



January 2026

the Messenger

Inside this issue...

10

Manchester Law Awards are coming back!



42

Employment Engagement

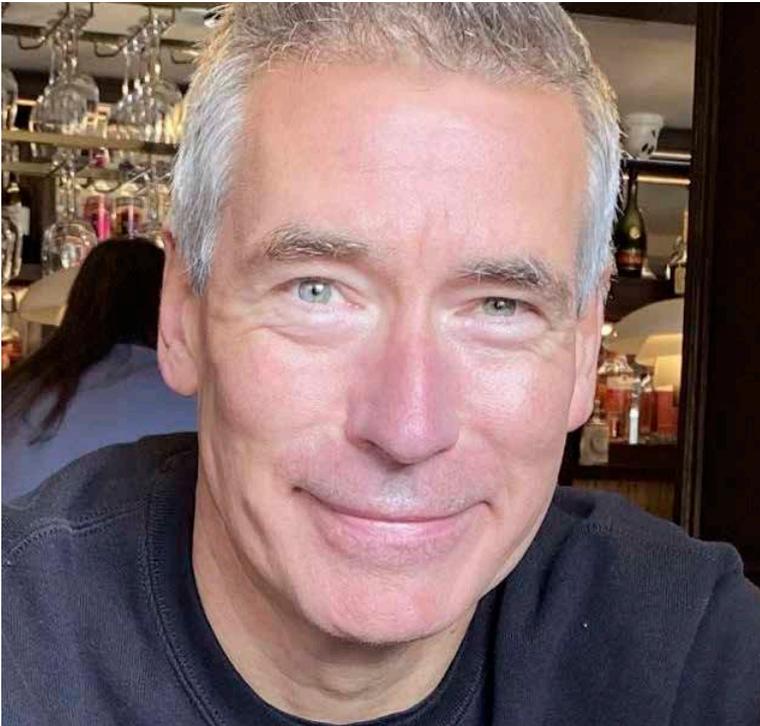


50

Beat the January Blues!



Introducing Ian McConkey – The new President of Manchester Law Society



We are delighted to announce Ian McConkey as the new President of Manchester Law Society. Our Chief Executive, Fran Eccles-Bech, recently sat down with Ian to learn more about his journey, his career, and the person behind the title.

Early Life and Roots

Born in Newtownards, Northern Ireland, Ian is proud of his Northern Irish and Irish heritage. His mother worked as a social worker, while his father was an engineer in the textile industry before moving into the automotive sector, including a stint at DeLorean. Ian jokes that he has never forgiven his father for turning down a company car in favour of a brown Vauxhall Cavalier!

Continued on page 3

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MIL AWARDS 2026

GUESTS WHO'S BACK!

Thursday 2nd July 2026 at The Kimpton Clocktower Hotel

For more information:

www.manchesterlegalawards.co.uk #MLAwards

Event host



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Continued from p1

Family remains central to Ian's life. His brother, now retired in India, spends his time painting and practising yoga after a career as an occupational psychologist. His sister is a nurse in Belfast. Ian's wife, Louise, enjoyed a long career as long-haul cabin crew for British Airways—a role that led to their serendipitous meeting in Hong Kong in 1994. They married in 1997 and have two grown-up children: Alexandra, 25, who works in climate research for an insurance company, and Fergus, 22, who is pursuing a career in finance as an aspiring actuary.

Education and Career Path

Ian attended state school in his hometown before studying law at Durham University. After graduation, he returned to Ireland, working as a paralegal in a criminal law firm while supplementing his income with a job at a nightclub called Mingles. A six-month adventure travelling through Australia, Thailand, and Canada followed, before Ian returned to the UK to attend law school at Nottingham Trent.

His legal career began in London at Davis Arnold Cooper in 1990, where he joined the Litigation Team and remained until 1999. Ian then moved to Beachcroft Wansbroughs, later DAC Beachcroft, and relocated to Manchester in 2001. From 2013 to 2022, he served as Regional Senior Partner and Location Head. Today, Ian specialises in media claims and professional indemnity claims for a wide range of professionals. Ian is a Solicitor Advocate (Higher Courts Civil) and he also shares his expertise by teaching Advocacy part-time at BPP as well as teaching on the SQE and LCC course.

