you're interest in Membership, the Members' Lounge or Chamber Space, then feel free to get in touch with the team on benefits@gmchamber.co.uk



Experience counts for two new hires at Anthony Collins

As part of the firm's ongoing expansion in the North West, Nimrah Malik has joined the local employment team at [Anthony Collins](#) as a newly qualified solicitor with five years' client services experience.

Previously employed as a legal executive at Peninsula Business Services before securing her qualification through CILEX, Nimrah has gained significant experience of both contentious and non-contentious employment law work. She has also previously held an in-house position, providing comprehensive legal advice and support spanning various areas of employment law practice.

As part of her role at Anthony Collins, Nimrah will be supporting the firm's employment team in handling a growing

caseload of Employment Tribunal work, primarily for clients in the social care sector. She will also be supporting one of the firm's larger local government clients with a complex TUPE claim and supporting the firm's lead in handling business immigration queries.

Jackie Morris, senior associate in the Employment and Pension's team at Anthony Collins' Manchester office, said: "Nimrah is joining Anthony Collins at an exciting time when our employment-related caseload is growing, and we are being asked to provide more hands-on advice and support for existing as well as new clients. One area where we are receiving a lot more enquiries currently is business immigration, mainly from clients in the social care sector who rely heavily on overseas workers."



Emily Southworth



Nimrah Malik

Another key aspect of Nimrah's role will be representing clients at preliminary hearings in the Employment Tribunal. The employment team at Anthony Collins is expecting demand for tribunal services to remain high through 2025 following the Government's wide-ranging reforms to employment law announced in the Employment Rights Bill.

Jackie Morris added: "With five years of practical legal experience, Nimrah is an excellent addition to our employment team. She is used to working in a fast-paced legal practice environment and applying her knowledge to dynamic cases and situations. Her skills will be invaluable at a time of significant change to the employment law regime, where we are expecting to see an increase in demand for litigation support."

Last year Emily Southworth also joined Anthony Collins' thriving property team in the North West from a former role at Trowers & Hamlin's. Backed by considerable experience in the social housing and third sectors, she is currently

acting for social housing sector clients on a range of property regeneration and development projects and advising charitable organisations that are landlords or tenants on all aspects of lease work. Other activity includes supporting several clients with regearing leases at strategic sites including a number of head offices and community centres, and she is also acting for a large housing association client and its development subsidiary company on a complex project involving a national housing developer in the North West.

Lucy Worrall, partner in the property team at Anthony Collins' Manchester office, said: "We are delighted that Emily has joined our growing team to work with our registered provider clients in providing much needed affordable housing. Since joining the firm earlier this year, Emily has provided invaluable support to the team, particularly as we have won a number of tenders for housing property work recently, and her advice is always greatly appreciated by clients."

Messenger Deadlines for 2025



Don't miss your chance to promote your news to the Manchester legal community. You can submit your news any time to Messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk but if you have something time sensitive you want to get in a particular issue here are the deadline dates for 2025.

February 2025	24/01/2025	August 2025	18/07/2025
March 2025	21/02/2025	September 2025	22/08/2025
April 2025	21/03/2025	October 2025	19/09/2025
May 2025	17/04/2025	November 2025	24/10/2025
June 2025	23/05/2025	December 2025	21/11/2025
July 2025	20/06/2025	January 2026	12/12/2025





New hires at Browne Jacobson will support schools with data compliance amid enhanced ICO scrutiny

New hires at Browne Jacobson will support schools with data compliance amid enhanced ICO scrutiny [Browne Jacobson's](#) education practice has bolstered its data compliance team with two key appointments.

The firm has hired award-winning [Claire Archibald](#) as Legal Director and [Bethany Paliga](#) as Senior Associate.

Working with Dai Durbridge, Partner, who leads the education data compliance team, they further strengthen the firm's specialism in supporting schools and academies in data protection matters.

Claire joins from The Education Data Hub at Derbyshire County Council, where she led a data protection officer (DPO) service that grew from a handful of clients to one of the leading providers of DPO services to schools.

