



December 2025

# the Messenger

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## President's Council Dinner

Each year, the Society hosts a dinner to reflect and celebrate the past Presidential Year, honouring the activities and accomplishments that defined our President's time in Office.

It's our opportunity to show our appreciation for our President's hard work and dedication, inviting our Council members to gather for an evening of recognition and celebration.

This year, we were honouring Fiona Ledden, our President for 2025, and her thoughtful and inclusive leadership.

The dinner took place at Manchester Hall, in their stunning Library room, where the staff were as attentive and accommodating as ever.

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For more information:

[www.manchesterlegalawards.co.uk](http://www.manchesterlegalawards.co.uk) #MLAwards

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# From the President

**Fiona Ledden**, President

This is the last message I shall be writing as President. It has been such a fantastic privilege to have represented this wonderful Manchester legal community over the last twelve months and for that I thank you.

I was particularly honoured to make one of the valedictory speeches for His Honour Judge Potter on his retirement. He has been a fantastic Judge, a wonderful individual, and a real role model for aspiring solicitors wanting to undertake advocacy before considering Judicial appointments.

I was also proud to represent you at awards ceremonies, both in Liverpool and Bristol. It is always good to see other local law societies and their events, I thought having the event at the Titanic Hotel might have been risking it – but no, we all stayed afloat!

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank some of our Council members who are now stepping down and have given such tremendous service to our legal community, Mike Devlin and Such Amin – thank you for your wonderful contributions.

I want to say a huge thank you to Mark Fitzgibbon who has stood down as Treasurer as he enters the polar regions of North Scotland in his retirement. Thank you so much Mark, and a thank you to Paul Johnson for stepping into his shoes!

I also welcome Nichola Evans, Steve Kuncewicz, Laura Scott, Saima Mazhar, Kathryn White and James Brown, who will be joining us as Council members next year.

Fran, Carla, Grace and Chandre have been fabulous making sure the ship stayed steady, even with me as President.

At the recent President's Council Dinner, my driving skills (or lack of them) were acknowledged when I was presented with wing mirrors for my scooter – people have been so frightened for their toes, so it was a great present. I also received a number plate with ML5PREZ on it, so look out for me speeding on the pavements of Manchester! My thanks to Ian McConkey for his kind words and for being a wonderful Vice President. He will make a fantastic President for 2026, and I know you will give him your support.

In the times we are in at the moment, I wanted to finish with a few words of thoughtfulness. This is our Civic Prayer, which has been read by all faith leaders at our City Council meetings over the years. I love the words; they ring so true:

*"O God, grant us a vision of our City, fair as she might be; a city of justice, where none shall prey on others;*

*a city of plenty, where vice and poverty shall cease to fester,*

*a city of brotherhood, where all success shall be founded on service, and honour shall be given to nobleness alone, a city of peace, where order shall not rest on force,*

*but on the love of all for the city, the great mother of the common life and weal.*

*Hear Thou, O Lord, the silent prayer of all our hearts as we each pledge our time and strength and thought to speed the day of her coming beauty and righteousness."*

Have a great holiday season however you celebrate and give a thought towards peace, those in extreme difficult times, and our magnificent city.

Thank you for your love and support over the last year.

**Fiona**

# the Messenger



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# Winners announced at the Greater Manchester Pro Bono Awards 2025

The Greater Manchester Pro Bono Awards have celebrated the region's lawyers, law students and legal professionals who are transforming lives through free legal advice and representation.

Now in their second year, the awards were hosted by the Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee at the Manchester Civil Justice Centre on Thursday 6 November 2025 during Pro Bono Week.

Opening the ceremony, Sophie Cartwright KC said: "It is heartwarming to celebrate the many ways Manchester's legal community supports those in need. Nominations were of an incredibly high standard, and we must congratulate not only tonight's winners, but everyone nominated. Their commitment to access to justice ensures people's voices are heard and legal challenges aren't faced alone."

This year's **Outstanding Contribution to Pro Bono Award** went to His Honour Judge Bird, recognising his pivotal role in establishing the Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee and his ongoing leadership and advocacy in uniting solicitors, barristers, universities and charities to strengthen access to justice across the region.

Hudgells Solicitors were named **Law Firm of the Year** for their continued support to Manchester Arena victims, swift response to families affected by the Air India crash and their delivery of free clinical negligence advice in partnership with local charities and trauma centres including Peeps, The Birth Trauma Association, the Greater Manchester Trauma Centre and the Limbless Association.

Christian Weaver of Garden Court North Chambers received **Barrister of the Year** for his role in laying the groundwork for Awaab's Law, strengthening tenants' rights to safe housing, and for his public legal education project *The Law in 60 Seconds*.

**Law Firm Individual of the Year** went to Abigail Whelan, Senior Associate at TLT, for her work supporting vulnerable individuals in complex family law cases and helping shape national financial abuse policy. Maseehullah Mahomed, Paralegal at Fairmont Legal, was named Junior Lawyer of the Year for providing 145 hours of pro bono employment advice with *The Growth Company*, assisting clients facing discrimination, dismissal and tribunal claims.

The **Frontline Agency of the Year** award was presented to the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU), whose collaboration with firms including Clyde & Co, Dechert, Linklaters and Squire Patton Boggs helped 286 individuals navigate the eVisa process and avoid job loss or homelessness. Their model has since been replicated elsewhere in England.

23 Essex Street Chambers received **Chambers of the Year** for launching the Manchester Chancery Litigant in Person Support Scheme (CLIPS), with every barrister in their Business & Property team volunteering, and for expanding access opportunities for under-represented young people. The University of Manchester's Justice Hub was named **Educational Institution of the Year**, recognised for its community partnerships tackling issues from housing and welfare to wrongful convictions.

Finally, Zayd Tariq, an LLM/SQE student at Manchester Metropolitan University, won the **Student Contribution** Award for more than 150 hours of volunteering with Support Through Court and handling 10 welfare benefits appeals, securing over £50,000 for clients via the Legal Advocacy Support Project.

Reflecting on the event, Jason Tetley, CEO of the Greater Manchester Law Centre and last year's winner of the Outstanding Contribution Award, said:

"Around 650,000 people across Greater Manchester fall into the 'justice gap' - those who earn too much for legal aid but can't afford private representation. Many issues are no longer covered by legal aid, so lots of people must represent themselves to maintain contact with their children, keep their jobs, or secure essential support. Free legal advice is a lifeline, and the lawyers recognised tonight make that lifeline possible."





# Update from the Corporate and Commercial Law Forum

## September 2025 Meeting

The Forum met on 10 September, and we were joined by Jenny Coyle, Director (Managed Services) at Diligent.

Jenny delivered an insightful and very topical update on the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (ECCTA), with particular emphasis on two of the 7 major areas of reform:

- Failure to Prevent Fraud:** this new offence, effective from **1 September 2025**, applies to large organisations and holds them criminally liable for fraud committed by employees or agents unless they can demonstrate that **reasonable prevention procedures** were in place. Jenny highlighted the importance of implementing robust internal controls and fraud risk assessments to meet this new standard of accountability.
- Identity Verification Requirements:** from **18 November 2025**, all UK company directors, persons with significant control (PSCs), and LLP members must verify their identity with Companies House. This reform aims to improve corporate transparency and reduce fraudulent activity. Jenny outlined the practical steps firms should take to prepare, including integrating ID verification into onboarding and compliance workflows.

## Looking Ahead: Spring 2026 Corporate Finance Panel & Networking Event

The Forum also discussed plans for a Corporate Finance Panel and Networking



Event scheduled for Spring 2026. This upcoming event will provide a platform for legal and financial professionals to explore emerging trends, share insights, and build valuable connections.

Watch this space for further details!

## Join the Forum

The Forum is open to all Manchester Law Society members whose practice is focused predominantly in the areas of Corporate and / or Commercial law. It is for lawyers of all levels, from Paralegal to Partner.

If you're interested in being part of the Forum, we'd love to hear from you! Whether you'd like to attend events, contribute to discussions, or help shape the Forum's future activities, your voice and involvement are welcome.

If you are interested in joining the Forum please contact: [enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk) 

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# Criminal Law Update with His Honour Judge Dean KC

On 13th November, we were delighted to be joined by His Honour Judge Dean KC, the Honorary Recorder of Manchester, as the keynote speaker of our Criminal Law Update, kindly hosted by [Deans Court Chambers](#) @.

Our Criminal Law Updates have become a staple part in our legal education programme. Organised by our Crown & Magistrates Courts Committee, these events aim to provide criminal lawyers with the opportunity to stay updated with their sector and listen to some expert advice and commentary from our esteemed speakers.

This year, we listened to the Committee's interest in having a wellbeing speaker take part in the update – allowing attendees to receive timely legal updates while also learning how to manage their wellbeing in such high-stress and often emotional environments.

After some refreshments provided by Deans Court Chambers, an introduction from our Committee Chair Daniel Weed and references to some satirical cartoons, His Honour Judge Dean KC started his talk with a number of key updates within the criminal sector. This ranged from Home Detention Curfew exclusions to the impact of recent, ground-breaking legislative changes such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act.

His Honour Judge Dean KC also broke down current and forthcoming legislative changes, like the Sentencing Bill currently progressing through Parliament, which seeks to reform release points and expand community punishments.

Another insightful part of the Judge's presentation was his discussion of the Leveson Reviews and its commentary on the current state of the justice system. He delved into many of Levenson's recommendations, particularly some of the more controversial ones!





The Judge then opened the conversation to attendees, inviting and allowing them to ask questions and discuss the topics further.

Following His Honour Judge Dean KC's excellent insights, we heard from our wellbeing speaker, Jeannette Jackson Director at Manchester Stress Institute. In her session, Jeannette, a nutrition and wellbeing expert, explained the link between diet and stress, particularly the connection between the gut and the brain. She shared some recommendations for supplements and recipes to try out, designed to boost performance.

If you would like to get in touch with Jeannette about her session or any other wellbeing training courses, please visit the Manchester Stress Institute's website [here](#) or email her at [info@manchesterstress.com](mailto:info@manchesterstress.com). You can also read Jeannette's advice on how to avoid burnout [here](#)

After all that insightful advice and discussion on nutrition and healthy eating, it was time to tuck into some pizza and prosecco! Deans Court Chambers had kindly arranged for some delicious food

and drink to be ready once the talks had finished, inviting everyone to gather in their common area for some networking and refreshments. It was a very welcome addition to the evening, and closed off our event with a wonderful chance to catch up with colleagues.

A massive thank you to our attendees, our speakers, and to our hosts Deans Court Chambers for their goodwill and hospitality.

We would also like to thank our Crown & Magistrates Courts Committee for all their help with organising this event. The Committee meets regularly, with the aim of improving communication and opening a dialogue between the two Courts to discuss current events, challenges, and more.

If you would like to take part in the Committee and be involved in the organisation of their upcoming events, please email [enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk) for further information.



# Cyber Risk Management: A Simple Truth for Law Firm Leaders

By **Lindsay Hill**, CEO, Mitigo Cybersecurity

Law firms are investing heavily in cyber security, yet many leaders still carry that nagging fear their defences will fail. Lindsay Hill, solicitor and CEO at [Mitigo Cybersecurity](#) @, explains why that fear is justified – and how to make sure you’re investing in the right areas to protect your firm.

Most law firm leaders I speak to know that cyber risk is the biggest “single event” risk facing their firms. It’s the one thing that could, overnight, demolish firm value, destroy client trust, and halt operations.

And yet, despite the awareness, despite the spending, many still have that nagging fear: *When the cyber criminals come for our firm, will we be protected?*

Here’s the uncomfortable truth: that fear is justified.

## Getting the order wrong

Law firms are being persuaded, or persuading themselves, that buying technical ‘solutions’ such as software or monitoring tools, or even cyber insurance will make them safe.

But they’re buying solutions before properly identifying the problems they need to solve. In other words, they are getting the order wrong.

It’s the equivalent of prescribing medicine before you’ve diagnosed the illness.

You might think you’re secure - but you don’t actually know if you are.



The starting point is a full, comprehensive risk assessment to identify precisely where your vulnerabilities lie across systems, people, working arrangements, governance, and your supply chain. Without this, you’re spending money blind (you are also failing to comply with your legal obligations).

## The illusion of security

There’s no question that firms are spending money - and lots of it. At Mitigo, we see evidence of that every day. But the real issue is how it’s being spent.

Ask most firms how their cyber investments were prioritised, and the answer is often vague. Too often, decisions are driven by IT and MSPs, not by risk.

The result? lots of technology, but gaping vulnerabilities. They’ve reinforced one door while leaving others unsecured.

This happens because jumping straight to technical solutions creates blind spots – gaps in visibility across people, governance, and supply chain risks that technology alone can't fix.

That's why the nagging doubt persists - because deep down, law firm leaders know they've done something, but not necessarily the right things, or in the right order.

Ask yourself some questions. Where are your documented cyber risk and vulnerability assessments? Who undertook them and what is their cyber risk management experience and expertise? What visibility have they given you on the actual risks your firm faces? How do your technical and non-technical measures match up to control the risks (technical and non-technical) which have been identified? What proof do you have that they are working as intended?

### Independence matters

You can't do this yourself, and you shouldn't ask your IT provider or MSP to do it either.

Your IT team is there to keep your systems running. That's their job. But cyber risk management is a different discipline entirely - one that demands specialist expertise and independent oversight.

Independent expertise exposes what you may not see. It replaces assumption with assurance.

### The simple truth

At Mitigo, we see this pattern every week. Once firms start with an independent, expert-led risk assessment, the uncertainty disappears. They stop guessing, and start spending in the right areas.


Get the order right, and that nagging


“

Independent expertise exposes what you may not see. It replaces assumption with assurance.


fear finally goes away – replaced by the assurance that your defences will stand when tested.

Of course, assessing cyber risk is not a one off MOT. Your governance regime must include scheduled audits to identify fresh and emerging risks, as well as evaluating whether the controls you have in place are actually effective and giving you the protection you need.

To find out how independent cyber risk management can strengthen your firm's resilience, contact Mitigo at [www.mitigo.com](http://www.mitigo.com) 

Lindsay is a solicitor, former Head of Dispute Resolution at City of London law firm, and Chief Executive Officer of [Mitigo Cybersecurity](#) , the MLS partner for cyber risk management.

If you want to learn more on this subject directly from the cybersecurity experts at Mitigo, join us for our FREE webinar '[Cybersecurity for Law Firms: What You Don't Know, Can Hurt You](#)'  on Wednesday 3rd December, 11:00 – 11:30, Online via Teams.

[Click here to register and ensure your firm is staying vigilant against cyber-attacks today](#) 



# Thank you to Manchester Law Society and the Manchester Legal Community

Over the past three years, Manchester Law Society, its members, and the wider legal community have shown unwavering support for [We Love Manchester Charity](#) <sup>®</sup>.

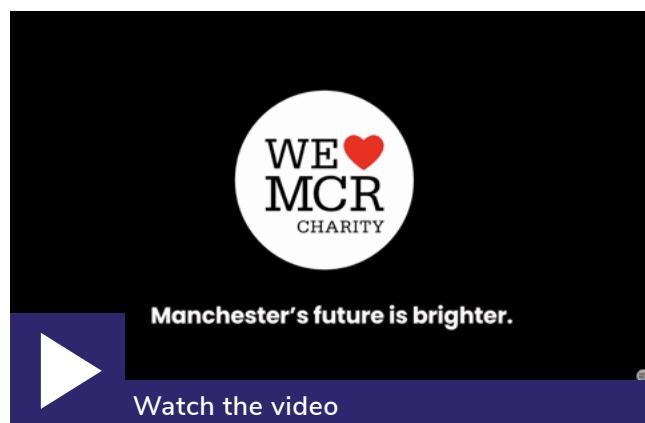
Your proactive engagement has gone far beyond fundraising—you have truly championed our mission to empower young people and community groups across the city. More importantly, we're proud to have become close friends of the incredible staff team, the Chair's and committees that make the society such a welcoming organisation.