Life in Manchester

Ian quickly felt at home in Manchester, drawn to its post-industrial character and warm, welcoming people—qualities

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We are excited to see the positive impact Ian will bring as President and look forward to the next chapter for Manchester Law Society under his leadership

that reminded him of Northern Ireland. A fitness enthusiast, he appreciates the city's proximity to the countryside and enjoys cycling to work (although his mother-in-law thought he was provided with an official car and parking space in central Manchester). When visiting Ireland, he loves swimming in the sea.

Passions and Interests

Ian's interests are as eclectic as his Spotify playlist, which spans traditional Irish music, Manchester bands, classical and new bands introduced by his kids. Despite Ezra Collective featuring high in his 2025 list, his “listening age” was humorously pegged at 74! He is also an avid art collector, often browsing Irish art auction sites, and enjoys theatre (though musicals are firmly off his list). Looking ahead, Ian hopes to learn the piano.

Looking Forward

When asked what advice he would give his 20-year-old self, Ian said take every opportunity, don't be uptight, have fun. What is clear is his enthusiasm for his new role. We are excited to see the positive impact Ian will bring as President and look forward to the next chapter for Manchester Law Society under his leadership.

the Messenger



In this edition...

03 Cover Story

06 News from HQ

16 Mental Wellbeing

18 MLS Committees & Forums

42 Professional Development

44 Regulation Update & News



Manchester Law Society

Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871

Manchester Law Society

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www.manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

Send your stories to: messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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by following us on social media?





- 50 Talking Heads
- 52 Member News
- 66 MLS Advantage
- 72 Movers & Shakers

- 76 Management Matters
- 80 The Solicitors' Charity
- 82 Legal Costs Update

- Fran Eccles-Bech**
Manchester Law Society
- Carla Jones**
Manchester Law Society
- Grace Lindsay**
Manchester Law Society
- Chandre May**
Manchester Law Society
- David Anderson**
St John's Buildings
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A Message to our Members: Leadership transition at Manchester Law Society

As we step into a new year, I wanted to share some important news with you all.

After 38 incredible years with Manchester Law Society, I will be retiring from my role as Chief Executive at the end of July 2026. It has been an absolute privilege to serve our members and work alongside such a dedicated and inspiring community. Together, we have achieved so much, and I am deeply grateful for the support, collaboration, and friendships that have made this journey so rewarding.

I am delighted to announce that Carla Jones, our current Operations Director, will be stepping into the role of Chief Executive

from July 2026. Carla has been an integral part of the Society for nearly 12 years, bringing exceptional leadership, vision, and commitment to everything she does. I have every confidence that under her guidance,

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It has been an absolute privilege to serve our members and work alongside such a dedicated and inspiring community – *Fran*.



Manchester Law Society will continue to thrive and evolve.

Over the coming months, Carla and I will work closely to ensure a smooth transition, and I look forward to celebrating this next chapter with all of you.

When I first joined Manchester Law Society as a secretary, I could never have imagined the journey ahead. Over the years, I've had the privilege of working with outstanding professionals, witnessing the legal sector adapt and innovate, and seeing our Society grow stronger through collaboration and shared purpose. From launching new member services to hosting events that have become highlights of the legal calendar, expanding and diversifying membership to digital transformation of our systems and app, every achievement has been a team effort – and I am proud of what we've accomplished together.

What has meant the most to me are the relationships built along the way. The support, camaraderie, and passion within our community have made this role more than a job – it has been a vocation. As I prepare to pass the baton, I do so with immense gratitude and confidence in the future of Manchester Law Society.

Carla Jones shared: "I am honoured to have the opportunity to lead Manchester Law Society into its next chapter. Fran's dedication and vision have shaped the Society into the vibrant, forward-thinking organisation it is today. I look forward to building on that legacy, continuing to support our members, and driving innovation to meet the evolving needs of the legal profession."

Ian McConkey, President of Manchester Law Society, added: "Fran's contribution to Manchester Law Society over nearly



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I am honoured to have the opportunity to lead Manchester Law Society into its next chapter – *Carla*

four decades has been nothing short of extraordinary. Her tireless work and leadership have strengthened our community and positioned the Society as a trusted voice in the legal sector. We are delighted that Carla will be stepping into the role of Chief Executive – her experience and commitment make her the ideal person to lead us into the future.”



