



June 2025

the Messenger

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becomes Policing
Academic Centre
of Excellence



Manchester Legal Awards 2025 shortlist announced



We are delighted to announce the shortlist for this year's [Manchester Legal Awards](#) , which has attracted more entries than any previous year.

Leading the pack with six entries on the shortlist is Leigh Day, which features in the Corporate Culture & Wellbeing Champions, Employment Team of the Year, Personal Injury/Clinical Negligence Team of the Year, Solicitor of the Year, Partner of the Year and Medium Law Firm of the year categories.

Six other firms (DWF, Evershed Sutherland, Irwin Mitchell, Mills & Reeve, Olliers and Slater Heelis) each have four entries apiece on the shortlist.

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From the President

Fiona Ledden, President

I hope you have been enjoying the marvellous May weather we have had, it's been so good to have the sunshine.

May has been a very busy month with lots happening. I was delighted on the 2nd May to welcome Officers and senior partners from Manchester Law Society member firms to have lunch with myself and the Lord Mayor (Councillor Paul Andrews). The lunch was in promotion of my charity of the year [We Love MCR Charity](#) , which the Lord Mayor is Chair of Trustees. We were invited into the Lord Mayor's Parlour which is currently housed in the Library and had a very entertaining time with stories of the experiences the Lord Mayor had over the course of his year. On the 14th May, MCC held its annual Council meeting and the new Lord Mayor Councillor Carmine Grimshaw was installed!

I was excited to see that the shortlist for the ML Awards 2025 was published on the 6th May – I look forward to meeting all of you shortlisted at our dinner on the 3rd July. Please make sure you have your [tickets booked](#)  as they are going fast!

I represented you at the annual Leeds dinner on the 8th May which was a lovely occasion, although the speech grabbed everyone's attention starting with the quote 'first we kill all the Lawyers' – it did get better!

MLS invited colleagues to attend a talk by one of the Holocaust survivors Tomi Komoly BEM. The evening was facilitated by a group called My Voice which has worked with a number of survivors to produce books which tell the stories of those terrible events. I personally have heard two such stories delivered here in Manchester, both

of them recalling events when they were small children, each extremely powerful and terrifying in equal measure.

We also had the fantastic Posh Pub Quiz on the 15th May, kindly sponsored by Excello Law which looking at the pictures shows fun was had by all.

This month Liverpool Law Society hosted the Joint V meeting at Taylor Wessing offices and we had speakers from the Law Society and the SRA which was timely, in relation to the data breach for the Legal Aid Agency (LAA). Whilst the representative could not talk to the issue, we were able to send comments back and following the meeting a Joint V letter was sent out specifically requesting support is given in relation to how the LAA are going to provide mechanisms for payments to Solicitors and Barristers to be made while applications for Legal Aid are going back to old school for filling in forms.

The SRA referred to a further consultation in respect of the financial penalties that they are now able to apply and giving the guidance with some case examples. This affects all Solicitors practices and individuals. Please try and find time to look at the consultation and case studies, they are eye watering fines. Michelle Garlick from Weightmans is pulling together a response with the Joint V so please do email her at Michelle.Garlick@weightmans.com  with your comments, there is a real urgency as the consultation closes on the 6th June.

Finally, a reminder of the [Manchester Pride Afternoon Tea](#)  on the 23 August, I have my place booked, have you? It is always a great fun event, see you there.



the Messenger

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Thank you to our Messenger supporters

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



Posh Pub Quiz 2025

A much-loved event in our social calendar took place last month – it is, of course, the Posh Pub Quiz! 23 teams of Manchester's finest legal professionals joined together at [Manchester Hall](#) for some friendly competition to decide which firm had the best trivia knowledge. This event was kindly sponsored by [Excello Law](#), who brought two teams to join in on the fun – 'The Excellers' and 'Lowry Legends.'

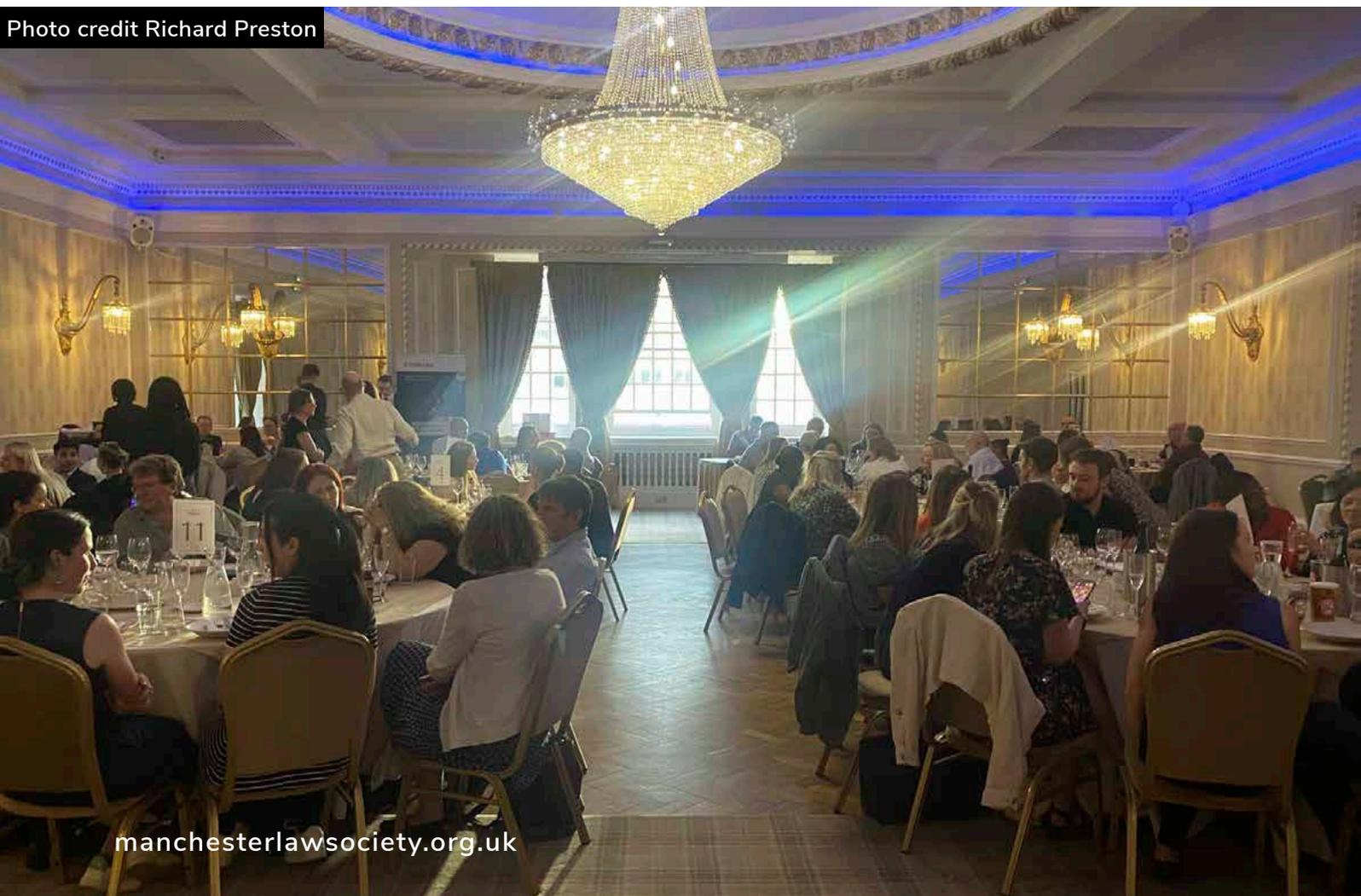
The Posh Pub Quiz was also importantly in aid of [We Love MCR](#), our President's charity of the year. We Love MCR works within Manchester's local communities to provide financial grants to those who need them, as well as uplift young people by offering funding and opportunities to fulfil their full potential.

We had prizes for the most points scored, the best team name, and a wooden spoon prize of five £5 Gregg's gift vouchers – which funnily enough ended up being the most sought after prize! Stick around to the end to find out who ended up winning them...

Our quizzers arrived and were greeted with a glass of bubbles to begin the night, before making their way into the gorgeous Goulburn Suite in Manchester Hall.

Our quizmaster, Chris Payne, began with a general knowledge round, with the first question right off the bat causing some headaches ('What is the only single-named country in the world that contains all five vowels?' No googling!). The MLS team, 'The Franettes,' were still reeling from this

Photo credit Richard Preston





The Divorce Force - the best team name



The Excellers and Lowry Legends photo credit Richard Preston

“

As one-hit wonders often go, many of us knew the song but not the person singing it!

question as Chris carried on testing our knowledge on football, music, history, and more. Safe to say we scored rather average on this round.

We then moved on to a music round, filled with questions on Bond themes, band nationalities, and then a number of one-hit wonders where we had to guess the artist behind the song. As one-hit wonders often go, many of us knew the song but not the person singing it!

It was after this round that our quizmaster chose the best team name – ‘Divorce Force’ from Hall Brown. The team received a free round of drinks from Manchester Hall for their creativity.

While we tucked in to some food, teams looked over the picture round, which was movie posters with the title removed. We continued the movie theme on to the next round on film and television. Anyone know the footballer mentioned in The Only Fools and Horses theme tune?

Chris then gave all the teams the chance to take a gamble with the genius round – teams had to name as many actors featured in Trainspotting as they could, but they were warned to proceed with caution as a wrong answer meant a point deducted!

Continued on page 8



After all this quizzing, it was time to decide who won! The winners of the quiz were the 'Premature Adjudicators' from McHale and Co, who scored a whopping 49 points. As a result, the team left with a bottle of prosecco each and some chocolate to pair with it. Many congratulations to them – a very impressive score!

The wooden spoon prize (the famous Gregg's vouchers) went to Leonard Curtis Legal's 'Legal Leopards,' who were very much pleased with their winnings. We hope they serve you well, and you can have a few free sausage rolls on us!

It was such a fun night, and we hope you enjoyed as much as we did! We had a great turn-out for the quiz, with over 100 guests attending. We are also delighted to announce that this event raised over £700 for We Love MCR – a massive thank you to all of our attendees!

What do you say, perhaps same time next year?

Final Scores

Premature Adjudicators	49
Divorce Force	41.5
Don't Judge Us	39
Risky Quizness	38
The Excellers	38
No Win No Fee	36
The Legals Have Landed	35
Patently Correct	35
The Johnny Come Lately's	34
Legally Brunette	34
Ward Hadaway LLP	32
Mini Kinders	31.5
The Franettes	30
Gunner Try for Greggs	26
Just Olliers	25
Silkin and Disorder	22
LS1	22
And The Greggs Voucher Goes To	21
Wooden Spoon	19.5
LS Quiz Team No. 3	18
Lowry Legends	16
Legal Eagles	12
Legal Leopards	12

The Premature Adjudicators - our winners!





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The National Law Society's 'Reframing Justice Toolkit'

The [National Law Society](#) has launched their [Reframing Justice Toolkit](#) in collaboration with [FrameWorks UK](#), with practical advice and guidance about access to justice and the rule of law.

For decades, the rule of law and access to justice have been undermined. Cuts to court funding, legal aid and legal education have made it harder for justice to be done.

At the same time, claims of judges being 'enemies of the people' and 'lefty lawyers' using law to frustrate public will, have entered public discourse.

The targeting of immigration lawyers and legal advice centres during the 2024 riots shows the real-life consequences of this narrative.

“

The toolkit outlines five tools to change public thinking on access to justice and the rule of law

This is why, together with FrameWorks UK, the Law Society has developed a communications framing strategy and practical toolkit to meet this challenge. When important ideas become fraught or even weaponised like this – it's time to find a new story about the rule of law and access to justice.

The toolkit outlines five tools to change public thinking on access to justice and the rule of law. These are rooted in evidence based off two years of research with experts in the field as well as voters in England and Wales. You can explore the evidence behind the recommendations [here](#).

They aim to build understanding of the rule of law and access to justice as vital to everyday life amongst the public, and to help people recognise our government's responsibility to champion and maintain the two.

The Law Society kindly asks members to share the toolkit around their network so that we can work together to create a new shared story of the rule of law and access to justice.

You can also spread the word by resharing their recent [LinkedIn post](#).



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Time to be Proud!

With Pride season approaching, the LGBTQ+ community is gearing up to celebrate – but how can you get involved in the fight to improve LGBTQ+ young people’s lives?

The Proud Trust's top priority is improving the lives of LGBTQ+ young people.

Through our regional youth work and national support services, we empower LGBTQ+ young people and the adults in their lives to create positive change for the future. Our work is building a safer environment for LGBTQ+ young people to thrive and achieve their full potential in all the spaces they exist. We do this because we believe all LGBTQ+ young people deserve to live happy, fulfilling lives.

We won't stop until true equality is a reality for all LGBTQ+ young people.

Meaningful Impact

At The Proud Trust, LGBTQ+ young people are at the heart of our work - from mentoring support helping them to navigate their toughest challenges, to delivering training in schools so that their teachers can understand and support them better. It is the charity's mission to show LGBTQ+ young people that they are important, that they have a bright future ahead of them, and that they have so much to be proud of.

“The Proud Trust has been life-changing for me in almost all aspects of my life and has improved the quality of it drastically, I don't know where or who I would be without it.”

– A young person who attends one of The Proud Trust's youth groups

Photo credit: Orla Evans





Our work is especially important in the current climate, where LGBTQ+ young people are facing so many unique challenges. LGBTQ+ hate crime is disproportionately on the rise in the UK, with 64% of people surveyed by Galop saying they had experienced anti-LGBTQ+ violence or abuse. LGBTQ+ young people are particularly affected, reporting significantly lower wellbeing than their peers, according to the #BeeWell survey of young people in Manchester. We are yet to understand how a recent Supreme Court judgement will impact the lives of young people, but already things feel worse.

The good news is, with the right support, these outcomes can be turned around. 95% of our young people rate their youth group as "good" or "excellent, 97% say they feel a sense of belonging in our spaces and 100% say that we have helped their confidence to grow.

The Power of an Hour

- With one hour, The Proud Trust can support a young person who needs advice about coming out to their friends, via its digital live chat service, Proud Connections.
- Two hours a week at one of its youth groups can give a young person a space to be their true self, without judgment, for the first time.
- One hour a month with a Proud Mentor can help support a young person to take the first steps towards their dream career.

Get Involved

This Pride season, we've launched the Time To Be Proud campaign, aiming to raise £45,000 to fund a minimum of 1,500 hours of life changing youth work and support services for LGBTQ+ young people across the UK.

You can sign up to take part [online](#) and it couldn't be easier - simply donate through the website and you'll be helping us reach our goal. The theme of the TIME TO BE PROUD campaign is – you guessed it – time! So why not take that as your inspiration for a timed challenge? Here are just a few examples.