Earlier this month, she won the Champion of the Year Award at the PICCASO (Privacy, InfoSec, Culture Change and Awareness Societal Organisation) Awards Europe, which recognises people making an outstanding contribution to the fast-growing data privacy sector.

Bethany, who was previously at Forbes Solicitors, brings extensive experience advising education clients on data protection and freedom of information law.

Claire and Bethany are based in Browne Jacobson's Manchester office.

Data compliance is becoming increasingly important within education, with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) reprimanding several schools for compliance failures. The regulator is placing enhanced scrutiny on children's privacy, subject access requests, artificial intelligence and biometrics.



Bethany Paliga



Claire Archibald

Claire said: “Supporting schools to get on the front foot when it comes to data protection compliance means they are less likely to experience organisational risk and stakeholder dissatisfaction, making their work less stressful.

“Our aim is for schools, and their stakeholders, to feel confident in their data protection compliance programmes. We’re excited to bring this mission to the Browne Jacobson education team to ensure our services provide school staff and their DPOs with the expertise and resources to increase their knowledge and confidence.”

Dai Durbridge [↗](#), Partner leading on safeguarding and data protection at Browne Jacobson, said: “With schools facing an ever-increasing burden from subject access requests, cyber-breach incidents, complaints and claims for damages from people affected by data breaches, there has never been a more crucial time for focusing on carrying out proactive work to ensure data protection compliance.

“Claire and Bethany will bring extra depth of knowledge and some innovative products

and services to our education clients, ensuring they are prepared for challenge in the new digital, AI-driven world. Their energy and passion are infectious.”

Nick MacKenzie, Head of Education at Browne Jacobson, added: “Half of the respondents in our **School Leaders Survey** in spring 2024 said they faced challenges in recruiting people with sufficient expertise in data management and analysis, while only one in five schools believe they have sufficient expertise in artificial intelligence, a technology where data compliance will be crucial to its successful and ethical adoption.

“Strengthening our team of data compliance specialist lawyers will therefore supplement the wide range of expertise we can offer across the breadth of our education practice. This investment in our team ensures we continue to be recognised as a market leader, having maintained our Band 1 schools and academies rankings in every region for the Legal 500 directory and nationally in Chambers this year, and voted by The Times as one of its top three firms for education.”

Start 2025 with Mitigo’s Cyber Security Guide

Mitigo, our cyber risk management partner, has launched an interactive guide to help you strengthen your cyber security. It debunks myths, shares technical security tips, and teaches you to spot phishing attacks.

Begin your 2025 cyber resolutions – download the guide [here](#) [↗](#).



Management Matters

By **Bill Kirby**, director of Professional Choice Consultancy



This Month

- **A list of essentials to support the law firm and make it commercially more viable**
 - Revenue and client relationship generation
 - Basic management essentials

Management Challenges for 2025

My article for January 2024 as a New Year set of objectives Had a good response but for many firms the commercial challenges during the year have left some very key items in need of proper attention.

Worth all reading at least the 2024 articles which can be found [here](#) ↗

After the first few items below – Big current issues from the main list for many the first couple of items – fundamental basics have not been really handled plus many firms have not improved client relationships, profitability (Revenue v GP and overheads) and working capital management and have added to issues with issues around resourcing, compliance, regulation which are having impacts on the firm's image, repeat and cross sold work, PII and fines.

A couple of Big Current Issues

- **Private Client activity – client enhancement and return**
Recent [research and activity](#) ↗ has demonstrated that most law firms who have private client services are not providing the best service to their clients in terms of giving broad enough advice with changes in government and

personal wealth to current clients – loss of repeat revenue for the firm – nor are they offering a service to 50% of the population that are without a Will – this will mean clients who use the firms for other activity – cross selling and all round support and potential new clients that could be referred in.