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- 5.5 km run or 2 km walk
- Summer's evening after work
- Shared finish line and fun with colleagues and 100s of other organisations

GREATER MANCHESTER MEDITATION

- Thurs 22nd Oct 2026 - virtual event (in office, at home, in a park)
- Improve focus, attention and calm... 3 minutes at a time
- Science backed, non spiritual - all will be explained

YEAR ROUND WELLBEING SUPPORT:

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- Specialist Apps; supporting physical, social and mental wellbeing
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£45 unlocks participation in GM Wellbeing Run & Walk PLUS
Purchase 3 places or more to unlock GM Meditation and Wellbeing Apps
for all colleagues in your organisation.

Watch our fab Promo Video [here](#).

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said:

“The Greater Manchester Wellbeing Series is a flagship demonstration that we care about our workforce and our communities. Every organisation, large or small has the chance to make movement and mindfulness part of everyday life.”

Why it matters?

“66% of UK’s workforce say they’re on the edge of burnout driven by stress, isolation, and lack of connection at work” (Forbes, 2025)

Why Running & Walking?

Every walk and run, on your own or with others has its own finish line moment to cherish and connects you with the outdoors.

Why Meditation & Mindfulness?

You can train your brain like you can your body - it’s scientifically proven to aid focus and attention and bring calm.

For Everyone: Thrive, connect and improve mental wellbeing
For Organisations: High impact, low cost, simple to implement
Care and support for the wellbeing of Greater Manchester’s workforce:
Greater Manchester coming together for collective wellbeing.



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**ML
AWARDS
2026**

**SAVE
THE
DATE!**

Thursday 2nd July 2026 at The Kimpton Clocktower Hotel

Manchester Legal Awards are coming back for 2026!

We can't wait to celebrate your achievements at the [Manchester Legal Awards 2026!](#)

[See the sponsorship brochure here](#) or email MLAwards@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

Applications will be opening on 26th January so get ready to sing the praises of your team, your firm and yourselves.

We are delighted to be again working with our marketing partner [RMS PR](#) and media partner [TheBusinessDesk.com](#). For 2026 our President's charity of the year will be the [Greater Manchester Law Centre](#).

If you are interested in raising your profile in the Manchester legal community why not explore the sponsorship opportunities available?

Key dates and details:

- **26 January** – Applications open
- **13 March** – Entries close
- **5 May** – Shortlist announced
- **12 June** – Judging Day – all shortlisted candidates will be interviewed on this day. If you are applying make sure you keep the day free!
- **2 July** – Manchester Legal Awards ceremony and dinner at the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel



manchester law society

SUPPER CLUB

25 FEB | 18:00

INTER-PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

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CONNECT WITH YOUR FELLOW MANCHESTER
PROFESSIONALS.

Pip @ Treehouse Hotel

Blackfriars St

Manchester

M3 2EQ



find out more



MLS Supper Clubs – Inter-Professional Networking Dinners are Back!

You asked, we listened.

For the last couple of years, people have been asking us, “When are the dinner clubs coming back?” and we’re delighted to tell you: right now!

Back by popular demand, we are thrilled to be restarting these inter-professional networking dinners — this time, with a fresh rebrand.

Formally known as the Manchester Professionals’ Dinner Clubs, these events were a solid staple in our social calendar, popular amongst our membership and wider network for its ability to bring together individuals from the entire business spectrum. These dinners gave opportunities for collaboration, cross-referrals and connection in the finest restaurants Manchester had to offer.

Now, after months of preparation, we are relaunching with the ‘[MLS Supper Clubs](#)’ , designed to bring back these invaluable opportunities of informal yet powerful professional networking.

Our inaugural event, in what we hope to be a long series of networking dinners, will take place on Wednesday 25th February 2026 at Pip, and we’d love to see you there.

ALL sectors are welcome — we want these events to encompass the entire Manchester professional community, not just the lawyers!

We also don’t have seating plans at these events – you just come and sit with whoever you like. It gives you the best opportunity to

get to know new people and reconnect with existing colleagues.

Start new collaborations, rekindle old friendships, connect with your fellow Manchester professionals — all at the [MLS Supper Club](#) ☞

Event Programme

- 18:00 Registration & Welcome Drinks
- 18:30 Supper & Networking
- 21:00 Event Closes

What’s Included?