- Timed sponsorships: Get your friends to sponsor you to crochet as many rows of a blanket as you can or run as far as you can in one hour.
- Bake-off bake sale: Bake as many cakes as you can in a timed challenge and sell them at a charity bake sale.
- Penny-per-minute Pledge: Pledge to donate a penny for every minute you spend on Instagram this week (your phone will do the maths for you! |)), or £1 for every episode of your favourite TV show you watch this month.
- Charity streaming: If you're a streamer, why not spend an hour of one of your streams raising funds for The Proud Trust? Encourage your viewers to donate during the hour and see how much you can raise.
- Auction of promises: Find friends and colleagues with valuable skills and auction their time off to the highest bidder! This could be anything from a one-hour driving lesson to a full day of cleaning.

No matter how you raise money, you can be sure that it will make a difference to LGBTQ+ young people.

Join the campaign [here](#)

You can find out more about the Proud Trust, the chosen charity for our upcoming [Pride Afternoon Tea](#) on Saturday 23rd August, [here](#)



MLS Future Stars: building confidence and supporting legal careers

Hear from one of our inaugural Future Stars cohort, Louis Hazeldine-Cosgrove, on how the programme has supported him so far.



Beginning university is daunting for anyone, regardless of the degree. But for me, the fear that came with studying law wasn't just about the academic challenge — it was about what comes after. We've all heard the stereotypes: the law graduate unable to find a job, or the student who "wastes" their degree despite years of hard work and dedication. That uncertainty lingered heavily in my mind.

However, joining the Future Stars Programme quickly helped ease those fears. The support I received through this initiative began to chip away at the doubts that so often hold us back. Since the new year, I've had the privilege of being mentored by James Miller, a barrister at 18 St John's Chambers, and meeting David Anderson, Immediate Past President of Manchester Law Society. Both reminded me that the goals we set — our career aspirations and ambitions — are not out of reach. Often, these ambitions can feel like abstract ideas, operating in a vacuum, far removed from reality. But completing my first mini-pupillage at St John's Buildings Chambers made everything feel tangible. It confirmed for me that a career at the Bar is not just something I want — it's something I can pursue.

That sense of certainty was deepened by my time shadowing barristers at Minshull Street Crown Court. Many of the criminal barristers I met came from backgrounds similar to mine, and seeing the paths they carved through hard work and resilience was incredibly motivating. Watching them prosecute, defend, interview clients, and

deliver powerful advocacy gave me a first-hand glimpse into the work I one day hope to do. It was an experience made possible by the Manchester Law Society, whose commitment to promoting legal excellence and building community in Manchester is something I've come to truly value.

These experiences have greatly strengthened my motivation to pursue a legal career. Through them, I've built new connections and received invaluable advice on gaining practical experience before applying for pupillage. As a result, I've secured further mini-pupillages for later this year and have begun applying for roles where I know I'll be able to thrive.

Careers in law — particularly in criminal justice — shouldn't be rushed into, especially in light of the many critical perspectives on the state of the system. Yet, rather than being discouraged, the professionals I've encountered and the opportunities I've had have helped dispel much of that negativity. They've shown me that a future in criminal law isn't just something to hope for — it's something to work towards, and one I genuinely aspire to be a part of.

If you are interested in getting involved in our Future Stars Programme, either as a mentor, offering work experience or spreading the word of the programme please get in touch by emailing CarlaJones@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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Employment Law Conference 2025

May marked the return of the Employment Law Conference, which took place on the 14th of May at [Manchester Hall](#). The conference, headed and moderated by MLS Employment Law Forum co-chairs Bryn Doyle (Partner, Lewis Silkin) and Jo Handler (Partner, Forbes) was a space for those interested or involved in employment law to learn about the most recent updates in the sector and get key advice from employment law experts.

Jeni Morris, Head of the National Minimum Wage Specialist Team at EY, started us off with a session all about National Minimum Wage and explained the importance of correctly calculating employees' Working Time to ensure NMW compliance (even for employees in professional services earning more than £50,000 per year). Jeni used case studies to illustrate how even the smallest mistake interpreting the law can have huge financial consequences for a business and lead to HMRC enforcement

action being taken against it. This is a topic all employers, including law firms, need to be aware of to avoid breaching NMW legislation/HMRC enforcement action.

Keynote speaker Regional Employment Judge Franey summarised the recent changes in Employment Tribunals, including new changes to tribunal procedure and the new presentation of claims and responses. Judge Franey then looked ahead to speculate on future rule changes and the potential move to further digitisation within employment tribunals, from improving digital case files to the judicial use of AI.

David Hopper, Partner at Lewis Silkin, used his collective employment law expertise to advise on the role of unions in the workplace (even where a company does not recognise a Trade Union), using recent supreme court cases and current market practices to provide some contemporary context. David spoke on these current





issues as well as discussed the upcoming Employment Rights Bill and the potentially 'seismic changes' that could happen as a result, with a reminder that this area of employment law is both complex and very costly if incorrect advice is given.

Barrister Amy Smith of Nine Chambers then did a detailed case law update, unpacking a number of individual cases that had recently passed through the employment tribunals and court system, from discrimination cases to anonymity rulings.

During the panel discussion, our speakers were joined by Gemma Hardiman, Head of Employment Law at Oliver James, and we discussed topical issues such as the recent Supreme Court (trans)gender ruling and the upcoming Employment Rights Bill – a key theme shared across many of our sessions. Attendees from the public sector and commercial law firms provided valuable insights into how their organisations and also their clients are dealing with these issues, which was helpful to understand how the current challenges are impacting different sectors.

The conference was a fantastic opportunity to keep updated in the everchanging



employment law world, and we were so pleased to receive positive feedback from everyone that attended on the day.

If you missed this session and want to keep up to date with the changing legal landscape before next year's Annual Employment Conference, then you are very welcome to come along to join the Manchester Law Society Employment Law Forum (ELF) which meets four times a year to discuss, debate, and network! For more information on how to join the MLS (either individually or as a Corporate member) and access the wide range of committees on offer, please email carlajones@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk



Manchester becomes Policing Academic Centre of Excellence in new initiative

Manchester has been officially recognised as one of the UK's new Policing Academic Centres of Excellence (PACE) as part of a national initiative to embed world-class research into frontline policing and community safety.

The M-PACE centre will be led jointly by experts from The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University, in partnership with local police, community groups and industry. It is one of nine PACE hubs launched across the UK by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in a bid to transform how policing tackles today's complex challenges.

Backed by funding from the NPCC and UKRI, the centres will become long-term drivers of innovation – giving police forces across the UK access to cutting-edge research and practical

expertise in everything from crime prevention and digital policing to ethics and public trust.

Unlike traditional academic centres, PACE hubs are designed to work hand-in-hand with police services to co-develop research that responds to real-world problems – from improving how crimes are investigated, to tackling violence, supporting victims, and rebuilding public confidence in law enforcement.

M-PACE will help the police to understand and use existing research by working together to share their knowledge, as well as creating new research in partnership with the police, and helping to train the next generation of policing researchers and professionals. The programme draws on a team with a strong track record in evidence-based policing to meet the ongoing research and innovation needs of UK policing.



“

As the UK faces fast-changing demands on its police services, the launch of the PACE network signals a long-term commitment to smarter, safer, and more responsive policing

”

As part of the wider PACE network, it will also help establish national best practices, support training and skills development in policing, and ensure new technologies and methods are evaluated using robust evidence.

“M-PACE is an exciting collaboration between Manchester Metropolitan University and The University of Manchester which will engage colleagues from multiple faculties and disciplines in a common project,” said project co-lead Professor Jon Bannister of Manchester Metropolitan University. “Building on our rich and varied expertise, M-PACE will strive to meet the evidence needs of police forces. We will develop new research and knowledge exchange activities with the ambitions of helping improve public safety and improving the legitimacy of policing within communities.”

“M-PACE will aim to strengthen the link between academic research and operational policing,” said fellow co-lead Dr Réka Solymosi from The University of Manchester. “It will support the development of skills, tools, and evidence that address real-world policing challenges, while ensuring academic research is informed by operational practice in a way that is both collaborative but also analytically independent. I’m really excited about how M-PACE will bring together interdisciplinary expertise from the two institutions to build safer communities together.”

The PACE programme marks a major shift in how UK policing engages with science and evidence. The initiative will create a collaborative, nationwide research infrastructure that reflects policing’s Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) – from public protection to digital transformation. Each centre will act as a gateway to independent

“

M-PACE is an exciting collaboration between Manchester Metropolitan University and The University of Manchester”

academic advice, helping forces to navigate complex issues and adopt effective, ethical strategies that serve diverse communities.

As the UK faces fast-changing demands on its police services, the launch of the PACE network signals a long-term commitment to smarter, safer, and more responsive policing – backed by the best that British academia has to offer.

“This is about making sure policing decisions are grounded in the best available knowledge,” said Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, NPCC Chair. “It strengthens our commitment to evidence-based practice and shows our determination to be more transparent, accountable and effective.”

Stian Westlake, Executive Chair of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), said: “The Policing Academic Centres of Excellence will forge closer relationships between police forces and researchers, providing the police with data and evidence to make the justice system work better.

“By bringing experts in policing practice together with social scientists and data scientists across the country, the centres will provide knowledge and insights to drive service improvement. These centres of excellence demonstrate our commitment to reducing crime and making Britain a safer place.”



Joint V May Meeting

The Joint V meeting of Birmingham Law Society, Bristol Law Society, Leeds Law Society, Liverpool Law Society and Manchester Law Society, hosted at the lovely offices of Taylor Wessing UK overlooking The Albert Dock, took place on Tuesday 20th May.

We were delighted to be welcomed by Olivia Wyld who is three weeks into her new post as Taylor Wessing's COO for UK, Ireland and the Middle East and Head of the Liverpool Office!

After a business and activity report from each Society there was a discussion around Land Registry delays led by John-Paul Dennis of Liverpool Law Society.

We then welcomed Helen Holmes, Legal Policy Consultant and Meenara Islam, Policy Manager – Regulatory Policy from the Solicitors Regulation Authority who gave us an update on their Financial Penalties Consultation Paper, their interim report and their continuing work on wider reforms to their financial penalties framework, informed by the feedback they received to the consultation and ongoing engagement with stakeholders. They plan to publish a further consultation later this year.



We then welcomed Emily Weidner, Policy Adviser - Modernising Justice from The Law Society who gave us an update with communication with HMCTS about court delays and central telephony issues.

The main topic of discussion was the The Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) recent data breach and the impact this is having on our members and their clients.

The impact on Law Firms is severe –

- **Operational Disruption:** The LAA's online portal has been taken offline until at least 22 May, halting digital submissions and payments. This is especially disruptive for small legal aid firms that rely on timely reimbursements 2.

- **Administrative Burden:** Firms must now follow manual or alternative procedures for submitting applications and claims, increasing workload and the risk of delays.
- **Client Trust:** Law firms are facing difficult conversations with clients whose sensitive data may have been compromised, potentially damaging trust and reputations.

And the impact on Clients cannot be underestimated.

- **Data Exposure:** Personal information including contact details, national ID numbers, criminal history, employment status, and financial data may have been accessed.
- **Security Risks:** Clients are being urged to watch for identity theft, phishing attempts, and other forms of fraud.
- **Emotional Distress:** Many clients are vulnerable individuals seeking legal aid for sensitive issues, and the breach may cause significant anxiety and distress.

A joint statement from the Joint V has been drafted, and can be seen on the [following page](#) [↗](#).

As always it was great to see our friends from the other local law societies, and to continue working together to represent the interests of legal professionals and the clients they serve. This alliance ensures that the voices of regional law firms are heard on important national and regional issues.

We look forward to our next meeting in November in Bristol.



Statement of the Joint V Law Societies on the Legal Aid Agency Data Breach – 21 May 2025

The Joint V Law Societies express deep concern at the recent data breach affecting the Legal Aid Agency, which may have compromised highly sensitive personal information of legal aid applicants and contracted firms. As we understand it, the breach may include details such as applicant financial information, previous convictions, allegations that did not result in a conviction, and sensitive information about domestic abuse in the case of family law applicants.

This breach represents not only a grave data protection failure but a potential threat to the safety and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable individuals in society. Many of those affected are already at risk and have come to the justice system for protection and support. The exposure of such personal and often traumatic information could have serious consequences for their privacy, security and mental health.

Our member practitioners working in legal aid have been significantly affected. The ongoing outage of the LAA's online portal has left them not knowing how to submit applications for legal aid or to process claims for payment. A contingency plan has not been forthcoming and information as to how practitioners should continue working is scarce. For firms already working on the narrowest of margins, this interruption in work, and possibly in income places them at real risk of financial instability. These are firms whose commitment to access to justice sustains entire communities – their survival cannot be taken for granted.

Delays in processing legal aid applications also add further pressure to a court system already under strain. Hearings may be postponed, vulnerable clients left

unrepresented, and justice delayed – or denied – for those who cannot proceed without public funding.

We call upon the Legal Aid Agency to:

- Urgently update practitioners with clear guidance on contingency arrangements for making legal aid applications, submitting bills, and applying for payments on account and interim payments;
- Commit to full transparency about the nature and extent of the data breach, including its impact on clients and practitioners;
- Ensure the restoration of functionality for vital systems such as the online portal as soon as possible, and provide regular progress updates;
- Engage meaningfully with practitioners to understand the operational and financial consequences of the disruption, and to ensure appropriate mitigation and support.
- Reassure practitioners and applicants of the steps taken to ensure that a similar breach cannot occur in future.

Legal aid providers have consistently gone above and beyond to uphold access to justice in increasingly difficult circumstances. They – and their clients – deserve urgent action, honest communication, and robust support.

21st May 2025

Bristol Law Society
Birmingham Law Society
Leeds Law Society
Liverpool Law Society
Manchester Law Society

The views expressed in this statement are not necessarily the views of the individual members or directors of the Joint V Law Societies.



Manchester Business and Property Courts Forum

Lessons from Thames Water and British Home Stores

Under the Chairmanship of **His Honour Judge Cawson KC**, the Manchester Business and Property Courts Forum is delighted to welcome the Chancellor of the High Court, **Sir Julian Flaux** and **Giles Maynard-Connor KC** of Exchange Chambers, to speak on recent and topical issues of insolvency.

The Chancellor will speak on restructuring plans under Part 26A of the Companies Act 2006, in particular following the decision of the Court of Appeal to confirm the plans proposed by Thames Water Utilities Holdings Limited and supported by its Class A creditors, which had been previously approved by the High Court (*Kingston SARL v Thames Water Utilities Holdings Ltd* [2025] EWCA Civ 475).

Giles Maynard-Connor KC will discuss the recent decisions in *Wright v Chappell* [2024] EWHC 1417 (Ch) and [2024] EWHC 2166 (Ch), and their significance in terms of the creditor duty and the basis on which compensation for a breach of that duty should be assessed.

This event is **in-person only**, being held at **TLT Solicitors**, Eden Building, Irwell Street, Salford, Manchester M3 5EN. The event will start at **5:30pm** with pre-event drinks from **5pm**.

To book a place, please click [here](#).