The existing Will Bank in many firms is not being seen as a valuable asset for repeat business (updates) LPAs and of course probate. Data is all not digitised and therefore easily found nor marketed too – when it should be part of the CRM process.

Getting this right can add massive revenue to the firm, enhance the reputation with the client base, lead to more referrals, and enhance demonstration of social awareness to own staff.

We also have to get the right staff skills in place and strong interface with multiple accountancy firms and IFAs. It is not just a document production exercise.

The state of our PMS/CMS systems and way forward

After the multiple acquisitions of UK PMS/CMS suppliers there has been a major stand off and lack of clarity on the way forward with these products.

[See my August article here](#) ↗. There is also the opportunity for a review of new clients coming in from overseas – already mainly cloud based and integrated with our added value solutions. All firms need open conversations with their existing suppliers and make a decision to wait or move.



Realistic IT infrastructure for now and going forward

From a timing perspective it is also appropriate at the moment for law firms to get an audit undertaken of their IT infrastructure. Whether in house and/or managed services/hosted. Not all suppliers are being as open as they could be. There are many firms now being contacted about getting an audit done of their hosted environment - Health check expectations - IT in line with business strategy, paying too much? Potential changes to infrastructure to save money and underwriting security, compliance, fraud protection and vulnerability. Needs to be on the management list.

General Essential Items

Director and Senior Manager Stocktake

It is very important that there is clarity about the potential and futures of the key personnel. An open disclosure is very important from everyone in terms of their drive, likes and dislikes in terms of the job role and performance plus their ambitions and future plans including retirement. Whether they want to maintain functional performance or enhance management commitment, client relationships, business development. It makes succession planning, the right resource planning so much easier.

A session for open disclosure works very effectively along with potential contribution to the business strategy and delivery

Strategy

Review the current status of performance. Current dimensions and scope - staffing levels by type, office locations, fee income, gross profit, major clients then a vision of where this is desired to be in three years' time - demonstrating growth objectives, locations, work types, GP, client expectations (new or current developed), risk and support needs - BD, HR, IT, Finance

Year one will likely become the budget but that needs regular assessment with monthly trends and performance and perpetual forecasting. The right personnel on the strategic board need to meet at least once per quarter

Process for Proactive Monthly Management

The right personnel in the Operations Board that meets monthly with the boss, legal department heads, finance head, marketing head, HR head and IT head. Even smaller firms have the legal department leaders but may be short of advice in the staff functions. This is increasingly available with the changing environment. Just one or two days a month could be useful.

Every firm irrespective of size needs a report plus a live presentation from legal department heads demonstrating understanding year to date performance by month and making clear where recovery or exploitation in the months ahead is going to happen and why.

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This should cover Billing, Gross Profit (Billing less direct costs of fee earners and staff by department), chargeable time, lock up, headcount, matter starts, complaints, business development and needs from other departments.

This needs to be accompanied by confirmation of existing files and likely billing in time – this makes the forecast that much more acceptable and focuses minds on getting the job done.

Finance will present a summarised total firm performance with monthly history and the ability to forecast forward monthly. This covers by legal department revenue and gross profit and all overheads.

IT, HR and Business Development to present history, trends and plans in place plus performance and actions

This is increasingly being seen as very important and recent interface with a number of lead consultants in the sector has identified that more analytics needs to be available enabling safer management of business and finance performance around cashflow, working capital, and even financial risk with clients. There is more requirement from inhouse finance, accountants, the IT system and in many cases added value solutions. Many of the systems in use at the moment fall short in this provision.

Too many firms are struggling at the moment over their financial security and availability of finance. Not always the best responses from banks even when clients who are under pressure themselves. It is hard to demand the right relationships without the right data available but it can be made to work. A more open relationship needs to be put in place with Banks or changes made.

Resourcing

Again, a relatively new (last 5 years) challenge for law firms.

Legal expertise and resource is a need and many smaller firms need to be able to access additional skills to meet client needs. This is becoming more available with the large number of lawyers wanting to remain independent. There are half a dozen businesses offering this sort of access now. This can also be an activity peaks and troughs resolution as client demands fluctuate but generally get stronger.