For just £60pp plus VAT (£72.00), you will get:

- A 5 course tasting menu
- An arrival drink
- Half a bottle of wine or soft drink equivalent during your meal
- The invaluable opportunity to meet and connect with your fellow professionals!

How to Book:

Secure your place at the table today by emailing events@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk ☞ with your details.

By booking a place at this event, you are agreeing to our terms and conditions details of which can be found [here](#) ☞ .

Please let us know of any dietary or access requirements at the time of booking, so we can inform the venue in plenty of time.

About Pip

Located in the wonderfully playful Treehouse Hotel, **Pip** is the latest venture of celebrated chef Mary-Ellen McTague, and has already been recognised on the **Michelin Guide** just months after opening.

With years of experience in world-class kitchens working with the likes of Heston Blumenthal, Mary-Ellen brings a curious, creative spirit to every dish, finding new ways to delight diners with unexpected flavours and thoughtful, sustainable cooking.

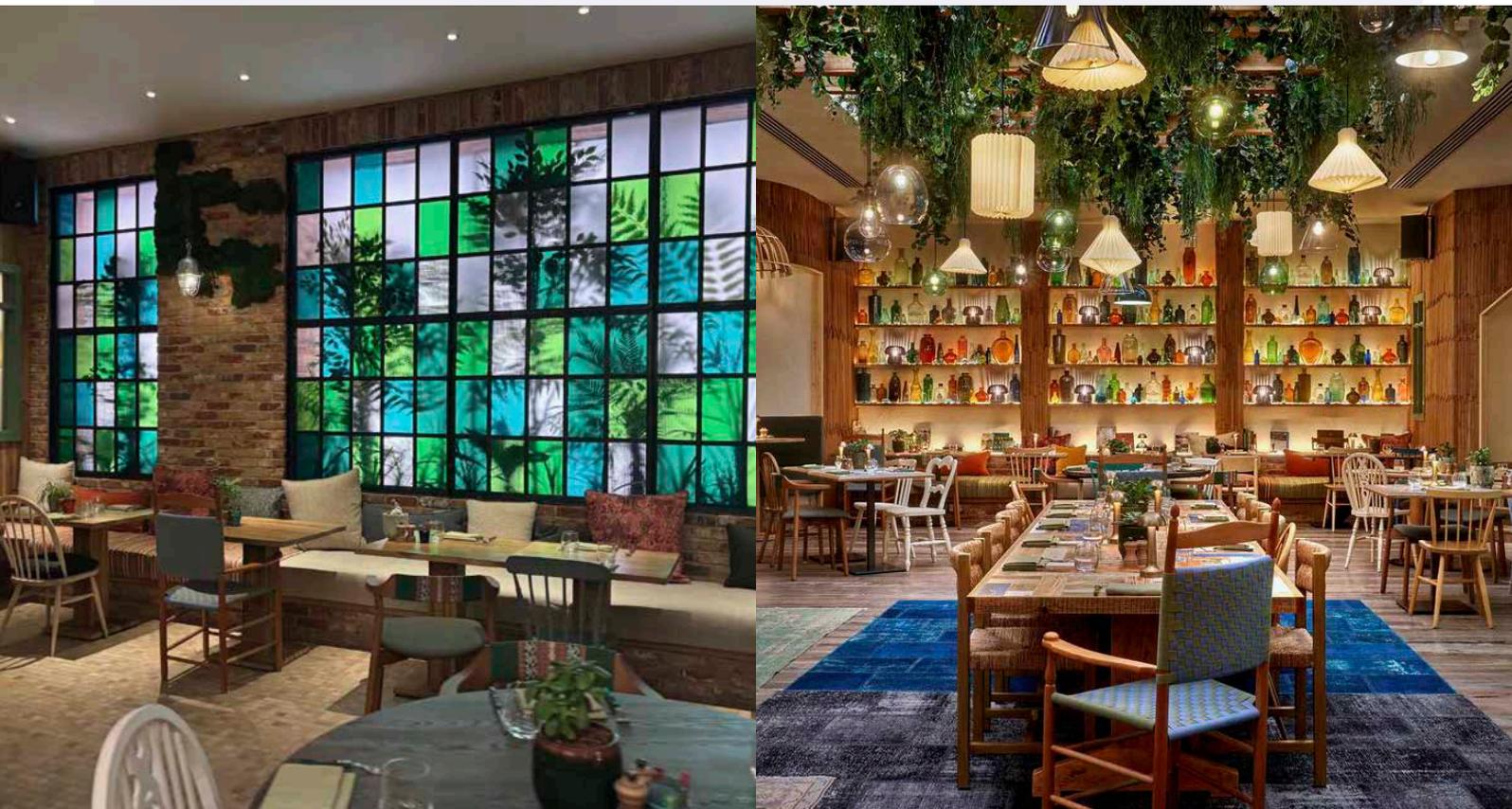
A local favourite, Mary-Ellen has significantly influenced the city's culinary scene, from her acclaimed restaurants Aumbry and The Creameries to founding the charity Eat Well MCR during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her inventive use of local and unconventional

