



March 2025

the Messenger

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Leading law societies warn against SRA's overreaching reforms



The five largest local law societies in the UK - Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester - known as "the Joint V" - have joined forces to challenge the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) proposed reforms to client money management, regulatory oversight, and the Compensation Fund.

Representing over 15,000 legal professionals nationwide, the Joint V argue in their high-level response submitted to the SRA this week that the SRA's proposals are disproportionate, risk undermining public confidence in the profession, and fail to deliver meaningful consumer protection improvements. Each Society will also deliver its own individual detailed response to the SRA.

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From the President

Fiona Ledden, President

I have been getting into the role as President of MLS over the last month.

I was so pleased to be able to attend the Joint V meeting at Birmingham, see the report on this meeting [here](#). During our various discussions we had a great debate in respect of the consultation put out by the SRA. Whilst Manchester have undertaken our own response, a response with the weight of the Joint V Law Societies does, I believe, have a greater impact weight in considerations.

We also heard from [LawCare](#), a charitable society dedicated to the wellbeing of those in the Legal profession. The wellbeing of our colleagues is so important, particularly with the pressures we have professionally and with the very toxic messaging happening both Globally and Nationally. It is so important for us all to check in on each other and watch out for those having a difficult time. I continue to be disappointed by the focus on hateful messages that can ping into social media.

I thoroughly enjoyed representing MLS at Birmingham Law Society's Awards and was fascinated to see their President looking very elegant in dinner suit, black tie and sneakers (very lovely ones). I doubt that will be my foot attire at the [Manchester Legal Awards](#). I am so delighted the nominations are now open for our awards. I trust you are looking to see which awards categories you will be entering. Don't forget the deadline is 28th March!

I was pleased to be part of a group of colleagues led by our Muslim Staff Network,

“

The wellbeing of our colleagues is so important, particularly with the pressures we have professionally

celebrating the 13th world hijab day on 1st February. The theme was 'Modesty Attitude and behaviour' and featured a number of speakers. I found it really interesting and learnt a lot from the session.

February also saw the 50th Celebration of LGBTQ+ history month and it was great to see some celebrations around Manchester.

You may have noticed we are recruiting for and [Events and Marketing Executive](#) to join the ranks of the team at MLS. I and the other officers are really excited as to where this could enable us to go.

I wanted to leave you with a thought on how we can further Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within our organisations and beyond. It's crucial that we practice and foster an environment with zero tolerance for discrimination and bias. This involves challenging discriminatory behaviours against protected groups and promoting EDI through our language and actions. While it can be challenging at times, it is incredibly important.

the Messenger



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Manchester Law Society

4th Floor, Arkwright House, Parsonage Gardens,
Manchester, M3 2LF

www.manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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Communications Committee

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Manchester Law Society

Carla Jones
Manchester Law Society

Chandre May
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David Anderson
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The Society welcomes articles and letters from members on any topic and items should be sent to messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

The views and opinions expressed in The Messenger are those of the individual contributors and not of the Manchester Law Society



**Deadline for the
April 2025 edition
of The Messenger**

The Messenger is published by



Advertising enquiries:

Please contact Martyn Best:
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Design by Andy Bellis Creative



Joint V Law Societies Meeting Report

As referred to on the cover article, collectively the Joint V Law Societies of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Liverpool and Bristol have a voice on behalf of somewhere near 15,000 practising solicitors and barristers.

The Officers of each Society meet at least twice per year to discuss issues that are important to their membership and, together, we are then able to agree on a collective approach and take those issues forward with the relevant audience, whether the SRA, Law Society, Legal Ombudsman, or any other relevant agency or organisation. In addition, the group can share experiences and opportunities that could be of benefit to their membership. It is an invaluable working group.

The most recent meeting took place on the 30th of January 2025, hosted by Birmingham Law Society. Manchester Law Society were well represented at the meeting. As readers would expect, important issues on the agenda included the SRA Consumer Protection Review. The Joint V were able to join forces in reaching a collective response to express grave concerns over the Solicitors Regulation Authority's proposed reforms to client money management, regulatory processes, and the Compensation Fund. Having agreed on the wording for a press release, that position garnered extensive coverage in the [Law Society Gazette](#). Interest that would have been difficult to achieve if we stood alone.

“

The Officers of each Society meet at least twice per year to discuss issues that are important to their membership

The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss pressures faced locally and nationally and to better understand and therefore represent the wider profession. We heard from Elizabeth Rimmer, the CEO of [LawCare](#), who provided a detailed and passionate explanation of what LawCare can do for our members, particularly those who are struggling. We also heard updates about costs delays in court, SRA account rules and crypto assets, Law Society Bicentenary events and key priorities for 2025. It is clear that issues faced in Manchester are issues shared by the profession.

The meeting provided an opportunity to reaffirm what is important to our members and also to receive reassurance that our views are shared. Working closely with our colleagues from Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham and Bristol, particularly as we face regulatory pressures from multiple angles, has never been more important. The next meeting is taking place in May. Should any member have a view or an issue that they think the Joint V should consider or perhaps adopt, then please contact [Carla Jones](#) at Manchester Law Society so it can be fed into the Officers of the Society and, if appropriate, on to the wider Joint V audience.



Upcoming events: **Social Events**

15 May 2025 - [Posh Pub Quiz](#)

Thursday, July 03, 2025 - [Manchester Legal Awards Dinner](#)



Upcoming events: **Legal Education**

05 March 2025 - [The Next Generation of Legal Professionals – Helping Define the Future](#)

11 March 2025 - [Local Authority Conference](#)

May 14, 2025 - [Employment Law Conference](#) - save the date!

Thank you to our supporters

More information can be found within the Messenger



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HMPPS Bail Information Service: Briefing note to Legal Representatives

The HMPPS Bail Information Service (BIS) is being rolled out nationally, with recruitment underway to support the delivery of this service both at first hearings (probation court staff to support) and second or subsequent hearings (to be supported by prison-based staff).

Bail information reports (BIR) provide relevant, objective, and factual information to the court to enable it to make fully informed decisions about bail or custodial remand. Bail Information Officers do not advocate for or against bail but gather information to assist the court decision.

Bail Officer activities in Court

- Liaise with the Crown Prosecution Service, HMCTS, Defence advocates, Probation Service, police, and any other relevant agencies at the earliest opportunity in the process, to support the efficient running of the court day through early case identification and information exchange.
- Interview defendants to gather factual and relevant information.
- Conduct checks relating to a proposed address, including making contact with the primary householder identified, and completing necessary safeguarding enquiries by obtaining relevant information/data from police, local authorities, and other agencies.
- Liaise with relevant statutory and/or voluntary support services and complete referrals as required for NACRO-CAS accommodation.

- Check with Home Office Immigration to confirm legal status of foreign national defendants.
- Prepare a written Bail Information Report or update courts via verbal delivery as required.
- Bail Officers will work with their counterparts in the HMP to share and represent information for either 1st or subsequent bail applications.

Legal Representatives:

Please liaise with probation court colleagues or prison bail officers at the earliest opportunity. By identifying cases at the earliest possible opportunity, we will maximize the time available to seek out the necessary information that will support judicial decision-making regarding bail or remand decisions, including removing practical barriers to bail or signposting to community support services.

Please contact the Probation Service to get the contact details of your bail information officer and information on when the service will be available at your court. Thank you.

General BIS enquiries:

Bail-information-service@justice.gov.uk 



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Are you ready for the Manchester Legal Awards 2025?

Entries close on 28th March for the [Manchester Legal Awards 2025](#). With 23 categories there are more ways than ever to celebrate your achievements. We have four new awards this year so we wanted to make sure you know all about them.

New Awards

[Corporate Culture and Wellbeing Champions of the Year](#) celebrates your organisations efforts to support and engage with their employees. Employee wellbeing is growing in importance to employers. Ensuring your team are balancing their work and life outside of work is essential to long-term success. Share with us how you are doing this successfully.

We are delighted to be highlighting the work of in-house lawyers with our returning [In-house Team of the Year](#) award. It is a great chance to showcase the great and varied work done by in-house teams across a multitude of sectors.

As climate concerns come to the forefront of the agenda we have added an award for [Sustainability Champions of the Year](#). This is your chance to shout about the brilliant work we know is going on in the legal sector to reduce the environmental footprint of your organisation.

Open to all staff working in the legal sector, the [Unsung Hero of the Year](#) award is designed to ensure that these remarkable individuals know just how much they are appreciated. Anyone can enter, and anyone can be nominated – from support staff, including post room staff, PAs and EAs, HR & Marketing, IT and Finance Staff, to

solicitors and barristers. So do give a shout out to that colleague who has been making your life easier and let them know they are appreciated!

You can see all the award for 2025 [here](#).

Who can enter?

The awards are open to anyone working in the legal sector in Greater Manchester and to all members of Manchester Law Society, be that in a firm, chambers or an in-house team.

You do not need to be a member of Manchester Law Society to enter unless you work outside of Greater Manchester.

What period do the entries need to cover?

The qualifying period for these awards is 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024. Your entries need to refer to activities within this timeframe.

Can I nominate myself?

Yes! You can definitely nominate yourself or someone else. We ask for details of the nominator and the nominee but if you are nominating yourself, you can click a button and the form will auto-fill.

Is there a cost to enter?

No! It is free for anyone to enter so what have you got to lose?

How are entries judged?

Each entry is reviewed and scored by a panel of judges made up of professionals and business leaders. The nominations are scored against the four criteria for each category and given a score out of 10.

The nominations with the highest marks will be included in the shortlist announced on 6th May and all shortlisted nominees will be interviewed by a panel of judges on Friday 6th June.

All information in the nominations are treated in the strictest confidence by the MLS team and the judges. No information is publicly disclosed.

There is one exception to this, the Lifetime Achievement Award which is awarded by the Manchester Law Society Council.

How to enter

Visit the [Enter](#) page of the Manchester Legal Awards website and select the category you wish to enter.

Enter the details of the nominator and, if different, the nominee.

Click through to the next page.

Review the criteria and enter answers of up to 250 words for each of the four questions.

You can either save your form to review and enter at a later date or submit it immediately.

Look out for the shortlist announcement on 6th May and make sure you/your nominee keep 6th June free for judging day!



How can I attend?

You can register your interest in attending [here](#). Tickets are allocated with a priority for the shortlisted firms and sponsors, your booking will be confirmed once the shortlist is announced.

How can I support the event?

Raise your profile in the Manchester legal scene and support the Manchester Legal Awards by sponsoring the event. See the packages available [here](#) or download them [here](#). Contact [Fran Eccles-Bech](#) to find out more.

Key dates

28th March 2025	Entries close
6th May 2025	Shortlist announced
6th June 2025	Judging Day
3rd July 2025	Awards Ceremony

We cannot wait to celebrate your brilliant achievements from 2024 and hear all the ways in which you are raising the bar for excellence.

If you have any questions regarding the ML Awards please email mlawards@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk and we will get back to you as quickly as possible.



Women in the Law UK launches 2025 programme with conference and annual dinner

Women in the Law UK has launched its 2025 programme of events, starting with its annual International Women's Day conference and dinner on 6 March 2025.

The organisation's fourth annual International Women's Day conference, which will take place at the Manchester offices of law firm Irwin Mitchell from 10.00am to 4.00pm on 6 March. Welcoming more than 100 delegates, the conference will explore the theme "Empowering Women in the Law".

Confirmed speakers include Ros Beever, partner and national head of the Divorce & Family Law team at Irwin Mitchell, Caroline Green, senior partner at Browne Jacobson, and Nicolina Andall, interim chair of the Audit & Risk Committee of the Judicial Appointments Commission. A number of senior public figures are also expected to attend.

Later that evening the Women in the Law UK annual dinner will take place at the Radisson Edwardian Manchester Hotel.