Thursday, 12th June 2025 at 5:30pm

(pre-event drinks from 5pm)

In-person only at TLT Solicitors,

Eden Building

Irwell Street

Manchester M3 5EN





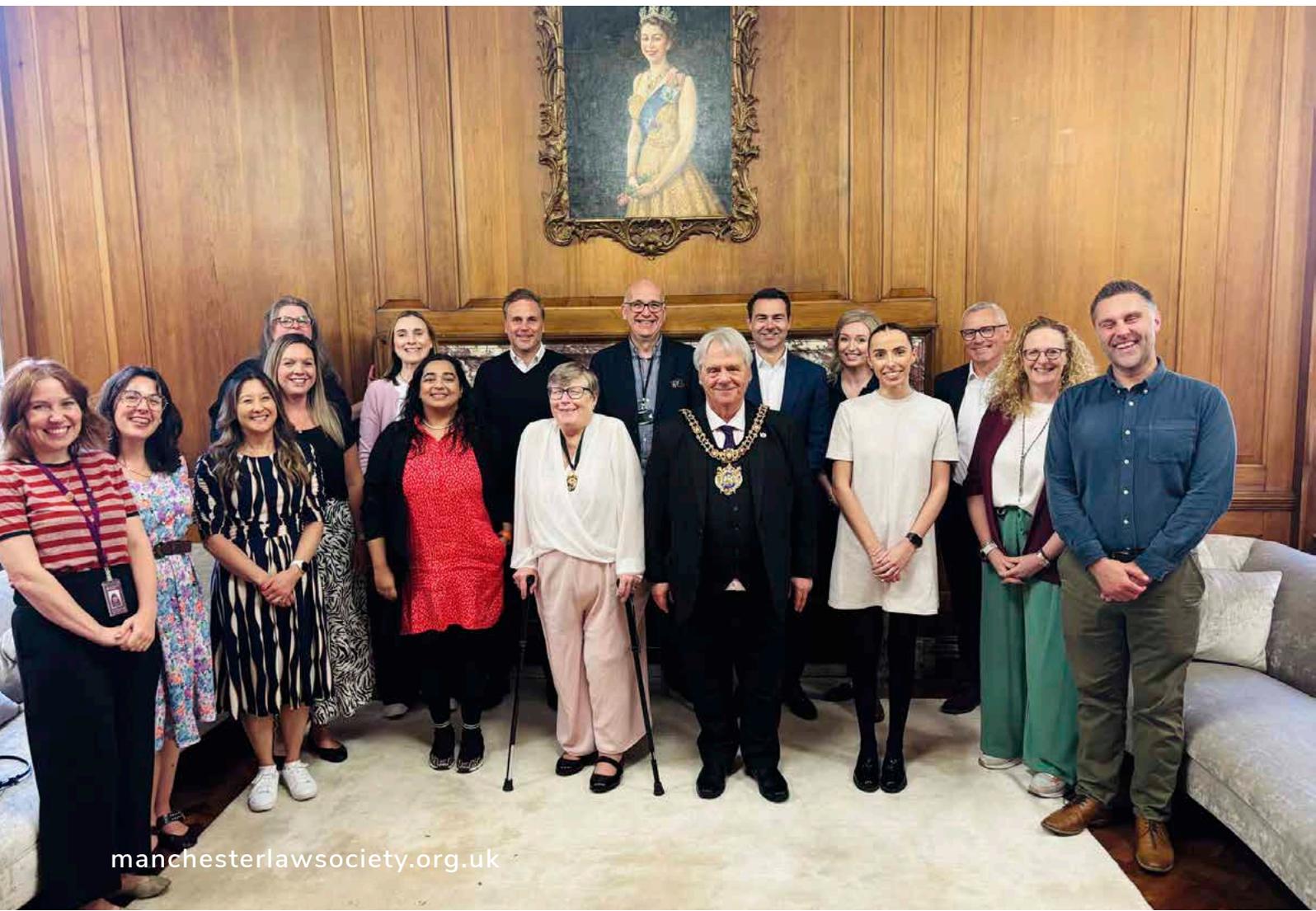
Lord Mayor of Manchester's Legal Lunch

[We Love MCR](#) is now into its third consecutive year as the chosen charity partner of Manchester Law Society, selected by the President each year. The Charity supports young people and communities across Manchester. Our current President, Fiona Ledden is City Solicitor of Manchester and a Trustee of the Charity and it is therefore particularly close to her heart, as it is to the Lord Mayor of Manchester, who is their Chair of Trustees.

Manchester Law Society has also been working hard to improve the lives and opportunities of young people in Manchester, particularly those from a disadvantaged background, by way of support through the [Future Stars](#)

[Programme](#). This programme offers opportunities and financial support to young people in the region who are driven to achieve a career in law, but who do not have the necessary knowledge, finances or connections to achieve that dream.

Noting the synergies between the endeavours of We Love Manchester and of Manchester Law Society's Future Stars Programme, members of Manchester Law Society were delighted to be invited to the Lord Mayor's Parlour on 2nd May for an event to celebrate the efforts of the charities in supporting the next generation of legal professionals in Manchester. Fiona was able to work her magic behind the scenes in making this event a possibility.



The attendees from the Manchester Law Society Council, member firms engaged in the Future Stars Programme, as well as representatives from We Love Manchester, were able to share ideas and stories of support over a buffet lunch, followed by an address from the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor also regaled attendees with stories of the array of artefacts on display in the Lord Mayor's parlour, including a ceremonial Bell from China and portraits of the late Queen, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Future Stars Programme is now entering its second recruitment window for the programme and it was already clear that the first round of beneficiaries have received support and opportunities that would otherwise have been unavailable to them,

including work placements, mini-pupillages in Chambers, mentoring, and financial support. It is the Society's intention that the programme should grow and have future events at which the success continues to be celebrated. Should you or your firm wish to support the programme please contact [Carla Jones](#) .

We Love Manchester continues to seek the support of professional organisations in both supporting fund raising, but also in offering opportunities to those young people who are engaged with the charity. For further information please contact welovemcrcharity@manchester.gov.uk .

Thank you to the Lord Mayor of Manchester for welcoming us all and for entertaining us.

[Click for more info](#)

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A guide to the Law Society's Climate Change Risk Property Practice Note

Following the publication of the [Law Society's Climate Change Risk Property Practice Note](#) [↗](#), Landmark spoke to two of its contributors, Simon Boyle, environmental lawyer, and Robert Lee, Professor of Law at the University of Birmingham, for their take on what this means for conveyancers.

Landmark's Sustainability Team has played a key role in helping to shape the Law Society's Climate Change Risk Property Practice Note. Environmental Law Director, Simon Boyle, and Special Advisor, Professor Robert Lee, contributed to the Practice Note and co-wrote the supplementary Technical Note.

Around six drafts and 18 months later, the Practice Note was published on 12 May. With conveyancers understandably concerned about scope creep, even prior to this new Law Society climate change guidance, we quizzed Simon and Robert about the practical implications of the Practice Note.

[Click here to watch the video of this discussion](#) [↗](#)

What are climate risks in the context of property transactions?

Prof. Robert Lee: There are three main species of risk. Physical risks involve damage or harm to owned property due to climate change. Transition risks arise from changes made by governments and others on the journey to net zero. Then there are legal risks, whereby individuals or businesses could fall foul of the implications that follow from physical and transitional risks.

What does the Law Society practice note on climate change advise in relation to ordering climate risk searches?

Simon Boyle: I think it's taken a pragmatic view. There's a very useful checklist for property lawyers in the Practice Note, which has seven key steps that it sets out. The first one relates to climate risk searches, and it states that these are an option for property lawyers to commission.

When a property lawyer has an initial conversation with the client about the risk in the context of the whole property transaction, for the first time, in most cases, the lawyer will be mentioning climate change risks too. When it comes to the searches, step one is to say to your client: 'it might be useful to commission a climate search.' That's at the top of the recommendations.

Are conveyancers expected to advise on climate change risks?

Prof. Robert Lee: It's not the lawyer's job to advise on the technical risk or the nature of those risks. But any client will sensibly expect that the lawyer will look out for the legal implications that follow from that risk and offer practical advice on how one might mitigate those legal risks or liabilities.

What the lawyer is really doing is taking the technical information that comes through the legal search and using that background contextual knowledge gained from client instruction to look at the legal consequences and advise accordingly.



How can conveyancers practically apply the new Law Society Practice Note on climate change?

Prof. Robert Lee: Once we have a Practice Note, that introduces some degree of change and a standard that conveyancers are expected to meet. There are quite definitely things that law firms can do in terms of stepping up to that requirement.

I'd begin with training. Whilst we don't need to be technical experts in risk, we do need to have some consciousness of the search products out there on the market. You need to be able to have a conversation with your client to say, 'I'm wondering about a climate search and here's why.' You could even script this initial conversation.

You also want to be very clear about the extent of your instructions in this area. Again, you could have some form of wording about what it is you will do and what it is you won't do in relation to climate change risk. We can also start thinking now about how we would cover climate-related issues in any report on title and reduce that to some form of standard wording.

Some of this must be sensibly defensive on the part of the conveyancer, so I would also be documenting advice and assistance over time.

What if a conveyancer needs more information following a climate risk search?

Simon Boyle: Landmark has a helpline and an excellent customer services team that is here to help. If you order a [climate risk search](#) from us and have any questions

about it or have any points for clarification, then the Landmark customer services team can give you the information that's required.

As it's such a new area, there may well be some questions that even our customer services team won't be able to answer. They can then turn to our 12-strong Sustainability Team, so we can answer any question that comes up. We recognise that quite often people need to come back and ask for more information. Especially several years down the line when things may be different.

Where can conveyancers access climate change training?

Simon Boyle: At Landmark, we've put a lot of store in providing training materials on climate change. We have our [Landmark Academy](#), which Robert is the chair of and has provided a number of lectures on climate change. We already have a huge amount of information on the Academy, which is freely available for anyone to access and get that more in-depth understanding.

The other thing we do is provide [face-to-face training for law firms](#). We can do this on Teams, but we can also, and regularly do, go and see firms face to face. This gives us an opportunity to meet everybody and have in-person discussions, which I think is the best way of providing this training.

Find out more about our market-leading [Climate Change Risk Management Services](#), [Climate Change Reports](#) and [Sustainability Training Services](#). Alternatively, if you have any climate change queries, please contact our customer service team on 0330 036 6619.

[Click here to listen to the audio of Landmark's latest discussion on Spotify](#)

Feeling anxious about mistakes? You're not alone

Mistakes are a normal part of life. But in the legal sector, where accuracy and high standards are expected, the fear of making a mistake can feel overwhelming. At [LawCare](#), we often hear from people who worry about past mistakes or feel anxious about what could go wrong in the future.

For some, this fear takes over. We've spoken to people who keep going over past decisions, questioning themselves, and believing they've made a huge mistake they can't fix. Others worry so much about making a mistake that they struggle to focus, put things off, doubt their choices, or even avoid tasks completely.

These worries don't just disappear when the workday ends. Many legal professionals tell us they struggle to sleep because of anxious thoughts, replaying case details or conversations in their heads late into the night. Some describe waking up with a

racing heart, feeling physically sick at the thought of what might happen if they make a mistake.

Why does this happen in the legal sector?

The legal sector places high expectations on its people. Lawyers, paralegals, trainees, and support staff often work in environments where mistakes can have serious consequences - for clients, cases, the reputation of the employer and careers.

There are several reasons why people have a strong fear of making mistakes:

- **Pressure to be perfect** – Many people in law feel they must get everything right, often setting impossible standards for themselves. The work can be complex with tight deadlines and high regulatory standards.





- **High stakes** – In legal work, even small mistakes can feel significant due to the potential for serious outcomes.
- **Fear of judgement** – Worrying about what colleagues, supervisors, or clients think can make mistakes feel like personal failures.
- **Blame culture** – In some workplaces, mistakes aren't treated as learning experiences, making it hard for people to admit errors or move forward after making one.
- **Speak to someone you trust** – Whether it's a mentor, colleague, or a support service (like LawCare). Talking about your worries can help you see things more clearly
- **See mistakes as a chance to learn** – No one gets everything right 100% of the time. Instead of viewing mistakes as failures, try to see them as opportunities to grow and improve.
- **Be realistic** – No one is perfect. Focus on doing your best instead of trying to be flawless.

The impact of constant anxiety

When the fear of making mistakes takes over, it doesn't just affect work - it can harm mental and physical health too. Constant worry can lead to burnout, making it harder to focus and stay motivated. It can also knock confidence, causing self-doubt even when things are going well. Some people start putting off tasks or avoiding opportunities because they're afraid of getting things wrong. Anxiety can also show up in physical ways, like headaches, stomach problems, tense muscles, and trouble sleeping.

Moving forward: how to manage fear of mistakes

If this all sounds familiar, here are a few ideas that might help:

- **Acknowledge negative thoughts** – It's common when we're under stress to jump to worst-case scenarios, particularly in law where it's often part of the training. If you keep stressing over a mistake, take a moment to acknowledge those thoughts. What would you say to a friend feeling the same way? Indulge in some self-care, which might free up some headspace to think things through more clearly.

It is so important to be kind to yourself. Mistakes don't define you; they're a normal part of life.

You're not alone

If you're feeling anxious about making mistakes, you're not alone - lots of people in the legal sector feel this way too. Support is available, and you don't have to deal with it on your own.

Talking about your worries can help. At LawCare, we provide confidential, non-judgemental support to anyone in the legal sector who is struggling with stress, anxiety, sleep problems, or anything else that's making life difficult. We're here for you.

Call LawCare for a confidential chat on 0800 279 6888 Use LawCare's [online chat](#) to connect with a real person who understands. Email LawCare at support@lawcare.org.uk

7 reasons why coaching works (with 10 bonus questions)

Coaching is such a powerful tool to have as a manager. It doesn't need to take 2 hours. Coaching conversations can take 5 mins, if you ask the right questions. Integrating coaching into your management style has so many benefits.

Here's a breakdown of why it's so valuable:

1. Improves Performance

- Coaching helps employees identify their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Regular feedback and guidance enable them to set clear goals and overcome obstacles, leading to better individual and team results.

2. Boosts Engagement and Motivation

- Employees who feel supported and valued by their manager are more motivated.

- Coaching shows that the manager is invested in their growth, which increases job satisfaction and commitment.

3. Develops Talent and Future Leaders

- Coaching encourages learning and skill development.
- It helps prepare employees for higher responsibilities and succession planning, reducing the need to hire externally.

4. Fosters a Growth Mindset and Accountability

- Coaching promotes a culture where feedback is constructive and learning from mistakes is encouraged.
- Employees take greater ownership of their work and outcomes.

Mike Ode



5. Strengthens Relationships and Trust

- Coaching conversations build rapport between managers and team members.
- Trust leads to open communication, better collaboration, and a more positive work environment.

6. Enhances Problem-Solving and Innovation

- Through coaching, managers can guide employees to think critically and creatively about challenges.
- It empowers employees to find solutions rather than waiting for directions.

7. Supports Change Management

- In times of organisational change, coaching helps individuals adapt and maintain performance.
- It provides clarity, reassurance, and direction.

Here's a few coaching questions that you can use with your team:

These questions help you to open up the initial coaching conversation and help you to identify the goal/objective. What do they want to achieve?

- What would you like to happen that is not happening now, or what would you like not to happen that is happening now?
- What outcome would you like from this session/discussion/interaction?
- What do you want to achieve long term?
- What does success look like?

“

Integrating coaching into your management style has so many benefits.

Reflective Questions:

These questions encourage the individual to think about and reflect more deeply on their current practice.