ingredients makes every plate a fresh taste of Manchester's ever-evolving food scene.

Part of Mary-Ellen's wider ethos surrounding sustainability, Pip features seasonal, low-waste cooking and local produce, embodying her diverse culinary experience and dedication to high-quality, heartfelt dining. The menus change seasonally, with a focus on utilising produce picked-to-order from nearby organic and regenerative farms, so you can enjoy every bite knowing it boasts the freshest ingredients.

Due to Pip's seasonal kitchen, the menu for our upcoming Supper Club will be confirmed in due course. However, we do have a sample menu published on our website to give you some idea of the fun and fresh food Pip has to offer.

[Visit our website to find the full details.](#)



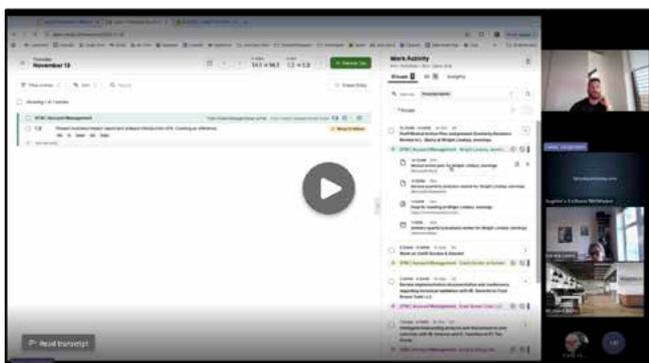


Catch up on your IT updates with Quiss

In November and December of 2025, we held a series of webinars in partnership with [Quiss](#). Don't worry if you missed them – we've saved them here for you!

The first was held on 13th November and titled 'Unlocking Hidden Profit: Tackling Revenue Leakage in Your Law Firm with AI'. This session explored how to improve your firm's profitability by streamlining processes and making record keeping more efficient with AI tools.

Lasse Jorgensen from [Laurel.ai](#) explained the common pitfalls causing revenue leakage in law firms and how AI-driven time tracking can capture every billable minute. He also explored strategies for optimizing billing, expense management, and client intake to maximise revenue.



[Watch the full webinar here](#).

The second webinar was 'Demystifying Microsoft Modern Workplace: The Definitive Guide to Licensing for Law Firms' which took place on 4th December. Most businesses pay for Microsoft licenses but do you have the right ones? And are you getting the most out of them?

manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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Quiss have kindly offered to do a free no obligation audit of MLS members to ensure you have the right licences for your needs

In this session, Peter Graham from [Ingram Micro](#) shared his expertise on the options available and how to maximise the value of your Microsoft 360 setup. We discussed how to compliantly use AI tools you are already paying for and identified the essential security add-ons.

Such a useful session for anyone to better understand what you're already paying for and how to make the best use of it.



[See the full session here](#).

Thank you so much to Quiss for working with us on these sessions. They have kindly offered to do a free no obligation audit of MLS members to ensure you have the right licences for your needs. If you're interested in taking this offer up, please email Matt Rhodes on Matt.Rhodes@quiss.co.uk



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LawCare's winter survival guide

LawCare have some tips to help you stay positive and healthy during the winter months.

- January and February can be tough; it can be a challenge going back to work after the festive break and coping with the dreary weather and lack of sunlight.
- Make sure you spend time outside, even if it's cold, as the natural daylight and fresh air can really help improve your mental health. LawCare have some top tips to help you.

At LawCare, we know our helpline is going to be much busier than usual at the beginning of the year. January and February can be tough months to get through. The festive holidays are now behind us, Spring still feels a long way away, and many of us

struggle to get back to swing of things at the office.