Guests at this sold-out event will hear from a number of leading legal figures, including Barbara Mills KC, the new chair of the Bar Council of England and Wales. She is the first specialist family practitioner in 35 years, and the first ever person of colour, to assume this office.

The dinner is being held with the support of headline sponsors Browne Jacobson LLP, as well as HW Independent Financial Management and the Northern Circuit.

Women in the Law UK is a professional development organisation which exists to promote gender equality in the legal sector. It was founded in Manchester by the award-winning barrister Dr Sally Penni MBE and operates throughout the country.

The organisation has more than 60,000 followers on LinkedIn and the "Talking Law" podcast hosted by its founder, Dr Penni, is in the top two per cent of podcasts globally by number of downloads.

Dr Penni said, "We have a packed programme for this year's conference, with sessions from a really diverse array of speakers covering a wide range of topics around the theme of empowering women in the law. It will also be an amazing opportunity for lawyers at all stages of their careers to network and build new relationships with their peers, and I would like to thank Irwin Mitchell for generously hosting us once again.

"Our annual dinner, meanwhile, has become known for the succession of trailblazing female lawyers who have filled the after-dinner speaking slots, including Baroness Hale. This year is no exception.

"Both events are also an opportunity for us to celebrate International Women's Day, which will this year fall on Saturday 8 March and take the theme, 'Accelerate Action'. That is exactly what we are seeking to do as we strive to empower women in the law at all stages of their careers."

The International Women's Day event is the organisation's first conference of the year. It

will also hold, in association with The Legal Director, a dedicated conference for general counsel and in-house lawyers at the London offices of HFW on 20 May.

The organisation's annual London conference will take place at the City offices of Leigh Day on 25 September and a further autumn conference will take place at the Manchester office of DLA Piper on 28 November, as well as a programme of regular events throughout the year.

These include webinars on applying to be a KC, and taking on part-time coronial and judicial roles, as well as a number of face-to-face events. Dr Penni also continues to deliver the Penni Lecture series of substantive online lectures providing CPD content.

Women in the Law UK's events are held under the Chatham House Rule, enabling speakers and audience members to speak freely and learn from each others' experiences in a confidential environment. Previous events have covered subjects including career progression, why lawyers need to sit on boards and what lawyers can learn from inspiring businesswomen.

To book places at Women in the Law UK events readers should visit www.womeninthelawuk.com or book directly via www.eventbrite.co.uk.

Individuals and businesses that are interested in joining Women in the Law UK or applying for the Women in the Law UK Charter for employers should email womeninthelawuk@gmail.com.

Dr Sally Penni MBE





Upcoming Q1 & Q2 meetings

Tuesday, March 04, 2025

MLS Council Meeting

Thursday, March 06, 2025

Employment Law Forum

Thursday, March 06, 2025

Property Law Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Communications Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

MLS Officers Meeting

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 01, 2025

MLS Council Meeting

Wednesday, April 02, 2025

Communications Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

MLS Officers Meeting

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Private Client Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

Communications Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

MLS Council Meeting

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

MLS Officers Meeting

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 03, 2025

MLS Council Meeting

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Communications Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

MLS Officers Meeting

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Private Client Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 01, 2025

MLS Council Meeting

Wednesday, July 02, 2025

Communications Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 15, 2025

MLS Officers Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 2025

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Meeting

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Are you getting enough sleep?

Sleep is absolutely crucial to our wellbeing. Research shows after people sleep, they tend to retain information and perform better on memory tasks. While we can cope fairly well with a day or two of late nights, regularly getting less than 7 hours sleep has a significant negative impact on performance.

So, what can you do to get more and better-quality sleep? There are healthy habits you can adopt in order to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Get up at the same time every day

Wake up at the same time every day even when you have had a poor night's sleep. This helps your body find a natural rhythm that will help you go to sleep at night.

Exercise

Research shows that exercise improves sleep and helps sleep disorders such as insomnia. Exercising too close to bedtime though can sometimes inhibit sleep.

Spend time outside

Increasing the amount of time you spend outdoors can improve sleep quality, try and get out for a walk at some point in the day.

Look at your diet

Caffeine, alcohol, sugar, rich food or a heavy meal too near bedtime will affect your sleep. Try to cut down in the evenings or switch to decaf.

Have a wind down routine

Have an evening routine involving reading, having a bath, preparing for the next day. Try calming your mind by focusing on your breathing, or try a mindfulness or meditation app.

Reduce screen time

The blue light from your phone or laptop suppresses melatonin which affects your sleep. Turn screens off an hour before bedtime and keep electronics out of the bedroom, buy an alarm clock rather than charging your phone by your bed.





Create a sleep sanctuary

Your bedroom should be cool, dark and free from clutter, and your bed should be comfortable and supportive.

Waking up in the night

When you wake up at night, don't allow your mind to start thinking. If you can't get back to sleep get up, go to the loo, do something until you feel sleepy again – but keep the lights low. Reading can help as can writing down your thoughts on a notepad for the next day.

Try not to worry

Whilst having a routine is important for good sleep, try not to worry if life gets in the way and your sleep is affected. It's possible to survive a period of poor sleep with no ill effects.

“

Whilst having a routine is important for good sleep, try not to worry if life gets in the way and your sleep is affected.”

Seek support

If you are having prolonged periods of interrupted or little sleep lasting more than a few weeks seek evidence-based support from a health professional.

If you can't sleep and need to talk contact LawCare for free and in confidence on [0800 279 6888](tel:08002796888) , email support@lawcare.org.uk or go to www.lawcare.org.uk to access live chat and other resources.

We understand life in the legal sector.

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lawcare.org.uk/survey

LawCare

Presenting – It's all about the 3 Greeks

Mark stood at the front of the room, he looked at his adoring crowd, he wasn't feeling too nervous as he'd done his homework. What could possibly go wrong?

He revealed his graphs one by one. The content was good, plenty of research and evidence to support his opinions, but by slide 15, he knew he was losing the room. His audience weren't getting it. The graphs proved a point, but something was missing.

Later over a Choca Mocha, he reflected but couldn't put his finger on what went wrong. He knew his stuff; he proved his points, and he even smiled a lot. He sipped the dregs of his coffee and decided it was time for a rather large Gin.

So, what went wrong? Simple really, Mark didn't tick all the 3 Greeks of Ethos, Logos, and his mate Pathos.

Ethos – Is all about your credibility. Are you demonstrating/explaining your experience and expertise as part of your presentation? Failure to do this will lead to your audience thinking "What does he know?" "What experience has he in this anyway?" Explain who you are and why you've been asked to present. Explain your sources and where your evidence came from. Do all of this and your audience will be filled with confidence.

Logos – Is all about logic and reason. Have you supported your argument via evidence and hard facts to support your idea/message? Failure to do this will leave your audience thinking "So what?" "It's a great idea, but there's no evidence to support it". Mark ticked this box, but this along won't sway the audience.



Mike Ode

Pathos – Is all about hearts and minds. Are you making an emotional connection with your audience? Failure to do this will leave your audience thinking "Great idea, but I don't like him" "He didn't seem to care what we, or the team thought", "He shut down anyone who disagreed with him and got really defensive".

Mark dove into logic & reason without convincing the audience of his credibility and as a result the audience didn't warm to him.

Think back to presentations you've seen that haven't gone that well. Which Greek was missing? Think about your past presentations? What Greek was missing?

Ahead of your next presentation, take 10 minutes to reflect on your content and how you'll deliver it. Are you ticking the 3 Greeks?

Do you need help developing your presentation skills?
 Contact Mike direct for a chat
mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk ↗

Free Youth Justice Training for Lawyers in the North of England

Are you a criminal lawyer representing children in the Youth and Crown Courts in the North of England?

Venue: Alliance Manchester Business School, Booth Street West, Manchester, M15 6PB

Date: Saturday 22nd March 2025, 10 am - 4 pm

Cost: The training is free of charge for attendees

Our free training is a necessary update on knowledge and skills and will be invaluable to all lawyers representing children in the Youth and Crown Courts.

The training will address:

- Bail & Remand for children – a refresh
- Child Criminal Exploitation – law and tips for practice
- Addressing racism and adultification in the youth justice system
- Child welfare & safeguarding – using existing law and guidance to protect children from criminal justice responses
- A detailed understanding of the Youth Justice Board’s ‘Child First’ approach
- Out of Court Disposals, pursuing diversion and local context

The Ministry of Justice is funding this training as part of its commitment to encourage greater uptake of youth-specific training for legal practitioners working with children. This kind of training, combined with increases in remuneration for youth court work, recognises the complexity and seriousness of working with child clients and the need for experienced legal practitioners who can provide high-quality legal advice.



Scan the QR code to register or go to:
<https://yjlc.uk/training-and-events/forthcoming-events/free-youth-justice-training-lawyers-manchester>

20 Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



How can it be March already? It still feels as though the Christmas break was only a couple of weeks ago! Compli is back with our monthly update on regulatory matters, risk and compliance, and recent disciplinary decisions.

SRA requires firms to provide information on complaints handling procedure

On 30 January, the SRA wrote to 750 firms for information regarding how the firm identifies and handles any first-tier complaints. The questionnaire asks about the complaints procedure, how staff and clients are made aware of the process, ways in which the firm responds to complaints, outcomes etc. Responding to the questionnaire is a regulatory requirement, with the SRA taking disciplinary action for failure to respond. The deadline was 28 February, so if you have received one and not yet replied, do so asap!

Responses to SRA consultation on client money in legal services

We understand that a large number of responses were submitted to the SRA's consultation, which closed on 21 February, by various groups, including the Law Society, Manchester Law Society, the Joint V (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds Liverpool, and Manchester Law Societies), firms and individuals, mainly expressing disapproval of the proposals, particularly the replacement of client accounts with third party management accounts (TMPAs) and removing the ability for firms to earn interest on client accounts, and suggesting that rather than introducing swingeing changes, the SRA focuses on improving its own internal processes, including strengthening the authorisation process, reintroducing the requirement for firms to

“

The SRA questionnaire deadline was 28 February, so if you have received one and not yet replied, do so asap!”

submit annual accountant's reports and greater scrutiny on non-legal personnel, referencing the conclusions and criticisms of the SRA in the report into the Axiom Ince failure. To date, the only published response we have noted in favour of some of the proposals was from a TPMA provider. While the consultation may have closed, and we wait for the SRA's response and any possible changes to be introduced, the debate is likely to continue, particularly as the report into the SSB debacle is still awaited.

SRA study on vulnerable clients

A recent study commissioned by the SRA, as part of its 'ongoing commitment to improving access to legal services', found that the term 'vulnerability' can be thought too harmful or stigmatising, so there was a reluctance to disclose vulnerabilities, and proposed there should be a fundamental change, moving from an opt-in to opt-out approach, so all legal communication would change to using language that all could understand, rather than requiring individual



adjustments. The report recommended policy changes by the SRA and guidance on 'universal practice' and the SRA are now considering the feasibility of introducing this. Paul Philip, Chief Executive, said: 'It is clear that, in order to improve accessibility, build trust and reduce complaints, the legal sector could look at designing services that are accessible and inclusive for everyone. We will now consider how we and others might take this forward by bringing together experts in this field.'

SRA update on investigation on the Post Office scandal

The SRA updated its June 2024 statement on 20 February 2025, the only change, so far as we can see, being the addition of a paragraph stating: 'Now that the inquiry has finished hearing evidence, we are liaising closely with it to collect all relevant evidence, and with the police to understand what, if any action they might take. We will, of course, take action as soon as we can, and while we can't confirm the exact timeline, we are hopeful that we can launch prosecution action in some cases in the summer of this year.' In its earlier statement it indicated that there are more than 20 live investigations, and that number appears unchanged. It is looking at a range of issues including solicitors' management and supervision of cases; the strategy and conduct of prosecutions and of litigation, duties relating to expert witnesses, disclosure obligations and improper application of privilege to protect communications from disclosure. The Bar Standards Board also indicated that it was preparing to take action against barristers for potential breaches of professional obligations and was liaising with the SRA.