More accountancy firms are offering additional services to just doing the audit – working capital management, outsourcing, M&A advice, board meeting attendance.

Many more firms – and just not small ones are outsourcing their accountancy and bookkeeping activity because of their resource and skill challenges – client account and banking standards and regulations.

More firms are getting their document production done through outsourcing – all types including case files but also, transcription – there is no excuse for delays in document production (backlogs) and a 24 x7 service is needed to meet client and file demands.

Telephone answering and web interface management also a challenges for the right level of service.

One big challenge is also the provision of legal resource – every firm needs the right skill levels to meet client needs on line with client interface and development strategy,

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and they are not always available. There is an increased number of lawyers opting to work independently and some really good support operations.

[See my article from November 2024](#) .

Staff retention and development is also key.

Our People

Whether we like it or not the management and staff at law firms have to step up to meet challenges plus seek and win opportunities to successfully operate their business – image, client satisfaction, personal satisfaction and financial survival and returns. There are lots of personal and personnel development actions to take place along with managing the right sources of aid.

It is essential that firms retain and develop key personnel and that needs a programme from the time applicant – communication skills, intellectual skills, management skills, motivation – the right ones needed for the job role and the expectations going forward. Early awareness of shortcomings can be handled through positive development, regular communication with team leaders and personnel development programmes. The internal appraisal system needs to be up to this – an HR requirement or the right sort of advisory.

It is also important that the firm can demonstrate a positive policy for diversity and equality – not just for recruitment but also client attraction and provide regular and effective communication with certainly the younger generation to cut the current desire of 65% of them to leave their current firms as soon as they can.

For recruitment there needs to be a very

clear job specification but also a candidate profile covering required communication skills, intellectual skill, management skills (people and/or projects), motivation, and emotional factors. Applies to current staff in roles too. This can also be used for identifying coaching, training and development of existing staff

Compliance and Regulation

Again, there is too much evidence of firms not taking this seriously and they are damaging their image, being fined and potentially losing PII.

The role of management, COLPS, COFAs need to be much clearer and legal staff need to be aware that they cannot do things like tick a box when they get an AML report. They need to be read, authorised as part of the procedure. This sort of workflow is available from some suppliers of the reports and some of the newer PMS/CMS. Getting fined by the SRA does not help.

Happy to provide advice and intro for any of the potential challenges. Some good suppliers in the sector.

Bill Kirby is a director of [professionalchoiceconsultancy.com](https://www.professionalchoiceconsultancy.com) offering advice to firms on business issue from strategy, planning, business development, the effective use of IT applications and IT hosting for compliance, business continuity and DR. He can be contacted at billkirby@professionalchoiceconsultancy.com and [LinkedIn](#)

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Legal Costs Update



By **Nick McDonnell** (left) and **Colin Campbell** (right)

Here, in **Kain Knight Costs Lawyers'** regular monthly legal costs update, we focus on those cases which we believe are likely to have a practical relevance for its members. We welcome feedback and if there is an area, topic or case you would like us to address, please let us know.

We start with a chilling case in the Senior Courts Office where Master James undertook a detailed assessment of a between-the-parties bill of costs which had claimed £258,583.78. – see ***Kapoor v Johal*** [2024] EWHC 2853 (SCCO). Assessing the bill down to nil, the Judge found that there were numerous examples of misconduct within CPR 44.11 by the receiving party's solicitors, including that the attendance notes were not contemporaneous. Indeed, she said: "The impression given is that the file has been supplemented with scores if not hundreds of attendance notes created more recently. I cannot overstate how serious that is. The complete file has been retained at the SCCO as evidence should the SRA wish to see it." Awarding the costs of assessment to the paying party on the indemnity basis, the judge continued that the solicitor could not shift responsibility to the costs draftsman, and that even if there had been no misconduct, the proper charges should only have been £40,000 to £45,000 plus reasonable disbursements. Not a good day in court !