Through a series of incredible initiatives, ranging from The Posh Pub Quiz, sporting competitions and the spectacular Manchester Legal Awards, you have raised over £25,300 for our work. But your collective impact cannot be measured in pounds alone. By acting as ambassadors for our cause, you have all helped amplify our message and inspire others to join us in creating opportunities for young Mancunians and building stronger communities across our city.

This support has been directed to our Stronger Communities Fund—our longest-standing fund—which empowers local people to improve their own communities and spaces, whenever they are ready.

We listen and act on their inspiring ideas, and thanks to partners like Manchester Law Society, we've supported hundreds of local groups and charities to deliver great work in Manchester's unbeatable communities.

Your contributions have also supported the Manchester Rising Stars Fund, which recognises that limited finances can be a prominent barrier for many young people in Manchester.



This transformational fund provides a helping hand at the right time, enabling young Mancunians to take opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach—whether starting a career, pursuing self-employment, or continuing their learning journey. We know, in our thriving global city, many young people are unable to enjoy the benefits of rapid growth.

A little financial support can make a big difference, and thanks to the legal community's generosity, more young people are now able to realise their potential.


Simon Wright, Head of Charity at We Love Manchester, said:

"The support from Manchester Law Society and the legal community has been nothing short of inspiring. Their commitment to our mission and their willingness to go above and beyond has helped us reach more young people and community groups than ever before. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and have been proud to be their chosen charity. Whilst the partnership is now concluding, we know that the legal community will always support Manchester"

Fran Eccles-Bech, CEO at Manchester Law Society, commented:

“We Love Manchester works with some of our most vulnerable people and most ambitious communities to help them write Manchester’s next chapter. It has been our great honour to support them for the last three years and we are delighted by the astounding amount our generous members have donated to the Charity. The We Love Manchester team have been fabulous to work with and please do reach out to them if you are able to support them in any way.”

To everyone in the Manchester legal community: thank you for standing with us, for believing in our vision, and for making a real difference where it matters most.

If your organisation would like to support We Love MCR Charity and are looking for a Charity of the Year please reach out to [simon.wright@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:simon.wright@manchester.gov.uk) 

## News from HQ

# Manchester Stress Institute Burnout Pilot Programme – January 2026

We have partnered with the award-winning Manchester Stress Institute to offer members access to a 4-week Beat The Burnout Pilot Programme, launching January 2026.

This science-based resilience and mental health recovery programme provides structured, confidential support designed specifically for legal professionals working under sustained pressure.

### Programme includes:

- **4 x private 1:1 coaching sessions** with a high-performance stress and resilience expert
- Individualised strategies to improve:
  - Stress regulation
  - Mental clarity
  - Sleep quality
  - Energy levels
  - Emotional resilience
  - Cognitive performance

### Kickstarter Supplement Plan

Participants also receive a **FREE 14-day Supplement Support Plan**, designed to:

- Support adrenal function
- Boost energy and concentration
- Improve digestion
- Enhance sleep quality
- Strengthen resilience and cellular recovery

### Programme Cost

£225 per person per week  
Manchester Law Society Members receive a **20% discount on total cost.**

Click [here](#)  to register your interest



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**BEAT THE BURNOUT**  
Resilience & Mental Health Recovery Programme

Manchester Stress Institute



## Two events, one mission - workforce wellbeing for all

**Greater Manchester Wellbeing Series** is a world first event initiative dedicated to improving the wellbeing of Greater Manchester's workforce. Two flagship events, one mission. Workforce wellbeing for all.

- Greater Manchester Wellbeing Run & Walk 21st May 2026: 5.5km run and 2km walk for every member of your team - from the CEO to the front desk.
- Greater Manchester Meditation 22nd October: focused on building mental resilience and clarity in a world of constant noise.

The legal industry thrives on deep focus and attention. The GM Wellbeing Series is designed specifically to build these tools.

We've teamed up with Manchester Law Society to open this up across the Greater Manchester legal profession. To help with burnout, train the brain to improve focus, or simply to connect better with colleagues and clients.

Why? Because healthier, more connected teams build stronger, more successful organisations.

We're creating a powerful, shared experience that tackles burnout, forges genuine bonds, and builds a happier, more productive Greater Manchester.

We keep hearing across GM that 'it's needed' and the stats are profound:

- "1 in 2 people say they feel lonely at work." (UK Workplace Wellbeing Survey / Bupa & CMI data convergence)
- "875,000 people suffered from work related ill health due to stress, depression and anxiety in 2022-23" (Health assured, Wisdom Wellbeing)



- "88% of UK employees have experienced and suffered from burnout in the last two years." (Health assured, Wisdom Wellbeing)

From Nick Rusling the CEO and Founder of Greater Manchester Wellbeing Series:

'Running, walking, meditation and mindfulness - simple tools at everyone's disposal. After 25 years of delivering events such as the Manchester Marathon; I truly believe this is the most inclusive and useful of them all. It's for everyone to benefit from. And the legal sector is one I know well and believe can have some fun taking part in also.'

To enter the GM Wellbeing Series and be part of a healthier, stronger Greater Manchester workforce it is £45 for both events.

If there are 3 or more entries from your organisation this will unlock access to the GM Meditation for your whole organisation and year round wellbeing support.

The GM Wellbeing Series is inclusive by design:

- For Everyone - Thrive, connect and improve mental wellbeing.
- For Organisations - High impact, low cost, simple to implement.
- For the community - Greater Manchester coming together for collective wellbeing.

**Register your interest now to be part of the Greater Manchester Wellbeing Series**



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- ▶ **CYBER RISK MANAGEMENT**





# Burnout at Work is on the Rise for Legal Professionals

UK data shows a significant increase in workplace stress, with up to 92% of legal professionals experiencing high levels of stress or burnout, and around 25% reporting symptoms on a daily basis.

But burnout is far more than just feeling tired.

It is a state of profound **emotional, physical and cognitive exhaustion** caused by chronic, unresolved stress. At a biological level, burnout develops through a dysregulation of the body's stress response system. The nervous system becomes locked in survival mode, with the body constantly scanning for threat rather than supporting rest, repair and restoration.

## Burnout: Common Signs and Symptoms

Anxiety is one of the most common symptoms of burnout. This may present as a constant sense of dread, feeling on edge, excessive worry or an inability to relax and switch off.

Stress hormones such as cortisol can become chronically elevated or flattened, disrupting sleep patterns, blood sugar regulation, mood and immune function. Sleep quality deteriorates, inflammation increases and cellular energy production drops.

## The 12 STAGES of BURNOUT



[www.manchesterstress.com](http://www.manchesterstress.com)

The result can include:

- Persistent fatigue
- Frequent illness
- Muscle tension
- Digestive issues
- Brain fog
- Low mood and irritability

Motivation dips, resilience weakens, energy crashes, decision-making becomes impaired and mental clarity fades. What once felt manageable gradually becomes overwhelming. Over time, the brain prioritises survival over higher-level thinking. Creativity declines. Memory and concentration suffer. Emotional capacity shrinks and patience thins. Tasks that were once second nature become draining, and even minor demands can feel overwhelming. Many individuals describe

feeling detached from themselves, their work and those around them — as though they have “nothing left in the tank”.

High Performance Under Pressure

Sustaining high performance under intense stress, without adequate rest and recovery, significantly increases the risk of burnout, fatigue, insomnia and adrenal dysregulation.

For legal professionals working under constant deadlines, long hours and high cognitive load, this creates a cycle where performance may initially be maintained — but at a growing physiological and psychological cost.

**Jeannette Jackson**  
 Director, Manchester Stress Institute

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## Worried about someone you work with?

Working in the legal sector can be intense. Many roles involve long hours, high pressure, and a constant need to get things right. On top of that, the work can often be emotionally challenging. And like everyone else, people in the legal sector are also juggling life outside of work - family, friends, caring responsibilities, and day-to-day pressures - which can make things even more overwhelming.

So, it's no surprise that people may sometimes struggle with their mental health. But spotting when someone needs help - and knowing how to support them - can feel difficult. The good news is you don't need to be an expert in mental health to check in with a colleague.

It may be difficult to start a conversation with someone you're worried about, and it's normal to feel anxious about it, but taking just a few minutes to talk could make a real difference.

### Spotting the signs

Everyone has tough days. But if someone's behaviour changes over time, it might be a sign they're struggling with their mental health. Look out for:

- Irritability, mood swings, anger and short temper
- Lack of energy, concentration and motivation
- Missing targets, even when working long hours
- Avoiding others or becoming withdrawn
- Changes in appearance or hygiene
- Frequently feeling unwell or needing time off

- Overreacting to small issues
- Coming into the workplace smelling of alcohol
- Becoming overconfident but making mistakes
- Having more tension or problems with managers or teammates

### How to start the conversation

Choose a quiet, private space - somewhere away from desks or meeting rooms. A café or a short walk can help create a relaxed atmosphere.

Start with something simple like, "How are things at the moment?"

Here are some tips for making the conversation helpful:

- **Give your full attention:** Put your phone away and try not to rush.
- **Let them speak:** Don't interrupt. Just listen.
- **Ask open questions:** Try, 'How are you feeling at the moment?', 'How long have you been feeling like this?', 'Is there anyone you feel you can ask for support?', 'Are there any work issues that are contributing to how you are feeling?', and 'Is there anything I can do to help?'
- **Show empathy and take them seriously:** Say things like, "That sounds really tough" or "I can see this is hard for you."
- **Don't use clichés:** Avoid saying things like "It'll all work out" or "Just stay positive."
- **Don't compare stories:** Focus on their experience, not your own.



- **Offer practical help:** Ask if they'd like help with tasks or managing their workload.
- **Encourage support:** Suggest they talk to HR, a GP, or use services like LawCare.
- **Be reassuring:** Suggest they talk to LawCare, other support services, HR, another colleague, or visit their GP.

There are more useful tips on how to start that conversation from [Mental Health First Aid England \[MHFA\]](#) <sup>Ⓔ</sup>.

And remember supporting someone else can be hard too. Make sure you check in with yourself and talk to someone you trust if needed.

Talking about mental health at work isn't always easy

It's okay if you don't have all the answers. Just listening and showing you care is enough.

Some people feel better after opening up - it can be a relief not to keep things hidden. But others may worry about how people will react. It's important to remember that many people in the workplace experience mental health problems, and no one is alone in this.

It's up to each person whether they want to talk about their mental health at work: there's no right or wrong. But opening up can make it easier to get the support needed to stay well.

You don't need to be a mental health expert to check in with a colleague who seems to be struggling. It's normal to feel nervous about starting the conversation, but just talking could really help someone.

### Supporting someone returning to work

If a colleague has taken time off due to mental health, it's important they feel



supported when they return.

Even if you aren't their managers, stay in touch while they're off - just to check in, not to talk about work.

Once they're back, encourage them (and everyone else) to:

- Take proper breaks
- Avoid working long hours or weekends
- Use their full annual leave

These habits are important for preventing problems from coming back.

Regular check-ins also help. Some people might like having a "code word" to signal when they're feeling overwhelmed without needing to explain in the moment.

### Need support?

If you're worried about a colleague - or struggling yourself - [LawCare](#) <sup>Ⓔ</sup> is here for you. We offer free, confidential emotional support to anyone working in the legal sector.

Call us on **0800 279 6888**

Email: [support@lawcare.org.uk](mailto:support@lawcare.org.uk) <sup>Ⓔ</sup>

Chat online (just people - no bots) and access resources [here](#) <sup>Ⓔ</sup>



# Celebrating World Menopause Day 2025: the role of lifestyle medicine in managing your menopause

By **Lisa Wright**, Founder, Menopause the Wright Way



Each year the International Menopause Society (IMS) nominate a subject which will be the focus of the World Menopause Day. The idea behind having a different theme every year is to help provide detailed information on a particular aspect of menopause. This enables women, healthcare professionals and communities globally to be provided with in-depth information on the chosen topic and to link to the underlying research and evidence that supports the information should they wish to do so.

The theme identified for 2025 was the role of lifestyle medicine in managing your menopause. Lifestyle medicine is defined by the IMS as: healthy eating, physical activity, mental wellbeing and stress, avoidance of risky substances, restorative sleep and healthy relationships. We should aim to incorporate all of these elements within our lives to help reduce our risks of chronic diseases in later life.

Healthy eating when taken at face value can be quite intimidating for many women. What does healthy eating actually mean? There are so many different diets and styles of eating being pushed at us today; ranging from 16:8 fasting, keto, 5&2 diet, low carb etc, so how do we determine what is actually a healthy diet for women especially during the menopause. During peri/menopause the hormonal changes women experience often result in weight gain, changes in body composition, typically an increase in visceral fat (usually around the

stomach, hips and bottom), higher cholesterol levels impacting upon heart health and reduced bone strength and density. To combat these physiological changes a healthy diet should comprise primarily of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, polyunsaturated oils, nuts, fish and with limited red meat. Calcium rich foods should be consumed daily, along with ensuring sufficient vitamin D intake to help maintain healthy bones. Focus on reducing ultra-processed foods, for example snacks such as biscuits and crisps and look carefully at the ingredients list on food packaging. A general rule of thumb is that if there is an ingredient you haven't heard of, can't pronounce or cannot buy then ideally try not to eat that product too frequently if at all. Soy based foods have been found to help some women reduce the severity of vasomotor symptoms, and soy is a good source of plant protein so helping women meet their higher protein needs as they age.

Physical activity is something that we should all do, but many women either do not have the time or are disinclined to participate in what they perceive to be "sport". However, when you look at the UK's Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) definition of an adult's minimum weekly physical activity it is as follows: 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity cardiovascular exercise or 75 minutes per week of high intensity cardiovascular exercise, along with two strength training sessions per week. 150 minutes sounds a lot, but the reality is that if you take a brisk walk for just 20-30 minutes per day, where you can feel that your heart rate is raised and you are slightly out of breath then you are meeting the minimum requirement as set by the CMO. If you are a woman who is not currently particularly active then as you enter peri/menopause you should look to achieve these 150 minutes as a minimum. It is also especially important that you incorporate strength training into your weekly activities. Strength training is a critical

part of maintaining good bone health and future mobility which is important for many aspects of our daily lives. If you are already a very physically active woman then the focus of your activities should potentially change to incorporate multi-component training such as High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), along with heavier strength workouts. Both of which provide significant benefits over and above just increasing the amount or length of cardiovascular workouts in an attempt to address physiological changes experienced as a result of the menopause.

Unfortunately, the age at which menopause occurs very often coincides with the time in a woman's life where there can be multiple other stress factors. These may include but are not limited to work stresses, typically women reach more senior positions older than men do; family pressures, such as elderly parents needing care or children who are leaving the family home; relationship pressures and of course the associated health changes of menopause. When combined with the peri/menopause hormonal changes taking place that impact upon many areas of the brain, it is not unsurprising that many women feel that their stress levels rise and their mental health suffers during this time in their lives. Increased stress whether perceived or otherwise can exacerbate menopausal symptoms so it is imperative that women are aware of the options available to them to help with mental wellbeing and managing stress. Effective tools include participating in mindfulness practices, such as meditation, yoga and breathwork classes as well as taking part in creative activities for example art classes. Additionally, research has shown that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques can be useful in helping with low mood and negative thoughts.