Disciplinary and regulatory decisions:

Fines for AML breaches

The raft of fines we have seen imposed on firms and fee earners for AML breaches continues:

Four firms were fined between over £3000 to £25000 for breaches including failing to adequately conduct client risk assessments and not maintaining records of risk assessments,

COFA and firm fined for compliance failures

A law firm and its COFA have each been fined £25,000 as a result of multiple compliance failures, including AML and accounts rule breaches and jointly ordered to pay £38000 costs.

An SRA investigation found that failure to monitor the client account accurately resulted in a client account shortfall of over £40,600 and residual balances totalling almost £288,000.

Firm and solicitor fined for AML breaches

A firm was fined £25000 and ordered to pay £18000 in an agreed outcome for using client account as a banking facility and failure to apply CDD, ongoing monitoring and carry out risk assessments in relation to a client, and the partner with responsibility for the client was fined £3500 and £6500 costs.

Continued on page 22



Trainee barred for touching colleague at social event

A trainee solicitor received a section 43 banning order and is barred from being involved in legal practice without the SRA's prior approval, following inappropriate behaviour towards a female colleague at a firm social event. The conduct was said to be 'inappropriate and/or unwanted and/or sexually motivated'.

Solicitor fined for 'cavalier' approach to regulations

A sole practitioner was fined £45,000 for breaching AML regulations, allowing the client account to be used as a banking facility and making false declarations to the SRA and insurers. The SDT found his false declarations to be reckless and lacking in integrity, as opposed to dishonest.

The SDT found his remorse to be 'sincere and genuine' but still felt he had fallen "far short of the standards of integrity and probity expected of a solicitor and in the circumstances the level of seriousness of the misconduct was high". In addition to the fine and an order to pay costs of £60,000, conditions were placed on his practising certificate preventing him from being a partner, sole practitioner, holding client money, taking a compliance management role or being a signatory on any client account.

Partner struck off for misleading clients about state of claim

A partner who misled clients for two years regarding the progress of the claim was struck off and ordered to pay almost £20,000 costs. The client had been led to believe that the claim had been issued when in reality, this was not the case.

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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Leading law societies warn against SRA's overreaching reforms

Unnecessary disruption to client money handling

The SRA's long-term ambition to prevent solicitors from holding client money is both disproportionate and ill-conceived – “a sledgehammer to crack a nut”. The legal profession overwhelmingly acts with integrity, and the existing safeguards are robust. A move to Third-Party Managed Accounts (TPMAs) would not improve consumer protection and would introduce new risks, including cybersecurity threats and reduced client choice. There is no clear evidence that TPMAs offer any greater security than the current system.

Flawed approach to interest on client accounts

The SRA's claim that firms are improperly retaining interest on client funds is fundamentally mistaken. The legal profession has long absorbed the costs of managing client accounts, and there is no evidence of improper conduct. Interest retention was never raised as a concern when rates were low, highlighting the inconsistency in the SRA's approach.

Unrealistic residual balance proposals

A rigid 12-week deadline for returning residual balances is impractical, particularly in complex matters involving international clients, deceased estates, or property transactions. The current “prompt” obligation already ensures that balances are cleared appropriately. Arbitrary deadlines could lead to unnecessary breaches and administrative burdens without achieving meaningful reform.

The SRA must improve its own regulatory processes

The focus should be on strengthening the

SRA's own internal oversight rather than imposing further regulatory burdens on firms. The Joint V supports:

- Enhancing pre-authorisation checks to prevent misconduct before it arises.
- Better training for SRA staff and improvements in regulatory enforcement.
- Reintroducing accountants' reports to strengthen compliance monitoring.

Compensation Fund lacks transparency

The Compensation Fund is being used not just to compensate clients but also to cover SRA intervention costs—without sufficient oversight or transparency. A significant portion of the Fund's budget is allocated to interventions, yet the profession receives little accountability on how these funds are used. The SRA must provide greater clarity on the Fund's future and ensure solicitors are not unfairly burdened with rising costs.

Call for proportionate and evidence-based regulation

The Joint V strongly urges the SRA to rethink its approach.

“The proposed reforms risk undermining trust in the profession without delivering tangible benefits to consumers. The SRA should focus on improving its own regulatory effectiveness before imposing new burdens on firms,” said Richard Port MBE, President of Birmingham Law Society.

The Joint V stands ready to engage with the SRA to develop fair, practical, and evidence-based solutions that protect consumers while maintaining the integrity and efficiency of legal services.

To read the full response please [click here](#)

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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



In honour of International Women's Day on 8th March we asked our Talking Heads:
“Who has been the most inspirational woman in your life, professionally and/or personally, and why?”

Stuart Cartwright

Partner, Lawshare

I have two. From a personal perspective, my Mum. She combined working, with bringing up two 'football mad' sons, whilst my Dad worked unsociable shifts. I've never heard her complain and she's still an absolute rock for us, our families, and her grandchildren. She taught us the valuable principles of hard work, honesty, manners and treating other people as you would like to be treated yourself.

Professionally, Joy Kingsley, JMW's former senior partner. An absolute one-off and a powerhouse of a woman who drove the firm to new heights during her tenure. I had the pleasure of working with Joy for over a decade and 'every day was a school day' for me. Never phased, a font of legal management know-how and a genius at getting the most out of her staff and partners.



Laura McMorland

Corporate Partner, Bermans

Professionally, Judge Judy. I loved watching her show on TV. Judge Judy's no-nonsense attitude, wit and impressive credentials make her my law idol, albeit with perhaps an unrealistic expectation of the legal world in practice! Anyone with books titled '*Don't Pee on My Leg and Tell Me It's Raining*' and '*Beauty Fades, Dumb is Forever*' deserves to be admired in my opinion.



Personally, and continuing a theme of feisty women... my mum. She has taught me to be independent and to always stick up for myself. My mum spending one parents' evening in the mid-1990s telling my PE teacher why girls could play football just as well as boys still sticks in my mind today – it also acts as a reminder why on International Women's Day 2025 we are seeking to imagine a gender-equal world.

Continued on page 30

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Lorna McGlone
CEO, Venus Legal

When I think about the person who has shaped me the most, the answer is simple—my mum. She has been my biggest cheerleader, my role model, and my source of strength through every challenge life has thrown our way.

Growing up, my mum made it clear that education was the key to opportunity. As a primary school teacher, she didn't just teach lessons from a textbook—she taught people how to believe in themselves, how to push beyond their limits, and how to dream bigger than they ever thought possible

Five years ago, everything changed. My mum was diagnosed with cancer, and for the first time, I saw the strongest person I knew facing something completely out of her control; she faced every round of treatment with courage and determination, never letting the illness define her. Even on the hardest days, she still found a way to smile; selfless, resilient, and unbelievably strong.



Everything I am, everything I strive to be, is because of her. She has taught me resilience, ambition, and the importance of never giving up, no matter how tough things get. She has shown me what it truly means to be strong—not just in the moments when life is easy, but in the moments when everything feels impossible. My Mum, my inspiration, my role model, and my hero.



Cody Brookes
Trainee Solicitor, Irwin Mitchell LLP

The most inspirational woman in my life, always has been and always will be my mum. She is strong, independent, ambitious, funny and caring, and always goes out of her way to make every birthday, Christmas, holiday or achievement as amazing as possible. Not to mention, her Friday Night Butty Nights are quite literally legendary!

Despite the things she has been through herself, she is always the best source of support and has remained my rock, especially when helping me to navigate my battle with PTSD. No matter the occasion she is always able to make me laugh and smile. My mum is also a fierce advocate for those she cares for and for what is right, and I cannot imagine anyone I would rather have in my corner.

Happy International Women's Day to my incredible mum and all the amazing women out there!

Elizabeth Rimmer**Chief Executive, LawCare**

Catherine Alice O'Connor, my granny was a force of nature. Born in Dublin in 1905 (thank you I can get an Irish passport) I am always struck that when she turned 18, she did not have the vote.

She settled in London and raised 5 children, including my Mum. She lived to be 101, moving into a nursing home at the age of 99. She lived through a century of conflict and saw the world transform.

Her nickname was Chatty, a trait that definitely runs in our family. She was strong and generous, deeply compassionate, optimistic, fair but always kind, a keen reader and lover of music, with a brilliant sense of humour. I loved her very much and her way of being has always been an inspiration.



Her greatest legacy was helping me see the power of connection with family and friends, that comes from gathering around a table for a meal.

Above is a photo of her at 100th birthday party.

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Lisa Edmunds Named Barrister of the Year at the Manchester Resolution Awards 2025

We are thrilled to announce that Lisa Edmunds, CEO and Head of Chambers at [Unit Chambers](#), has been awarded Barrister of the Year at the Manchester Resolution Awards 2025. This prestigious accolade recognises Lisa's exceptional contribution to family law, her unwavering commitment to client care and her dedication to shaping the future of the profession.

The Manchester Resolution Awards celebrate excellence in family law, honouring professionals who go above and beyond to uphold Resolution's core values of constructive, collaborative and child-focused legal practice. Lisa's recognition as Barrister of the Year highlights her outstanding advocacy, leadership and

innovative approach to resolving complex family disputes.

Lisa's legal career has been defined by her deep passion for family justice. As CEO and Head of Chambers at Unit Chambers, she has pioneered a modern, inclusive and forward-thinking approach to barristers' chambers, nurturing a team that prioritises both legal excellence and human-centred advocacy. Her expertise spans public and private children law, international family law, family finances and alternative dispute resolution.

Lisa herself said: "I am thrilled to have been awarded Barrister of the Year at the Resolution Awards 2025. Thank you to the sponsor of the awards, Broadway Insurance, and of course to the Manchester Resolution Committee for putting on such a fantastic event. Behind every good barrister is a great team and I very much dedicate this award to them."

Lisa's accolade follows an outstanding year for Unit Chambers, which was recently named Family Chambers of the Year at the LexisNexis Family Law Awards 2024 and Chambers of the Year at the LexisNexis Legal Awards 2024. These achievements solidify Unit's reputation as a leading force in family law advocacy and reflect Lisa's impact as both a barrister and a visionary leader.

We extend our warmest congratulations to Lisa on this well-deserved recognition.

For more information about Resolution Manchester and their commitment to excellence in family law, visit [Resolution Manchester](#).





Why Support Is Essential for Lawyers' Mental Health

The legal profession is a high-stakes game—long hours, intense pressure, and constant demands from clients and cases. It's no surprise that many lawyers experience chronic stress, anxiety, and even burnout. The truth is, mental well-being for legal professionals isn't just important—it's essential.

Lawyers are more prone to anxiety, depression, and substance abuse than many other professionals. The relentless pace, the adversarial nature of the job, and the pressure to perform at peak levels create the perfect setting for mental health struggles. Yet, the stigma surrounding mental health in the legal field deters many seeking the support they need. Fear of judgment, career setbacks, or being perceived as weak holds professionals back from prioritising their well-being.

But here's the reality: taking care of your mental health isn't a weakness—it's a competitive advantage. A well-balanced, mentally resilient lawyer is sharper, more focused, and better equipped to handle the demands of the job. Investing in therapy, mindfulness, exercise, and a healthy work-life balance enhances decision-making, performance, and job satisfaction. More firms, recognising this, offer confidential counselling, wellness initiatives, and mental health resources to support their teams.

Advocating for clients is second nature for lawyers, but advocating for their own well-being should be just as important. When mental health is prioritised, productivity increases, burnout decreases, and legal professionals can build careers that are not only successful but sustainable. In today's fast-paced legal world, taking care of your mind isn't optional—it's the key to long-term success.

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Brabners surpasses £50m revenue milestone as it delivers on purpose-led growth plan

Brabners  has secured another year of significant organic growth having completed its latest three-year strategy.