- What would you have to change in order for...?
- What's another way you might look at this?
- What is holding you back?

'Resource' Questions

These questions get the coachee to consider which experience, qualities, skills they already have.

- Which skills that you already have can help right now?
- When you were last in this situation, how did you fix it?
- Which qualities that you have can be useful in this situation just like this?

Do you need help developing the coaching skills of your managers? Contact Mike direct for a chat at mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk 

34 Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



This article is being written prior to the last Bank Holiday until end of August (it would be good if they were spread out more evenly!) following weeks of dry, bright weather – and the forecast is predicting a wet weekend, followed by more rain! At least the gardens and reservoirs will get the benefit. The forecast for risk and compliance is also changeable, with the SRA's unlimited fining powers in relation to economic crime coming into play shortly, version 1.1 of the latest LSAG guidance being introduced a few weeks ago, and two questionnaires set to land from the SRA.

Updated LSAG guidance

As we reported last month, the latest version of the LSAG AML compliance guidance (ominously titled version 1.1) was published on 23 April 2025. Helpfully, a full list of the changes is in the Schedule of Amendments at pages 221 - 228. Firms should review their FWRA and PCPs in light of the new guidance and record the fact they have done so.

We understand there may be a further update later this year to reflect the effect of the Uyghur case on the limits of the 'adequate consideration' exemption from criminal liability for money laundering. The Law Society's view, based on advice, is that the decision does not impose additional suspicious activity reporting (SARs) obligations on solicitors, but discussions are ongoing.

SRA enforcement relating to AML to increase

The SRA has announced that as a result of firms not complying with AML obligations, it will be stepping up its enforcement. Paul Philip, Chief Executive of the SRA, said it is still finding fairly basic deficiencies, fines are going up and if firms continue not to comply, the consequences will be increased.

At the end of June, the SRA will carry out a data gathering exercise about AML, Sanctions and suspicious activity reports and the results will help prioritise firms that require inspections and desk-based reviews. The SRA beat its inspections target by 70% for the first quarter of the year, which the SRA put down to streamlined processes, making use of desk-based reviews alongside inspections, retention and development of staff working within AML teams leading to quicker and more effective inspections. This announcement follows closely on the heels of a large number of recent decisions relating to breaches of AML in the first quarter of this year. Fines for firms ranged from £1600- £300,000, and £3500 to £45,000 for individuals.

If the SRA want to inspect your AML processes you will need to provide the documents within 10 days, so it's a good idea to collate them now and put them in a separate folder, with more than one person being aware of where they are kept, in case the MLRO/MLCO/COLP is away when the request lands!

SRA looks for budget rise

Last month we reported that LeO was seeking a budget increase of over 11%, and In its recently published business plan



Manchester Law Society

Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871

for 2025/26, the SRA is proposing a 25% increase in its budget due to an increase in reports of misconduct, leading to 40% more investigations being opened per month, compared to 12 months ago. According to the SRA, efficiency has improved and 18% more cases are being concluded per month, but the scale and complexity of the caseload has increased. However, the improvement in efficiency has not been noted by practitioners - if the SRA decides to investigate a firm or individual it can take months, and often years, for the process with little/no progress for months at a time.

The plan also confirms that the SRA will develop a programme of work on professional ethics and progress work on high-volume consumer claims. The proposed budget increase is subject to consultation and will require approval from the LSB.

Reporting your firm's diversity data

We reported last month that the biannual collection of diversity data by the SRA will be carried out this summer, and it appears that summer is almost here, as firms will need to report its diversity data between 9 June and 4 July 2025. As well as reporting diversity data, there are questions about plans for publishing a summary of the data. It is a regulatory requirement to complete the report and if the SRA takes action for failing to comply a firm could be issued with a [fixed penalty fine](#) for non-compliance.

AI

The increase in the use of AI is affecting firms. Policies should be considered, particularly in light of recent cases where, in one case, fake case authorities have been referred to in court and the judge ordered the defendant

to send the transcript of the judgment to the SRA and BSB, and in another, a former solicitor referred to almost 30 false cases in support of his appeal against strike off in 2017 for misleadingly stating his practice had indemnity insurance.

We are seeing more complaints from clients/litigants in person written with 'the assistance' of AI, which makes them more difficult to respond to, replies to responses arrive quicker, and add to the pressure of a stressful workload. We anticipate firms may consider settling spurious complaints in order to deal with the matter quickly and avoid it being escalated to LeO/SRA.

Law Society In-house ethics framework

The Law Society has introduced an ethics framework 'providing practical guidance, tools and resources to assist in-house solicitors uphold their ethical and legal obligations while operating effectively within their organisations', intended to complement the SRA's guidance which covers specific issues such as identifying the client, internal investigations and legal privilege. The Law Society will continue to review and improve the framework based on feedback from putting it into practice.

New practice notes and guidance

The following have been since our previous update:

SRA guidance/news

[Complying with the UK Sanctions regime](#)

Continued on page 36



Law Society practice notes

Climate change and property [↗](#)

Recent decisions

Largest ever fine imposed

While the SRA is continuing the discussion about fining powers, (it already has the ability to impose unlimited fines for failure to prevent fraud), it has just reported its largest ever fine of almost £4 million on a former non-solicitor owner of an ABS. The previous largest fine was for £500,000 for AML breaches and failing to prevent clients being involved in a dubious investment scheme. Investigators found evidence of 310 improper transfers to companies linked to the manager of a now closed firm that were used for loan repayments and to buy assets unrelated to the business, and forged statements attempting to conceal the transactions. The SRA intervention in the firm in 2020 secured £22.5m of client money but there was still a shortfall of £10m. Two other non-lawyers involved in the matter were disqualified from working in a law firm without SRA permission and ordered to pay costs and a solicitor was fined almost £27,000 and costs.

Struck off for falsifying LPA details and fraudulently obtaining confidential medical information

A solicitor has been struck off the roll for misleading the Office of the Public Guardian by indicating that an LPA was signed and dated by her client and attorney, and that she had acted as certificate provider. She had in fact instructed the parties to not date the LPA and had added dates for the signatures which she knew to be false. She also called a hospital to ask for confidential information regarding the client and gave another person's name in order to acquire the information in question, clearly knowing this to be false.

manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

The solicitor admitted that her conduct had been dishonest and the SDT made the order in accordance with the statement of agreed facts and proposed outcome and made an order for costs of £20000.

Struck off for not disclosing bankruptcy

A solicitor with over 40 years' experience was struck off for failing to disclose a 2014 bankruptcy and related financial issues to both his firm and the SRA. He had continued to practise as a solicitor, falsely stated in three annual compliance declarations that he had never entered into an IVA, despite doing so in 2009 and was found to have acted dishonestly, with the Tribunal rejecting his explanations of forgetfulness and reliance on advice from a now-deceased accountant.

The SRA sought costs but in view of his limited means, age and health issues the Tribunal made no order for costs.

Suspension for failing to comply with court order

The sole owner of a firm was suspended for 6 months by the SDT, with conditions at the end of the period, including being unable to be a sole practitioner or partner, for failing to ensure his firm complied with a court order to serve and file a witness statement and not responding to an application for wasted costs, and then failing to respond to the SRA and not complying with decisions made by the SRA to pay fines for regulatory breaches. He was also ordered to pay almost £25,000 costs.

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.

WE LOVE MCR CHARITY GREAT OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

 **Friday 18 July 2025 (all day event)**

 **Lake District National Park**

This July, We Love MCR Charity invites valued partners to join us in our 5th annual trekking challenge, a fundraising event providing an incredible team-building experience every year. We'll be taking trekkers from Manchester by coach to our Great Outdoor Challenge in the stunning Lake District!

For added accessibility, we're offering fundraisers two different, yet challenging, routes that will test your determination and fitness...

Mountain Challenge

- Langdale Horseshoe
- 20km, ~7hrs, 1600m elev.
- Rugged mountain paths with steep ascent and descent
- LIMITED TO 40 PLACES

Hike + Lake Challenge

- Gummers Howe + Windermere
- 16km, ~4.5hrs, 334m elev.
- 10km hike to summit, then 6km rowing across the Lake
- LIMITED TO 30 PLACES

All trekkers will meet back up for barbecue and drinks when finished!
Places cost £50, and £200 minimum fundraising target required.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Friday 4th July

For more information, and to enter a team, please contact nicholas.clarke@manchester.gov.uk





From p.1

Manchester Legal Awards 2025 shortlist announced

This year's most hotly contested category, Solicitor of the Year, sees seven individuals make the cut with Irwin Mitchell and Slater Heelis both having multiple colleagues vying for the win.

Of the 83 entries that made this year's shortlist, a healthy number of first-time entrants appear, demonstrating the buoyancy of the region's legal community and on-going appeal of the awards.

Finalists will face in-person interviews with a panel of judges on Friday 6 June before the winners are revealed at a prestigious black-tie event on Thursday, 3 July at the iconic [Kimpton Clocktower Hotel](#) .

Fran Eccles-Bech, chief executive of the Manchester Law Society, said:

"The judges have really had their work cut out this year, not just because of the sheer number of entries but the calibre of those entries which has made judging especially tough.

"I know I say this every year but the legal talent in the north west never fails to astound me. Everyone in the legal community should be extremely proud of their contribution to our sector which is clearly thriving.

"Last year, we were thrilled to see so many first time entrants and I'm thrilled that the momentum has continued.

"Heartfelt thanks to everyone who took the time to enter – your efforts are genuinely appreciated as you all contribute to our vibrant legal community - and huge congratulations to all the individuals, teams, firms and chambers who have made the shortlist.

"I look forward to welcoming everyone to the awards dinner in July – remember, we have a new venue this year!"

A massive thanks to our media partner [TheBusinessDesk.com](#) , our marketing partner [RMS](#) and our charity partner [We Love MCR](#) .

If you'd like to join us please get your ticket requests in quickly as they are selling fast! Tickets are £130.00 + VAT each, just let us know how many you need. Tables are of 10 or we have a limited number of tables of 12. If you book less than 10 places you'll likely be sharing with other guests so we can fit everyone in. Request your tickets at manchesterlegalawards.co.uk/tickets/





Manchester Legal Awards 2025 Shortlist

Corporate Culture and Wellbeing Champions of the Year

- Brabners LLP
- Fletchers Solicitors
- Leigh Day

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Champions of the Year

- Clyde & Co
- Duncan Lewis Solicitors
- Gateley

Sustainability Champions of the Year

- DWF Law LLP
- Irwin Mitchell
- Weightmans LLP

Corporate/Commercial Team of the Year

- Beyond Corporate Law
- Eversheds Sutherland (International) UK
- Myerson Solicitors
- Slater Heelis

Crime Team of the Year

- Burton Copeland Ltd
- JMW
- Olliers Solicitors
- Slater Heelis

Employment Team of the Year

- Leigh Day
- Lewis Silkin
- Pearson Solicitors and Financial Advisers Ltd
- TLT LLP

Family Team of the Year

- Hall Brown Family Law
- IMD Solicitors LLP
- Vardags

In-house Team of the Year

- ASM Global
- Lookers
- Odeon
- Oliver James

Litigation Team of the Year

- Addleshaw Goddard LLP
- Eversheds Sutherland (International) UK
- TLT LLP

Personal Injury/Clinical Negligence Team of the Year

- Fieldfisher
- Fletchers Solicitors
- HCC Solicitors
- Leigh Day
- Serious Injury Law

Private Client Team of the Year

- Hugh Jones Solicitors Private Client Team
- Private Client Solicitors
- Weightmans LLP

Property Team of the Year

- Clyde & Co
- Fieldfisher
- Mills & Reeve

Continued on page 40



Regulatory Team of the Year

- DAC Beachcroft
- DWF Law LLP
- Markel Law
- Stephensons Solicitors LLP

Unsung Hero of the Year

- Kate Emms, Mills & Reeve
- Cath Garner, Eversheds Sutherland (International) UK
- Amy Goodlad, Mills & Reeve
- Janet O'Keefe, Olliers Solicitors

Trainee/Paralegal/Apprentice/Legal Executive of the Year

- Emma Barrett-Ryan, DWF Law LLP
- Isabella Lloyd, Duncan Lewis Solicitors
- Emma Neild, HCC Solicitors
- Gabriella Rasiah, DWF Law LLP

Solicitor of the Year

- Helen Barker, Irwin Mitchell LLP
- Alex Barley, Slater Heelis
- Nicola Bruce, Olliers Solicitors
- Hannah Costley, Slater Heelis
- Saoirse de Bont, Irwin Mitchell LLP
- Lucy-Allena Mcilroy, Irwin Mitchell LLP
- Dhiran Solanki, Leigh Day

Partner of the Year

- Nick Hodson, McAlister Family Law part of Beyond Law Group
- Sally Hulston, Lewis Silkin
- Stephen Jones, Leigh Day
- Ruth Peters, Olliers Solicitors

Barrister/KC of the Year

- Tom Gosling, 23 Essex Street Chambers
- Natasha Khalique, Exchange Chambers
- Ravi Sethi, The Barrister Group

Barristers' Chambers of the Year

- 18 SJS Chambers
- Deans Court Chambers
- St John's Buildings Chambers

Small Law Firm of the Year (1-5 partners)

- Irwell Law
- Pearson Solicitors and Financial Advisers Ltd
- Private Client Solicitors
- Venus Legal

Medium Law Firm of the Year (6-20 partners)

- HCC Solicitors
- Hudgell Solicitors
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Private Client Solicitors founder appointed to Charity Commission Board

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has announced that the founder and Managing Partner of [Private Client Solicitors](#) (PCS) has been appointed to the board of the Charity Commission.

Ms Khalid's selection by Secretary of State Lisa Nandy as one of two new faces on the Commission's board is her second high profile recognition in as many months.

In March, she was named Private Client Partner of the Year in the Northern Powerhouse Awards.

The Awards are organised each year by Legal 500 in recognition of the "hard work

and accomplishments" of firms across the entire north of England.

Ms Khalid said that she was "immensely proud and delighted" to become a Commission board member.

"It is an honour to be chosen to contribute to the organisation's ongoing efforts to ensure that people can regard the many bodies which make up the charitable sector with absolute confidence.

"This should be regarded as much as a tribute to everyone who has done so much to the work of PCS and the individuals whom it represents as it is for myself.

Ms Khalid





It is understood that the Commission had wanted prospective board members to have a successful track record in business as well as a commitment to the third sector.

“I am naturally relishing the prospect of the tasks which lie ahead, not only doing my best to assist the Commission with their needs but helping our philanthropic communities to thrive for the betterment of the society that we live in.”

The addition of Ms Khalid and digital transformation specialist Alan Mather to the Charity Commission’s eight-strong board is intended to broaden the range of leadership advice helping determine its current and future strategy.

The Commission is the independent registrar and regulator of charities in England and Wales, responsible for overseeing the activities of more than 168,000 registered charities and £88 billion of charitable income from its four sites in Liverpool, London, Newport and Taunton.

It is understood that the Commission had wanted prospective board members to have a successful track record in business as well as a commitment to the third sector.

Ms Khalid has reaped repeated nationwide recognition since launching Private Client Solicitors in 2021.

She was described as “extremely adept” by the latest edition of the Legal 500 listings.