The long-term health implications of excessive alcohol and tobacco use are



### From page 23

widely known, however what may be less well known is the impact of both of these substances on menopausal symptoms. Research has shown that smoking can result in earlier menopause and is linked to worsened vasomotor symptoms (VMS) and that the length of time a woman has smoked is more impactful on her health than the daily number of cigarettes consumed. Alcohol also contributes to worsened menopause symptoms as well as impacting upon hormonal balances which are already affected as women go through menopause. Alcohol tends to be more impactful on sleep during menopause than when women are younger and also contributes to increased incidences of VMS, particularly night sweats. It is also best to avoid drinking any alcohol within 2-3 hours of going to sleep as this will interfere with the REM phase of sleep. There is evidence to suggest that use of recreational drugs amongst women of peri/menopause age is rising. When combined with menopausal mood changes and hormonal fluctuations it can make women more susceptible both to the harmful effects of such drugs and to continued misuse.

For many women, sleep issues can become quite pronounced during peri/menopause. Either they struggle to fall asleep, or they fall asleep but wake multiple times, or they wake up and then cannot get back to sleep. Sleep and its contribution to our overall health and wellbeing is frequently overlooked. Restorative sleep as referred to by the IMS is more than just the hours we spend in bed; this sleep would be defined as deep sleep that aids with mood and energy. For menopausal women sleep can be a circular problem in that it's difficult to get to sleep or stay asleep, yet poor sleep can trigger increases in other menopausal symptoms such as brain fog. Good sleep hygiene should always be part of your nightly routine but is even more imperative during menopause. Basics include being consistent with the time that you try

to go to sleep; maintaining an ambient room temperature of 18 degrees; minimizing screen time and exposure to blue light; avoiding meals and alcohol for at least two hours prior to bed; not drinking caffeine after 2pm in the afternoon; and finally keeping a pen and paper by the side of the bed so that troublesome thoughts can be written down!

The final pillar of lifestyle medicine that the IMS include is what they refer to as "healthy relationships". By this they are looking at the impact on long term health and aging of strong social connections, when compared with loneliness and social isolation that have been shown to increase the risk of chronic illness and early mortality. Strong social connections are formed within various groups including work colleagues, friends, family members and of course partners. Having such friendships and supportive networks contributes towards a more positive mindset when dealing with challenging menopause symptoms. Crucially it is important to be honest and open with your partner. Thus, ensuring that they understand and are aware of the potential impact of menopause on both you and them. Do not be afraid to utilise support networks or speak to your peers about any struggles you may be having during this time.

All of the above form part of a well-rounded and holistic approach to menopause. This approach does not exclude the use of hormone replacement therapy, which is another aspect of managing the menopause that many women also use as part of their overall approach to the challenges that menopause can bring. Every woman's journey is different therefore what works for one person may not necessarily work for another. The key thing is to be aware of all the information with regards to the different aspects of lifestyle choices and that they all have a relevance to your overall health and wellbeing.



x



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# Managing underperformance: what part did you play?

Whether it's conduct or capability, managing someone who is under-performing can be stressful and time consuming for all parties. It can sometimes feel like you're going around in circles. You have a chat with them, then they improve for a few weeks and then it's back to normal.

In these situations, it's easy to blame the individual, after all, they are the one's underperforming. The big question is, what part have you played? Here's a few reflective questions you could ask yourself:

## Managing gaps in performance - Looking in

- How well did I set the task?
- Did I communicate it effectively using the right method? Did you send a vague email? Did you rush your verbal communication?
- Did it match their learning preference?
  - Auditory – learn from listening to instruction
  - Visual – learn from writing things down, slides, instructions
  - Kinaesthetic – learn from doing
- Did I ensure the recipient clearly understood what was expected of them?
- How well did I validate their understanding? Did you assume too much?
- Was it a realistic task, given their circumstances? e.g. did I know they had sufficient access to the right people, resources etc. given their environment?
- Did I give them enough encouragement and feedback during the task? Was it using the right channel? Some people want reassurance and praise.
- Did I really empower them to get on with

the task or did I interfere, micro-manage or direct too much? Micromanaging could instil fear in some people. They are so pumped full of cortisol (stress hormone) that they are unable to perform

## Managing gaps in performance - Looking out

- Was the environment they were undertaking the task in conducive to getting it done? Would it have been better if they'd been in the office instead of at home?
- Are there any other distractions to consider (e.g. family, workspace etc.)?
- Are they in optimal mental/physical/financial health or could underlying issue/s be at play?
- Are their motivation needs being met and in the right way? (Remember, these can change over time)
- Could a skills or capability gap have formed whilst working under different circumstances, e.g. remotely?

Many managers don't allow themselves time to reflect and ask these types of question. Sometimes it's because of vulnerability, in other words, they might have to admit they have made a mistake. Falling on your own sword can help to create rapport and trust. The other reason not to ask these types of questions is time. However, this is counterproductive as you'll waste time having several chats about underperformance because you haven't got to the root cause.

Do you need help developing your management skills of your managers? Contact Mike direct for a chat at [mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk](mailto:mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk) @



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# Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



As the year draws to a close and the festive period approaches, **Compli** continues to monitor an evolving regulatory landscape where momentum remains strong, even as we begin to wind down for the holiday season. However you are planning to spend the break, we hope you find time to relax and switch off

## AML and financial crime:

### SRA AML annual report

The SRA's latest AML annual report, for the period April 2024 – April 2025, was published on 30 October 2025. The number of pro-active engagements with firms increased by 72% to 935 (including thematic engagements), an increase from 545 in the last reporting year, with over 800 firms receiving an onsite AML inspection or desk-based review. Over 30% of firms were found to be non-compliant, in relation to e.g. failure to carry out due diligence or client/matter risk assessments, failure to have FWRA and/or adequate PCPs. 137 firms received SRA enforcement outcomes with almost £1m fines, and 14 cases going to the SDT, with total fines of almost £550,000. The SRA identified three key themes it says contributed to breaches:

- Inadequate importance placed on having robust and compliant AML controls in place.
- Inadequate supervision or training of fee earners on the regulations and PCPs.
- No process in place to stop moving to the next stage in the transaction when e.g. an element of customer due diligence has not been performed, monies received from an unexpected source.

Only half of the firms had carried out an independent audit, with the majority having been carried out within the last two years, but over 30% of the audits were not

compliant with regulation 21 as they did not include file reviews. The SRA found that firms with a compliant independent audit had a higher rate of overall compliance than firms who had not conducted an audit at all.

### SRA Thematic review of source of funds and wealth compliance

The results of the SRA's latest thematic review were published on 5 November. The report sets out the findings from a review of how regulated firms are complying with source of funds/wealth requirements and how the SRA expect firms to comply. It also provides regulatory best practice, FAQs, case studies and further resources, including a form, with guidance, to record the approach taken. It found that while awareness is good, there was evidence of non-compliance including weak document review (collecting without proper analysis), poor record-keeping and audit trails, and a disconnect between declared fund origins and those shown in ledgers (in 8% of cases). Over 5,800 client files were reviewed in 2024/25, with 11% lacking evidence of any source of funds checks and 18% showing inadequate scrutiny of the information provided.

The SRA emphasises that checks must be proportionate, risk-based and clearly documented, and reminds firms that the costs of CDD, including source of funds and wealth checks can be charged to clients, providing the cost is clearly stated in your terms and conditions. It accepts there is



need for more clarity on when and how the checks should be carried out and will be working with HM Treasury and stakeholders to examine existing guidance but whether this work will be completed prior to the FCA taking over AML supervision remains to be seen.

The next SRA thematic review, on Regulation 19 - PCPs, including monitoring and management of compliance with PCPs, is expected to be carried out early 2026.

### Next steps after SRA sanctions data exercise

The SRA has analysed the data collected through the recent AML and sanctions data collection exercise. As a result, over the next few months, the SRA will be increasing its engagement with firms by:

- Sending tailored guidance letters to 490 firms where the data suggests sanctions controls could be strengthened, signposting practical steps and good practice. These are firms who confirmed they have not assessed their sanctions risk in writing and do not screen new clients for sanctions.
- Carrying out desk-based reviews to understand sanctions risk and exposure with firms who have clients with connections to sanctioned countries and/or offer services that may carry a higher sanctions risk.
- Continuing with the sanction control in its AML inspection programme, so firms inspected for AML compliance will also have their sanctions procedures reviewed.

All firms should ensure that their sanctions controls are proportionate and kept under

regular review, and, in particular, should:

- Assess and document their sanctions risk in writing.
- Carry out appropriate sanctions screening of new and existing clients; and
- Ensure staff understand when and how to report to OFSI.

### New OFSI sanctions licence

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) issued a new General Licence (INT/2025/7323088) effective from 28 October 2025. This allows UK legal firms and advisers to receive payment for services provided to designated persons under the UK autonomous sanctions regimes without needing an individual OFSI licence. The requirements are different to previous versions, so, where relevant, policies, onboarding processes etc. should be updated.

### HMT consultation on AML reform

Further to the decision that the FCA should take over responsibility for AML/CTF supervision of legal, accountancy, and trust and company service providers, on 6 November HMT has published the first of what is expected to be a number of consultations, 'The Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Supervision Reform: Duties, Powers, and Accountability Consultation', which closes midnight on 24 December 2025 – great timing! It sets out proposals for the key duties, powers, and accountability mechanisms that the FCA will need and the legislative changes required and asks for views on whether these are the right changes to make, setting out a list

Continued on page 30



of 28 questions. One area that stands out, which is already within the FCA enforcement process, is the ability to deny, suspend or cancel a business registration, which would mean that firms could no longer carry out work within scope of MLRs.

### New SAR guidance

The UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU) has published updated guidance, available on the NCA and [SRA website](#) under the tab 'Suspicious activity reports', covering:

- Using the SAR portal
- Submitting a good quality SAR
- Understanding DAMLs and DATFs.

This replaces all previous guidance, so update links were applicable.

### ECCTA

The legal requirement for new directors, PSCs and members of LLPs, to verify their identity, and the 12 month transition plan for existing directors, PSCs and members of LLPs to verify their identity, began on 18 November 2025, an informal process having started in April, with only one million of the estimated seven million directors, PSCs and LLP members having verified their identities with Companies House before the new law came into force. On 17 November 2025, Companies House published guidance on its approach to non-compliance with mandatory identity verification, which includes three main routes for enforcement action; prosecution, referral to The Insolvency Service and financial penalties (which may be issued to the company or individual officer). Where there is evidence of fraud and criminal activity, it will use its powers and work with law enforcement partners to convict criminals.

## SRA Consultations:

### Changing requirements on first-tier complaints

Following the consultation earlier in the year and feedback from stakeholders, the SRA has applied to the LSB for approval to regulatory changes to:

- make changes to when complaints information must be provided to a client, to include providing it at the conclusion of the matter (despite most respondents to the consultation opposing this proposal);
- require complaints information to be clear, accessible and in a prominent place on firms' websites, where they have one (and made available on request when they don't have a website); and
- include the LSB's definition of a complaint in the SRA glossary of defined terms.

The SRA will produce new new complaints handling guidance and case studies and start to collect more complaints data.

### Safeguarding client money





You may well recall the three SRA consultations relating to protecting client money, which closed on 25 February. We understand that a further consultation will be issued at the end of November relating to a requirement for all firms to file Accountants reports; the numbers of compliance roles that can/should be held by one person, and SRA oversight of mergers and acquisitions. Responses will be due by end of January (unless, by the date of publication, the SRA has reconsidered the closing date in view of the Christmas period). The question of solicitors holding client money remains on the SRA agenda for the longer term but will not be included in this consultation.

## New practice notes and guidance

### SRA guidance

- AML guidance – reporting breaches

### Law Society practice notes/guides

- [Social media](#) 
- [Administering insolvent estates](#) 
- [Consumer protection measures in conveyancing](#) 
- [Support for solicitors facing disciplinary investigation and enforcement](#) 
- [UK sanctions regime](#) 
- [Mazur and the conduct of litigation](#)   
NB The latest version, as at the date of writing, is dated 18 November 2025, and is the 5th published since 16 October 2025, with no indication of amendments from previous versions. This has been pointed out to the Law Society.

## Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

### No dishonesty in costs schedule

A solicitor alleged to have provided false and/or misleading information in a schedule of costs was cleared by the SDT. It found that while correspondence was poorly drafted, there was no intention to mislead, and the schedule accurately reflected the fee agreement in place.

### Suspended for failing to undertake due diligence with employees

A sole practitioner who failed to carry out basic checks, resulting in the employment of a disbarred barrister using a false identity and a struck-off solicitor working under a pseudonym, and the closure of the firm, has been suspended for 18 months and ordered

to pay £25,000 costs. The individuals carried out reserved legal work, generating significant fees, and were involved in serious compliance failings, including breaches of AML and accounts rules. In addition to the suspension the SDT imposed an indefinite restriction order.


### Struck off after admitting misleading client

A partner specialising in immigration and asylum law was struck off following his admission that he misled a client, the client's MP, the COLP and the Home Office regarding the progress of an asylum claim. He was ordered to pay £6,000 costs.

### Struck off for providing false information as company director

A solicitor was struck off by the SDT after providing false information to obtain a corporate loan as a company director, impersonating a co-director and electronically signing a guarantee without authorisation. He also misrepresented to counsel's clerk that payment had been authorised when it had not, and failed to co-operate with the SRA investigation. The tribunal found his behaviour clearly dishonest, lacked integrity, undermined public trust and amounted to professional misconduct despite the conduct occurring outside active legal practice.

### 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 [compli@weightmans.com](mailto:compli@weightmans.com) 



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From page 1

## President's Council Dinner (continued)

Guests arrived for a drinks reception, then after some mingling (and Fran asking everyone to pose for some photos!), we all tucked into a delicious three-course meal. We started with a potato and parsnip soup, followed by salmon en crouete, then a limoncello cheesecake for dessert.

Once plates were cleared and refreshments served following the meal, it was time for the speeches!

As is tradition, our Vice President, Ian McConkey, made a speech honouring our President and her achievements throughout her year of Office. In his speech, Ian told us all about Fiona's legal journey, from working in a criminal law firm to working in councils across the country. He also made sure to tell us some very entertaining

stories from outside Fiona's professional life, accompanying his anecdotes with some amazing photographs (including a particularly amusing one taken on a roller-coaster!).

Ian also highlighted Fiona's commitment to maintaining and improving our ED&I efforts, both in the Society and in the wider legal community. He praised Fiona's years of public service as City Solicitor, and the incredible insight it gave to the Society. It was a speech which succeeded in expressing our shared, immense thankfulness for Fiona's dedication to her role as President.

Following Ian's speech, to further convey our gratitude, we also got Fiona some gifts! We made sure her scooter had all the best accessories, with some wing-mirrors and a





license plate that read ML5 PREZ. Amusing but useful gifts, if we do say so ourselves!

Fiona then made her own speech, reflecting on her role and the aims she set out at the beginning of her tenure, when she decided the theme for her Presidency would be Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and “ensuring everyone has the opportunity to compete and work on a level playing field.”

She recalled our Pride Afternoon Tea this August, and the joy she felt being able to watch the parade pass by and celebrate the city’s unwavering commitment to acceptance and inclusivity. She also underlined her appreciation for being so warmly welcomed into the Society as a lawyer working in the public sector.