Publishing its latest accounts (covering the year to April 30th 2024), the business delivered a seventh consecutive year of growth, with revenues up 15 per cent to £53.9million – surpassing the £50million milestone for the first time. Profits (before members remuneration and profit shares) at the firm, which is proudly anchored in the North and acts as a strategic partner to both UK-based and international clients, also increased by 16% to £18.2million. Revenues grew by 40% over the course of the three years, guided by its strategy of ‘purpose-led growth and value-driven efficiency’.

Representing clients ranging from multinational businesses and global brands to social enterprises and ambitious SMEs, as well as families, individuals, senior professionals, athletes and celebrities, Brabners secured a number of high-profile victories and new business wins during the period. Its corporate team – which advised on more than £800million-worth of M&A activity last year – remained one of the region’s most active advisers, while its litigation team securing a nine-figure settlement for the Commonwealth Games Federation relating to Australia’s withdrawal from hosting the 2026 Games. The period also saw Brabners’ 130-strong real estate practice also play a critical role in supporting regeneration across the North – most notably facilitating a 50-year agreement between Peel Ports Group and GPH, the world’s largest independent cruise port operator, which will deliver £25million of investment into the city of Liverpool.

The figures cover 12 months in which Brabners secured a number of accolades, being recognised as the UK’s Best Law Firm to Work For by Best Companies – a position it has since retained in the annual table. It was also ranked as the 11th Best Large Company to Work For. It has since improved that ranking to sixth in the country. Guided by its purpose, ‘to bring about positive and lasting change for its clients, its people and the communities it serves’, the business was also awarded the Excellence in ESG Award at the British Legal Awards as well as Sustainability Initiative of the Year at The Lawyer Awards for its extensive support for Kingsdale Head – a major peatland restoration project in the Yorkshire Dales. Meanwhile, with its mission ‘to make the difference’ guiding client activity, its specialist client teams were recognised at a range of sector and regional awards.

As it continued to maintain its B Corp status, the firm’s approach to social impact saw it launch and grow its True North network, which was conceived to unite the region’s most influential and purpose-driven voices to shape and unlock the true economic potential of the North. The network has grown to more than 360 purpose-led organisations and business leaders since its inception in late 2023. Last year, the network established its advisory council with prominent figures from local organisations including Leeds Trinity University and the Turing Innovation Catalyst in Manchester. Brabners also partnered with Open Innovations — the not-for-profit open data ecosystem — to launch the True North Data Explorer. Through this new open data platform and the advisory council, the firm is identifying where national resource should be directed in terms of upskilling talent, cross-sector investment, reducing inequality and driving sustainability.



Nik White

Robert White

True North's latest publication, [Scaling Northern Ambition](#) [↗](#), published last month, provides a practical guide to help northern organisations scale their impact.

The period also included Brabners growing to more than 550 colleagues and delivering a record round of promotions across the business, supported by continued investment in the career pathways that it offers – particularly for junior colleagues. This investment was recognised at the 2024 National Training Awards, with Brabners' commitment to learning and development highly commended.

2024-2027: Client-centred, scalable growth

Brabners has since embarked on an updated three-year strategic plan, led by long-serving CEO Robert White and managing partner Nik White, with a focus on 'client-centred, scalable growth'. That includes a commitment to further investment in building a brand-led firm, delivering superior client service as well as investing in technology, innovation and further leadership on social impact. Recent months have seen it launch a range of new services, including its personal law offer Brabners Personal and Health & Safety consultancy service Brabners Protect.

Led by Legal 500 'Hall of Famer' Helen Marriott, Brabners Personal brings together a 100-strong team of legal experts from across the firm's family, estate planning and medical negligence offerings, among others. Meanwhile, Brabners Protect is designed to help organisations to better manage risk and reduce the UK's £7bn annual work-related injuries bill through a single integrated consultancy package.

Robert White, CEO of Brabners, said: "Brabners continues to go from strength-to-strength, with our vision remaining to be the UK's leading independent law firm. That vision is rooted in our commitment to being innovative, diverse and sustainable, while proactively promoting, supporting and developing diversity in all aspects of the business.

"We're pleased to have already delivered a positive start to our current three-year plan which, looking ahead, provides us with the platform to further grow the business and continue to be a partner in action for our clients. Critically, it also provides the foundation for us to invest in our position as the legal sector's employer of choice – including the refurbishment of our Liverpool office to bring it into line with the quality of our spaces in Manchester, Lancashire and Leeds – and to continue to create inclusive opportunities not just for our colleagues but the communities around us."

Nik White, managing partner at Brabners, said: "As a firm, our independence continues to be our greatest asset – and that is demonstrated not only by the consistent organic growth we've delivered but also the diverse and talented group of lawyers and professionals we are able to attract and nurture. It's a genuine pleasure to watch their development and I look forward to them continuing to drive Brabners forward in the next few years as we continue to scale through outstanding client service."



I want to ride my bicycle... all the way to MIPIM!

Many lawyers from the Manchester region will be travelling to MIPIM in March, including Neil Armstrong, partner and Head of Construction at [JMW](#) – but he isn't taking the easy route.

He's getting there on his bike, all in aid of three charities.

Neil will be cycling for four days, starting Saturday 8 March, from Blois in Northern France to Cannes on the French Riviera, a distance of almost 1000km, as part of the Knight Frank Club Peloton Cycle to MIPIM.

He is personally raising a minimum of £3000 for three of Club Peloton's charities: Coram, funding adoption activity days for children to meet with approved adopters, Cyclists Fighting Cancer, funding adapted bikes and equipment for children with cancer, and the Tom ap Rhys Pryce Memorial Trust, which helps disadvantaged young people in Central London. The Trust provides them with the support, skills, and confidence they need to break the cycle of disadvantage and build a better future for themselves.



Neil Armstrong

“

I've undertaken some pretty rigorous training for the ride, out with the Club Peloton Manchester hub.”

“It's going to be a real challenge, with long days – I believe my first day involves a 4:30am start and we have to cover more than 300km in what is likely to be cold, windy and wet weather – so understandably I am looking forward to getting further south for the sunshine, warmth and beautiful scenery.

“I've undertaken some pretty rigorous training for the ride, out with the Club Peloton Manchester hub for the past year. I average around 100km a week generally but have upped it to around 200km the last few weeks to prepare for what's to come. I've also been trying to do a couple of hours during the week in the evenings on a turbo trainer at home and going out both days every weekend for the past month for between two and four and a half hours each day.

“My cycling has been mainly in Cheshire but sometimes into the Peak District for the hills. It's a real commitment and sometimes it's been challenging finding the time to get out on my bike, but I know it will be worth it. I'm excited to cross that finish line on Tuesday 11 March!”

If anyone would like to make a donation, no matter the size, it would be greatly appreciated. Please visit Neil's [JustGiving](#) page here [Neil Armstrong is fundraising for Club Peloton](#)

Olliers Solicitors doubles Manchester office space

Olliers Solicitors [↗](#) has relocated to a new office at 44 Peter Street, Manchester. The move marks a significant milestone in the firm's growth, doubling its office space to 3,500 square feet and solidifying its commitment to expansion and innovation within the legal sector.

The firm will be based in Northspring, Peter Street and has undertaken a complete fit-out to accommodate the growing team's needs and create a welcoming space for clients. The building also offers amenities, including a gym and business lounge.

Olliers has secured a five-year lease on the new premises, establishing a strong foundation for its continued success. Over the past four years, Olliers has experienced remarkable growth, tripling its turnover since 2020 and doubling its staffing levels in the last two years.

This expansion aligns with the firm's strategic vision to future-proof its operations as it continues to build on its impressive reputation for taking a proactive approach to criminal law.

Matthew Cloughton, managing director of Olliers Solicitors, said: "Our move to 44 Peter Street is a testament to the exceptional progress Olliers has made in recent years.

"We have embarked on a five-year plan designed to further strengthen our position as a market leader, particularly in pre-charge investigations. This new space supports our current team and provides room for further growth as we continue to develop key departments, including serious crime fraud and regulatory cases."

Rosie Veitch, Sixteen Real Estate, commented: "We are delighted to welcome Olliers to the Northspring portfolio. Northspring has delivered a bespoke occupier fit-out, expertly designed and installed by Workspace Design & Build, tailored to meet Olliers' needs both now and in the future."

Ruth Peters, Matthew Cloughton and Stacey Mabrouk, Olliers





Brabners delivers third consecutive year of dealmaking growth

The corporate team at [Brabners](#) has seen its dealmaking activity grow by almost a third in the past year, as it continues to support a broad range of national and international clients across the full business lifecycle.

Despite the UK M&A market experiencing a mixed year, Brabners delivered a 31% increase in annual dealmaking values, having advised on more than £800 million-worth of activity. The team, which counts Peel Ports, NWF Group and Suez among its clients, supports businesses across the full lifecycle. As well as providing complementary deal advisory services through its specialist team of corporate finance accountants, Brabners' corporate team works with the firm's full service offering to ensure those preparing for sale are able to achieve maximum value and those seeking to acquire receive transparent due diligence and full protections for the price being paid.

The 50-strong team, which is one of the largest in the North and has previously been recognised as among the UK's most active by Experian, also saw deal volumes increase last year – advising on 188 transactions across its Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Lancashire offices (2023: 180).

This makes 2024 the third consecutive year of growth for the team, as it continues to support the journeys of its clients to growth, success and sometimes to exit. Activity was driven by consistently strong acquisitive demand amongst larger firms, with the team advising global clients including Atlas Copco, Suez Group and Terminal Investment Limited on a number of transactions at home and abroad.

“

We look forward to building our relationships with existing partners and fostering new ones in the year to come.”

Deal volumes were also buoyed by improving sentiment across a number of the North's strategic growth sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare and technology. In this arena, the firm advised on notable transactions including the sale of Compass CHC to Omni Partners as well as the sale of engineering services company BGEN to M Group Services for an undisclosed fee.

Brabners also advised on 22 deals supporting the transition of firms to employee ownership, with clients including popular Liverpool-based restaurant chain Lunya and legal recruitment firm TRG.

The corporate team's leading role in the market contributed to Brabners' revenues surpassing the £50million mark for the first time last year as the purpose-led firm entered into a new three-year strategy cycle.

Ruth Hargreaves, partner and deputy head of the corporate team at Brabners, said: “Despite challenging market conditions, M&A activity remained buoyant in 2024 – and we're pleased to see that reflected not only in the deal volumes we supported but also the increased value

placed upon high quality businesses coming up for sale or strategic investment.

“This was the case across the team’s presence in Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire and Leeds where we supported businesses at all stages of their journey – from those looking to scale-up, capitalise in consolidatory sectors or transition to employee ownership to support succession planning. Critically, we’re seeing more and more clients coming to us earlier on their journeys to take advantage of our broader offer, be that our IP or employment teams

or strategy workshops from our deal advisors, to prepare their business for growth or for sale. With plenty of funds looking to deploy pent-up resources and interest rates starting to ease, it’s key that these businesses have access to the services and support they need to develop and grow.

“We look forward to building our relationships with existing partners and fostering new ones in the year to come as the corporate team continues to be a key pillar in our plans for client-centred, scalable growth.”

Pannone named Regional Firm of the Year by Chambers UK

Pannone  was awarded the Regional Firm of the Year at the Chambers UK Awards.

Flying the flag for the North West, these awards honour the finest legal teams in the UK. They are based on the rigorous research of client feedback that has been conducted for the 2025 Chambers UK Guide.

Chambers receives tens of thousands of submissions each year and has launched these awards to recognise outstanding legal work and excellence in client service delivery.

Commenting on the win, Pannone senior partner Paul Jonson, said: “This is a significant achievement for the firm and everyone in our team. It means so much because it has been determined by client feedback, and we pride ourselves on our commitment to client service and helping them and their organisations to succeed. It was also fantastic to be representing the North West amongst the best of the UK’s legal industry and we’re proud to bring an award back to the region.”