Next a foray into the world of criminal costs. In ***IPE Marble Arch Ltd v Moran*** [2024] EWHC 2913 (KB), Yip J held that the High Court did not have jurisdiction to award a defendant his costs of defending the prosecution's unsuccessful application for leave to prefer a voluntary bill of indictment against him. The application had been a "criminal

cause" for the purpose of the Senior Courts Act 1981 Pt II s.51(5) and, absent any exceptional circumstances falling within the very narrow category established by ***Murphy v Media Protection Services Ltd*** [2013] 1 Costs L.R. 16, and subsequent decisions, costs in relation to criminal proceedings were recoverable only to the extent permissible by the statutory criminal costs regime. There was no power to make the costs order sought under the criminal regime, and no other residual inherent power had been identified, so no costs could be awarded.

Back to civil costs under the Civil Procedure Rules and to Part 36. In ***Grierson v Grierson*** [2024] EWHC 3048 (Ch), Joanne Wicks KC had conducted a trial involving a substantial will which the family had contested. Giving judgment on costs, she held that although an offer made by the claimant under Part 36 had not been for a specific sum of money, it had offered terms that were more favourable to the defendant than the eventual result at trial. It followed that the CPR 36.17(4) benefits were engaged, and that as there was nothing unjust in awarding them to the claimant, they should apply, not only because of the rule, but also due to the defendant's litigation conduct. In addition, the judge ordered the defendant to make a payment on account of 80% of the costs sought.

Next an ingenious attempt to defeat a claim for costs on the grounds of a failure to serve a cancellation notice under Regulation 13 Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013. In **4VVV v Spence** [2024] EWHC 3035 (Comm), it had been the paying party's case that failure to serve the appropriate notice timeously had meant that by operation of the indemnity principle, the paying party's liability to pay any costs, had been reduced to nil. Foxton J disagreed: the cancellation period had ended after 12 months and 14 days under regulation 31(1), at which point a contract became binding, even if the information was not provided to the consumer before it was entered into, or, indeed, if it was never provided.

Finally, before the courts break up for Christmas, a case about Litigant in Person (LIP) costs. In **Tendring District Council v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions** [2024] EWCA Civ 1518, following the dismissal of Tendring's appeal (see [2024] EWCA Civ 1509), the LIP had sought her costs in the sum of £10,115.00. That had been represented on the basis of 520 hours

of work at the rate of £19 an hour. It was Tendring's case that there should be no order for costs. It said that the LIP's gross overcharging represented unreasonable or improper conduct because a claim for 520 hours equated to 65, eight-hour days or three working months. Such a claim was fanciful. The Court of Appeal disagreed that the conduct of the appellate proceedings could fairly be described as unreasonable or improper such as to deprive the LIP of any order for costs. The hours claimed were high and did require scrutiny and assessment by a costs judge, but as Tendring had lost its appeal, she was entitled to her costs, to be assessed if agreement could not be reached.

As always, these are a selection of the principal recent cases which are likely to be of use to practitioners and if any further information is required, please contact either Nick McDonnell or Colin Campbell at Nick.McDonnell@kain-knight.co.uk or Colin.Campbell@kain-knight.co.uk



Meetings in 2025

Council Meetings 2025

- 7th January
- 4th February
- 4th March
- 1st April
- 13th May
- 3rd June
- 1st July

- 9th September
- 14th October
- 4th November
- 2nd December

MLS Annual General Meeting

- 2nd December 2025

Officers Meetings 2025

- 28th January
- 25th February
- 18th March
- 29th April
- 21st May
- 17th June
- 19th August
- 23rd September
- 21st October
- 18th November

The Legal Loop: Director of Impact and Development, Anita McCallum



The Legal Loop

Anita McCallum

The Solicitors' Charity is launching a new series "The Legal Loop" to show the "behind the scenes" of what it's like to be an active part of the team running the charity. To start off, The Legal Loop is putting Anita McCallum, our Director of Impact and Development, into the spotlight.