Fiona also made sure to acknowledge the Council members that would sadly be leaving us this year — Mark Fitzgibbon, Mike Devlin, and Such Amin — and thanked them for their years of hard work and commitment to their roles on Council.

“

It was a fantastic evening, and we hope we communicated even just some of our deep gratitude and appreciation for Fiona

It was then time for the arduous task of trying to fit us all in a photo, though Steve at Manchester Hall did a brilliant job at making sure we had plenty of options to choose from. The one included on the cover was the best we could get!

It was a fantastic evening, and we hope we communicated even just some of our deep gratitude and appreciation for Fiona, and succeeded in celebrating all her hard work and efforts as President.

A massive thank you everyone who attended and took part in making the night so special, as well to all our Council members who play an integral part in our Society.

Thank you for everything, Fiona.





Friday 5th December marks International Volunteering Day, a time to celebrate the incredible impact volunteers make in our communities and professions. To celebrate this important occasion, we asked our Talking Heads:

## Why do you think volunteering is important for the legal profession, and how can lawyers make a difference through it?

Whether their firm held a charity initiative, volunteering their time to help and support their chosen cause, or they were proud to have volunteered their expertise for any pro-bono work, we wanted to honour them giving back to their community.

**Nick Johnson**  
**Vice Chair**  
**Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee**

"We are finding that in a complex legal world where few have the ability to afford access to justice the number of people who are denied legal

representation is growing. There is a real concern that with enhanced employment rights on the horizon many will not be in a position to enforce those rights due to a lack of legal representation.



There is a real need for lawyers to volunteer and support our front line agencies in supporting access to justice and this should be seen as part of a firms DNA."

**Carole Spiller**  
**Partner and Head of Manchester office**  
**Weightmans**

"At Weightmans, we believe volunteering is such a positive way to give back to the local community. We actively encourage our people and partners to get involved in community initiatives, offering up to two paid days each year for local charitable work



as part of our CSR policy. This commitment enables us to step up in our local community, build stronger connections with local organisations, and inspire the next generation. Our people have undertaken all sorts of volunteering initiatives over the years from coaching local sports teams, mentoring young people, and helping with community projects close to their hearts.

"Our partnership with the Greater Manchester Youth Network has enabled us to support its incredible work with young people facing challenges in the region and promoting social mobility. By working side by side with the community, we can bridge gaps, provide support, and help create better opportunities and outcomes for all. Our recent Snowdon challenge, which raised over £3,000, is just one example of how collective action can make a tangible difference."

**Claire Duncan**  
**Partner and Head of Risk**  
**Napthens**

“Volunteering is vital to the legal profession because it reflects our commitment to the community that we serve. Lawyers have unique skills that can make a tangible difference. At Napthens, we’re proud to champion the NSPCC as our partner charity, with a fundraising target of £7000 (we’ve already

nearly reached this target). This year, our efforts have included bake sales, a Euros sweepstake, the firm’s trainee solicitors’ sponsored walk and a 10k swim by Partner Oli McCann, which raised £1,480. We’re also sharing Amazon wish lists for children supported by NSPCC hubs in Liverpool and Leeds. Looking ahead, I will be taking part in



the London Marathon in April to raise further funds - so far raising £1686. These

initiatives unite our people and demonstrate how volunteering and fundraising can create lasting impact for vulnerable children.”

**Sponsor Claire’s London Marathon [here!](#)** @

**Beth Critchley**  
**Associate Solicitor**  
**Hall Brown**

“Volunteering is enriching and rewarding, as legal professionals we can use our skills and experiences to make a tangible difference to lives of others.

Volunteering is not just about, for example, free legal advice. As a firm we are heavily committed to the



development of problem-solving Family Drug and Alcohol Courts. As well significant financial donations we have also volunteered office space for them to hold training sessions, our own time to galvanise support amongst the profession and volunteered our marketing professionals to generate PR for them.

I have volunteered with the Social Mobility Foundation, mentoring students, throughout my career. I hope they would agree, but I feel that taking time to connect in this way is incredibly beneficial for us both. In each partnership, as I watch their aspirations increase, I am faced with new challenges, perspectives, and insights, which I take back into my own life and practice.”

**Jayne Howell**  
**Senior Associate and**  
**Community Manager**  
**Eversheds Sutherland**

“December and the festive season are a time when volunteering and supporting our local communities feels more meaningful than ever. As legal professionals, we are often in a privileged position to make a real difference—whether by sharing our expertise through pro bono initiatives or by contributing

our time and resources to the charities we champion. Sometimes all it takes is awareness of a charity or campaign to make a real difference. Being able to utilise an office of people to do so really helps.

There are so many ways that we can undertake volunteering, recently, we have been able to



support the Salford Foodbank with a supermarket sweep and collections in the office, the Booth Centre with sweet and smoothie sales, and Olympias Music Foundation and the WWT through a fun office quiz.

These efforts not only strengthen the communities around us but also reflect the values at the heart of our profession.”



**Clare Beavan**  
**DWF Foundation and**  
**Community Investment**  
**Manager**  
**DWF**

“Because it’s about more than law—it’s about impact. Volunteering builds empathy, social responsibility, and creates

real change. Lawyers bring advocacy, problem-solving, passion, caring and mentoring skills that transform lives. Our DWF team in Manchester engages in many different initiatives like Canal Clean Ups, gardening projects, and clothing collections improve

communities, while 5 STAR Futures boosts confidence and employability for young people. Mentoring through the Social Mobility Foundation, BITC Carers, and skills programmes tackles barriers to inclusion. Online projects such as Ramzya and Social Shifters extend global engagement and volunteering also amplifies the impact of DWF Foundation grants—adding time, expertise, and passion to funding for even greater value. It’s not just giving back; it’s leveraging professional skills and passion to create opportunities and inspire futures. At DWF, volunteering is part of our values, driving positive change and lasting social impact.”



**Jaime Penaluna**  
**Trainee Solicitor**  
**Forbes Solicitors**

“I enjoy volunteering to help make a difference in the local community. I’m involved in our charitable foundation, the Forbes’ Foundation, which raises money for children and their families in need across the North West.

I support the Foundation Trustees by taking minutes of meetings and

collating funding applications. I also help with fundraising initiatives: I managed a car wash station in the staff car park and am helping to organise a raffle and a Christmas markets event at our Head Office.

There are many fundraising events throughout the year, including the Forbes’ Half Marathon and “Tour de



Forbes”, our own version of the Tour de France with volunteers cycling 100 miles from our office in Leeds past our other offices across the North West.

Forbes’ other charitable projects also include pro bono work and long term partnerships with organisations such as Blackburn Youth Zone.”

*Miller*

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## Document Direct appoint former intelligent office CEO Rachel McCorry to their board

Document Direct, one of our long-standing Manchester Law Society Advantage members, and the U.K. and Ireland's leading provider of transcription and document production services to the legal sector, has appointed Rachel McCorry to its board.



Rachel McCorry

The move comes on the back of a series of acquisitions for the B Corp business, most recently Digital Transcription for Lawyers (DTFL), and continued investment in AI-driven technologies which have been supporting its growth.

Document Direct Founder and CEO Martyn Best said: "Rachel built Intelligent Office into one of the most respected support service providers in the legal market, trusted by many of the U.K.'s top firms. Her operational expertise and reputation for client care are second to none.

"As AI, speech recognition and new digital tools reshape the sector, Rachel's insight and corporate experiences will help us grow and further develop our offering while keeping an unwavering focus on our client service and our clients' needs."



### About Document Direct

Document Direct provides typing, digital dictation and transcription services to the legal, medical and other professional services sectors across the U.K, Ireland and beyond. Established in 2005, they are the leading supplier in this sector and in 2024 became the first B Corp registered business focussed on the legal sector.

Further details can be found at [documentdirect.co.uk](https://documentdirect.co.uk) and by contacting their CEO, [martyn.best@documentdirect.co.uk](mailto:martyn.best@documentdirect.co.uk)

Rachel McCorry added: "I've spent over 20 years working inside and alongside leading law firms, helping them improve efficiency and deliver better client service.

Growing Intelligent Office into a market leader gave me first-hand experience of what matters most to firms and their clients, and my role as Senior Vice President Legal Services, EMEA for Williams Lea following their acquisition of Intelligent Office added to my leadership and corporate skills. My time as CEO of Rothley Law further deepened that understanding.

"Document Direct has that same client-first mindset, combined with cutting-edge technologies and supportive AI and I'm excited to join Martyn and the team to help drive the next stage of growth in a sector that is changing fast, and where client care will always be the priority."

## Clarke Willmott unveils ‘Tula’ The Elephant to champion workplace wellbeing and mental health conversations

Clarke Willmott LLP <sup>®</sup> has launched a brilliant new wellbeing initiative in partnership with Elephant in the Room (EIR), a movement dedicated to encouraging open conversations about mental health in the workplace.

As part of the initiative, Clarke Willmott invited colleagues from across the firm to suggest a name and design for the elephant – a representation of the idea of openly talking about mental health and mindfulness. The result is “Tula”, a vibrant creation brought to life by EIR’s artists.

Tula’s name was suggested by one of Clarke Willmott’s employees, who explained that Tula means ‘balance’ in Sanskrit. As well as representing strength, harmony, equilibrium and equity it is also a great nod to the imagery of the scales of justice.

Tula made her debut at a special event near Clarke Willmott’s Bristol headquarters, where colleagues gathered for the big reveal. The event featured a talk from Brent Pope, founder of Elephant in the Room, who shared his personal reflections on mental health and why he established the movement.

Brent, a professional sportsman and media personality, explained that each hand-painted elephant represents a step towards breaking stigma and bringing the “elephant in the room” into the open.

Over the coming months, Tula will embark on a tour of Clarke Willmott’s regional offices across the UK, encouraging open dialogue and connection around mental



health and wellbeing. In each office she’ll help draw attention to a range of events and learning experiences curated to open minds, stay curious about colleagues, help people connect with each other and show they care.

“Our people are at the heart of everything we do,” said Peter Swinburn, CEO of Clarke Willmott. “Supporting mental health is central to our values, and initiatives like this help us create a culture where everyone feels able to speak openly, support one another and know that it’s okay not to be okay.”

The partnership with Elephant in the Room forms part of Clarke Willmott’s broader commitment to colleague wellbeing, aligning with the firm’s core values.

The firm’s commitment to helping support colleagues’ mental health includes resources available online 24/7, a team of mental health first aiders available in every office and free confidential support available for all from external specialists. It is also a member of the Mindful Business Charter, Mindful Employer Charter and has signed the Menopause at Work Pledge and Mental Health at Work Commitment.



## Charity cheer aim for Bexley Beaumont after another year of growth

**Bexley Beaumont** <sup>®</sup> has revealed that it aims to finish 2025 by spreading some community cheer in Manchester after another strong year of progress.

The firm's own charitable foundation is expanding its support for one of the city's leading children's third sector organisations as further evidence of a commitment to balance growth with good deeds.

Chief Executive Karen Bexley has described how an eight-strong team of partners and support staff will be working as volunteers with Cash for Kids in the build-up to Christmas.

She added that the firm was also encouraging staff, partners and clients to donate gifts to boost the charity's appeal.

Ms Bexley said that the decision to increase support reflected Bexley Beaumont's determination to mirror the firm's greater nationwide presence in the 12 months since it unveiled the BBFoundation.

"This is the third year that we have tried to do our bit for Cash for Kids and certainly no recent, sudden realisation that we should perhaps do something to help.

"The idea that we should give back to the communities in which our partners live and work in line with the rate at which we grow is a fundamental element of our strategy.

"Just as with our broader approach to business, we enjoy a full, frank and regular dialogue with our colleagues about which initiatives we should support.

## Myerson Solicitors named headline sponsor of A Taste of Altrincham 2026

**Myerson Solicitors** <sup>®</sup> is proud to be returning as headline sponsor of A Taste of Altrincham, the town's annual celebration of its outstanding food, drink and hospitality scene.

Running from Friday 27th February to Sunday 8th March 2026, the festival will once again bring together Altrincham's vibrant mix of restaurants, bars, cafés and independent retailers. Visitors can look forward to an exciting line-up of cookery demonstrations, supper clubs, workshops, competitions and

exclusive offers across the town.

Building on the success of the 2025 event, A Taste of Altrincham 2026 aims to showcase the creativity, quality and community spirit that have helped establish the town as one of Greater Manchester's leading destinations for food and drink.

Carl Newton, CEO of Myerson, commented: "We're proud to once again be the headline sponsor for A Taste of Altrincham. Last year's event was a fantastic celebration of the town's thriving



“In the year since the Foundation commenced operations, our collective insight about how best we might help has definitely evolved.

“Cash for Kids fulfils a very vital role in the Greater Manchester area during this time of year and more than trying to help them with donations of gifts and cash, colleagues wanted to offer practical, hands-on support.

“Although our charitable work is by no means limited to the festive season, this time of year is one in which some families find themselves in particular need and, therefore, we all believe it’s important for us to step up.”

The BBFoundation was set up in 2024 as a means of co-ordinating Bexley Beaumont’s charitable activity and benefits from a proportion of the firm’s profits.

In the five years since Bexley Beaumont first opened its doors, its central support team and lawyers have already undertaken a wide of range of fundraising ventures, including

food and drink scene, and we’re delighted to continue our support. Having been rooted in the town since 1982, we’re passionate about giving back to the community that makes Altrincham such a wonderful place to live and work.”

Mandy White, Director of Altrincham BID, added: “We’re thrilled to have Myerson Solicitors as headline sponsors for A Taste of Altrincham 2026. Their ongoing support highlights their strong partnership with the town’s hospitality community. After the brilliant success of last year’s event, we’re looking forward to an even more exciting programme that celebrates the best of Altrincham’s vibrant food and drink offer.”



walking, riding and cycling a total of more than 2,000 kilometres across the UK on behalf of the mental health charity, MIND.

Ms Bexley outlined how the Foundation and the greater structuring of charity support had been one of a series of “cornerstone ventures”.

She explained that this year’s Christmas campaign would see Bexley Beaumont lawyers and staff become “Santa’s Legal Helpers”.

Whilst Cash For Kids intends to provide underprivileged children with presents in general, the BB Foundation is supporting older children and teenagers in particular.



The full A Taste of Altrincham 2026 programme will be revealed early in the new year. For updates and more information, visit [VisitAltrincham.com](https://www.visitaltrincham.com) or follow @VisitAltrincham on Instagram and Facebook.



## Did somebody say Mano Pause?

**Fieldfisher's** Manchester office nailed it again this year with another great celebration of World Menopause Day as they continue to raise awareness and provide the best support in the workplace. On the 4th of November, their Menopause Support Group, headed up by Julie Molloy from their Business Services, hosted a 'Lunch & Learn', where the office had the pleasure of welcoming Jainy Smith, The Menopause Raconteur.

So, who is Jainy Smith? Well, as she says, she is a local lass who has really struggled with her menopause journey. As Jainy was finding her way through the menopause journey, she realised that the issues were also impacting her husband as he empathised and gave his support. From this experience, Jainy decided to author her own book in the style of a Haynes car manual, the *Men's Guide to Menopause: A Funny, Honest Survival Manual for Men Supporting Their Partners and Work Colleagues Through Menopause*.

Mano Pause 101 was published and released back in May 2025 and gives the reader lots of top tips, humour, and factual information.