Pannone was shortlisted as one of six finalists with the winners announced at an event at Landing Forty Two at the Cheese Grater building in London on Thursday 13th February.



Greater Manchester to lead the devolution revolution

It's nothing new to Greater Manchester of course, with the Combined Authority and elected Mayor established in 2014, but the Government's plans for a 'devolution revolution' are starting to materialise. As an area with what is now to be termed as an 'Established Strategic Authority', the powers and freedoms that are available will be some of the most devolved in England.

These are exciting times. The Deputy Prime Minister in the Devolution White Paper stated if "we're going to build an economy that works for everyone, we need nothing less than a completely new way of governing." This involves not just Strategic Authorities covering all of England, but the replacement of the district and county council tiers of local government with a new unitary council. Proposals for this large-scale reorganisation have been sought by the Government, with outline plans needed by the end of March.

Armed with its devolution deal, the latest version of which was secured in 2023, the GMCA has considerable experience of using its devolved powers to work with local services, businesses, communities and other partners to improve the city-region. This rich seam of experience will be of major interest to the new Mayoral Councils and the Council of Nations and Regions, which will be chaired by the Prime Minister. The elected Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, will of course be joining both. The white paper enables further devolution to Strategic Authorities with consolidated long-term budgeting and the opportunity each year to ask for more responsibility



Claire Ward

from central Government, to be delivered in accordance with its new missions.

Mayors will be integral to delivering the 1.5m homes committed to in this Parliament. Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have the ability to set the strategic direction of any future affordable housing programme. This will require a stronger partnership and an increase in Homes England's accountability to the Mayors. Although it's not yet known what this will mean in practice, as part of this, the Government intends, over time, to move Homes England to a more regionalised model so that it can be more responsive to the needs of the area, and it will be Mayors that will have the control of grant funding for regeneration and housing delivery. For Registered Providers of affordable housing in Greater Manchester who will now have leadership for the Affordable Homes Programme, devolution will bring significant changes. These changes will require engagement with those organisations and Mayors that could gain greater devolved decision-making powers in the future.

Manchester has an opportunity to lead England's devolution revolution, so watch this space.

Claire Ward
 Partner and Local Government sector specialist at [Anthony Collins](#) .



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Burton Copeland celebrate recent honours with games night

In the last couple of months [Burton Copeland](#) has seen quite a few honours and successes.

Firstly, Youth Court expert Rob Moussalli who recently celebrated 25 years at Burton Copeland had been made Senior Associate Solicitor & Head of the Youth Crime Department. Rob has been specialising in youth court work for over 15 years

His two close colleagues, solicitors Samantha Corcoran and Karl Benson have also been made 'Associates' Both Samantha and Karl joined Burton Copeland in 2018 and have been instrumental in developing and inspiring new members of the team.

Manging Partner Louise Straw said; "Rob is like a piece of the furniture in the youth court he is extremely well respected by his



Sean Reilly goes for the pot in 2nd round



Pool Champion Rob Mousalli

Clarke Willmott joins £50k fundraising effort for World Encephalitis Day

[Clarke Willmott LLP](#) is once again supported this year's World Encephalitis Day (WED) on Saturday, 22nd February, to help raise global awareness of the potentially devastating brain condition.

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain caused by an infection or a problem with the immune system. There are multiple potential triggers and the level of long-term damage caused by the illness may vary from individual to individual.

Long-term outcomes can include tiredness, recurring headaches and difficulties with

memory, concentration, mood swings, aggression and clumsiness through to epilepsy, bodily weakness, loss of sensation and significant long-term brain injury.

Clarke Willmott is a corporate supporter and an innovation partner of the Encephalitis Society, which helps raise public awareness, support those affected, and fund scientific research. The firm's medical negligence team is a specialist in this area and supports patients and their families where it can be shown that medical treatment has been unacceptable.

contemporaries, the magistrates and all his colleagues. His legal knowledge of dealing with young people is second to none and he has a particular skill in building positive relationships with his young clients and their parents or carers. It is only right that we recognise his years of dedication to the firm. Karl and Sam are both experienced and exceptional advocates from whom our trainees and newly qualified solicitors absorb so much skill and wisdom, and I congratulate them all on their achievements and very much look forward to their future successes in the firm”

In addition to the promotions the firm has seen other triumphs. Sean Reilly qualified as a solicitor in January and Solicitor Nawal Nadeem has recently achieved qualification as a Duty Solicitor.

The firm decided to celebrate their distinctions with a team building games night in their new games and breakout area in the office with drinks, pizza, snacks and a darts and pool tournament.

Last year, Clarke Willmott had the opportunity to sit down with Joanne Martin, a former client, to share the story of her daughter Allana, who tragically lost her life due to a poor treatment for her encephalitis. Joanne and her family hope that by sharing Allana’s story, it can increase understanding and awareness of the disease, particularly the cognitive changes that may occur.

World Encephalitis Day 2025

This year’s WED will focus on the Encephalitis Society’s work with the World Health Organisation.

Five years ago the society presented a petition signed by more than 27,000 people to the WHO to show that

The games started slowly, and it was thought it was going to be a very long night with the first game of pool between Practice Director Deborah Jackson and Billing Manager Sarah Read taking, perhaps a record breaking 25 minutes, but the games moved swiftly on.

Paralegal Jack Ashworth is known as somewhat of an icon within the firm at both pool and darts and breezed his way through the knockout stages, quarter and semis to secure his place in the final of both competitions.

Unfortunately though, it wasn’t to be Jack’s night, possibly, it was the pressure of both tournaments that came to bare. The darts final went first, and although it was a very close match a couple of late mistakes saw longshot Driving Offence Manager Lisa Nevitt take the crown. Next came the pool final, again it was a long strategic and very closely matched game. But finally, Rob Moussalli kept his nerve and potted the 8 ball to secure the title.

#EncephalitisMatters and this year will see the publication of a WHO technical briefing in the run-up to 22nd February.

The document is aimed at policymakers, government and health officials globally, asking them to recognise the problem of encephalitis and be open to solutions on topics such as better surveillance, improved diagnostics and treatments and furthering research.

The Encephalitis Society is aiming to raise £50,000 by the end of WED 2025 towards these activities, driven by the technical briefing.

This week ahead of WED on Saturday the team is running fundraising events in our offices as well as sharing their knowledge in colleagues to support awareness of encephalitis and its impact.



Manchester Young Lawyers – Charity Quiz Night 2025!

We had the pleasure of hosting our annual Charity Quiz Night on 11 February 2025 at Revolution, Oxford Road. The SELL OUT event was kindly sponsored by BCL Legal, who also entered the quiz with a 6-person team.

The quiz was a tricky one, with rounds on food and drink, sport and a valentine special, that stumped even some of our most experienced quizzers! We also enjoyed a delicious buffet supper and premium drink, with opportunity to network with other lawyers from local firms.

It was a closely fought quiz, with the final scores all being within 9 marks. A huge well done goes to the quiz winners' team, Eversheds Sutherland, who roared to victory with a final score of 39.



We also held a raffle with some fantastic prizes, such as tickets to Manchester City, £100 Selfridges Voucher (donated by Hall Brown), PT Vouchers, Fix Voucher, Ryde Voucher, and Alberts Shed Voucher, along with a £75 San Carlo Voucher (donated by BCL Legal). Congratulations to raffle winners Ruth Thomas, Madeline Langmead, Karima Al-Saidi, Grace Coyne, Iya Hashim and Ruth Wynn! We hope you enjoy your prizes.

We are pleased to confirm that a total of £500 was raised for our chosen charities, 'Manchester People First' and 'Manchester and Cheshire Dogs Home'. We know that the funds will make a huge difference to our local community and the charity users.

Keep your eyes peeled for future charity events!

We are also collaborating with Manchester Young Professionals at their upcoming Spring Social on 3 April 2025 at Diecast, Manchester. Tickets are sure to sell out fast, so get yours before they're gone!

For more information about our events, please head to our webpage: www.manchesteryounglawyers.co.uk and be sure to follow us on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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Continued on page 48



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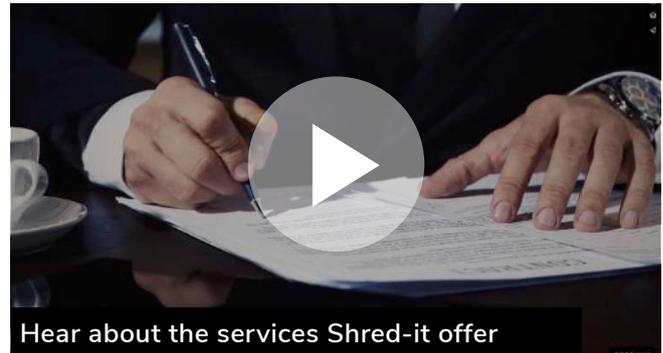
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Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce HQ is based at Elliot House, Deansgate, right in the heart of Manchester City Centre. Over the course of the pandemic, the Chamber doubled the size of the Members' Lounge and added a hot-desking facility, so why not pop in, grab a free coffee and network?

As members of Manchester Law Society, you're welcome to use the facilities there, just notify a member of staff on

arrival. The Chamber also has a suite of 16 meetings rooms at Elliot House from conference facilities, boardrooms through to gallery rooms – and members of the Chamber get 20% off.

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



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In aid of



Dash Pub Quiz

Thursday 15 May 2025

Book in and bubbles: 18:00 – 18:30

Quiz: 18:30 – 21:30

Manchester Hall, 36 Bridge Street, Manchester, M3 3BT

Cost to attend:

£36.00 inc VAT per team member

Includes a welcome drink, a delicious supper, quiz entry and donation to We Love MCR Charity

Maximum 5 per team

More details

What's happening in March?

Let's take a look at what is coming up in March in relation to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Shrove Tuesday – 4th March

I can be certain that on 4th March, I will be perfecting the pancake flip and indulging in a pancake or five, covered with sugar and dripping with lemon. But why do we celebrate pancakes? Well, it's not exactly a celebration of pancakes and it is about so much more.

In Christianity, Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day, is the last day before the fasting period of Lent and occurs the day before Ash Wednesday. It is traditionally a time for Christians to attend confession and be 'shriven' or absolved of their sins, as they prepare for a period reflection and fasting by renouncing comforts leading up to Easter. So what is your go to pancake topping and what are you giving up for lent?

International Women's Day – 8th March

On 8th March, we are proudly celebrating International Women's Day and this year's theme is all about simultaneously advancing and celebrating women's equality worldwide. #AccelerateAction is about speeding up the rate of progress for gender equality. It is a day where we honour the achievements of women whilst continuing to advocate for the acceleration of gender equality.

The main hopes of celebrating this day, are not only to celebrate the great achievements of women from all aspects of our society, but to foster solidarity, from women and allies, in support of gender parity and women's rights and to give

visibility and raise awareness of gender inequality and the work to be done to accelerate action.

Did you know, the first IWD was held in 1911 but the movement has a powerful and extensive history dating back to 1776 when Abigail Smith Adams, the First Lady to President John Adams, wrote 'Remember the Ladies' in her letter to Congress to encourage them to consider women's rights and protections when drafting the laws of the newly independent America. English author, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' in 1792 advocating for women's social and educational equality and of course, in 1903, here in Manchester Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union.

Progress has been made since Abigail Smith Adam's letter but much more is yet to be done. It is concerning that the World Economic Forum predict that none of us will see gender parity in our lifetime and that gender parity won't be attained for well over a century. Their data shows that at the current rate of progress it will still take until 2158 to reach full gender parity. Let's change that, together we can and should make a difference now.

I want to end by celebrating the incredible women and very backbone of Manchester Law Society and the huge role they have played and continue to play in the Society's success and role it plays within our Industry, in Manchester and beyond: so, shout out to our Chief Executive Officer, Fran Eccles-Bech, and her team, Carla Jones, Chandre



May and of course our President, Fiona Ledden.