With The Legal Loop, you're getting an insight into what it's like being a core part of The Solicitors' Charity team and the things that go on in the background to keep the charity running. Anita has an empowering, strong message she would like to share to all solicitors around England and Wales.

She says: "I want more solicitors (and former solicitors) to realise that they can come to us for all sorts of help and assistance to improve their wellbeing!"

My message to solicitors in England and Wales is: be assured that your wellbeing is our priority and concern whether its emotional, professional, financial, or physical. We'll handle your enquiry discreetly and non-judgementally to get you the best advice and support we can".

"The rewarding part is knowing that promoting the charity, and making sure it's highlighted within the legal community, means that people are then aware they can come to us to seek wellbeing assistance. When I'm at events, it always makes an impact on me when I see the surprise in people's eyes in learning there is a FREE, confidential, wellbeing service for solicitors, former solicitors and their dependants.

It's inspiring to be a part of this essential work, and a safety net for a profession



Unique

Essential

Discreet

We've asked Anita about how she would describe The Solicitors' Charity in three words...

which does so much for others at difficult times – like house moves, divorces, criminal cases, and employment issues” says Anita.

Anita’s role is widely spread across marketing and communications, to developing fundraising, impact measurement and volunteering approaches. The key mission for Anita’s role is to ensure that solicitors (and former solicitors) are aware of The Solicitors’ Charity and can

make an active contribution by donating time and/or money.

What sets this charity apart from others is that we provide a very tailored and individual response to clients in need. We are extremely flexible in our approach compared to many in the occupational support sector.

[Want to support The Solicitors' Charity? ↗](#)

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Pet of the Month

Name: Fiona Ledden

Firm: Manchester City Council

Pet Name: Basil and Toby

Pet Nickname: Bousil Roby Toby

What kind of pet do you have?
 Labradoodle and long haired Daschund

Is your pet: Male

How old is your pet: 2 and 10 months

Favourite Toy: big fluffy teddy bear with a
 sana hat on and any toy that is Basils

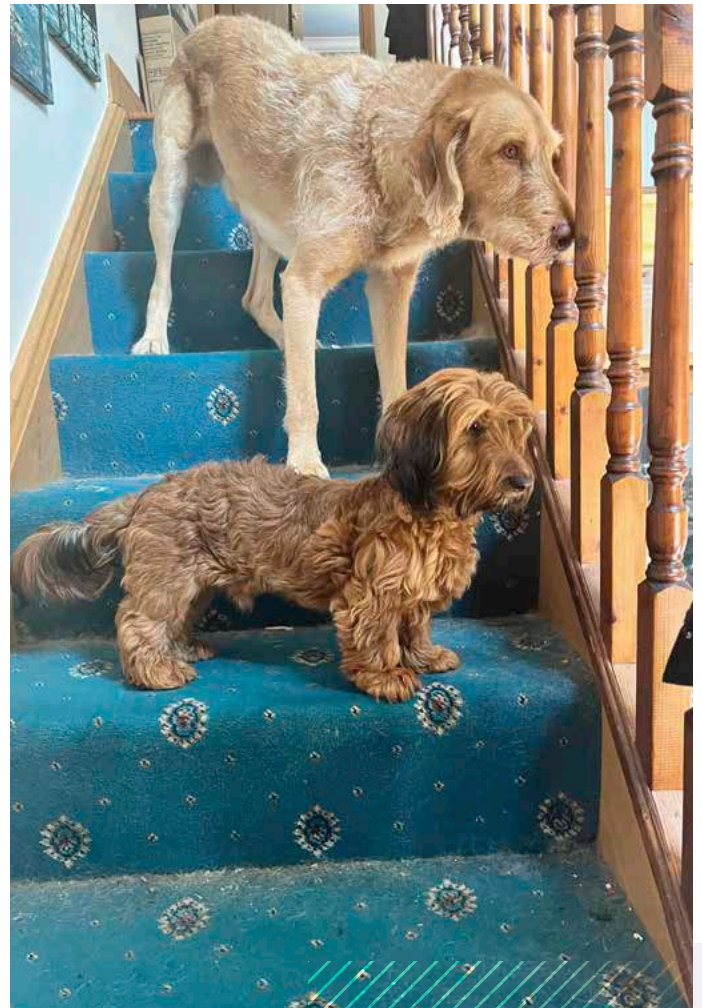
Favourite Activity: running around Garden
 and greeting my Humans, trying to play
 with Basil