For Fieldfisher, this 'Lunch & Learn' session was an opportunity to involve more male colleagues in a topic that is becoming increasingly prevalent as the firm continues to raise awareness. It was fantastic to see Partner & Head of Dispute Resolution, James Lappin, Senior HR Business Partner, Matt Akin, Employment Solicitor, Blaise Nsenguwera and IT Customer Success Manager, Mark Harrison Fletcher bravely volunteer to be at the hands of 'The Menopause Raconteur' in what Jainy called a 'Menopause Mastermind: The Legal Edition'. All four were grilled with several multiple-choice questions, which brought lots of engagement and humour to the session, with HR's Matt Akin, coming out on top as the winner.

The group were so pleased to see so many people attend the session both in person and remotely from offices across the UK and Europe. Further talks are now ongoing as the firm is planning to bring Jainy Smith back into the Manchester office in the new year for a Men's Leadership Workshop. Watch this space!

Finally, the group would like to extend a big thank you to Jainy Smith, The Menopause Raconteur, for delivering a fantastic session.





# John Amaechi OBE: becoming the protagonist of your own story

## What does it take to achieve the extraordinary?

In a truly thought-provoking episode of The Inspiring Leadership Podcast, Professor John Amaechi OBE joins [gunnercooke](#) founder Darryl Cooke for an inspiring conversation about leadership, resilience, and the courage to define your own path.

## From the NBA to the OBE to the PhD: The journey of John Amaechi

John Amaechi's story is one of improbable beginnings and extraordinary achievements. From becoming the first British player in the NBA, to being awarded an OBE for his services to sport and inclusion, and later earning a PhD in Psychology, John has continuously defied expectation.

Yet, as he shares with Darryl, success was never about fame or titles. It was about refusing to let others define his potential and helping others to do the same.

## Becoming the protagonist

Drawing inspiration from The NeverEnding Story, John recalls how an overlooked child discovers he is the hero of his own tale, the only one who can save a fantastical world.

That story, John says, mirrors real life. He added: "The most unlikely of people in the most improbable of circumstances can become extraordinary, if you are willing to plan and work at it."

It's a message of empowerment, self-determination, and courage, one that resonates deeply with leaders navigating uncertainty and change.

“

The most unlikely of people in the most improbable of circumstances can become extraordinary

## The true privilege of leadership

Throughout their conversation, Darryl and John explore what leadership really means today. They discuss:

- The privilege of leadership and the responsibility it carries
- The impact of leadership on mental health in the workplace
- Why the best leaders are those who accept they are never a finished product.

John's reflections are laced with humour, honesty, and deep psychological insight. He reminds us that leadership is not about perfection, but about awareness, of ourselves, our influence, and the stories we tell.

John goes on to add: "Leaders who are properly, authentically connected to others, who are unafraid to give them thoughtful and direct feedback. You know, that's where magic happens."

Recorded live at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, this episode is an experience that will leave listeners inspired to see themselves and their lives differently.

You can listen to the full episode on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#).



## Foot Anstey's record revenues to support development of national law firm in Manchester

**Foot Anstey** <sup>®</sup> has confirmed that, as part of its wider growth strategy, Manchester is a key target location for future growth, a move underpinned by the firm's strongest-ever financial results, which saw revenues climb to a record £76.9 million in the 2024/25 financial year.

The firm, which has a sector specialist approach to its legal services, currently employs more than 700 people and also has offices in Bristol, Belfast, Exeter, London, Plymouth and Southampton.

It now plans to grow its headcount in the North West region and further develop its legal offering in line with key business growth sectors of retail, sports, infrastructure and technology.

The law firm was one of the first in the UK to confirm a pledge to donate 1% of its net profits annually to a wide range of charitable programmes. This includes a long-term partnership with Young Enterprise as part of its commitment to improving social mobility across the UK.

Martin Hirst, Managing Partner at Foot Anstey, said: "The high calibre of our established team in Manchester as well as positive economic data gives us the confidence to make further investment in Manchester and the wider North West region.

"Greater Manchester is one of the UK's fastest-growing city-regions in the UK. It is home to one of the UK's most dynamic digital and tech clusters, with over 10,000 tech businesses and sector growth outpacing the national average.

"It is an exceptional environment for ambitious clients and the legal talent that supports them. Manchester is the perfect city to develop our sector specialist approach across the North West region."

The firm has a strong partner trio leading the presence in Manchester.

Tom Kershaw joined from boohoo group plc, where he spent over a decade as General Counsel and brings this specialist legal experience to the retail and consumer sectors.

Melanie McGuirk, who previously headed the intellectual property litigation team at Pannone Corporate is recognised in The Legal 500 "Hall of Fame" and has a strong sector focus on retail and technology.



(L-R) Jan Levinson, Melanie McGuirk and Tom Kershaw

Jan Levinson, an experienced commercial litigation partner, brings decades of experience in high-stakes disputes, including in the sports sector, after time in senior roles at DAC Beachcroft and Squire Patton Boggs.

Tom Kershaw, said: “Our record national revenue has enabled the firepower to invest, and we are now actively building on the strong team we already have in place here in the North West. The strength of Manchester’s economy is a major part of that decision. It’s a city that is growing in confidence and capability, attracting high-growth companies and exceptional talent and we’re committed to being part of that continued growth.”

Melanie McGuirk, said: “The North West is a powerhouse of leading businesses and brands, but many are now at a crossroads, facing huge opportunities and significant reputational threats from new technology like AI. Our planned development of our Manchester office allows us to deepen our support for these businesses, protecting their most valuable assets, their brand and their intellectual property as they innovate.”

Jan Levinson, said: “Manchester is central to our strategy. We are building a powerhouse law firm in the city, backed by exceptional talent and a clear vision for growth. Over the coming year, we will continue to expand our capability to support the most complex commercial disputes and high-value advisory matters, working alongside the region’s most ambitious organisations and leaders”

## News from HQ

# Specialist Civil Circuit Judge (Chancery): Pre-Application Seminar

### [The Judicial Appointments Commission](#)

will soon be recruiting a Specialist Civil Circuit Judge (Chancery) based in Manchester.

On Tuesday 2nd of December, the Judicial Office is holding an online pre-application seminar from 17:00 — 18:00, which aims to help applicants be better prepared to make an application and to receive up-to-date guidance and advice on the JAC’s selection process.

As well as the JAC, you will also hear from a leadership judge and current Specialist Civil Circuit Judges.

Register here to attend [here](#).

You can also sign up to get updates about the role [here](#).

Applications for the role will open on the JAC website on the 16th of December and close on the 13th of January 2026.





## Leigh Day celebrates two-year anniversary of human rights team in Manchester

The Manchester human rights team at [Leigh Day](#) is celebrating two years of providing legal support in the north of England.

Since its launch in Autumn 2023, Leigh Day's Manchester human rights team has worked on cases related to migrants' rights, discrimination, welfare rights, trafficking, judicial review, and inquests.

The team, headed by human rights specialists Ryan Bradshaw and Stephanie Hill, now consists of five lawyers, including solicitors Hannah Jandu, Louise

Brocklehurst, and Josephine Whitehouse, and supported by paralegals and trainees.

Partner Ryan Bradshaw represents ex-England football captain David Watson in his legal battle to achieve recognition of the neurological impact of repeated head injuries during his career.

In October this year, Ryan also settled a £12 million claim over a discriminatory housing policy which denied rent allowances to younger unmarried military personnel on behalf of approximately 4,000 members of the armed forces.



Stephanie Hill



Ryan Bradshaw



Ryan and Stephanie are also part of Leigh Day's public law team, which was recognised with a major accolade from Chambers and Partners UK

Partner Stephanie Hill represented Windrush scandal victim Raymond Lee, who was found to have been unlawfully refused compensation by the Home Office in a landmark judgment earlier this year.

Stephanie also led a legal challenge against Northern Trains on behalf of disability rights campaigner Doug Paulley over the lack of step-free access for wheelchair users. The case was settled this year and Northern Trains implemented changes to improve accessibility at its stations.

Ryan and Stephanie are also part of Leigh Day's public law team, which was recognised with a major accolade from Chambers and Partners UK. The legal directory named the team at Administrative Public Law Team of the Year, acknowledging their work across NGOs, charities, domestic and international public law claims.

Last year, Leigh Day announced it was further bolstering the growth of Leigh Day's human rights work in the north of England by expanding the department to Liverpool. Human rights partner Leanne Devine heads up the human rights team in Liverpool, where the team represents bereaved families through the inquest process.

In November this year, lawyers from the human rights team across the Manchester and Liverpool offices collaborated with LJMU and JUSTICE on an event which celebrated the 75th anniversary of the European Convention of Human Rights, through a living library of 'human books' exhibit at National Museums Liverpool.

The North West team further co-hosted charity INQUEST's Northern Conference and fundraising quiz with Garden Court North chambers and Ison Harrison solicitors. Proceeds from the day were donated to INQUEST, which provides advice and support to bereaved people, whose loved ones' deaths relate to potential state failings.

Ryan Bradshaw said: "Having a human rights team here in Manchester really allows us to build on existing bonds with the local community. We are not just a London firm – we have a brilliant team of lawyers up North who are all committed to obtaining justice for clients."

Stephanie Hill said: "It is crucially important that people whose human rights have been breached have access to legal representation, to challenge unlawful decisions and to hold public authorities to account. Since the launch of our team in 2023, our team has been working tirelessly to represent our clients and to expand our areas of work, to better serve our northern clients with a dedicated team of human rights lawyers."



## Fletchers Group agrees to acquire Rayden Solicitors in first move into Family Law

**Fletchers Group** <sup>®</sup> has agreed to acquire Rayden Solicitors (Raydens), one of the country's most highly regarded Family Law practices.

The deal marks the Group's first move into Family Law and adds a new specialist pillar to its Serious Injury and Clinical Negligence operations.

Founded in 2005 by Katherine Rayden, Raydens has grown from its base near St Albans to offices across Buckinghamshire, Essex, Central London, and Birmingham. The firm employs 113 people and is one of the largest specialist Family Law firms in England and Wales.

Following the acquisition, Raydens will retain its brand, offices, and leadership team, with Katherine Rayden joining the Fletchers Group Executive Committee.

Clients will continue to receive the same trusted service from the Raydens team, now supported by Fletchers Group's investment, technology, and strategic backing to drive the next stage of growth.

This is the tenth acquisition by Fletchers Group in the past four years and follows the addition of Scott Rees and Shoosmiths' Serious Injury practice earlier this year, alongside the Group's ongoing expansion into Birmingham, Northampton, and the Thames Valley – part of a broader strategy to build a nationwide presence across specialist consumer law.

Peter Haden, CEO of Fletchers Group, said: "Our strategy is clear: to invest in brilliant specialist firms and help them grow more quickly, help more clients, and strengthen



their organisation.

"We're keen to apply the same successful approach to Raydens as we have in our Serious Injury and Clinical Negligence practice, moving at pace to build a national leader in Family Law through a mix of organic and inorganic growth.

"Our experience in scaling up specialist legal practices gives us a strong platform to support Raydens' next stage of growth, drawing on our expertise in marketing, client service, people development, and the use of technology and AI to improve efficiency and deliver exceptional outcomes for clients.

"Katherine has built a fantastic business. With Fletchers Group's investment and infrastructure, we can give her and her team the backing to accelerate their national growth plan, strengthen their market presence, and lead consolidation in Family Law."

Katherine Rayden, Founder and Senior Partner at Raydens, added: "This is a fantastic opportunity for us; we are delighted to be joining forces with Fletchers Group. This acquisition will benefit both our colleagues and our clients, whilst retaining

our trusted Raydens brand. We will have access to more resources and support in all areas of the business, helping us to accelerate our growth plans and thereby augmenting our capabilities and our offering to clients.

“We share the same values as Fletchers – a commitment to providing the best possible

results for our clients, based on industry-leading expertise and first-class client care. This acquisition is the natural next stage in the growth of Rayden Solicitors.”

The deal is subject to SRA approval.

*Note: Advisors to Fletchers were DLA Piper and KPMG.*

## The University of Law appoints new Campus Director in Manchester

Justine Thatcher has recently been appointed as Campus Director for *The University of Law* @ Manchester and Liverpool campuses.

Justine brings a wealth of experience to the role, having worked in education for over two decades following an early career in human resources within the health and social care sector. After achieving CIPD accreditation in 2001, she transitioned into education and earned a PGCert in Education in 2006. Most recently, Justine was awarded Senior Fellowship of Advance HE, reflecting her commitment to excellence in teaching and leadership.

Her career spans both further and higher education, with extensive experience teaching leadership and management. Justine has taught A Level, undergraduate and postgraduate business and management programmes and has acted as examiner for Cambridge University Press and Assessment.

For the past 15 years, Justine has successfully led diverse teams and departments in various educational institutions, including a three-year secondment at an international school in Cape Town, South Africa.



Justine Thatcher

Justine joined the university three years ago as Academic Manager for The Business School and assumed the role of Campus Director in July. In her new position, she oversees the operational management of the Manchester campus and is passionate about building strong partnerships with regional organisations.

“The Manchester campus offers outstanding education in law, business, and criminology,” said Justine. “I look forward to working closely with local firms to create opportunities that prepare the next generation for success in the workplace.”

The University of Law’s Manchester campus continues to provide innovative, career-focused education, supporting students as they develop the skills and knowledge needed for professional success.



## Quality pays off as Hall Brown rounds woff another rankings clean sweep

*Hall Brown Family Law* <sup>®</sup> has described how its commitment to hiring and retaining top quality staff has seen it remain the only North West-based family law specialist to feature in all of the year's legal rankings.

The clean sweep was completed by its keeping its place in an authoritative list of the best 250 law firms in England and Wales compiled by The Times.

Hall Brown's inclusion means that it is one of the very few family law boutique firms to feature every year since the table was first published in 2018.

It is also the only family law firm based in the North West and one of only two specialist practices with headquarters outside London and the South East to make the index.

The appearance of the Times' classification has coincided with Hall Brown again being the sole specialist from the North West named in the first tier of epivateclient's survey of UK family law practitioners.

These latest placings follow a hat-trick of top placings in Chambers and Partners, Legal 500 and Doyle's Guide.

Hall Brown has the additional distinction of being the only Manchester-headquartered law firm to be considered one of the Sunday Times' Best Places to Work.

Managing Partner James Brown said that latter recognition had been "instrumental" in a year which has seen stong growth both in fee income and the number of employees.

"We really do feel privileged to be acknowledged for doing what we love to do so well.

"That is down to the standards which we set when we launched almost a decade ago and a determination on the part of everyone within the firm to provide exceptional support for clients every single day.

James Brown



“

Hall Brown's inclusion means that it is one of the very few family law boutique firms to feature every year since the table was first published in 2018

“To have clients, our legal peers and independent researchers rate us so highly is a source of great pride.

“Just as the legal industry rankings help individuals decide who to turn to for advice on some incredibly sensitive and occasionally difficult issues, the fact that we have once more been ranked one of the country's best places to work has helped make us a place where so many talented lawyers and support staff have decided to further their careers.

“As 2025 draws to a close, the rankings serve not only as testament to how much we have achieved collectively in the last 12 months but as a reminder of the levels we will all strive to live up to next year and beyond”.

Mr Brown's comments follow the eighth and latest edition of The Times' rankings of the UK's leading 250 firms in 28 different legal disciplines.

The appearance of this year's listing came just a week after Hall Brown was the North West's only standard bearer among seven family law specialists to make private clients' top tier.

Hall Brown was singled out for providing “a Rolls-Royce service” by Legal 500, while Chambers and Partners concluded that the firm was “exceptionally good at what they do”.