Neurodiversity Week commencing on 17th March

It is hugely important, and a founding principle of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Network, that we recognise difference and celebrate diversity and so we want you to celebrate Neurodiversity week with us in the week beginning 17th March.

This is a week all about challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and transforming the way neurodivergent individuals are perceived and supported. Within the legal industry, we should all be promoting and supporting the creation of more inclusive and equitable cultures within our workplaces for our colleagues and clients to celebrate those differences and empower individuals. It is important at all levels, that we recognise the many strengths of neurodivergent individuals and that we value and celebrate the talents of neurodiverse minds, empowering them to achieve their potential.

Those with neurodiversity can be individuals with dyslexia, autism, dyspraxia, ADHD, Tourette's syndrome and other neurological differences. You can get involved by educating yourself and others to learn about neurodiversity and share your knowledge with your colleagues; by challenging misconceptions and reviewing policies and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive.

It is worth remembering that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) published guidance on 31 January 2025 to raise awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace. The guidance addressed how to create more inclusive organisations and how to foster and environment

where discussions about neurodiversity is normalised and offers employers some practical advice.

It is so important that we help maximise the potential talent of our neurodivergent colleagues by breaking down barriers, educating ourselves, having open discussions and being an ally, so please celebrate with us.

International Transgender Day of Visibility – 31st March

On 31st March we recognise international transgender day of visibility with the aim of raising awareness about transgender people by celebrating them and their achievements, whilst also drawing attention to the discrimination and violence that they, as a community, still face.

This day is also really important and allows an opportunity for trans and non-binary people to feel seen and heard. A day for them to share their stories and for allies to learn more about how they can make a difference and stand in solidarity.

Coming up

Please do keep a look out for announcements about how we plan to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Holocaust and also our plans for this year's fabulous Pride Brunch celebrations.



Shane Smith
Chair, MLS Equity,
Diversity & Inclusion
Committee
Associate, Slater and
Gordon



Brabners adds new Litigation Partners as firm targets further growth

Brabners [↗](#) has added two new partners to its litigation practice as part of plans to further grow its portfolio of mid-to-large corporate organisations and high-profile private clients.

Steven Garry and Craig Arrowsmith join the firm's 50-strong litigation team – one of the largest in the North of England – from Fieldfisher, bolstering Brabners' commercial litigation and insolvency offer.

Brabners' litigation practice specialises in complex commercial and personal dispute resolution, helping clients to settle disputes in the most effective manner – including through mediation, arbitration or alternative dispute resolution. The team covers a wide range of issues, including shareholder disputes, professional negligence, debt recovery, defamation and privacy, medical negligence, property disputes, and matters relating to wills and inheritance.

A commercial litigation specialist qualified in multiple jurisdictions, Steven joins Brabners as a partner having also spent time at

Pinsent Masons, Knights and Addleshaw Goddard. With significant experience in high value, complex commercial disputes in the UK and internationally, he has acted for a range of blue chip and international clients.

Craig, who joins the firm as partner after more than 10 years at Fieldfisher, will support Brabners' insolvency and restructuring team. Having managed a broad range of corporate and personal insolvency cases, he also holds long-standing client relationships with alternative and digital lenders as well as insolvency practitioners.

Both partners will be primarily based in the firm's Manchester office at Barbirolli Square, working as part of a cross-office team.

Recognised as a tier one practice by the Legal 500 and ranked among The Times' Best Law Firms, Brabners litigation team has secured a string of high-profile victories for clients in recent years. Last year, it led a landmark malicious falsehood case in the Supreme Court and continued to represent the Commonwealth Games Federation following a successful nine-figure settlement relating to Australia's withdrawal from hosting the 2026 Games. Prior to this, it led Coleen Rooney's successful defence in the infamous Wagatha Christie case.

Brabners, which has offices in Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire and Leeds, was recently named as the UK's Best Law Firm to Work For by Best Companies for a second year.

Paul Lunt, head of litigation at Brabners, said: "Our litigation practice has gone from strength to strength in recent years, supporting successful outcomes in cases of national significance. Steven and Craig bring complementary drive and expertise to



L-R – Steven Garry, Nik White and Craig Arrowsmith

the team, strengthening our strategic client support not only in mainstream commercial litigation but recoveries, restructuring and contentious insolvencies.

“It’s incredibly pleasing to see them step up to partnership with us as we look to further scale our litigation team across the North.”

Nik White, managing partner at Brabners, said: “Much of our success in recent

years has been based on our purpose-led approach, and our commitment to being our sector’s employer of choice. Doing so has enabled us to attract ambitious and talented lawyers like Steven and Craig, who will play a key role in delivering the commercial success that enables us to bring about positive change. I look forward to seeing the positive impact they bring to both our thriving litigation team and the broader partnership.”

Commercial Property lawyer Andrew Stone joins Myerson Solicitors as Partner as growth continues

Myerson Solicitors [↗](#) has expanded its Commercial Property team with the appointment of Andrew Stone as Partner, further enhancing its expertise in real estate transactions. Andrew joins from JMW Solicitors LLP, adding significant expertise to Myerson’s Real Estate team, one of the largest in the North West outside the major city centres of Manchester and Liverpool.

Andrew brings extensive experience in real estate transactions, advising investors, developers, and businesses on acquisitions, leasing, and portfolio management across industrial, office, and retail sectors. Andrew also has significant experience advising healthcare clients, including GPs and dentists, on real estate matters.

Andrew began his legal career at Burges Salmon LLP and subsequently gained valuable experience as both an in-house lawyer and National Estate Manager at Integrated Dental Holdings (now MyDentist). Following his in-house role, Andrew returned to private practice, where he advised on complex real estate transactions at a senior level, before joining Myerson.

Joanne Perritt, Head of Myerson’s Commercial Property Team, said: “We are delighted to



Andrew Stone, Partner, Commercial Property

welcome Andrew to the team. Our team is already recognised as a Top Tier practice by The Legal 500 and, with Andrew joining us, we continue to strengthen what is already a highly experienced and senior team. We are proud to work with major clients such as AkzoNobel, AQA Education, Dransfield Properties, and National Nuclear Laboratory. Andrew’s expertise will reinforce the team, enhancing our ability to provide partner-led and commercially focused advice and further establishing our position as a serious alternative to larger and international firms.”

The team’s growth trajectory continues, following the arrival of Doug Henderson as a Solicitor last summer. With another Solicitor joining at Easter, Myerson’s Commercial Property department continues to strengthen its leading position in the market.



Trio join Manchester office of Bermans as expansion continues

Bermans  has made three strategic hires to bolster its litigation, asset-based lending recoveries and private client teams.

Mike Carter, Adam Tiesteel and Jobeth Copping-Barrett are all based in Bermans' Manchester office.

Their arrival continues the firm's expansion following the recent appointments of property partner Usha Sharma, corporate partner Paul Edels and paralegal Paul Rabbette at the Liverpool office.

Mike has joined Bermans as a litigation partner from Slater Heelis. He has more than 15 years' litigation and dispute resolution experience.

He advises a diverse client base including owner-managed businesses, SMEs, property developers, secured lenders, professional

practices and individuals.

His areas of expertise encompass an array of issues, including contract, property and construction disputes, professional negligence, shareholder and partnership disputes, intellectual property and contested probate.

Mike is recognised as a recommended lawyer in The Legal 500 directory and is a member of the Professional Negligence Lawyers Association.

Before starting his legal career in 2007, he spent 20 years in the shipping and logistics sector in a variety of commercial and managerial roles.

Jobeth has joined Bermans as a senior associate in the private client department after moving from Sinclair Law.

New Court of Protection Partner For Irwin Mitchell

Irwin Mitchell  has added experienced Court of Protection Partner Georgina Garner to its Manchester team.

Georgina was previously a Partner and Head of the Court of Protection Department at Slater Heelis and has more than ten years of experience managing mentally incapacitated individuals' property and financial affairs.

She brings to Irwin Mitchell a strong reputation in the market and regularly receives direct instructions from multiple local authorities and other law firms acting on behalf of people without capacity or those who need additional assistance managing their financial affairs.

She also acts as a professional deputy or attorney for property and financial affairs with various clients, from young children to those in later life. She has experience with managing multi-million-pound settlements from personal injury claims and has been a member of Association of Lifetime Lawyers, CoPPA and the Professional Deputies Forum.

Lucy Nicol, head of the Court of Protection team at Irwin Mitchell said: "I'm thrilled to welcome Georgina Garner to our team. Her extensive experience and dedication to managing complex cases will be a tremendous asset to our clients and our firm. Georgina's reputation in the



L-R Adam Tiesteel, Jobeth Copping-Barrett and Mike Carter

She supports clients on their future and estate planning, including the preparation of wills, lasting power of attorney applications, trusts, probate applications and estate administration.

Adam has joined Bermans as an associate in the ABL recoveries team from Greenhalgh Kerr Solicitors. He qualified as a solicitor in 2020 and has focused on recoveries and enforcement since completing his legal practice course in 2018.

Jon Davage, managing director of Bermans and the firm's head of corporate, said: "We continue to attract high-calibre individuals to the practice and our three latest recruits are testament to this. They are an excellent fit for the firm.

Manchester legal market is outstanding, and her strong relationships with her clients speak volumes about her commitment and professionalism. We are excited to see the positive impact she will make as we continue to grow."

Georgina, who will also become a Director of the Irwin Mitchell Trust Corporation, said: "Irwin Mitchell's Court of Protection team is the leading team in the country and I can't wait to work with my new colleagues to help even more people to navigate the difficult circumstances that life has dealt them. Whether by injury or illness it crucial that people who are left vulnerable and without capacity are given professional help and support to live as independently as possible."

"Mike worked with our head of litigation Andrew Koffman at a previous firm and it's great to see them reunited.

"Jobeth's appointment enables us to offer a private client advice as part of our full service to business owners.

"Our ABL recoveries team continues to thrive and Adam is a welcome addition to the ranks with his dedication and experience in the sector.

"In line with increasing demand and nationwide referrals from other professional service providers, we are planning additional key strategic hires during the course of 2025. We have an active calendar for the year ahead and a healthy pipeline across all practice areas."

Bermans is part of MAPD Group, which was founded by Brian Cullen and Joanna Kingston-Davies in 2020 to power the growth of local law firms nationally through acquisition. The initials stand for Making a Positive Difference.



Georgina Garner



DWF announces 47 promotions in Manchester

This latest round of promotions at [DWF](#), whose largest office is based at Scott Place on Hardman Street, includes promotion to partner for real estate lawyer Katherine Carey and insurance lawyer Patrick McBrien. Dan Monaghan has also been promoted to partner and head of chambers, and Seth Hughes has been promoted to partner and global head of eDiscovery.

Additionally, insurance lawyer Tom Higson and regulatory, compliance and investigations lawyer, Vikki Woodfine, were promoted to a higher level within the partnership structure.

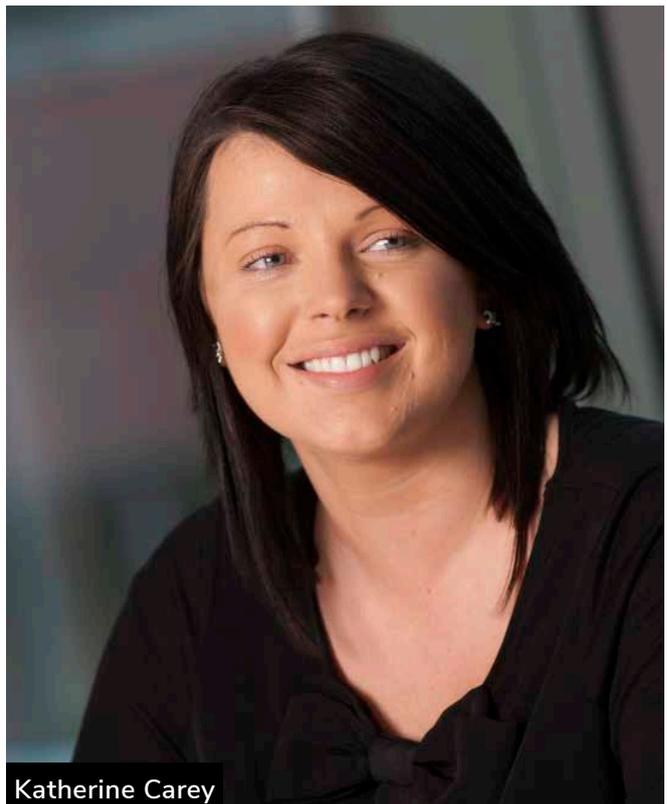
Eight colleagues have also advanced to director or equivalent roles, including: Charlotte Ellis, Christopher Hudson, Ian Jenkinson, Lauren France, Liam Gibson, Matthew Judge, Neal Mellor, and Velida Pudic.