The temptation is to hunker down indoors and hibernate during these winter months, but our top tip for dealing with it is to get outside as much as possible. We may wake up a bit grumpy, but as the day progresses, we can begin to feel happier if we spend some time outdoors.

So many of us, in the depths of winter, get most of our light artificially from screens and desk-lamps. The shorter days of light drain us of energy, meaning some of us will experience seasonal lethargy, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and depression. There is evidence that exercise outside can be more effective than antidepressants for those with mild to moderate depression.





There are several physiological and neurological changes that take place when we go outside which can boost the happiness chemicals in our brain. Serotonin is a compound that carries signals between nerve cells and there is link between the levels of serotonin in our brain and our mood. Time spent in the natural world and particularly in sunlight triggers an increase in serotonin.

Bright morning light can also advance our circadian rhythms, helping us to sleep better at night and suppresses melatonin from having an antidepressant effect. Sunlight helps the body produce the immune-boosting Vitamin D, and being outside also helps us breathe more deeply, get more oxygen into our lungs and chase away the stress hormones of adrenaline and cortisol.

Top tips to help you stay positive during the winter months

1. Open your curtains and window in the morning, even for just a few minutes, to let a blast of cold air in.
2. Try and work near a window if you can.
3. Make sure you have appropriate outdoor clothes – if you're warm and waterproof you're ready for any weather.
4. Go outside a few times a day for a few deep breaths of fresh air.
5. Take work calls/meetings outside where possible if there's no reason you can't be walking and talking.
6. Take a lunch break and get into the light whatever the weather. It doesn't have to be an hour, or even at lunch time if that doesn't suit your working

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The temptation is to hunker down indoors and hibernate during these winter months, but our top tip for dealing with it is to get outside as much as possible

pattern but try to get out in daylight hours wherever possible. Having a break outside can make all the difference to your productivity.

7. Make sure you spend time outside every weekend – visit parks, gardens, countryside and beaches. Going outside and being in nature can reduce your anxiety and stress.
8. It may be worth investing in a SAD light which replicates daylight and can boost your mood.
9. Put fairy lights up, light candles, practice the Danish tradition of hygge at home to get through the long winter months. When darkness is illuminated by a few little flickering lights it seems more bearable.
10. Take a Vitamin D supplement. Experts recommend everyone does during winter.

Talk to LawCare

If you are finding winter hard to cope with, then LawCare is here to listen. You can call our confidential helpline on 0800 279 6888, email us at support@lawcare.org.uk or get in touch using our online chat on www.lawcare.org.uk.



What are MLS Committees and Forums?

The Manchester Law Society operates through a Committee and Council structure, meaning that our Committees and Forums are the lifeblood of the Society. Now with sixteen Committees and Forums, there is something for everyone to get involved in.

2025 saw the introduction of several new Committees and Forums including the Corporate and Commercial Forum, the International Committee, the Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence Forum and the Practice Management Forum.

Some Committees and Forums focus on practice areas while others are tasked with how the Society is run or broader initiatives. Some of our non-legal Committees include:

- Communications Committee who are responsible for The Messenger, the website, our email comms, social media, and our app;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee who ensure we are hearing from a wide range of voices and perspectives while hosting a variety of events from interviews with Holocaust survivors to the Pride Afternoon Tea;
- Future Stars Committee look after our Future Stars Programme, supporting people into careers in the legal sector
- Membership and Social Committee ensure we are providing relevant benefits to our members and put on THE best social events – from 5-a-side tournaments to supper clubs and quizzes.

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These groups are essential to the Society, providing a platform for members to voice their needs and concerns, share best practice, and build a supportive legal community

These groups are essential to the Society, providing a platform for members to voice their needs and concerns, share best practice, and build a supportive legal community.

We always welcome new members of our Committees and Forums – diverse perspectives help keep the Society relevant and responsive.

In this edition of *The Messenger*, we feature reports from Committees and Forums on their 2025 activities and plans for 2026.

Responsibilities of a Committee or Forum member

As a member of a Forum or Committee, you will be expected to attend and contribute to meetings. You may wish to take on additional roles such as supporting on any events organised by the group, responding to consultations, or stepping into a role of secretary, deputy chair or community champion.

We are always very grateful if members are able to host any hybrid meetings or share any of the initiatives or events organised by the group.