Over the course of the year's rankings, all five of Hall Brown's offices in Manchester, London, Sheffield, Leeds and Birmingham have reaped considerable individual praise.

Chambers and Partners singled out Mr Brown and his co-founder, Sam Hall, as a “visionary” and “force of nature” respectively, while Legal 500 included Andrew Newbury, Zoe Round and Martin Loxley in its Hall of Fame.

Alison Fernandes, who heads up Hall Brown's Sheffield office was named in the same classification as a Leading Partner, along with Mr Brown, Mr Hall and Claire Reid.

Melanie Hadwin and Madelaine Hailey were identified as Leading Associates, and Hall Brown's Head of Non-Court Dispute Resolution (NCDR), Sarah Manning, was singled out as a Next Generation Partner.

Her colleague in the firm's Leeds office, Partner Laura Guillon, Izzy Walsh and Priya Palanivel - who together head up its London premises - were also lauded.

Hall Brown was among only 11 legal firms nationwide and the only one from Manchester to feature in the Sunday Times 'Best Places to Work' list.

Judges described how the firm's continued growth since launching in 2016 was due to “the culture and wellbeing of the team”.



## FLBN Manchester Event Champions Inclusion and Allyship at Eversheds Sutherland

**Eversheds Sutherland's** Manchester office welcomed legal professionals for the latest Female Lawyers Breakfast Networking (FLBN) event, continuing its mission to empower junior lawyers and foster meaningful connections across the industry.

Founded by Tanya Dolan and Maddie Drabble in January 2023, FLBN has grown into a leading platform for collaboration, mentorship, and advocacy, earning recognition as a finalist for Diversity and Inclusion Programme of the Year at the UK Women & Diversity in Law Awards 2024. With events now hosted in London, Cambridge, Dubai, and Paris, FLBN's growing footprint reflects its commitment to driving diversity and inclusion across the legal profession.

FLBN events typically run from 08:30 am to 10:30 am, starting with arrivals and networking to create an informal space for attendees to connect. This Manchester session followed the same structure, opening

with a warm welcome and introduction to FLBN's founding principles and committee members. The focus of the event was inclusivity and allyship, explored through a dynamic panel discussion which considered three key topics (1) how to drive cultural change and strengthen inclusion within the legal industry (2) personal examples of inclusion in the workplace and the power of authentic engagement and supportive environments and (3) practical guidance on allyship and how to take proactive steps to advocate for underrepresented voices. Their insights reinforced the importance of collaboration and allyship in creating inclusive environments. The session concluded with further networking and refreshments, allowing attendees to continue conversations sparked by the panel.

Laura Nally, the Manchester Regional Lead for FLBN, said "I'm honoured to take on the role of Manchester Regional Lead for FLBN. Working and connecting with other lawyers has helped me to build my career and shape



my own future career goals – there is so much value that comes from the support of connecting with others. FLBN aims to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for all female lawyers across the profession and events like today are a great opportunity for us to connect and share ideas on how we can support other female lawyers and the wider DE&I agenda.”

For updates and details on upcoming events, join the FLBN LinkedIn community [here](#) and be part of the conversation driving positive change in the legal sector.



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## Opening Doors: Manchester Young Lawyers / Manchester Metropolitan University Mentoring Scheme 2025/6

November 2025 marked the launch of another successful year for the [Manchester Young Lawyers \(MYL\)](#) mentoring scheme, in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University.

Mentoring offers a wealth of benefits to both mentors and mentees. For students, it provides invaluable guidance, encouragement, and practical insights into the realities of working in the legal profession. For mentors, it is a chance to give back, to support the next generation of lawyers, and to develop their own coaching and leadership skills. The relationships built through mentoring often extend beyond the scheme itself, creating lasting professional networks and opportunities.

On 13 November 2025, lawyers from across Manchester gathered at Eversheds Sutherland for the launch of this year's scheme, which pairs university students from Manchester Metropolitan University with members of the legal community in Manchester. Students and their mentors meet regularly, either in person or remotely, to discuss career aspirations and plan next steps. Both mentors and mentees are provided with handbooks to assist with building and sustaining the mentoring relationship.

This year, the scheme saw 22 mentoring pairs formed, comprising a diverse mix of second- and third-year law students. These students were thoughtfully paired with experienced legal professionals from a wide range of practice areas, ensuring that each student had the opportunity to explore different areas of the legal profession.



From corporate law and litigation to family law and dispute resolution, the diversity of practice areas represented in the mentoring pairs was varied.

In terms of firm size, the mentors came from both large, global firms with international reach, as well as smaller, more boutique practices that offer a more specialised approach to legal work. This variety provided students with a unique opportunity to understand the breadth of career paths available within the legal field. Whether they were aspiring to work for an international firm or a smaller firm, each student had the chance to learn from professionals whose career trajectories aligned with their own aspirations.

By matching students with mentors from firms of all sizes and across various practice areas, the scheme aimed to ensure that

mentees could get a rounded view of the legal landscape in Manchester, helping them make informed decisions about their future career paths. The varied experiences and backgrounds of the mentors also encourage students to think creatively about the many opportunities the legal sector has to offer, beyond just the traditional routes.

At the launch event, students had the opportunity to network with each other and their mentors, and to hear from Sam Bumby, Senior Associate at Eversheds Sutherland and Professional Development Director on the MYL Committee, and Josie Leydon, Careers Mentoring Manager at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Josie said: "Mentoring is more than guidance – it's about opening doors. The Manchester Young Lawyers Mentoring Programme gives students a unique opportunity to learn from those who've recently taken the same steps, offering real-world insight and encouragement that textbooks can't provide. It's a head start for tomorrow's legal professionals."

Echoing Josie's sentiment, one mentee said on launch night: "I've found the scheme to be really insightful so far. I'm excited to get to know my mentor better, increase my professional skills, and open the door to future opportunities."

Sam Bumby remarked, "It's always inspiring to see the enthusiasm and dedication of the students who join this mentoring scheme. As mentors, we're not just offering guidance, we're building connections that can shape the next generation of legal professionals. The relationships that start here can lead to lifelong networks and opportunities."

Looking ahead, MYL and Manchester Metropolitan University are excited for the



next mentoring event in March 2026, which will offer mentees and mentors another opportunity to network and formally close the scheme for this academic year.

For more information about the scheme, please contact Sam Bumby ([sambumby@eversheds-sutherland.com](mailto:sambumby@eversheds-sutherland.com)) or Kennedy Kay ([kennedy.kay@kennedyslaw.com](mailto:kennedy.kay@kennedyslaw.com)), or sign up to the MYL mailing list [here](#).

In the new year, keep an eye out for MYL's next event hosted by Professional Development Directors Sam and Kennedy - a panel talk and Q&A session titled "Pathway to Partnership." During this event, MYL members will hear from a diverse group of Partners across different practice areas and firms, who will share their career journeys and insights on how they made it to the top!

# Your Monthly High Five from **TheBusinessDesk.com**



By **Michael Taylor**, Editor of  
TheBusinessDesk.com

**Frankly, I have never been so pleased to see the end of a Budget process.**

The leaking of ideas for tax hikes, the ‘rolling the pitch’ to soften everyone up, and the endless wild speculation created a consistent state of confusion and paralysis where the Government completely lost control of the narrative.

Businesses and individuals will have made important decisions in an attempt to second guess what Rachel Reeves was going to say.

Now it has been and gone, businesses will deal with the certainty and hope such a clown show is not repeated next year.

On the day our team produced exemplary coverage that captured the main themes very well.

My hot take on the Budget, joining all the others from everyone with a LinkedIn account and a fondness for punishing people on benefits, was that it was at least a Labour budget that exposed a strategic

“

The begging bowl culture has harmed the North over the last thirty years. The broken promises and shallow gimmicks have made fools of us

purpose behind what they are meant to be about. Their main problem from day one is that it doesn’t know what it is for, except not being the Tories.

It suits the leadership to say the previous lot left them a financial mess, but not to acknowledge how much of the black hole was as a result of the extensive support businesses received during the pandemic.

Maybe if they did, then those being asked to pay a high price now might join the dots as they recognise that their survival at that time came at a price.

Personally, I wish they’d gone harder on the gambling companies and bolder on devolution to the growing cities.

Andy Burnham has already warned that more dithering on rail investment would be an “intentional anti-growth policy” and he demanded we stop having to beg for scraps.

“After a decade of doing more for ourselves than they ever did for us, you would think



the system would stop behaving as if it knows best?" he said.

He's right. The begging bowl culture has harmed the North over the last thirty years. The broken promises and shallow gimmicks have made fools of us.

But closing loopholes that have widened beyond what they were intended for was a smart move too. On our Rainmakers platform yesterday I looked at the cutting of the capital gains tax relief on sales to employee ownership trusts, where the Chancellor said the quiet bit out loud. My sense is she's right, that too often the tax tail is wagging the deal dog. The cutting of the relief will test that thesis. But, maybe she'll come after Limited Partnerships next year.

Elsewhere, the biggest story of the month for us was the discovery of the £40m due to the rapist former owner of Manchester tech business UK Fast.

His reign was a shameful episode in the recent history of our city. I thought two years ago that there would be a reckoning, an apology from those who enabled and enriched him, as he hid in plain sight.

It's worth recalling the comments of HHJ Sarah Johnston when she said to him, as he cowered in the dock, "You created a workplace which was tainted by your attitude towards women".

I have the receipts. I know what I saw. I have tried to offer a platform for reflection, instead it's just been silence from the complicit.

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## Save the dates!

A sneak peek at our events programme next year – make sure to get these dates in your diary!

**Property Law Conference** – 29th January

**LegalEx Manchester** – 5th February

**The Rabbi, The Imam and the Power of Dialogue** – 9th February

**Corporate and Commercial Forum Panel Event** – 4th March

**The Next Generation of Legal Professionals Conference** – 12th March

**Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence Forum Panel Event** – 24th March

**Employment Law Conference** – 14th May

**Management Conference** – 21st May

**Manchester Legal Awards** – 2nd July





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## World AIDS Day: reflecting on history and challenging stigma in the UK

World AIDS Day is observed globally on December 1st every year to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, remember those who have died from the disease, and offer support to individuals living with the virus. Since its establishment in 1988, World AIDS Day has been a significant platform for educating people, advocating, and demonstrating unity, particularly as the global fight against HIV/AIDS continues.

The inception of World AIDS Day was a direct response to the escalating global health crisis by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). During a time marked by fear, misinformation, and stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, the day sought to

promote comprehension and encourage compassionate care on a worldwide scale.

In the early 1980s, the United Kingdom faced the emergence of HIV/AIDS, concurrent with the virus spreading globally. Initially met with widespread fear and misconceptions, the epidemic was erroneously linked to specific groups such as gay men and intravenous drug users, resulting in significant social stigma and discrimination.

Individuals living with HIV in the UK faced numerous challenges throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including reluctance to seek testing or treatment due to the fear of social exclusion. Stigmatization pervaded healthcare facilities and workplaces, further isolating those affected and impeding efforts to control the epidemic.

Despite these challenges, the UK played a pivotal role in advancing HIV research and treatment. The introduction of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in the mid-1990s represented a turning point, transforming HIV from a fatal disease into a manageable condition. Community activism and public awareness campaigns also contributed to gradually reducing stigma and promoting safer behaviors.

While medical advancements have significantly improved the quality of life for individuals living with HIV, stigma remains a persistent issue in the UK. Misconceptions about the disease endure, and many people with HIV face discrimination in various aspects of their lives. This stigma can deter individuals from accessing essential healthcare services, hindering efforts to prevent new infections.



Karol Prokopczuk

World AIDS Day serves as a crucial reminder that eliminating the HIV epidemic requires more than just medical solutions. It calls on society to replace fear with empathy, judgment with understanding, and ignorance with education. Recent years have witnessed significant progress in the UK's fight against HIV/AIDS. Increased availability of testing, widespread use of effective treatments, and preventive measures such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) have contributed to declining infection rates and improved health outcomes.

Campaigns focused on normalizing sexual health conversations and addressing the root causes of stigma are essential in sustaining this progress. As we mark World AIDS Day, it is important to honor those who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, support those living with the virus, and reaffirm our commitment to a future free from stigma and discrimination.

Through education, empathy, and collective action, the UK continues to lead the way towards ending the HIV epidemic.

**Karol Prokopczuk, First Response Team Manager, IMD Solicitors**

## Job Vacancies

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# Celebrating Chanukah

Chanukah, the Jewish Festival of Light, starts this year on the evening of Sunday 14 December, 25 Kislev of the Jewish calendar, and lasts for 8 days.

Chanukah means 'dedication' and commemorates when the Jewish holy temple in Jerusalem was seized by Syrian-Greek forces over 2,500 years ago. King Antiochus oppressed and massacred the Jews, prohibited the practice of the Jewish religion, desecrated the Temple, and gave the Jewish people an impossible choice – renounce their religion or be sentenced to death. A small group of Jews, known as the

Maccabees, fought back and recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple around 165 BCE. However, they discovered that there was only enough oil left to keep the holy light (the Ner Tamid in Hebrew), a flame which is never meant to go out, for one more day. However a miracle occurred, and the flame somehow stayed alight for eight more days, which was long enough for another batch of oil to be produced.

The eight candles which are lit on the eight days of the festival commemorate this miracle. Every night of the festival, candles are lit after sunset (except on Fridays

"For though my faith is not yours and your faith is not mine, if we are each free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



when it is lit before the Sabbath candles) *on a special candelabra, a Chanukiah, or menorah* <sup>Ⓔ</sup>, adding one more candle for every night until all eight are lit on the final night. The Menorah has nine branches on it, with the middle candle (the Shamash), which is used to light the other candles each night. Special blessings are said before lighting, and songs sung afterwards, telling the story of God’s deliverance. It’s traditional to place the candles in the window so that those passing by can see it, bringing light into the darkness.

Jews from around the world have differing traditions on Chanukah, depending on where their ancestors settled in the Diaspora, having been exiled from Israel by the Romans, ranging from eating fried foods, including doughnuts, fried potato cakes (latkes), fried cheese balls etc. to celebrate the miracle of the oil in the temple lasting 8 days, to giving small presents, particularly to children, on each night, and donations to charity.

Until the mass rescue by Israel of Ethiopian Jews in the late 1970’s and 1980’s after a massacre of Jews, the forbidding of the practice of Judaism and the teaching of Hebrew, members of the Beta-Israel (House of Israel) Jews in Ethiopia did not observe Chanukah, as they largely existed apart from other Jews across the globe before the recapture of the Second Temple, having established in Ethiopia sometime after the destruction of the First Temple in around 587 BCE. They have now developed their own customs, including making a stew with many different types of Ethiopian spices, small Ethiopian bread (dabo), and doughnuts. In North Africa, on the 7th night of Chanukah, the new moon, menorahs are often hung on gateposts and the ‘Festival

“

Jews from around the world have differing traditions on Chanukah, depending on where their ancestors settled in the Diaspora”

of the Daughters’, honouring the courage and contributions of women throughout generations, is celebrated. Since 2004, a giant menorah, the largest in Europe, is lit in Germany, in front of the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, as a symbol of hope and the regrowth of the German Jewish community, against the backdrop of historic and contemporary antisemitism.

**Andrea Cohen  
Compli, Weightmans**





# UK Disability History Month

UK Disability History Month spans 20 November to 20 December and we use it as a time to reflect on disability through an historical lens. This year we also consider intersectionality, i.e. how a person's experience of disability is shaped by the overlap of other identities, for example, gender, socioeconomic status, race, religion and age. Often these additional characteristics bring about combined discrimination at work and in the community. Most disabled people face general inequalities of accessibility, but they can also face added challenges.