The same classification summarised the capabilities of PCS as “extremely strong”, noting that it was one of the leading teams of specialist Private Client lawyers in the North West.

In October, the firm also featured in a list of the 250 best law firms in England and Wales compiled by The Times newspaper.

Ms Khalid’s Northern Powerhouse award followed her winning another notable title, triumphing in the ‘One To Watch’ category for emerging female entrepreneurs in the latest edition of the Northern Power Women Awards.

Much of the PCS’ workload is made up of complex probate work, business succession and estate planning but it has also quickly become recognised as the North West’s foremost authority on sharia-related Private Client law.

Its client list features many of the region’s wealthiest individuals and most notable entrepreneurs, and its recent workload has extended across several different jurisdictions, including Spain, Hong Kong, the Middle East and North America.

During 2024, its most significant cases included the restructuring of a family office worth £100 million and a business succession planning matter extending across a number of different jurisdictions.

The PCS team also successfully dealt with a complex probate dispute worth more than £10 million, acting in their capacity as professional trustees.



Hall Brown named as first tier family operator by Doyle's Guide

[Hall Brown](#) has described being singled out once more as a leading family law firm as a "justifiable cause for celebration".

The latest edition of the independent Doyle's Guide ranking of legal specialists has put Hall Brown quite literally in a class of its own for the second year in a row, naming it as the only First Tier family operator in Manchester.

The firm has also seen seven of its lawyers recognised across the full Doyle's listing, more than any other practitioner.

Hall Brown's co-founders – Senior Partner Sam Hall and Managing Partner James Brown – are two of only three lawyers identified as Pre-eminent in their field, while Andrew Newbury and his fellow Partner Beth Wilkins are included as Leading practitioners.

Another Hall Brown Partner, Claire Reid, is among those Recommended in the same category.

Mr Hall, Mr Brown and Mr Newbury together make up almost half of all the lawyers rated as the most capable advisors to High Net Worth clients.

The heads of Hall Brown's Mediation and Children divisions – Sarah Manning and Melanie Kalina – feature among the five names in their respective lists, while Senior Associate Madelaine Hailey is again named among the city's Rising Stars of family law.

Mr Hall said that the latest recognition was further evidence of Hall Brown's status as one of the country's family law elite.



Senior Partner Sam Hall

"When we launched, we intended to be one of the best family law firms in the country.

"We understood that meant not only working incredibly hard on behalf of our clients but being able to gather together some of the most talented young and experienced talent around, both family lawyers and support staff.

"Successive rankings have shown that our peers and our clients believe we have done so. To be regarded as head and shoulders above our competitors is extremely satisfying.

"We have been determined from the start not to rest on our laurels but to keep progressing - something evidenced by the calibre of the individuals whom we count ourselves as fortunate to work with and the growth in our caseload."

The Doyle's Guide is one of a handful of respected legal rankings worldwide and has a specific focus on lawyers and law firms in the UK, Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions.

It bases its conclusions on carefully vetted opinions within the legal industry and client feedback.



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The vital role of a local law firm in a village community

At the heart of every village or small town lies a network of relationships built on trust, familiarity, and shared values. One key pillar supporting this social and economic fabric is the local law firm. With this in mind, [Pearson Solicitors and Financial Advisers](#) are proud to return to their roots in **Saddleworth** with the opening of a new multi-service law practice.

Located on the High Street in **Uppermill**, the new office places Pearson right in the centre of a blossoming business community. Known for its vibrant atmosphere and picturesque surroundings, Uppermill is gaining a reputation as a great place to live and work.

The new office will serve as a base for up to 25 staff, offering both personal and commercial legal services. Pearson is also planning to recruit more local team members.

“There’s been a real buzz since the hoardings came down and passersby have seen the newly redeveloped building,” said [Richard Eastwood](#), Director at Pearson. “Uppermill’s strong sense of community makes it the perfect place to establish our new offices. We all live locally, went to school here, and have friends and family nearby. We’re excited to be part of the community once again.”



“

Uppermill is a true village community, and many of our clients are part of that. We wanted the space to reflect the warmth and friendliness of the area.”



Joanne Ormston

This opening marks a return to Saddleworth for Pearson, who previously had an office in the area during the 1980s and '90s. The new location in the historic High Street Square features buildings dating back to the early 1800s. In redeveloping the site, Pearson worked with local builders to preserve the character of the structure, respecting the area's conservation status.

Over the past two years, the once-neglected building has been sympathetically restored, cleaned, and landscaped. A key addition for the convenience of clients is the inclusion of **private parking**, an important feature in a village setting.

“During the renovation, we remained sensitive to the area's heritage and focused on providing a high-quality space for both staff and clients,” added [Joanne Ormston](#), Director and Practice Manager. “Uppermill is a true village community, and many of our clients are part of that. We wanted the space to reflect the warmth and friendliness of the area.”

While Pearson serves clients across the UK, the team values the personal touch that comes with being a local firm. “A local law office provides immediate, tailored support without the need to travel to a distant city,” Joanne added. “Whether it's drafting a Will, resolving a land dispute, or navigating family law, face-to-face service makes a difference — and that's what we're all about.”

The new Uppermill office includes state-of-the-art meeting facilities and will host community-focused events throughout the year. It is Pearson's fifth location, joining offices in **Oldham, North Manchester, Milnrow, and Failsworth**. With nationally recognised lawyers and award-winning solicitors, Pearson is set to offer the same high standards Saddleworth residents have come to expect, now even closer to home.

MYL / MMU mentoring scheme panel event is resounding success

On 10 April 2025, the [Manchester Young Lawyers Group](#) (MYL) and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) organised a networking event, hosted at Eversheds Sutherland, as part of their ongoing mentoring scheme which pairs up law students at MMU with legal professionals in Manchester.

The highlight of the evening was a panel discussion expertly moderated by Joe Cooper (a Senior Associate at Eversheds Sutherland) and featuring three excellent speakers, John Smith (an employment lawyer at Amazon), Julius Klutse (a barrister at Exchange Chambers) and Louise Coutts (a Senior Associate at Eversheds Sutherland).

The panel shared their personal journeys into the legal profession and were open with the students both about the setbacks which they had each experienced in getting in to the legal profession and how they had overcome those challenges to build successful legal careers. The speakers emphasised the importance of hard work and perseverance, building up a network of mentors in the legal sector and not being put off by the fact you do not fit the traditional lawyer stereotype. The panel also talked about why they had chosen their particular career routes (e.g. in-house, barrister or private practice solicitor) and the different skills which they needed to be successful in their chosen area.

After the panel had finished speaking, there was a lively Q&A session where students had the opportunity to engage directly with the speakers. A number of legal professionals who were in the room also shared their own experiences of trying to break into the profession and offered advice to the students present.



Following the panel session, attendees enjoyed a drinks and networking session. This provided a relaxed environment for the students to connect with legal professionals, exchange ideas, and build valuable relationships. The event was a testament to the success of the MYL/MMU mentoring scheme, fostering a sense of community and support among aspiring lawyers.

The event was organised by Sam Bumby, the Professional Development Director on the MYL Committee and a Senior Associate in Commercial Dispute Resolution at Eversheds Sutherland. Reflecting on the success of the event, Sam commented that "It was a pleasure to see so many students engaging with the mentoring programme and making the most of the opportunity to learn from established legal professionals. Each of the three speakers on the panel provided their own unique perspective on the legal profession and I know from the conversations afterwards that the students hugely benefited from hearing their insights."

The current mentoring scheme will run until the conclusion of the academic year, with next year's mentoring scheme launching in autumn 2025. For more information about the scheme, please contact Sam Bumby (sambumby@eversheds-sutherland.com) or sign up to the MYL mailing list [here](#).

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Reframing West African history: a hidden legacy of power and prestige

Sophia Azam, member of our ED&I committee, begins an educational series on Black history by highlighting West Africa's historical influence on the world stage, from developing trade to establishing complex legal systems.

I want to take you on a journey through a side of world history that often goes unnoticed. It's a narrative that steps away from the usual focus on slavery and colonisation which tends to dominate discussions around Black History. Instead, we'll spotlight West Africa before European interference—a time marked by influence, prosperity, and global significance.

The Silk Road and the Sand Road: Setting the Scene

To really grasp how West Africa connected with the wider world during the Middle Ages, we first need to understand the global backdrop—specifically the international trade networks and cultural exchanges of the era. This wasn't just about goods changing hands. It was also about ideas, technologies, philosophies, and diplomacy flowing across continents.

The most famous trade network at the time was the Silk Road—a vast web of routes linking China with Europe via the Near East (what we now call the Middle East). It began in the 1st century, growing from the heart of China and extending through regions like India and Persia. As the Roman Empire expanded eastwards, the Silk Road blossomed into a vital artery of trade and culture.



Sophia Azam

The Parthian Empire—roughly where Iran is today—played a key role in bridging East and West. It was from there that luxury items like silk found their way to Roman markets, igniting a fascination with Eastern goods.

But the Silk Road wasn't just about silk. It facilitated the exchange of a wide array of products—grains, fruit, livestock, leather, precious stones, tools, and religious artefacts. More importantly, it transmitted culture: languages, belief systems, science, art, and philosophy all travelled this route. One of the most transformative exports was paper, invented in China during the 3rd century BC. It reached Samarkand in the 8th century and eventually made its way to North Africa and Europe via Islamic ports in Sicily and Spain.

Even as the Western (Latin dominant) half of the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century, the Eastern (Greek dominant) half of the Roman Empire carried on, centred in Constantinople—modern-day Istanbul. Meanwhile, Islam emerged from Arabia, expanding rapidly across the former Roman territories of the Near East and North Africa, eventually reaching as far as Morocco, Portugal, and Spain.

Despite changing political landscapes, trade endured. A major breakthrough came with the introduction of the camel to North Africa, which allowed traders to cross the previously impassable Sahara Desert. This development linked the Silk Road with what became known as the Sand Road—opening up exchange between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Two previously separated worlds were now deeply connected.

West Africa on the Global Stage

At the time, the dominant force in West Africa was the Ghana Empire—centuries before Mansa Musa's famed Mali Empire rose to prominence. According to Tarikh al-Fattash, one of the earliest local historical accounts of the region:

"It is a very huge and extensive region lying far west in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean. Kaya-Magha was the one who founded the first empire in that area. The seat of his government was Ghana, which was a great metropolis in the country of Baghina. It is said their kingdom was in existence since 300 BC with 44 kings in the royal family lineage."

It's important to note that this ancient Ghana is not the same as the modern-day nation we know by that name. The country we now call Ghana was formerly the Gold Coast under British rule and adopted the name Ghana upon independence as a tribute to this powerful legacy. The original

Ghana Empire, however, was located in what is now Mali and Mauritania. It shared its borders with another influential polity—the Takrur Empire—in the area that today corresponds to northern Senegal.

Law and Governance

What often gets overlooked in the wider historical narrative is that these West African empires were not only thriving centres of trade and culture but were also governed by complex legal and political systems—systems that were often just as sophisticated as their European or Asian counterparts.

For instance, in the Mali Empire, the Kurukan Fuga—a charter established following the Battle of Krina in 1235—laid out laws that governed social order, property rights, and environmental protection. This document, passed down orally and only later recorded, is sometimes referred to as one of the oldest known declarations of human rights. It predates the Magna Carta and reflects a highly structured and communal approach to governance.

Yet when we talk about legal history, Western traditions like Roman law or English common law are usually the starting point. That's part of a broader issue: much of global history is still told through a Eurocentric lens. We tend to view legal, philosophical, and technological developments as flowing outward from Europe, ignoring the rich traditions that developed independently in other parts of the world—including Africa.

And so, our exploration of pre-colonial West African history begins here, with these two great empires, at a time when Africa was not a continent waiting to be discovered, but a land deeply connected to the pulse of global trade, culture, and civilisation.

Social Mobility isn't just a buzzword!

Social Mobility Awareness Day will take place on Thursday 12th June 2025 – a day that exists to promote wider conversations about social mobility and to encourage action that brings about positive change.

This year's theme is #ShiftMindsets, which shines a light on the business benefits of a socio-economically diverse workforce by shifting mindsets away from using Social Mobility merely as a buzzword, towards rethinking how we build successful, forward-thinking teams. "Social Mobility is about investment in a breadth of perspectives and skills, giving organisations an edge, and empowering individuals from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds to overcome imposter syndrome." (Quote: the Social Mobility Day organisation).

Social Mobility Awareness Day is an annual event dedicated to highlighting the importance of equal opportunities and the need to break down barriers that prevent individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds from achieving their potential. It serves as a national reminder of the persistent inequalities in education, employment and career progression. The day also celebrates success stories of individuals who have overcome socio-economic challenges, helping to inspire and inform policies that aim to level the playing field.

The origins of Social Mobility Awareness Day are rooted in the broader social mobility movement, which gained significant traction in the UK during the early 21st century. Spearheaded by research and advocacy from institutions like The Sutton Trust and later supported by the Social Mobility Commission, this movement pushed the government and private sector to acknowledge the structural disadvantages faced by many in society. The awareness day emerged as a practical tool to unite stakeholders, educators,

employers, policymakers, and of course, the general public, around the shared goal of improving life chances for all, regardless of their starting point in life.

The legal sector, historically associated with prestige and elitism, has been particularly scrutinised for its lack of socio-economic diversity. Despite progress in gender and ethnic representation, social class remains a significant barrier in the legal profession. Many legal professionals still come from a narrow band of privileged backgrounds, often attending a small group of elite universities. This disparity limits the diversity of thought and experience within the legal profession, which is essential for a justice system that reflects and serves society fairly.

To promote social mobility within the legal sector, firms and institutions must adopt comprehensive and transparent strategies. These can include outreach programmes to schools in underrepresented communities, paid internships and apprenticeships that do not require prior connections, and recruitment practices that focus on potential rather than polish. Additionally, mentoring and sponsorship programmes can support early-career professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In summary, by fostering a culture that values inclusivity and equity, the legal sector can play a crucial role in advancing social mobility and ensuring that talent, not background, determines success, and a reminder that we can all play our part in this journey.



Matt Flanagan-Roberts

Senior Legal Counsel –
Corporate Lawyer, Lookers
MLS Council Member and
ED&I Committee Member



The Solicitor's Charity appointing Chair Elect

[The Solicitor's Charity](#) are on the search for their next Chair, in partnership with [Starfish Search](#). The charity has been supporting solicitors at times of need since 1858, and they provide personalised support for emotional, physical, professional and financial wellbeing.

The charity now wishes to appoint a Chair Elect, to become a trustee in September 2025 and to take over from their current Chair, Shams Rahman, when his term of office ends in March 2026.

They are looking for a current or former member of the Roll of Solicitors of England and Wales who brings significant strategic leadership experience and an instinctively collaborative approach to developing organisational strategy and outcomes.

You will be a naturally inclusive leader with a strong ambassadorial approach who has considerable experience of engaging externally with a wide range of stakeholders. You will also bring some experience of working as part of a board as a non-executive director or trustee and will understand what constitutes good governance in the charity sector.

The Solicitor's Charity actively seeks to broaden the diversity of their Board in all aspects to enrich their collective decision-making and governance and welcome applications from candidates who share their values and demonstrate strategic thinking.