The firm, which recently reported that revenue has increased by 8% in the first half of its financial year, made 238 promotions globally. This includes 13 new promotions to partner or partner-equivalent roles. In addition, 13 existing DWF partners have been promoted to a higher career level within the partnership structure.

Managing partner of DWF in Manchester, Joel Heap, commented on the promotions: "It's fantastic to see so many of our colleagues in Manchester progressing in their careers. These promotions are a testament to their dedication, expertise, and contribution to the firm. I'm proud to celebrate their success and look forward to seeing them continue to thrive in their new roles. Congratulations to you all!"



Dan Monaghan



Katherine Carey

The full list of promotions is:

- Tom Higson, Partner
- Vikki Woodfine, Partner
- Katherine Carey, Partner
- Patrick McBrien, Partner
- Dan Monaghan, Head of Chambers
- Seth Hughes, Global Head of eDiscovery
- Charlotte Ellis, Director
- Christopher Hudson, Barrister (Director)
- Ian Jenkinson, Director
- Lauren France, Director
- Liam Gibson, Director
- Matthew Judge, Director
- Neal Mellor, Director
- Velida Pudic, Director
- Charlotte Fowles, Senior Associate
- Charlotte Hampson, Senior Associate
- Clare Woodland, Senior Associate
- Dan Millward, Senior Associate
- Elyse Eynon, Senior Associate
- Greg Wood, Senior Associate
- Jennifer Parr, Senior Associate
- Katie Harris, Senior Associate
- Katy Butler, Senior Associate
- Matthew Duncan, Senior Associate
- Mike Dyer, Associate
- Suzanne Farley, Senior Associate
- Tanzia Haq, HR Operations Manager
- Amy Underhill, Associate
- Anna Blythe, Associate
- Calum Franklin, Associate
- Cedric Bard, Associate
- Emma Adams, Associate
- Jean Luc, Assistant Company Secretarial Manager
- Katie Duggan, Associate
- Mark Hignett, Associate
- Megan Dickenson, Associate
- Michael Bogahalanda, Associate
- Nicole Edwards, Associate
- Olivia Dale, Associate
- Penny Rothwell Mason, Associate
- Ruth Robinson, Associate
- Sanjit Atkar, Associate
- Charlotte Randall, GEM Manager
- Flora Vickers, Lead Paralegal
- Isobelle Cooper, Lead Paralegal
- Bernadette Fallon, HR Advisor
- Lydia Davenport-Thomas, HR Advisor



Patrick McBrien



Seth Hughes



AFG Law Family Department hails strong start to 2025

The Family Department of [AFG LAW](#), is starting the new year strong with three new Solicitors, the appointment of two consultants and several internal promotions after a record year and continuous strong growth across the region.

AFG LAW, with offices in Bolton, Bury and Stockport is a long established, multi-disciplinary law firm providing a range of services across the region and beyond. With experts in aspects of law including family, conveyancing, commercial property, dispute resolution, wills and probate, it is built on traditional foundations combined with modern values and a fresh, forward thinking approach.

As the Family Department continues to grow, three experienced solicitors join the team. Dan Knox brings a wealth of experience dealing with all aspects of private family law, dealing with financial matters from the minimal finances to complex wealth with large capital assets.

Samera Khan also joins the team, specialising in helping clients navigate sensitive and complex matters including as child arrangements, divorce, and financial settlements.

Davinia Martin completes the new appointments, bringing an established background as a Child Protection, Local Authority solicitor, working both as a



Senior Solicitor and within the Senior Management Team for a number of local authorities across Greater Manchester and Cheshire for over 25 years. Davinia is also a Children Accredited Specialist representing children via children's guardians, parents and grandparents. Davinia have dealt with complex and high profile reported cases.

All three new solicitors were appointed based on their vast experience along with their dedication to providing first class customer care and adopting a sensitive and compassionate approach across all cases.

In two key internal promotions, Nicola Williams and Marie Gorton are transitioning from Associate Solicitors to Consultants for the Family department, in a move that will see them shifting their focus to advising the team on complex cases.

Nicola specialises in helping cohabiting and married families regulate their financial arrangements, helping them to resolve issues during separation and providing clarity in the law so that they can negotiate privately between themselves, as well as making divorce agreements legally binding.

Marie represents clients in respect of all aspects of family law, including divorce and dissolution of Civil Partnerships, financial matters, Private Law Children Act proceedings, Care Proceedings, and domestic abuse.

The Family department has seen record growth over the past 12 months, with an excellent reputation within the field and amongst clients. The department now stands at 43, with 20 fee earners. Professional and personal growth within the team is of the utmost importance and staff are regularly promoted, with detailed training plans for junior members to enhance their ongoing development.

“

We are extremely excited about the growth within in the Family team which marks significant expansion for the department and the firm.”

This includes everything from business apprenticeships to LPC, SQE, SCILEX, some of which the firm contribute to financially, and supporting the study time they require.

Last year the team won the accolade of Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Award for Support Team of The Year and took home a Manchester Resolution award, with Amanda Oakden winning Community Champion and Rachel Jones being runner up as Wellbeing Champion. The Bolton Law Society Awards saw a further win for the Support Team of the Year, with Katrina Gaskell as runner up as Trainee of the Year.

Already in 2025 the Firm has two shortlisting in the Manchester Resolution Awards and a further nomination in the Bolton Business Woman of the Year Awards.

Emma Cordock, Head of the Family Department and Director said:

“We are extremely excited about the growth within in the Family team which marks significant expansion for the department and the firm. The new additions and changes only strengthen the department and increase the service we can offer to clients. It is a fantastic department to be part of and I am very excited for 2025”



New MDs for Fletchers Group, following promotions for four senior directors

Fletchers Group [✓](#) has announced the promotion of four senior directors to new Managing Directors (MD) roles.

The promotions recognise the considerable contribution that the individual team members make to the business and reflects the need for more senior roles to lead their respective divisions following the continued expansion of the Group.

The new MDs are:

Caroline Morris, currently Director of Serious Injury will become MD of Serious Injury Law.

Caroline joined Fletchers in May 2017, after having specialised in personal injury for 27 years. She trained at Serious Injury Law (SIL), which was acquired by Fletchers in 2024, and is recognised as one of the leading catastrophic injury lawyers in the country.

Peter Rigby, Director of Clinical Negligence, will become MD of Clinical Negligence.

Peter began his legal career with Fletchers 15 years ago and fulfilled several roles in the firm before taking over the medical negligence serious injury unit. He now oversees the largest clinical negligence team in the UK, representing circa one in four of the total number of cases that will issue proceedings this year.

Georgia Briscoe, currently Director of Medical Law Services, will become MD of Medical Law Services.

Georgia has been leading Fletchers' specialist medico-legal company Medical Law Services (MLS) since it was set up in May 2024. She will oversee performance and lead on strategy for the MLS business, delivering efficient, high-quality medico-legal services that support clinical negligence and serious personal injury customers.



Charlene Mann, Director of Transformation, will become MD of New Acquisitions and MD of Scott Rees & Co.

Following the acquisition of Scott Rees at the end of last year, 100 fee earners have joined the Group. Charlene will lead the integration programme and carry forward that role to future acquisitions made by the Group.

The newly promoted Managing Directors will also join Peter Haden, Alex Lynch, Adrian Denson, Alex Kenny and Zoe Holland in an expanded leadership team.

Explaining the promotion, Fletchers Group CEO Peter Haden, said: "The new roles will address some of the extra challenges brought about by our recent growth, especially managing a more complex and sophisticated business and meeting the high expectations of our colleagues, clients and partners.

"I'm incredibly proud to recognise and celebrate the promotion of these exceptional leaders. All four have

“

This announcement is also testament to the ongoing success of our leadership development programme in that we're able to promote to these very senior roles from within the business.”

contributed significantly to the success of our firm, and I'm confident in their ability to step up to the added responsibility and we move ahead with our ambitious plans for 2025 and beyond.

"This announcement is also testament to the ongoing success of our leadership development programme in that we're able to promote to these very senior roles from within the business."



Management Matters

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



This Month

- **Getting essential skills in place - alternative sourcing**
- **The Perfect Partner**
- **Asset Management Client Support and Satisfaction**
- **Management checklist - essentials**
- **Getting essential skills in place - alternative sourcing**

Last November [↗](#) I referred to the large growth in outsourcing and focused at the time on document production, bookkeeping and accounting and legal skills and there is significant growth in all of these categories.

Since then, there has been a lot more detailed attention on the failure to meet regulations and compliance, accounts skills for rules, regulations, bank relationships, financial management, working capital and M&A Plus the right legal expertise to get Wills right, consultations with IFAs and Accountants, brand and image, client communication and data security and effective PMS/CMS

I have received these observations from **The Cashroom** [↗](#).

“Over the last year we have seen an ever-increasing number of law firms looking for expert support and advice with their finance functions. We still have firms approaching us when they have had a cashier leave, and as a result have a gap in their own resource. However, more frequently than ever firms are approaching us to discuss wholesale changes to their operating models. They want to optimise their way of working and that means obtaining skilled support, not just in relation to their regulatory processes

for their accounts, but also for the accounts elements of their Practice Management Systems. They need to be able to trust and also analyse the data on their client and office side accounts, thus enabling better informed decision making and monitoring best practice.”

I have witnessed some skills and systems failures/shortfalls in handling client accounts and their funds which is going to get firms fined, challenged over PII and a loss in credibility.

It is very apparent that irrespective of the size of a firm in some areas the right level of expertise is essential. Even some accountancy firms with legal experience are beginning to offer wider services

Recognising this is a new team on the block but with essential expertise **FD Flex** [↗](#) who are offering part time expertise to work as part of the management team of a firm for just a couple of days per month – dependent of the areas covered from financial and working capital management and forecasting – increasingly important, tax planning and PII negotiations, remuneration schemes, firm growth and maybe an exit strategy and of course regulation and compliance .

When selecting such an organization it is essential to review through due diligence the organization and the people available including checking their background skills in the sector – for example utilizing a skilled accountant with a history of PII insurance brokerage is pretty positive. I have done a check on the core management team of the group.



The Perfect Partner

With years of hands-on experience as a lawyer, manager, partner – heavily involved in commercial management of firms and then establishing [McCrum Legal](#) and for nearly the last 10 years operating as a consultant [Simon McCrum](#) has experience having dealt with hundreds of firms and thousands of partners.

Simon has just published the third book in his Trilogy – The Perfect Partner following on from The Perfect Legal Business and The Perfect Lawyer. Certainly, challenging and calling for strength. Brilliant challenges around attitude and style of leadership – there is so much in there about the style and effectiveness of leadership which many firms are missing – still some “I am a legal partner and am therefore always right”.

Staff recruitment and retention of the great ones is key as well as recognition of the importance of a prospective client, who then becomes one, repeats business and broadens scope of activities and then becomes a referrer and advocate to others.

Matches quite a few of the issues included in [my January article](#) which also suggests a partner stock-take.