We are a long way away from Ancient Greek and Roman practices of abandoning or legally sanctions killing for eugenic reasons; the Middle Ages when people were tortured as witches or sinners for their disabilities, and more recently 19th and 20th century segregation and institutionalising into asylums where disabled people were abused and neglected.

In 1867 San Francisco was the first city to enforce the US "Ugly Laws" which legally banned "any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object" to "expose himself or herself to public view". Incredibly, 1974 was the last recorded arrest under this legislation. Opposition to these laws with shocking examples of discrimination and led to activism and disability advocates, and ultimately the American Disabilities Act 1990.

Historically, disabled people have faced persecution and ridicule. We have all seen images of disabled people on public display in freak shows and at circuses. Religious communities have framed people's



Elizabeth Wallace

disabilities as a sign of sign of a trial or challenge from God with the framing of this as a positive or negative differing across religion, and over time.

We move forward to 2025 where life is better for disabled people and we also recognise that intersectionality must be considered when devising inclusive policy at government and community level, including the workplace. There is still some way to go, of course.

For example, disabled people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will inevitably face difficulties through lack of resources to fund top end disability aids, private treatment and therapies, fully accessible housing and digital accessibility tools. We also know that having a disability makes someone more likely to fall into poverty or to worsen existing poverty as a result of both the additional costs of being disabled and the reduced opportunity to income generate. Add in gender, and we know that disabled women face an increased risk of

violence and abuse within relationships; and on top of that again we can add in cultural viewpoints such as shame around disability which add to discrimination.

For disabled men, society often views disability as a deficit and weakness of the person conflicting with the masculine ideal of being strong. In work this can translate to a mistaken perceived inability to hold leadership positions. Disabled men can be less inclined to seek support, community and medical, which can lead to worse physical and mental health outcomes. For gay disabled men there can be an additional layer of social exclusion.

An intersectional approach to supporting people with disability can help plan

support and interventions to reduce the negative impact, and at the very least raise awareness that everyone is multidimensional and that in addition to just understanding this, there is practical change to ensure equal inclusion at work and in society generally. When we focus on a single identify we risk failing those whose lives are shaped by overlapping characteristics.

Disability is not one story, but many stories of different lived experience across a vibrant tapestry of cultures, ages, identities, skillsets, and perspectives.

**Liz Wallace**  
Partner  
Weightmans LLP

## Offers of the Month!

We're so excited to announce that we have brand-new MLS Member EXCLUSIVE offers from the trendiest venues in Manchester's city centre — [Banyan Bar & Kitchen](#) (Spinningfields and Corn Exchange locations), [BOX Deansgate](#), and [Manahatta Deansgate](#)!

From free karaoke sessions to complimentary private hire (with prosecco receptions!), discounted dining to shuffleboard on the house, there is something for every occasion this December.

[See the offers here](#)

These offers are for **December 2025 ONLY**, so make sure you book quickly!



So, whether you're looking for some festive team-building or need a space for your private events this Christmas season, check out the offers now and make the most of your membership.



To unlock all our member-exclusive offers, including venues like Flight Club, Peter Street Kitchen, The Alan Hotel and more, [download the MLS App today](#).



## Venus Legal promotes former legal apprentice after record year of growth

**Venus Legal** <sup>®</sup> has announced the promotion of Craig Johnson to Associate Solicitor, reflecting the firm's sustained expansion, national presence, and rapid development since opening its doors just five years ago.

Craig, who joined the business last year and brings more than a decade of litigation experience, has played an instrumental role in the firm's success, most notably in the Pan NOx group litigation, the largest group action currently underway in the UK.

Lorna McGlone, CEO and Founder of Venus Legal, said: "Craig's promotion recognises the significant impact he has made since joining the firm.

"He exemplifies the hard work, professionalism and dedication that underpin Venus Legal's success. His contribution to the Pan NOx group litigation case and his unwavering commitment to clients have helped cement our position as one of the North West's leading boutique litigation firms.

"The exceptional quality of work delivered by Craig and his colleagues is a major reason for our growth this year, as well as our recognition at the Manchester Legal Awards, The Sunday Times Best Places to Work, and the British Legal Awards. We're immensely proud of the feedback we receive from clients and remain committed to developing and growing our talented team."

The promotion follows a landmark year for Venus Legal, which has doubled its operations in the last 12 months and achieved its most successful year to date.

As Associate Solicitor, Craig will now take on more complex cases, deepen client



relationships, and mentor emerging talent within the firm.

Craig Johnson, newly appointed Associate Solicitor at Venus Legal, said he was honoured by the recognition:

"I'm absolutely thrilled to have been promoted to Associate Solicitor. This milestone represents far more than just the last 18 months since qualifying, it's the result of 12 years of determination, persistence and pushing through closed doors. The apprenticeship route wasn't always recognised or championed, and after hearing 'no' countless times, proving what's possible through belief and resilience makes this moment incredibly meaningful."

"Venus Legal has backed me from day one, and I'm excited to step into a leadership role and help elevate the firm's reputation even further. This next chapter is one I'm really looking forward to. Not only to lead, but to help others break the mould too."

As Venus Legal steps into what is set to be their most successful year yet, Craig's story - from trailblazing legal apprentice to newly appointed Associate - stands as a reminder of what's possible when talent meets opportunity, and when belief is met with equal support.

# Manchester City Council are Hiring: Head of People, Place & Regulation (Legal)

Location: Manchester

Salary: £72,031 – £77,783

Contract: Permanent | Full-time | 35 hours per week

Closing Date: 7 December 2025

Manchester is a city that does things differently – bold, innovative, and always moving forward. Now, we're looking for an exceptional legal leader to join our award-winning in-house team and help shape the future of one of the UK's most vibrant cities.

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- Advise on complex, high-profile projects that make a real difference to residents
- Work at the heart of Greater Manchester's devolved region – a unique opportunity in local government law

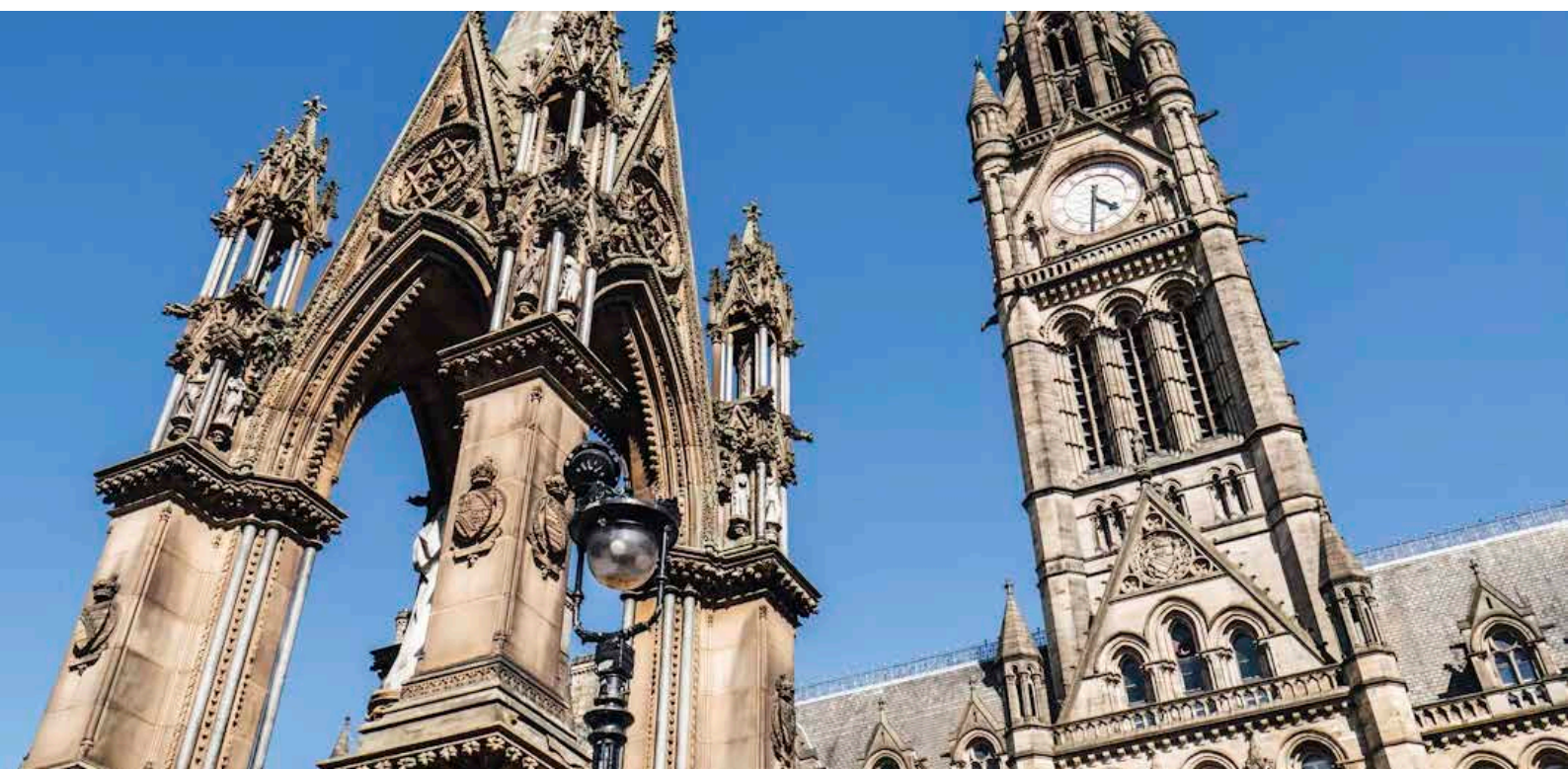
## Why Manchester City Council?

- One of the largest local authority legal teams in the UK
- Hybrid working and flexible arrangements
- Generous holiday allowance and pension scheme
- A culture of innovation, collaboration, and inclusion

If you're a qualified Solicitor, Barrister or Chartered Legal Executive with litigation rights, with strategic vision, political awareness, and a passion for public service, this is your chance to make an impact where it matters most.

Interviews: w/c 20th or 27th January 2026

[Click here to apply and be part of Manchester's next chapter @](#)





## Anthony Collins announces new hire and promotions as part of its ongoing expansion strategy

**Anthony Collins** <sup>Ⓞ</sup> has announced a new hire and a raft of promotions across the business, as part of its ongoing expansion strategy.

Its strategy of sustained investment in people and their professional development, combined with strategic hires, is strengthening the firm's position as a leading provider of legal services to the social care and housing sectors, local government, community-run organisations and charities nationally.

New hire, **Sue Bearman** <sup>Ⓞ</sup>, has been appointed as legal director of local government, planning and governance, where she will advise on all aspects of local authority law, including code of conduct advice, training, and standards investigations.

Anthony Collins has also made eight promotions – three to legal director, four to senior associate and one to associate. These promotions include Manchester-based **Kirsty Duxbury** <sup>Ⓞ</sup> to senior associate.

Kirsty Duxbury, senior associate in the governance, funding and corporate team in Anthony Collins' Manchester office, said:

"It's a proud moment, both personally and professionally, to have been promoted to senior associate. Having joined the firm in 2022 as a solicitor specialising in Ecclesiastical Law, I've had the chance to grow my career alongside some very






Kirsty Duxbury

talented colleagues whose expertise and dedication to the profession is nothing short of inspiring. What sets Anthony Collins apart from other firms is its people-first culture, for both clients and our team. The recent promotions highlight the strength of the team, and shows how dedicated we are to improving and growing services for clients.





“Within my time at the firm, I’ve been appointed as Diocesan Registrar to two Dioceses and have greatly valued, providing legal guidance to support their mission and community work’


“It’s also very exciting to be part of the Manchester team who have officially moved into our new office in the iconic Ship Canal House. It’s a fantastic space that represents our long-term dedication to the region providing additional space to expand our services. The new office is designed for collaboration so we can put clients at the heart of everything we do, and, alongside the raft of promotions across the business, it feels like we are now stepping into a space that supports the next phase of our firm’s journey which is very exciting for us all. I’m looking forward to this new chapter and can’t wait to continue contributing to the firm’s growth, and delivering meaningful work to our clients.”

[Liam Fitzgerald](#) , [Raj Flora-Seehra](#)  and [Amy Callahan-Page](#)  have all been promoted to legal director. In the corporate litigation team, Liam Fitzgerald holds extensive knowledge in commercial and property-related litigation and has advised many clients on both legal and commercial matters. Raj Flora-Seehra is now a legal director in the local government team, specialising in property-related matters. Amy Callahan-Page has been promoted to legal director in the projects department.

“

What sets Anthony Collins apart from other firms is its people-first culture, for both clients and our team, and shows how dedicated we are to improving and growing services for clients

Other key promotions include three team members who have moved up to the position of senior associate and one promotion to associate. They are [Hannah Bollard](#)  in the employment and pensions team, [Katie Duggins](#)  in the property team, and [Kadie Bennett](#)  in the family law team. In the private client team, [Isabel Griffith](#)  has been promoted to associate, where she will continue to develop her specialism in childcare.

Matthew Wort, senior partner, [Anthony Collins](#) , said: “We have had a very successful year and these promotions and our new hire will enable us to meet the needs of our clients and continue our expansion. People are our driving force at Anthony Collins, and we will continue to invest in their development so they can continue to deliver excellent services to our clients. It is only right that we celebrate and reward their achievements as often as we can.

“We’ve recently been renamed as one of Chambers UK’s top firms going into 2026, and it’s entirely down to the rich skills and sector knowledge of our people.”

# Management Matters

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



## This Month

- **Some key points from the Managing Partners Forum**
  - Profitability
  - Business worth
  - Strategy
  - Security and resilience
  - Added Value
- **Maximise Return on Business Development**

Managing Partners Forum, held at Barclays Bank in Manchester in November and organised and hosted by [Viv Williams](mailto:viv@vivwilliamsconsulting.co.uk) ([viv@vivwilliamsconsulting.co.uk](mailto:viv@vivwilliamsconsulting.co.uk)) was well attended by managing partners from firms in the North West and some speciality suppliers to the sector. "Chatham House Rules" applied so there were open discussions of the multiple challenges facing them and the businesses.

Topics covered included

- The growing costs of achieving regulation and some AI related solutions/assistants
- Funding and financial challenges and the impact of private equity
- The shortage of the right talent at the right time and the real benefit of having an outsourcing policy and source
- The changes and effective use of IT and its availability and security – essential for service delivery and demands
- How and why firms should enhance their brand and image for existing and potential new customers
- How law firms need to and can enhance their EBITDA and the differences between large, medium and small. It will mean more consolidation and appropriate exit strategies
- The existence and acceptance of a

proper business strategy, bought into and updated as appropriate to ensure the necessary profitability and maximise future value.

See the section below with some observations on added value enhancements.

## Meeting Topics

### Branding and Image

What sort of firm does my clients and potential clients think I am? Performance and social community image and identity are important to convey. Even what do my staff think of us – retention and potential recruitment. [Think Brand Not Bland](#) presented. Getting the right messages across about client support, market activity knowledge, community awareness – all very key.

Everyone in the firm needs to be aware of this commitment and support it in all communications. A consideration to help with the costs and returns of business development work.