These attributes should be combined with outstanding communication skills with a wide variety of audiences, so as to be able to build awareness of the Charity and their support, and the ability to probe and appropriately challenge both the Executive and Board colleagues, deploying a collaborative approach and sound judgement.

Closing date

Friday 20th June 2025

Preliminary interviews

w/c 7th July 2025

Final Panel interviews

Monday 21st July 2025

To find out more information on how to apply, please click [here](#).

You can also download the full candidate brief [here](#).

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JMW expands Commercial Real Estate offering with appointment of Planning Partner

Specialist planning and highway lawyer joins ever-growing team

Mark Iveson has joined the Commercial Real Estate team at JMW as a planning and highway partner.

He comes to the firm from Gateley's Manchester office, where he held the position of legal director. Mark brings to the team extensive expertise in planning and highways, his practice including related local government, compulsory purchase and environmental issues.

Mark has worked with many of the region and country's top-ranked developers, house builders and consultants and is also well known for his work in North Wales. Working on a national basis as required, his caseload includes planning appeals, complex statutory agreements, strategic advice, applications, BNG, CIL, BTR, social housing, heritage, viability, enforcement, scheme specific advice and court litigation (judicial review and statutory challenge).

Mark, who is ranked in the prestigious legal directory The Legal 500, has particular experience in acting on large mixed-use development and residential led schemes. Notable recent success came late last year at appeal in relation to a large housing, local centre, BNG and link road scheme, being the first phase of a strategic allocation.

"The legislative and policy landscape of planning is constantly changing and the success of many projects depends on quickly understanding, and interpreting, and adapting to the challenges such changes bring," he said.

"JMW is known as an entrepreneurial firm with a strong reputation for excellence and a genuine commitment to its clients. The team maintains excellent relationships with developers, and I am looking forward to assisting clients to not only work successfully within the current system, but also to seize the many opportunities inherent in the changes."

"It's also a particular pleasure to reunite at JMW with colleagues I have known through previous roles. It's a highly successful team and I'm delighted to be a part of it," he added.

Thomas Pearson, head of JMW's Commercial Real Estate team, said: "We are one of the largest specialist Commercial Real Estate teams in the North West and I look forward to working alongside Mark as we continue to support long-standing clients across the UK, while also welcoming many new ones.

"We have an extremely busy period ahead of us and Mark will play a significant role in delivering the very best advice to clients."



(L-R) Thomas Pearson and Mark Iveson

Ward Hadaway appoints new Finance Director as firm grows national presence

Nine new hires join Manchester firm in last quarter

Ward Hadaway has appointed James Foster as its new Finance Director, strengthening its senior team during a period of significant growth for the firm.

James brings extensive experience in venture capital and financial services. He has a strong track record of supporting companies of all sizes, providing financial guidance and strategic insight. His expertise will be instrumental in driving forward the firm's expansion strategy, which includes the opening of a new Birmingham office this summer and ongoing merger discussions with The Endeavour Partnership LLP.

The appointment comes as the firm makes 34 new hires across its Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle offices in the first quarter of 2025. These include three partners, one director, three managing associates, three associates, four solicitors, two conveyancers, two paralegals and 15 professionals in business support roles across teams such as real estate, corporate finance and construction. Nine are based in the Manchester office.

Steven Petrie, Managing Partner at Ward Hadaway, said: "This time last year we set out ambitious plans to double the firm's revenue within five years and reach £100m by 2034. Continuing to invest in talent and infrastructure and attracting the right people is essential to achieving this growth.

"James brings invaluable commercial and financial insight that will support our next phase of expansion. We're also pleased to welcome new colleagues across our



(L-R) James Foster with Managing Partner Steven Petrie

business who strengthen the specialist teams we've built across the entire firm."

Another new starter, Richard Bradbury, joins the Real Estate department as a Partner in the Manchester office. He brings a wealth of experience of supporting clients across their business lifecycle, from start-ups to PLCs. He specialises in landlord & tenant, acquisitions and disposals, real estate finance, corporate support and development matters.

Ward Hadaway now employs over 500 people across its offices, with headcount expected to rise further as recruitment continues in line with the firm's long-term strategy.

James Foster added: "It's a very exciting time to be joining Ward Hadaway. The scale of the firm's growth plans is ambitious, but the clarity of vision and client-first approach I've seen so far gives me every confidence in what's ahead. I'm looking forward to contributing to a firm with such deep roots in its regions, an extremely strong and diverse client base, and a depth of legal talent."



Pannone promotes trio to partner, as it cements long-term client relationships

Pannone Corporate has promoted three lawyers to partner, as it secures its position on two long-standing legal panels.

Sarah Bazaraa has been promoted to partner in the firm's dispute resolution team and will head up the IP litigation and media team. The firm holds the sole Legal 500 Tier One ranked IP team in Manchester, alongside a Legal 500 Tier One ranking for media work. Sarah joined Pannone in 2009 as a trainee solicitor and has risen through the ranks, being recognised by Legal 500 as a "rising star" and "one to watch" for several years.

Alongside Sarah, Michael McNally has been made partner in Pannone's employment team. Michael, who has particular experience working with businesses in the care, manufacturing, transport and logistics,

retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, joined Pannone in 2021 and has quickly made his mark at the firm.

Michael and Sarah are joined by Gareth Birch, who has been promoted to partner in the firm's real estate team. Gareth has built up a strong reputation in the property market since he joined Pannone nearly a decade ago, being listed as 'Up and Coming' by Chambers & Partners for three years, before being ranked last year when the real estate team received its first ranking in Band Three. Specialising in advising clients in the retail and wholesale sector, he also works alongside a number of investor and developer clients.

Paul Jonson, senior partner at Pannone, commented: "The promotion of Sarah, Michael and Gareth to partner is richly

Hat-trick of property panel reappointments for Gateley Legal

Gateley Legal's [specialist residential development team](#) has secured a trio of legal panel reappointments for Bellway Homes, McCarthy Stone and Taylor Wimpey.

They have been advising Taylor Wimpey for more than 30 years and recently celebrated their twenty-year anniversary of working with Bellway Homes. As a result of its strong relationships and valued services, the team has been reappointed to the streamlined panels covering all regions for both housebuilders. It will provide support on a wide range of property, construction,

disputes, commercial, regulatory and compliance matters.

Following five years of dedicated service, Gateley Legal has also been reappointed by retirement living developer, McCarthy Stone, across all its regions to cover land acquisition, planning and plot sales matters, as well as construction, litigation and fire safety work.

In addition to core legal advice, complementary support will be provided through the technical expertise of its

deserved, with each demonstrating great commitment, technical excellence and passion in their respective roles.

“As a firm, we pride ourselves on taking a partner-led approach, delivering a personal, collaborative and client focussed service with the support of a group of highly talented people. We’re confident that Sarah, Michael and Gareth will continue to lead from the front and help to strengthen our proposition, not just in dispute resolution, employment and real estate, but across the firm.”

The trio of partner promotions follows Pannone’s reappointment to two long-standing legal panels. The firm has been appointed by SSP Group for a further three years. Pannone has provided employment law services to the leading operator of food and beverage outlets for the last 15 years.

In addition, Pannone has been reappointed to the legal panel for Manchester-based NG Bailey – an independent engineering and

property and construction consultancies within the wider Group. This includes assisting with utility diversions and new connections, surveying matters, project management and capital allowances.

Callum Nuttall, partner and national head of the residential development team at Gateley Legal, said: “We are delighted to be continuing our long-term relationships with Bellway Homes, McCarthy Stone and Taylor Wimpey. These reappointments are a result of the hard work of our brilliant people, a series of strong lateral partner hires and our unrivalled multi-disciplinary offering which sees us providing both legal and consultancy services under one roof to meet the needs of both clients and the market.”



services business. Pannone have supported NG Bailey for almost 10 years.

Jonson added: “By building longstanding relationships with clients, we’re able to gain a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face. It’s testament to the team’s commitment to that approach that we’ve been reappointed by two such highly regarded businesses and we’re delighted to be supporting SSP and NG Bailey as they continue on their exciting growth journeys.”



Callum Nuttall



Bermans accelerates growth with new Head of Commercial and Litigation Partner

Bermans  has appointed a new head of its commercial team and a litigation partner as it continues to strengthen its ranks with key strategic hires.

Richard Riley and Elizabeth Wilkinson have joined Bermans from Slater Heelis and are based in the firm's Manchester office.

They are the latest additions to the Bermans team in the city following the recent arrival of litigation partner Mike Carter, Jobeth Copping-Barrett as a senior associate in the private client department and Adam Tiesteel as an associate in the asset-based lending recoveries team.

Richard has more than 15 years' experience advising on a wide range of commercial matters. His work includes drafting and negotiating contracts, advising on intellectual property rights, preparing and reviewing software development and SaaS agreements, IT contracts and licences and franchise agreements.

His arrival at Bermans also enables the firm to offer a new service in the area of data protection advice to SMEs and lending clients.

Richard regularly helps clients in numerous sectors, particularly in the scientific and life science industries, to navigate complex legal and commercial issues.

In addition, he advises on corporate matters in support of his clients' broader commercial objectives, and acts for schools and trusts in relation to academy conversions and their ongoing operational needs.

Elizabeth is a dispute resolution specialist with more than 25 years' experience of advising individuals and corporate clients



(L-R) Jon Davage, Elizabeth Wilkinson and Richard Riley

on matters including shareholder and partnership disputes, commercial contracts, professional negligence, claims involving directors' duties, and warranties in sale and purchase agreements.

She focuses on helping clients to minimise risk and protect the value of their businesses, enforcing restrictions in employment contracts and sale agreements when needed, and securing urgent solutions such as injunctions and asset freezing orders as well as other pre-emptive actions to protect companies from departing employees or previous owners.

Jon Davage, managing director of Bermans, said: "Our recruitment strategy to attract high-quality individuals who can complement our existing team has made great strides in 2025.

"Richard and Elizabeth are the latest to join us, and we feel the depth of their experience will be of tremendous benefit to our clients.

"Assisting clients on commercial contracts, intellectual property and data protection matters are key elements of our business, and we are delighted that Richard has taken on the role of head of department and is looking to build the team.

“Elizabeth joins Mike Carter and head of department Andrew Koffman to offer one of the most experienced litigation teams in the city.

“We continue to explore options for further expansion of the Bermans offering and we expect to add more recruits in the coming months.”

Meanwhile, Bermans trainees Kieran Williams, Sean Quinn and Jessica Murphy have become fully-qualified solicitors in the litigation, asset-based lending and property teams respectively. Megan Boyle has joined the firm’s Manchester office as a paralegal in the insolvency team.

Bexley Beaumont building real estate momentum with new appointment

Bexley Beaumont [↗](#) has further strengthened its Real Estate team with another key appointment.

Bethan Watt has joined Bexley Beaumont’s Manchester office as a Senior Associate after several years working for a City of London practice.

Her arrival means brings the number of lawyers within the firm’s specialising in Real Estate and Construction to 29 – up by one-quarter in the course of the last 12 months.

Bexley Beaumont’s co-founder and Chief Executive, Karen Bexley, said Ms Watt illustrated just how formidable the firm had become in only five years since launching.

“Bethan shows more than just the calibre and breadth of experience within our Real Estate team.

“She demonstrates that lawyers across the full range of commercial disciplines and across the country realise that we have the sort of model which can allow them to develop their practices.

“In addition to having greater autonomy in how they work, they understand that our central

support team provides a spine of excellence.

“It is a blend that is very different to what’s available elsewhere and one key reason why so many lawyers who have already established successful careers can take those careers even further with us.

“The culture which we invested so much effort in establishing has been critical in taking us this far and remains an integral part of our strategy for the future.”

The decision to join Bexley Beaumont marks a return to the North West for Ms Watt, who comes from Liverpool and gained a first-class law degree from the city’s John Moores University.

Her career to date has included a particular focus on short-term finance and bridging loan transactions for both residential and commercial developments.

Ms Watt arrives with Bexley Beaumont very much on a high, both within the Real Estate team and across the wider firm.



Bethan Watt



Foot Anstey strengthens Manchester office with leading retail lawyer from Boohoo

Foot Anstey [↗](#) builds on its national foundations with appointment of Tom Kershaw as Retail & Consumer Partner in the firm's Manchester office

Foot Anstey has today announced the appointment of former General Counsel and Company Secretary of listed online retailer boohoo group, Tom Kershaw, to its Manchester office. Tom joins the firm as a Partner during a period of ambitious growth for Foot Anstey as it establishes itself as a truly national firm.

With a decade of experience under his belt at one of the UK's fastest growing retailers, Tom's appointment will further bolster Foot Anstey's established retail and consumer offering in Manchester and across the North of England.

Tom brings deep experience across the commercial and consumer regulatory landscape, advising founder-led and listed businesses alike. His practice focuses on commercial matters, with a unique focus in regulatory investigations, ESG and corporate reputation management. Tom works closely with Boards to navigate these complex and evolving challenges with confidence and clarity.

In a fast-evolving regulatory landscape, responding to the growth of ecommerce and online retail sales which now account for 27% of total retail sales is critical. Foot Anstey is well placed to advise founders, Boards and high-growth retail and consumer businesses on navigating this dynamic environment and meeting the complex compliance demands it brings.

New construction partner follows team hire at Squire Patton Boggs

Squire Patton Boggs [↗](#) has appointed specialist construction and engineering lawyer Paul O'Kane as a partner in its European Real Estate practice from Addleshaw Goddard. Mr. O'Kane joins former colleague **Charlotte Higham** [↗](#) and a team of construction lawyers who arrived at the firm earlier in the year.

European head of Real Estate Matthew Dalzell said: "Paul is highly regarded and well-known to us, with a track record of advising on some of the most significant development projects in the North West and across the UK. He brings a wealth of experience in procurement, risk

management and dispute resolution as well as a sector focus that dovetails with that of our wider team.

"In bringing Paul, Charlotte and the team to the firm, we are not only adding to our strength in real estate development and our construction practice, but also looking to support our work in the private equity space. They will add great strength to our existing construction offering as we seek to increase M&A and investment mandates for high value real estate assets and significant traded portfolios."

Mr. O'Kane is a senior construction and



Tom Kershaw

Tom's arrival follows the appointment of IP and Media expert [Melanie McGuirk](#) in Manchester earlier this year and consolidates Foot Anstey's retail offering in the North. Tom's appointment marks an exciting period of growth as the firm looks to capitalise on the proliferation of growth retail, consumer and lifestyle businesses in Manchester and the North of England.

Commenting on Tom's arrival, Managing Partner Martin Hirst said: "Tom joins us at a pivotal moment in our growth strategy and it is a pleasure to welcome him to Foot Anstey. With a technical and practical reputation that precedes him, Tom will not only prove to be an indispensable asset to clients but also a key driver in solidifying our credentials at a national level."

Tom Kershaw, Partner at Foot Anstey, commented: "Retailers are navigating a perfect storm of challenges right now — from evolving consumer expectations and digital transformation, to complex ESG demands, regulatory scrutiny and supply

chain uncertainty. The pace of change is relentless, but that's exactly what makes it such an exciting space to be in as a lawyer. I'm delighted to join a firm that is growing as rapidly as its clients and I'm excited about the opportunity ahead. Leveraging a decade of experience advising founders and the board of one of the UK's fastest growing retailers, I look forward to helping bring Foot Anstey's leading retail expertise to clients in Manchester and across the North of England."