Asset Management, client support and satisfaction

[Back in December](#) and subsequently I have referred to how many law firms are mishandling a really key topic. The right action will enhance client satisfaction and referrals, cut back on the risk of poor performance, add revenue to the business and enhance the value of the Will Bank asset.

50% of the adult population without Wills and even where they have been done nobody sure if the client is still alive, whether there has been an update when IHT rules change, the right skills are used at the time of creation – it isn't document production only – IFTs, accountants should be consulted. I have also witnessed people dying and Wills not being traceable. A firm may have 10,000 Wills 70% of them in a known location but what about the rest. Not digitised and therefore not being communicated with about needs to make changes.

This is another area where much has happened over the last few months. Firstly, many forms need to have their data cleansed so that they can become active. The [Will Bank Transformation](#) business is very close to announcing its first law firm clients where the cleansing and updating of the database is actioned by expertise and the data being placed on an active CRM solution which enables the firm or the outsourced WBT operation to continue communication with the clients. On top of this there is a portal that allows law firm clients to be securely proactive – look at their own Wills and ask the firm for updates.

[The National Will Register](#) is an increasingly important database that currently is home to 10.5 million Wills that enables people to be able to find their or family Wills. More and more firms, enhancing service to clients are offering this facility which is an added value service that can be operated effectively with clean and digitised/validated data bases.

Continued on page 66



Management Check List

In February we identified a proposed list of actions that were essential and the management team should be on top of them as a priority – all about commercial enhancement and survival. The current marketplace is really enhancing the need for:

- SRA/AML/Regulations – loads of challenges, fines and image impact – lots of client account stuff. Will include issues over accounts production by who and where/when
- Accounts skills – financial management, planning, forecasting handling working capital, right MI and BI essential
- Resourcing – in house or using third party specialisms. Image, recruitment and retention plans – 65% of millennials looking to go
- Partner commitments and business strategy
- Private client activity – new business and existing database enhancements
- Brand, image and client communication. Clients becoming referrers.
- Current PMS/CMS plans and provider relationships, newcomers. It infrastructure reliability and security
- There needs to be an action plan for each of the above items within firms and Ops Board reviews on a monthly basis

Always available to point people in a direction.

Bill Kirby is a director of 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](#)

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.

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



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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 begin with developments in costs and case management (CCMC) hearings when the court is approving costs budgets under CPR 3.13. In common with traditional directions hearings, the usual costs order at the conclusion has been "costs in the case". Not anymore! A brace of decisions has demonstrated that a party who advances an exaggerated costs budget does so at their own risk as to costs where the figures put forward have been "unrealistic and ambitious".

In **GS Woodland Court GP 1 Ltd v RGCM Ltd** [2025] EWHC 285 (TCC), the claimants had sought approval of £8.74m for their costs budget against a pre-CMC offer of £3.539m and had come away with £4.212m. Constable J observed that the scale of that reduction had meant that the Claimants' Precedent H had been unrealistic both in terms of reasonableness and proportionality. In these circumstances, there was no particular reason why the costs order should not be the ordinary order that would be made when a party had lost. It followed that the "losing" claimants were deprived of their costs and ordered to pay the defendants costs' (excluding D1 and D6) of the attendance of counsel and one solicitor at the hearing.

In [Zavorotnii v Malinowski](#) [2025] EWHC 260 (KB) HHJ Walden-Smith was more

merciful to the claimant, but only just. The claimant had been overly ambitious in the sums it sought to have approved in its costs budget. However, the claimant had achieved 60% of that which it asked for and had obtained approval to expend costs which were 18% above that offered by the defendant. That meant that it could not be said that the claimant had been entirely unrealistic, but they had come "... very close to such a finding. Clearly it had been a lucky escape!

Finally on costs budgeting, a case where both sides had been unrealistic and over ambitious. In [Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon v Associated Newspapers Ltd](#) [2025] EWHC 106 (KB), Master Cook, giving judgment in conjunction with Nicklin J, observed that the costs budgets totalling £38.8m (including £12.2m spent already) for all parties, were "manifestly excessive". They went on to state that in carrying out costs budgeting, the court would not engage in an overly elaborate analysis of each phase, but instead, should stand back and look at the bigger picture. Costs management was not an exercise of reducing the parties' costs to an irreducible minimum but setting reasonable and proportionate parameters. Having applied those principles, the court approved budgets of just £4,084,000 for the Claimants and £4,445,000 for the

Defendant, meaning that together, the parties had been allowed £18.05m less than they had asked for.

Next a judgment which deals with hourly expense rates on summary assessment in heavy commercial litigation. In **Motorola Solutions v Hytera Communications** [2025] 1 WLUK 474, Sean O’Sullivan KC was carrying out a summary assessment, which involved a “finger in the air” exercise. He declined to allow a rate that reflected what might now be the market rate for City of London firms, but rather one that included an uplift to the London 1 rate for all of the factors which made the type of international commercial dispute out of the norm even for London litigation but still retained some relationship with the guideline rates. That rate was £650 an hour for the Grade A, and £350 per hour for the Grade C.

In **Magomedov v TPG Group Holdings (SBS) LP** [\[2025\] EWHC 304 \(Comm\) Bright J 14 Feb 2025](#) was dealing with payments on account which also addressed hourly expense rates, but without expressing a figure when deploying the court’s powers under CPR 44.4(3). In doing so, he reminded the paying claimants that “the guideline

hourly expense rates are not used in detailed assessment” (a point often overlooked by parties challenging a bill), and that anyway, the case in question was “of a kind that may be thought to justify rates above even the highest guideline bands.” To preserve a healthy margin for error in case the interim payments proved to be excessive, the judge awarded 70% of indemnity basis costs and 60% of standard basis costs based upon the costs schedules provided. That meant payments ranging between £211,281 and £1,616,315 depending upon the defendant in question.

Finally Qualified One Way Costs Shifting (QOCS)- **Birley v Heritage Independent Living Ltd** [2025] EWCA Civ 44. In a complicated judgment, the main question was whether the cost provisions relating to certain media claims, which did at one time permit recovery of a success fee together with an after the event (ATE) insurance premium, could be applicable at the same time as QOCS which applies in (but only in) personal injury claims. As Birss LJ held, the short answer was “Yes”, but the judgment requires detailed consideration beyond the scope of this short update in order to understand and digest the court’s reasoning.

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



Pet of the Month

Name: Lucy Fraser

Firm: Burton Copeland

Pet name: Nova

Nickname: Ouch!!

What kind of pet do you have? Bombay cat (kitten)

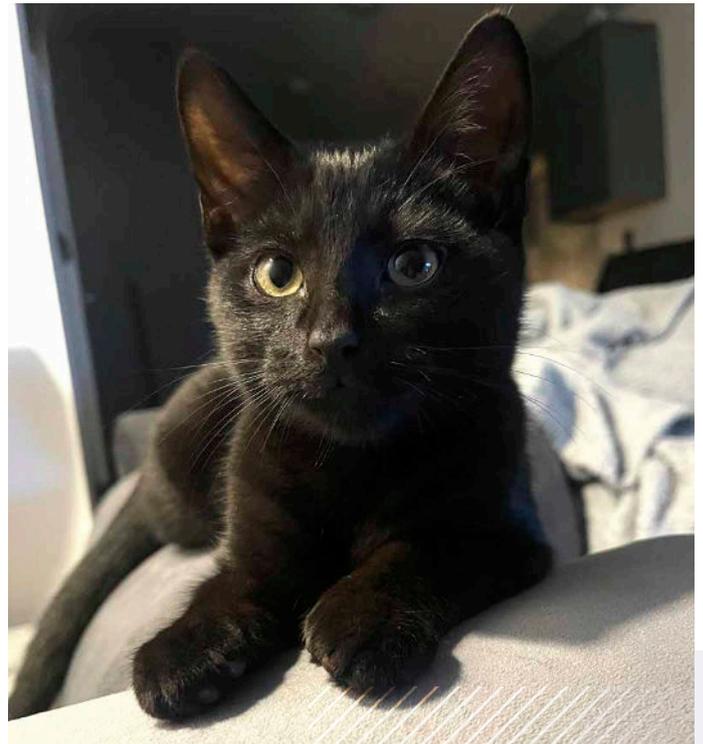
Is your pet: Female

How old is your pet? 3 Months

Favourite toy: Clothing maiden which is superb climbing frame

Favourite Activity: Napping

Favourite treat: Catnip



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

My perfect day would be a weekend because mummy and daddy are usually home all day. After they have woken and given me cuddles, they'll treat me to a delicious tin of Felix and some cat nip treats followed by a saucer of milk. Once energised I like to go for my daily climb, mummy says it's called a maiden and likes to hang clothes on it, but it is MY Climbing Frame. After climbing I like to have a nap, before it's time to play again!

My favourite things my parents do is mummy and daddy like to play games with me. They press buttons on the remote control, and I show them how I can do it too. Sometimes the television goes off or gets very loud. Mummy also likes to chase me when I pick up my toys, mummy says they are her hairbrushes but they are not, the flat is my playground and everything in it is MINE. The best thing that mummy and daddy does is give me cuddles, they like me to sit on their lap and stroke me, they also like to say "awe" and "so cute" quite a lot.

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!

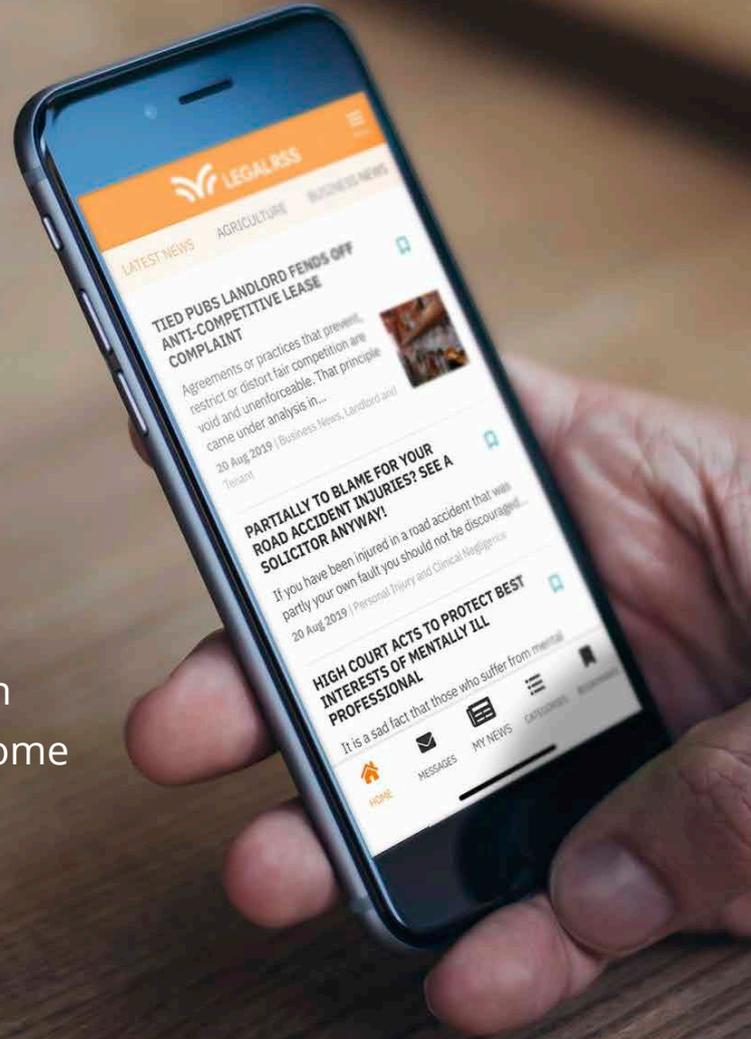
Each month we'll pick a couple of 'Pets of the Month' for the next edition so keep a look out to see if your pet has made it, modelling in *The Messenger* magazine!

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



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