Favourite Treat: Knuckle and Chicken

**What would your pet say, if they could
 speak, to the following ...**

My perfect day would be ... having Ice cream
 held by my humans and having a play date
 with his favourite female dog Lexy, a Shiatzu

My favourite thing my parents do ... is giving me ear rubs and chin scratches and letting
 me smother them with my adorable face.



Is your pet the perfect poser? Whether you have a cute cat, delightful dog, fabulous fish, gorgeous guinea pig, happy horse, brilliant bird, smart spider, luscious lizard – you get the picture – whatever animal you own we want to see and hear about them!

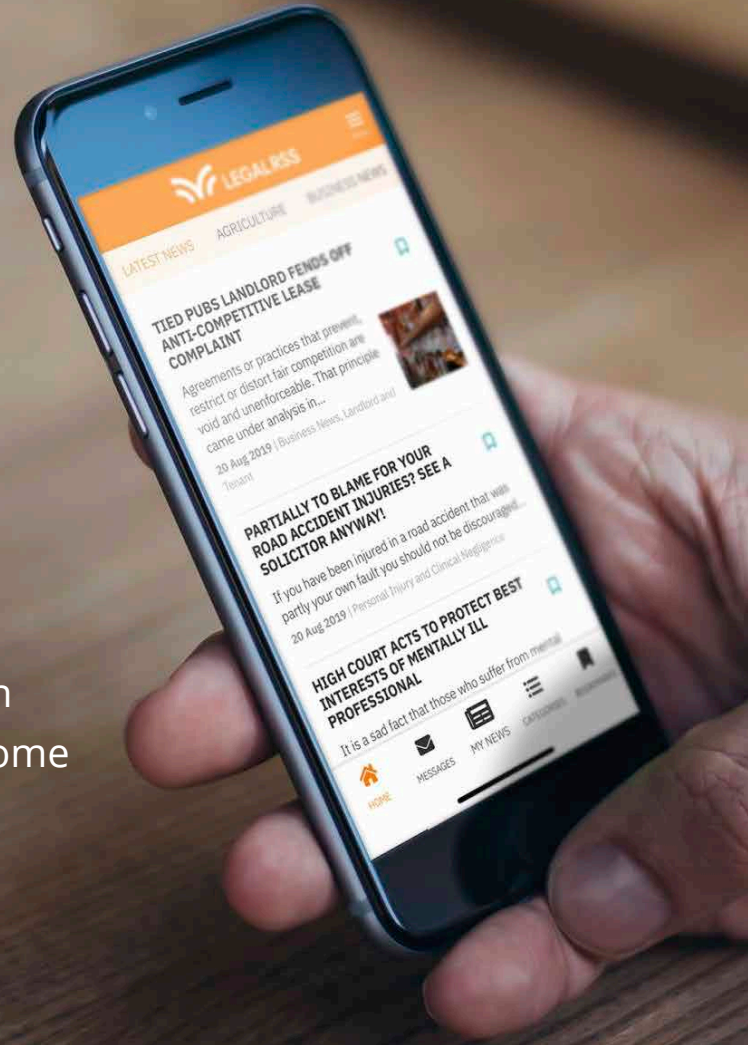
Each month we'll pick a couple of 'Pets of the Month' for the next edition so keep a look out to see if your pet has made it, modelling in *The Messenger* magazine!

You can download a copy of the questions [here](#) then send your answers and photo to Messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk



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