Nathan Peacey, Head of Retail & Consumer at Foot Anstey, commented: "We're excited to welcome Tom to the team. His deep understanding of the retail sector and proven track record of advising leading brands makes him a fantastic fit for both our clients and our culture. Tom's arrival strengthens our commitment to supporting the retail industry with commercially focused, forward-thinking legal advice."



development expert with over 20 years' experience advising public authorities, developers, and investors on major UK real estate, infrastructure, and regeneration schemes. He specialises in transportation infrastructure, including national rail frameworks and tram and light rail projects, and has led legal teams on landmark developments and regeneration projects like the Liverpool Waterfront. Paul is widely recognised for his expertise in Build-to-

Rent (BTR) and Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), and regularly advises on complex construction disputes, including High Court and international arbitration cases involving infrastructure and industrial plants across the UK and Middle East. His recent mandates include resolving issues arising from the collapse of Carillion on the Royal Liverpool Hospital project, Manchester Airport Terminal 2, and assisting West Midlands Combined Authority on their new railway station developments.

"We are delighted that Paul and his team have joined us and see great opportunity for the firm to expand its market share as we continue to develop our construction and real estate offering in the North West," said Manchester office managing partner James Fitzgibbon.



Oliver James' in-house legal team member qualifies as a solicitor

Oliver James is delighted to announce that **Nicholas Caraco**, a member of Oliver James' in-house legal team, has successfully completed his training contract and will qualify as a solicitor in May 2025.

Nick began his legal journey with OJ as a paralegal, after successfully securing a training contract with OJ, and has since developed a broad and practical skill set throughout the hands-on training contract that offered direct exposure to high-impact, complex legal work across the business. OJ operates across Europe, the US and APAC, and Nick has had the chance to work internationally from OJ's Manchester HQ. His training has been varied across commercial, corporate, employment law, and real estate, as well as a secondment in the litigation team at Squire Patton Boggs, with involvement in both day-to-day advisory work and strategic business initiatives.



Nicholas Caraco

"My training contract has been incredibly rewarding," Nick said. "Working in-house has given me the chance to collaborate closely with the business' senior stakeholders across different departments and regions. Although it differs from a traditional law firm training contract, the in-house route has allowed me to be right in the middle of the business — constantly engaged with the commercial realities behind the legal work."

Nick also expressed his deep gratitude to Gemma Hardiman, Head of Employment Law, and Adam Labbett, Chief Legal Officer, for their unwavering support and guidance throughout his training contract.

OJ's in-house legal team, shortlisted for In-House Legal Team of the Year at the upcoming Manchester Law Society Legal Awards, continues to support the company's growth and innovation across multiple jurisdictions.

Nick's qualification reflects the team's ongoing commitment to developing future legal talent, with the team also separately involved in the Grow Mentoring initiative.

Training Principal, Gemma Hardiman said, "We have been so happy to be able to offer Nick such a varied and comprehensive training contract, with Nick accessing high quality, global legal work, supervised by experienced lawyers in the growing in-house team at OJ. Nick has been an absolute pleasure of a trainee, and we are looking forward to him continuing to reach his potential upon qualification."

Alex Walsh joins Prosperity Law as Partner in Real Estate

Prosperity Law [↗](#) has strengthened its Real Estate team once again, with the appointment of an experienced Partner, Alex Walsh. This latest move comes 14 months after the team's inception, with the appointment of Karen Piontek as Head of Real Estate. The appointment of Alex as partner has been made in response to growing client demand for the team's expertise – a key element within Prosperity's recent growth and success.

Karen commented:

"It's great to finally share the news of Alex's appointment as Partner in Real Estate, and his expertise will further strengthen our expanding team. Alex will work across all areas of Real Estate, and I look forward to our working together for the success of our clients and growth of the firm."

Alex brings a wealth of experience as a Partner and Real Estate Solicitor from roles within large regional and international firms. Specialising in Commercial Property, Alex has represented a variety of clients, including banks, pension funds, as well as individual investors. He is experienced in the full array of Real Estate transactions and delivers efficient, client-focused advice – making him well-aligned with Prosperity's own standard of service.

Alex said of his appointment:

"On meeting Karen and the wider team, it was clear we shared the same ethos in terms of delivering for clients and working collectively as a team to achieve results. I look forward to helping the firm continue its growth trajectory and the team to serve more clients with pragmatic, effective legal support."



(L-R) Alex Walsh, Bethany Coward, Karen Piontek, Jennifer Shaw, Andrew Farrell

With offices across the North of England and London, Alex will be based within the Manchester office – which has enjoyed a flurry of individual successes in the last few weeks. Jennifer Shaw recently qualified as a Solicitor and will be working across the Commercial Litigation and Contentious Property teams, whilst Bethany Coward has begun her training contract, following a couple of years as a paralegal at the firm. These moves further recognise Prosperity's work to bring on the next generation of legal talent.

Andrew Farrell, Office Managing Partner in Manchester commented:

"Our investment in our people and ability to recruit high-calibre, experienced partners is testament to our achievements to date as well as our ambitious plans to continue growing our firm. Alex's appointment is the latest example of this – and I look forward to welcoming him to the team."



Leigh Day's Manchester medical negligence team announces new hires and promotions

Leigh Day is expanding its medical negligence team in Manchester with two promotions and by welcoming two new solicitors to the growing team.

Bryony Doyle, an associate solicitor who qualified as a solicitor in 2017, joins Leigh Day with 12 years of experience of clinical negligence. She represents clients in cases involving a delay in diagnosis, avoidable limb amputation, and with birth injury concerns. She has assisted families at numerous inquests and conducted a number of claims involving fatal injuries.

Zoe Donohue also joins as an associate solicitor with 11 years of experience in medical negligence claims having worked as a paralegal for several years before training as a solicitor and qualifying in March 2019.

She handles a range of complex cases on behalf of adults and children who have suffered serious or fatal injury following negligent medical care. Zoe has experience in a wide range of claims and has particular expertise in fatal injury claims, mental health, delayed diagnosis of cancer and orthopaedic injuries.

The medical negligence legal team has also announced two internal promotions in the Manchester office.

Stephen Clarkson has been promoted to a senior associate solicitor. Stephen has worked at Leigh Day since July 2019 and has 10 years' experience in clinical negligence. He has a varied caseload including catastrophic injury cases and claims where patients' injuries have resulted in death.

Recently he **settled a six-figure claim** on behalf of a widow whose husband died aged 71 following revision knee replacement surgery.

Rebecca Ridgeon also becomes senior associate solicitor. She joined Leigh Day as a trainee solicitor in September 2016, qualifying as a solicitor in September 2018. She assists with clients in a range of cases including people with brain, spinal, orthopaedic and other life-changing injuries.

Last year **she achieved a six-figure settlement** for a man who lost his vision in one eye after Specsavers faxed a referral for an emergency eye surgery to the wrong hospital. She also assisted on a claim for a client whose claim for a delay in **diagnosing her cancer** after a CT scan was not acted upon allowing her cancer to progress to stage IV settled for £160,000.

Bryony Doyle said: "I am thrilled take on my new role at Leigh Day. I look forward to helping clients with concerns on the care that they have received."

Zoe Donohue said: "I am really pleased to join such a dynamic and progressive firm and being part of the growing team in



(L-R) Zoe Donohue, Stephen Clarkson, Rebecca Ridgeon, Bryony Doyle

Manchester. Leigh Day takes on an array of cases and has shown a strong commitment to a client-first approach and I look forward to being a part of that."

Stephen Clarkson said: "I am glad to be a part of this growing team and look forward to what this next chapter at Leigh Day brings."

Rebecca Ridgeon said: "I'm immensely proud to be a part of this team. Together we can support clients in a such a diverse range of cases."

Head of the medical negligence team in Manchester, [Stephen Jones](#) said: "I am

delighted to see our team go from strength to strength. Zoe and Bryony bring to Leigh Day a wealth of experience, which will be immensely valuable to the support that we can offer to clients.

"Our expanding team will have better reach to clients with clinical negligence concerns in Manchester. I am excited to see our department continue to thrive with such talented solicitors."

Other team members are partners [Brendan Hope](#), [Lauren Tully](#), and senior associate [Julie Struthers](#).

Trio of new appointments for Venus Legal

[Venus Legal](#) has announced a trio of new hires that will join the specialist business as they expand their UK wide operations following a year of exponential growth.

The niche law firm represent people whose health and wellbeing has been affected by work, and consumers who have suffered loss or harm as specialists in large-scale group litigation and class action lawsuits, specialising in a unique type of litigation.

The latest appointments to the North-West based firm are Stacy Pimlott and Owen Coyle, who join as Partner, alongside Craig Johnson as Solicitor – all of whom bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise from within the legal sector.

News of the firm's growth follows a highly successful year for the legal experts, which includes the business being appointed on

Continued on page 70

Stacy Pimlott



Owen Coyle



Craig Johnson





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one of the Top 20 cases in the UK, as well as acting on behalf of claimants in high-profile cases and expanding their tech to integrate best practices for the future of AI within legal services.

Lorna McGlone, Founder and CEO of Venus Legal commented: "Whilst we're considered relatively new to the sector, over the past five years we have thrived to become a well-established, nationally recognised business.

"Our ethos stems from doing things differently. In fact, that's how the name of the firm was born - based on Venus which spins differently to the other planets - Venus Legal do the same and this is the very essence of our business.

"Recent uplift in activity, coupled with developments within the business has given rise to upscale our growth plans. We are therefore thrilled to welcome Stacy, Owen and Craig to our team and to further strengthen our position within the field.

"Our priority, as always, is to deliver the best possible quality service and specialist advice to our clients which is why we invest so heavily in our people."

Stacy Pimlott is a highly skilled and tenacious Solicitor specialising in military, industrial disease and personal injury claims, with particular expertise in complex high value litigation. She has established a strong reputation within the field due to her rigorous attention to detail, strong negotiation skills, and unwavering commitment to justice. She brings vast expertise, coupled with determination and a personal approach to clients.

Stacy commented: "I am truly honoured and excited to join this incredible firm with exceptional people based at the heart of it. Their innovative and welcoming approach underpinned my decision to join the firm. I

am thrilled to be part of the team and their future success."

With an equally impressive background, Owen holds over a decade of experience in complex litigation and a proven commitment to delivering exceptional client service. He brings a dynamic blend of commercial acumen, energy and unwavering dedication to excellence that will enhance the firm's capabilities. "I am delighted to have joined such a dynamic and client centric firm. Venus Legal are paving the way for an exciting growth journey and I am excited to be a part of it." Said Owen.

The final new face of the trio is Craig Johnson, who qualified in 2024 through the trailblazing UK legal apprenticeship route, exemplifying dedication and innovation. He brings over ten years' worth of experience to his role in complex litigation, including occupational disease and high value military cases.

Craig said: "I'm extremely proud to be given the opportunity to continue my legal journey and diversify my portfolio whilst working for Venus Legal. It is a company that shares my ethos and values, which was key for me. I am excited to be part of a super talented, friendly and supportive team as I progress in this new venture."

Lorna added, "We strive to be the best and that means building an exceptionally talented team. Our best-in-class individuals deliver unparalleled support and services to our clients, which have enabled us to propel as a business.

"One of our key objectives is wellbeing - taking action to reduce stress levels and boost mental wellbeing. Bringing the team together regularly during working hours to venture on walks, get outdoors and talk is a priority for us as we continue to build a positive, open culture and collaborative working environment."

Ashley and Hayden Cooke join gunnercooke as Chiefs of Staff as firm celebrates 15th year of growth

[gunnercooke](#)  has announced the addition of Ashley Cooke and Hayden Cooke, sons of Founder Darryl Cooke, to its Leadership Team.

The brothers join as Chiefs of Staff, supporting with the business's fast growth and charitable foundation. Their initial role will be to immerse themselves in the business and culture, driving forward the firm's key projects to spearhead growth and innovation.

Ashley Cooke began his career as a management consultant at PwC working with large multinationals. He most recently worked at Nous Group, a boutique consultancy focused on delivering positive influence. Hayden Cooke is a lawyer by background, starting life in the corporate team at Slaughter and May, before spending the last five years as General Counsel in venture-backed, fast growth, tech-for-good businesses.

Commented Darryl Cooke: "With a consistent rate of growth of 15-20% year on year, gunnercooke is growing at a pace that will soon cement it as a top 25 legal and professional services firm. 15 years in, it's clear we have established ourselves as a Top 75 law firm. Looking now to the next 15 years, I have huge ambitions for gunnercooke, both in legal services, wider professional services, and in philanthropy.

"I have considered the options for how we accelerate this growth while remaining true to our culture. Our view has always been that building upon the culture that we set out to create is a big part of who we are. It has been our ambition from gunnercooke's early days to place our community and people at the heart of what we do. I'm therefore pleased to welcome my sons to continue driving this culture into the next generation."



Ashley Cooke commented: "I knew the culture was central to the firm's reason for being, but it's hard to know what that really looks like until you see it up close. I've been delighted to find gunnercooke really lives up to it. As a management consultant I've spent a lot of time understanding the challenges that businesses face and advising on the solutions to take them to the next level. I'm looking forward to bringing some of this thinking to gunnercooke, to help the firm deliver for clients, partners, and society as it scales up. The next 15 years look very exciting!"

Hayden Cooke added: "I'm excited to be joining gunnercooke, a business Ashley and I have followed so closely over the last 15 years. Having spent my career initially in private practice and then in-house, I've seen first-hand how unhappy some law firms can be. I love that the model is about delivering better outcomes for clients and giving lawyers the ability to design their own lives, all whilst trying to operate as a deeply responsible business. gunnercooke is hugely ambitious and rightly so given the size and importance of the opportunity. I've spent the last five years in venture-backed scale-ups, so understand both the excitement and pressures that come with rapid growth and can hopefully support the business as it navigates those challenges."



Leading UK Clinical Negligence lawyer joins JMW

Sara Stanger, well known for her handling of high-profile public inquiries, has joined [JMW](#): she brings to the firm more than 15 years' experience in high value, complex cases of Clinical Negligence and Personal Injury, and is accredited by the Law Society for her specialism in Clinical Negligence as well as holding Senior Litigator status with the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

Sara has represented clients in a broad range of serious cases involving birth injuries, delays in diagnosis, surgical negligence, amputations, and fatal claims—securing millions of pounds in compensation.

Known for her compassionate approach to client care, she has acted for families in a wide variety of cases, including a

high-profile Public Inquiry (the Thirlwall Inquiry involving the crimes of Lucy Letby) and assisted the bereaved families in the Southport dance school tragedy.

"These cases are incredibly sensitive and demanding, and I am passionate about ensuring that the families involved in such extraordinary circumstances receive the support and justice they deserve," says Sara.

"I am experienced in both the claimant and defendant sides of litigation and therefore able to offer a strategic and well-rounded perspective," she adds. "I am absolutely delighted to join JMW, a law firm with a well-deserved reputation for excellence, and where I will continue my commitment to securing justice for those individuals and families affected by medical negligence."