### More Alert to the Benefits of Outsourcing

Like it or not, the necessary skills are needed at all times – full or part time

Legal advice – do we really have the necessary to handle a client challenge whether private client, family or corporate

### Document production and image/web content

Others – accounting/bookkeeping (including client accounts), rules and regulations – skills e.g. cash flow management, KPI, document production – where and when, phone and enquiry handling, business development skills. [Alex Holt](#) presented. So many firms are struggling with compliance and regulations, let alone staff



numbers and skills. It is cost-efficient and scalable. Less direct costs and higher skills.

### Regulation and Risk Management

Getting to the truth about a firm's risks was presented by [Forsyte](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup>. Forsyte's Smart Risk Framework addresses these challenges by transforming risk assessment from a burdensome administrative task into a streamlined, intelligent process that managing partners can trust.

We need consistency within the firm across all departments. We need to understand the risk profile. Managing partners who embrace technology solutions that deliver both compliance and operational efficiency will be better positioned to focus on what matters most: serving clients and growing their practices.

For managing partners, the regulatory landscape has evolved from a periodic concern to a constant operational reality. The Solicitors Regulation Authority's increasingly rigorous approach to Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Customer Due Diligence (CDD) means that compliance is no longer just a checkbox exercise—it's a fundamental risk management imperative that carries serious consequences when handled inadequately.

The Forsyte platform provides managing partners with the visibility they need for strategic decision-making. Understanding where risk concentrates, how it's being managed, and whether additional controls are needed becomes straightforward rather than requiring extensive manual analysis.

The future of legal practice will increasingly demand that firms demonstrate not just that they have risk policies, but that these policies are consistently practiced and continuously refined.

We have to find those hidden risks.

### IT Security and Added Value

For many months, we have reviewed the challenges of the established PMS/CMS suppliers and the new entrants to the market from Australia, Singapore and now even the UK. Getting the right added value from the business process software from efficiency, added value essentials like on boarding and client communications is all very key. There are, of course, cloud based solutions available now, but the majority for UK law firms at the moment is based in the core IT which of course in lots of areas has added service levels and support by being hosted. There have also been failures amongst some of the suppliers affecting availability, security and performance. [etiCloud](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup> presented at the meeting with a good demonstration of key elements for security. MLS also has a relationship with [Quiss](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup> and [Mitigo](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup>. It is well worth firms checking out their infrastructure suppliers.

### Value of the Firm

As mentioned earlier, a massive challenge for firms is defining their strategy – where they want to be and when. There is undoubtedly going to be a great deal of consolidation with mergers and acquisitions, which is one of Viv's hotspots.

Irrespective of this, growing and developing the business is a key strategy and this goes from ensuring that the bank balance is right over the next few months to identifying areas that will generate revenue, cash and profit. There was I think some useful referrals in the [November](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup> article in The Messenger. The check list in [October](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup> is also useful.

At the conference, [WBT](#) <sup>Ⓞ</sup> did a presentation which opened many minds to their hidden asset of clients with Wills – many of whom were not being marketed to or updated on the



world's changes. Databases in a right mess. The right communication will get people to update their Wills but also speak more highly of the firm. 10,000 Wills could go from no value to a potential acquirer of the firm or just the Wills. Plus, there is the undoubted benefit of the firm being more attractive to the 50% of the adult population who do not have a Will. The firm's owners and potential beneficiaries should be keen to make this happen.

### Maximising Return on Business Development

Over the last few years, we have discussed the importance of a strategy agreed by the committed people to a law firm - developed and committed to every year for the next three years but reviewed annually.

So, it is important to consider and work for direction, the brand and image of the firm with clients and potential clients, as well as great staff that need retaining and developing.

Unfortunately, it is not always in place, and many firms are spending a great deal of time and money on marketing without the necessary returns.

There has to be initially a Product Marketing Plan – here are our services, here are the benefits to clients and potential new ones, here is our target market and this is the right route to it. An essential basic. Then the plan, the budget, and performance measurement/management through the whole firm.

Having proposals in place that say what is the business impact on a 20% increase in private client or commercial work is one thing – but how many do? There is essential work having won that concept to get a product marketing plan in place.

Image of the firm, products and services, benefits to clients, target marketplace, route to market. It is only when this basic is completed that a productivity-related plan

can be put in place.

There is much further to go though, and that is the conversion of any enquiries that are generated and the effective management/enthusiasm of handling. Culture is one thing.

A 60% + conversion rate of enquiries is much better than an industry standard 20% - just do the sums on say 500 enquiries per month.

I have recently reviewed a product (and there are others) [Lexidesk](#) <sup>®</sup>. This AI product works with the firm. It's people and potentially existing PMS/CMS systems who need to grow up and collaborate.

Their views relate well to the conference – potential client reactions. Many calls are by phone with an expectation of a nice and competent person responding – we cannot assume in a competitive market a potential client will wait for a call back. Too often the recipients of calls are not happy, trained or processed to deal with them.

These days, the right AI can start to compensate for the shortfall – automatically lawyer like questions and then routing to the right person for response.

The right responses achieve:

- Better conversion rates – look at the difference between 20% conversion and 60% conversion with say 500 enquiries per month
- More client satisfaction from initial contact
- More useful detail passed to fee earners for conclusion and file opening – the relevant stuff initially

Bill Kirby is a director of [professionalchoiceconsultancy.com](#) <sup>®</sup> 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](mailto:billkirby@professionalchoiceconsultancy.com) <sup>®</sup> and [LinkedIn](#) <sup>®</sup>

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## Voices of The Solicitors' Charity launched to share expert insights on the future of the legal profession

*The Solicitors' Charity* has launched the Voices of The Solicitors' Charity to position its Trustees and senior figures as thought leaders available to comment on key issues affecting the legal profession.

The charity, established in 1858 (previously known as The Solicitors' Benevolent Association), is highly regarded for its vital work supporting all solicitors and their dependants in times of need so that they can thrive. It offers an authoritative and credible voice for the profession, offering expert views on wellbeing, governance, digital change, inclusion, and much more.

Voices of the Solicitors' Charity will make it easier for journalists, editors, industry partners, and event organisers to connect with the charity's experts who have the specialist legal knowledge to give insights into topics affecting the sector.

Voices of The Solicitors' Charity include:

**Nick Gallagher, CEO, The Solicitors' Charity**, offering guidance on matters of governance, leadership, the Big Report and sector change.

**Anita McCallum, Director of Impact and Development at The Solicitors' Charity**, specialising in charity marketing, fundraising and organisational change within the charity.

**Rory O'Keefe, Trustee and Founder of RMOK Legal**, giving expert advice on cyber security, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital regulation.

**Eugene Farrell, Trustee and Business Owner of HealthEFarrell**, leading on wellbeing issues, including psychological



health management, emotional wellbeing, managing stress and resilience.

**Ejike Ndaji, Trustee and Partner at Leathes Prior Solicitors**, advising on charity law, governance, pro bono work and social responsibility.

By providing a platform for these Voices, the charity aims to comment and contribute to sector-wide conversations on the issues that matter most to solicitors.

CEO Nick Gallagher explains: "Through Voices of The Solicitors' Charity, we want to show that our people are not only here to support solicitors in times of need to help them thrive, but also to contribute to the wider debate on the future of the profession.

"We've built a team of experts who are ready to share their knowledge and experience as trusted voices."

The Solicitors' Charity encourages media outlets, event organisers, and sector partners to engage with its experts for comment, analysis, and collaboration on the challenges and opportunities shaping the legal profession.

Email [hello@thesolicitorscharity.org](mailto:hello@thesolicitorscharity.org) to find out more, or download the Voices of The Solicitors' Charity [here](#).

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For further information please contact: **Michelle Garlick**,  
Head of Compli on **0345 070 1047** or email **compli@weightmans.com**

# Legal Costs Update

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



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

We start with costs budgeting in Part 7 multitrack claims. It was originally envisaged when it was implemented in April 2013 that budgeting would only apply to cases up to £10m. However, as just demonstrated in [White v Uber London Ltd](#) [2025] EWHC 2972, the court's discretion is unfettered and O'Farrell J refused to make the order sought by Uber that costs budgeting should not apply. The claimants were 13,000 London Black Cab taxi drivers whose individual claims were modest although the group losses were claimed at £340m. Ordering budgeting meant that they would then have visibility of their exposure in respect of Uber's costs and would enable the court to keep an eye on and manage the costs of the litigation. Accordingly, Uber's application to dispense with budgets failed.

Still with budgeting, in [Malhotra Leisure Ltd v Aviva Insurance Ltd](#) [2025] EWHC 2901 (Comm), the obtaining of an indemnity basis costs order from the trial judge assumed huge significance because the successful claimant had unbelievably exceeded its last approved budget of £546,730.50 by £656,226.59! There must have been sighs of relief when Nigel Cooper KC awarded indemnity costs, meaning that the claimant would not need to prove a good reason under CPR 3.18 for exceeding the budget: as the judge expressed it at [17], when that happens " ... the approved budget becomes irrelevant". Phew!

Next costs capping. In **Spender & Ors v F.I.T. Nominee Ltd & Anor** [2025] EWCA Civ 1319, the Court of Appeal refused to make a costs capping order under CPR 52.19 in favour of 76 tenants (out of a total of 436). The tenants contended that without one, they would be unable to advance their proposed appeal involving a service charge dispute with their landlords, because it would be stifled. The court held that if the landlords successfully defended the appeal, their costs would be recoverable from the tenants who were not subject to the cap, meaning that those who had chosen not to be involved in the appeal would bear the costs risk. That was not a result which accorded with justice or the overriding objective so the application failed.

**Process & Industrial Developments Limited v The Federal Republic of Nigeria** [2025] UKSC 36 concerns the currency for the payment of costs. Nigeria had won an eight-week trial and had unassessed costs of £44.2m. P&ID sought to have the costs denominated in naira because for several years, the naira had fallen markedly against other currencies, and that if Nigeria received costs in sterling, it would gain a substantial windfall at its expense. The Justices dismissed P&ID's appeal, holding that an award of costs is a discretionary contribution towards the liability incurred to the lawyer. It was not compensation for a party's underlying financial loss, such as currency conversion losses. Nigeria was entitled to a costs order in sterling, as its solicitors had billed in sterling and it had paid those bills in sterling.

Next consequentials. In *Jon Flowith & Partners v Greaves* <sup>o</sup> [2025] EWHC 2738 (Ch) – 22 Oct 2025, following a strike out application, Jonathan Hilliard KC dealt with costs orders involving multiple parties. The claimant [C] lost the third defendant's (D3) application to strike out various claims unless amended particulars were served. D1 and D2 sought their costs of D3's application from C, who contended for no order. The judge held that the hearing could have been avoided had C submitted a draft amended pleading earlier, and the failure to do so had caused the parties to incur avoidable costs. C was ordered to pay D1 and D2's costs from the date on which they received the C's skeleton argument as their support for D3 and their representation was justified by their distinct legal interests and responsive submissions at the hearing.

*Craft Development SCI v Actis LLP* <sup>o</sup> [2025] EWHC 2744 (KB) is a long and complicated judgement about security for costs under CPR 25 and whether (1) an earlier order to provide security made by Stacey J should be revoked under CPR 3.1.7 as it had been made on a false premise and (2) an order by Morris J as to whether a summary assessment of costs should be replaced by an order for detailed assessment. Jonathan Glasson KC rejected the Claimant's argument that there had been a change of circumstances because it could now establish a high degree of probability of success such that the Stacey J Order should be revoked. Likewise, the Claimant had not established a material change of circumstances such as to warrant varying the order made by Morris J. It followed that the Claimant was ordered to provide security for costs in the sum of £226,000 within 6 weeks otherwise the case would be struck out.

In *CRF I Ltd v Banco Nacional de Cuba and the Republic of Cuba* [2025] EWHC 2786, Butcher J dealt with interlocutory costs in respect of (1) Cuba's application for a payment on account which he dealt with by ordering £300,000 - being 60% of the sum claimed and (2) CRF's application for the detailed assessment of its costs of BNC's application to be commenced forthwith which he resolved by refusing an immediate assessment with useful reasons where there exists little authority. The general rule was that the costs of any proceedings were not to be assessed by detailed assessment until the conclusion of the proceedings (CPR r. 47.1). There was no good reason to disapply the rule where (i) a substantial payment on account had been received (ii) the judgment Order provided for interest on costs and (iii) an immediate detailed assessment would require the parties to engage in a complex and time-consuming process at the same time as progressing the matter to trial.

In *R. (on the application of Badger Trust) v Natural England* <sup>o</sup> [2025] EWHC 2761 (Admin) Fordham J began his judgment thus "This is a judicial review case about badgers." However, paragraphs 1 and 17 to the end concern costs under the Aarhus convention! They involve whether to change the level of the shielding costs caps which were in place to protect the Claimants. Natural England contended for of an increase beyond the Rule 26 Caps of £10k per claimant, to £20,000 (Wild Justice) and £30,000 (Badger Trust). The court examined the two-limb test for establishing that proceedings were prohibitively expensive for a claimant, and concluded that any increase to the costs caps was objectively unreasonable and the variation application was refused.

Continued on page 84



## From page 83

Next a factually tortuous dispute in the County Court where there had been separate claims which were case managed and heard together. In *Tates (Agents) Ltd v Nicholas* [2025] EWHC 2869 (KB) the proceedings had led to a third party costs order being made against the second defendant under s.51 Senior Courts Act 1981. Freedman J allowed the second defendant's appeal on the basis that he had never been a party to the principal claim brought against the first defendant, nor given notice of the potential non-party costs order, so the s.51 order was set aside.

Finally, for an example of the court using its powers to make a pro bono costs order in favour of the Access to Justice Foundation under s.194 Legal services Act 2007, see *EJW Builders Ltd v Marshall* [2025] EWHC 2898 (Ch). The Foundation benefitted to the extent of £117,000.

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](mailto:Nick.McDonnell@kain-knight.co.uk) or [Colin.Campbell@kain-knight.co.uk](mailto:Colin.Campbell@kain-knight.co.uk)

## Messenger deadlines for 2026



Please find the deadlines for next year's edition of The Messenger.

Make sure to get your copy in before these dates to ensure that your article is featured in your chosen edition. The Messenger is published on the first working day of each month.

We include any news on new-starters, promotions, significant cases, charity initiatives, award wins, and more.

Please note that we can only feature news from our corporate and individual members, particularly focusing on the activities in the Manchester office.

If you have any queries, please email [messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk](mailto:messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you!

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



# You are cordially invited to... Christmas Drinks!

The Law Firm Supplier Network invites you to join us for Christmas Drinks on Thursday 4th December from 4.00pm in central Manchester.

**Where:** Caravan, 6 Goods Yard St,  
Manchester M3 3BG.

**When:** Thursday 4th December from 4.00.

**Cost:** No fee to attend.

## What is the Law Firm Supplier Network?

A small but well-known group of trusted suppliers to the legal industry, led by Victoria Moffatt of LexRex. She has enrolled Martyn Best from Manchester Law Society Advantage member Document Direct, Tracey Longbottom from Forsyte, Alex Holt from The Cashroom and Tom Bailey from PostPartner.

They have joined forces to create relaxed networking events for lawyers and it's now time for our Christmas Drinks, having held very successful and popular Summer Drinks and NetworkingAF events this year.



They bring together groups of nice people from across the legal sector, with no agenda, just enthusiasm for good conversation, building relationships and meeting new people.

[BOOK YOUR TICKETS HERE](#)

## *Law Firm Supplier Network* CHRISTMAS DRINKS

The Law Firm Supplier Network invites  
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