Sara is consistently recognised in leading legal directories, being ranked by both Chambers and Partners, which notes "Sara Stanger possesses a broad clinical negligence practice, with particular experience in obstetric injury and amputation cases, as well as fatal claims" and The Legal 500, which describes her as "superb" and a "first-rate litigator". Sara will represent clients from all over the UK but will work primarily out of the firm's Liverpool and Manchester offices.

Eddie Jones, head of Clinical Negligence at JMW, added: "Sara has an excellent reputation for her Public Inquiry work and supporting the families involved. She is a great addition to the team and her appointment broadens the expertise of the department."



Sara Stanger with Eddie Jones

Latitude Law announces new partner promotions and national industry recognitions

Latitude Law is proud to announce the promotion of **Natasha Willett** and **Mohammed Hafejee** to the position of **Partner**.

Natasha Willett joined the firm in 2014 and qualified as a solicitor in 2017. Her strong work ethic and impressive technical knowledge have seen her rise swiftly through the ranks, achieving Partnership just eight years after qualification. While Natasha advises across all UK-inbound immigration routes, she has particular expertise in business immigration. Known for her pragmatic, efficient, and no-nonsense approach, she is especially valued by corporate clients and their HR teams.

She has significant experience advising on non-sponsored work routes and on sponsor compliance, particularly in the context of mergers and acquisitions. Natasha is also an accomplished litigator and frequently handles family immigration matters. As Head of Training and Development, she is committed to mentoring junior colleagues and embedding a culture of continuous learning.

Mohammed Hafejee joined Latitude Law as a solicitor in 2021. His rapid progression to Associate, then Senior Associate, and now Partner reflects both his technical excellence and his entrepreneurial mindset. Known for building strong and lasting client relationships, Mohammed is recognised in The Legal 500 UK 2025, which highlights his “expertise in advising start-ups and small enterprises.”

Mohammed specialises in supporting high-net-worth individuals and entrepreneurs to achieve their personal and business goals in the UK. He has particular expertise in securing visas for International Sportspersons and individuals recognised for exceptional talent or promise.



Managing Partner Gary McIndoe commented: “These promotions reflect the outstanding contributions Natasha and Mohammed have made to Latitude Law. Immigration is all we do – and both bring a wealth of expertise, leadership, and commercial acumen to our senior team. We’re excited to see them continue to elevate the firm’s profile and deliver exceptional service to our clients.”

Alongside these promotions, Latitude Law is also celebrating recent accolades across the team:

Senior Caseworker Nancy Zhang has received the Mondaq Thought Leadership Award (Spring 2025) for her insightful video exploring the challenges of applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. Her contribution has attracted wide engagement and praise across the platform.

Managing Partner Gary McIndoe has been named a Lexology Thought Leader in the Private Client Immigration category for the first time, adding to his longstanding recognition in Corporate Immigration. Lexology describes Gary as “a pillar of excellence in UK immigration law – respected not only for his deep expertise, but also for his unwavering commitment to justice, global talent, and human rights.”

These achievements reflect Latitude Law’s continued growth as one of the UK’s leading boutique immigration firms – delivering top-tier expertise with the personal care and clarity clients value.

Management Matters

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



This month

- **A Significant New Law Firm Brand**
- **Private Client Opportunity**
- **Enquiry Handling and Conversion**
- **More Compliance and Regulatory Challenges**

Something Different – A new law firm brand that many will see

[Hill Dickinson](#) – an international law firm with global offices including Manchester and Liverpool. Straying slightly off my normal tone, but still very relevant as you will discover, I applaud Hill Dickinson's naming rights of the new Everton Football Club stadium. Manchester and Liverpool have teams with perpetual rivalry but we have seen the huge economic gains derived by Manchester City and the Etihad.

I have some personal, if distant fondness for Everton, with my Granddad and Dixie Dean being good mates, and hearing great childhood reminiscences.

Closer to home, I talk often about the benefits of outsourcing skill sets which are needed by law firms, and which will aid the profitability of their business. The current demand for services from for example [Document Direct](#) and [The Cashroom](#) is certainly growing for efficiency and performance and also compliance.

I am advised that Hill Dickinson is one such firm, and they have been using the typing and transcription services of Document Direct for around 15 years, and this has helped them achieve some clear gains in internal efficiency, aiding responsiveness to clients, and very importantly adding significant contribution to their bottom line.

I hear that [Martyn Best](#), Document Direct's CEO and a great supporter of *the Messenger* through the publisher [Legal RSS](#), has recently been to Singapore, where, no coincidence, Hill Dickinson have a thriving maritime focussed office. Would you believe that they also use Document Direct? I'm sure Martyn would be very happy to share these experiences, and whether you're based in the city centre, or half way around the world, there are many ways to improve your law firm operations. Oh, and don't hold it against him, but he's an Evertonian.

Our Private Client Opportunity

That highly valuable Will Bank that needs to be cleansed and exploited – for client satisfaction, revenue and GP, and the quality of the interface.

It means the right people in the firm are speaking with the clients, updates maintained and the best and most appropriate advice with liaison for example with IFAs and Accountants.

We have also covered over the last six months or so the valuation of a critical asset for the firm – one that it can develop (for revenue, gross profit and client satisfaction) or even sell or be an asset for a potential acquisition.

There are a couple of solutions that have been extensively developed and are now becoming available:

[WBT](#) cleansing and updating of the database and a CRM system both can be outsourced to experts – the firm can then re-engage with their clients on a much



higher value Will Bank and up its revenue. Then there is [Share Smart](#) that enables a secure portal operating both ways to allow firms and clients to effectively share data.

New Enquiry Handling and Conversion

Over the last 3 – 4 years, I have made a big emphasis on how law firms are adding new clients effectively and it is something that the whole team needs to be aware of, behave in the right way and be coached

The objective is to achieve at least a 60% conversion rate from client enquiries but there are still so many firms achieving 20%. With the right structure in place with maybe say 300 inbound enquiries achieving 180 new matters is much more profitable than 60 – plus there is the failure for future business from those clients – direct or as referrals.

£1million revenue over 12 months if £500 per matter with a GP of £702k (65%)

The basics:

- Brand and image of the firm
- Route to market defined
- Scripts for communication methodology
- Job descriptions and accountability
- Staff training and development
- Statistics

There are also some great added value solutions such as [Omnichannel](#) and [LexiDesk.AI](#), an effective use of AI and process control and measurement. They support by helping to eliminate abandonment, measure a potential clients browsing, strong knowledge bases, tones and sentiments being expressed.

My [July 2023 article](#) went through a lot of detail which with many firms are still falling short of. I will be doing more research over the next month.

More Compliance and Regulatory Challenges

We are becoming increasingly aware of SRA enforcement in a growing number of areas like AML activity, client account management and so on – more fines and more insurance problems.

There are an increasing number of firms beginning to use AI to help their on boarding, administration MI/BI but now.....

[Brian Rogers FCMI](#) recently advised me “It’s not AI that is wrong, it’s the people who take what it says on face value who are!”

He has said “AI has really hit the legal news recently, firstly because the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) has authorised its first AI-driven law firm, and secondly, because of a recent case where AI may have led to a solicitor/barrister quoting a number of non-existent cases in submissions, although the judge found no actual evidence that AI was involved.

“In relation to the AI firm, the SRA clearly has security concerns around the use of AI as it sought assurances that there were appropriate processes in place to quality-check work, keep client information confidential, and safeguard against conflicts of interests; it also checked that the firm was managing the risk of ‘AI hallucinations.

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“Although no evidence has yet been produced to show AI was in fact responsible for producing non-existent cases, the reasoning for assuming it was seems overwhelming, for example, if the cases were non-existent, where would the lawyers have got them from, whereas if AI was being taken as ‘gospel’, such cases would not have been questioned.

“Bearing in mind the SRA sees the production of case law as a high-risk area for large language model machine learning, it will be interesting to see what comes of the investigation that is now likely to be undertaken after a referral by the judge!”

Before joining in the activity, feel free to take the appropriate advice from [Brian Rogers FCMI](#) or [Michelle Garlick](#)

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](#)

MLS Member Benefit: Chamber Space Access



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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What's next for midsize law firms?

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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.

A new category of judgment is developing known as a "consequential" judgment. Pre the implementation of the Civil Procedure Rules, the usual order at trial was that where "costs follow the event": the party who wrote the cheque, however small the amount, was the loser, and would be ordered to pay the costs to the recipient of the cheque, to be taxed if not agreed. That all changed with the coming into force of the CPR in 1998 and the court will look at levels of success and the costs of issues won and lost, when deciding who should pay what. This month, we report on three "consequential" judgments.

In **Peter Waddell Holdco Ltd v Bluebell Cars Holding Ltd** [2025] EWHC 36 (Ch) (15 January 2025 - judgment just published), Trower J dealt with the costs of various interlocutory matters (such as the costs of amendments to an unfair prejudice petition), whether the costs should be paid on the standard or indemnity basis, and whether there should be a summary or detailed assessment. Whilst the hearing had been completed in one day, there needed to be apportionments in respect of the overall costs totalling £500,000. These included hourly expense rates at up to 250% above the guideline rates, so Trower J decided that summary assessment was inappropriate and ordered a detailed assessment, with payments on account ranging between 55% and 70% of the sums sought.

Second is Mrs Vardy's last throw of the costs dice in **Vardy v Rooney** [2025] EWHC 1027 (KB) (29 April) in which Cavanagh J, having dismissed her appeal, considered the factors to apply in deciding whether Mrs Rooney's costs of the appeal should be reduced due to lack of success in her respondent's notice. Mrs Vardy lost that point, with the judge directing that the assessor who sat with him, should summarily assess the costs of the hearing, rather than for the issue to be remitted to the costs judge who will be carrying out the detailed assessment of the costs of her failed libel action.

Finally, in **Carl v Hawkins** [2025] EWHC 1104 (Ch) (7 May) Simon Gleeson dealt with complex costs issues arising out of a 435 paragraph judgement delivered a year earlier, including the parties' pre-action conduct and the equitable jurisdiction to award interest on costs. Of note are the judge's comments about the meaning of "costs thrown away" by reason of an adjournment. He elided those with "wasted costs" and directed that they were unsuitable for summary assessment. Accordingly, there needed to be a detailed assessment. The judge also gave guidance about interest, deciding that this should be paid at 2.7 percent over base compounded annually.

Next a warning to legal representatives to check that the cases they cite to the court really exist! **Frederick Ayinde, R (on the application of) v The London Borough of Haringey** [2025] EWHC 1040 (Admin) (3 April) was a judicial review involving a housing matter in which the defendant local authority had failed in its application for relief from sanctions to enable it to participate in the trial. Nonetheless, it was permitted to make an application for a wasted costs order against the claimant's solicitors and counsel on the grounds that the submissions that had been filed in support of the judicial review, had cited case law that had been "manufactured". Ritchie J agreed. Putting fake cases into a pleading was wholly improper. These were not "minor citation errors" or "Cosmetic errors." It was the responsibility of the legal team to see that the statement of facts and grounds were correct. Due to the appalling professional misbehaviour, the justice of the case required the court to make a wasted costs order against both the solicitors and counsel.

Next an unusual case about fixed costs. In **Makeality Ltd v City Doggo Ltd** [2025] EWCA Civ 400 (11 April), the Court of Appeal had to decide whether a claim in the IPEC worth under £10,000 should remain in the multi-track or be transferred to the small claims track notwithstanding Directive 2004/48 article 14. It was the claimant's case that the small claims track costs regime did not comply with article 14 which required intellectual property cases to be tried in a forum that allowed for the award of a significant and appropriate part of the winner's reasonable legal costs. The court held that following the [Retained EU Law](#)

[\(Revocation and Reform\) Act 2023](#) [↗](#), which provided that no general principle of EU law was part of domestic law after 31 December 2023, it was no longer open to the claimant to advance an argument based on article 14 having direct effect. In any event, the claim was below £10,000 and could be tried in one day. The judge below had been entitled to conclude that the action should be allocated to the small claims track, so the appeal was dismissed.

In **Jones v Persons Unknown & Ors** [2025] EWHC 977 (Comm) (29 April), Louise Hutton KC was required to decide a novel point in relation to security for costs under CPR 25. Could Mr Jones as a claimant, apply for security against a non-party applicant which had made an application to set aside a summary judgment granted on 5 September 2022? Expressed another way, could that non-party applicant be regarded as a claimant for the purpose of a security for costs application? The judge held that it could not. The application was being made in existing proceedings and CPR 40.9 permitted a person who was not a party to apply to set aside a judgment. That provision necessarily contemplated the non-party becoming involved in the existing proceedings. The relevant claim or proceeding for the purpose of the rule was that brought by the claimant, Mr Jones. It followed that the non-party was not a claimant, CPR 25 was not available for Mr Jones to deploy, so his application failed.

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Next, costs budgeting and variations under CPR 3.15A. In **BDW Trading Ltd v Ardmore Construction Ltd** [2025] EWHC 1063 (TCC) (2 May), an argument by the claimant that the court had no power to make a costs management order (CMO) after a costs and case management conference (CCMC) had taken place, met with no success. Andrew Mitchell KC held that a CMO can be made at any time under CPR 3.15(2) and in the case before him, subsequent to the first CCMC based upon the costs budgets filed for consideration at that hearing. Having made a CMO, it followed that subsequent revisions fell to be dealt with under CPR 3.15(A) and the judge permitted adjustments for leading counsel's fees on witness statements, disclosure and incurred costs in sums below those sought.

Finally, another decision of the Court of Appeal. **HM Treasury v Global Feedback Ltd** [↗](#) [2025] EWCA Civ 624 (13 May) concerned the Aarhus Convention. The court rejected the claimant's submission that a judicial review fell within Part IX of CPR Part 46 so that the costs limits in that Part should apply. The challenge in question advanced by the claimant had amounted to allegations of breaches of public law principles and not to any breach of this country's law relating to the environment or environmental law. It therefore fell outside the scope of Art.9(3) of the Convention, and any costs protection could only be considered through an application for a costs protection order.

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 [↗](#)

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.

July 2025 20/06/2025

August 2025 18/07/2025

September 2025 22/08/2025

October 2025 19/09/2025

November 2025 24/10/2025

December 2025 21/11/2025

January 2026 12/12/2025





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Pet of the Month

Name: Emma Cordock

Firm: AFG LAW

Pet Name: Bobbie

Pet Nickname: The Bobster or Bobs

What kind of pet do you have?

Dog, Cockerpoo

Is your pet: Male

How old is your pet: 8 years old

Favourite Toy: Bone

Favourite Activity: Hard to choose between chasing squirrels and swimming!

Favourite Treat: Sausages (but only from the Butchers!)

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

My perfect day would be: waking up at 5:30 am for my morning Denta Stick, going back for a snooze, long walk mid-morning chasing those squirrels and having a swim, then back for sausages for breakfast, more snoozing, then an evening walk to the pub with my mum and dad (and auntie and uncle!) where I am the centre of attention - then having my tea and lots of cuddles before going to bed !

My favourite thing my parents do is: give me cuddles...and send me to my auntie and uncle's when they go away, where I am super spoilt!



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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