What do our Committees and Forums do?

- Host regular meetings: typically meeting once a quarter or bimonthly for around an hour
- Respond to consultations: the groups focussing on areas of law discuss consultations from the Law Society, SRA or other bodies and draft responses on behalf of the Society

How to get involved

Joining a Committee or Forum is a fantastic opportunity to engage with the Society and the wider Manchester legal community.

To get involved, you must be a member of Manchester Law Society. [Check here](#) to see if your firm has corporate membership or check the *individual membership options here*.

If you're interested in joining any of these Committees or Forums please email enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk and let us know which one(s) interest you.

- Offer peer support: our Committees and Forums offer a safe space to discuss sector challenges and share advice.
- Inform educational events: many of our Committees and Forums hold annual conferences, events or webinars. As a member of these groups, you can make sure the issues you want to see are covered.
- Network building: the regular meetings offer you a space to build your connections with others across the Manchester legal community.

Read on for our Committee Reports...



Civil Litigation Committee

The Civil Litigation Committee of the Manchester Law Society has had an impactful and productive year in 2025, contributing to both the development of the profession and the strengthening of the Society's resources.

Key Achievements of 2025:

- **Educational Initiatives:** The committee has organised a series of well-attended talks featuring expert speakers on important civil litigation topics such as case law updates, procedural changes, and practical tips for practitioners, including a discussion on the implications
- **Advocacy and Representation:** The committee has played a critical role in representing the interests of civil litigators within the broader legal community, including contributing to consultations and providing feedback on proposed legislative changes. Consultations that we have contributed to in 2025 include the Consultation Paper on Electronic Service and the Fixed Recoverable Costs Interim

of the Mazur case. Past talks have included updating attendees on e-disclosure and a talk on how to get the most out of mediation.



Jeff Lewis

Implementation stocktake. We are currently contributing to the Business and Property Courts' Disclosure Review survey.

- **Member Support:** Through ongoing guidance and resources, the committee has supported its members in adapting to changes in practice and ensuring that they remain at the forefront of developments in civil law. We have continued to attend the various Manchester Court Users' Committees and have contributed significantly to their work.

Looking Ahead to 2026:

As we enter 2026, the Civil Litigation Committee is focused on continuing to provide valuable content and opportunities for our members. Our key priorities for the upcoming year include:

- **Expanding Educational Outreach:** We plan to expand our training sessions, particularly on emerging topics such as digital transformation in civil litigation.
- **Increased Collaboration:** We will work to strengthen ties with other practice groups within the Society to ensure cross-disciplinary collaboration and knowledge-sharing. We encourage members to join the various Court Users Committees. We are hoping to have a senior litigators' dinner with senior Manchester judges
- **Engagement and Recruitment:** The committee aims to attract more members, particularly those early in their careers, to ensure that the future of civil litigation is in capable hands.

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The Civil Litigation Committee is focused on continuing to provide valuable content and opportunities for our members

- **Advocacy on Key Issues:** We will continue to represent civil litigators' interests on key issues such as court access, funding arrangements and technological advancements in litigation.

We are actively seeking new members who are enthusiastic about civil litigation and keen to contribute to the committee's work. Whether you are an experienced practitioner or early in your career, your insight and involvement are invaluable. Joining the committee is a fantastic way to shape the profession, develop new skills, and support the wider legal community.

The Committee has a new Chair (Jeff Lewis) and a new Deputy Chair (Geraldine Stephens). Thanks are due to Jon Hainey, who has stepped down from the Chair role after several years' service, and to all committee members for their commitment and contributions throughout 2025.

Jeff Lewis (Chair)
Partner
Brabners



COLP/COFA/MLRO Forum

The COLP/COFA/MLRO Forum meets quarterly and is a safe, supportive space within which those in compliance roles are able to discuss recent SRA developments, changes in legislation and the practical implications from a risk and compliance perspective that they can take back to their firms to implement. It is also a forum where we openly share experiences, issues and reporting obligations under Chatham House Rules.

In 2025, the Forum met 4 times in January, April, July and October. SRA consultations were discussed and responses formulated including important SRA proposals around the protection of client monies and another on first-tier complaints handling.



Michelle Garlick

Representatives also worked closely with the other Joint V local Law Societies in providing feedback to the SRA on proposed changes to its enforcement policy/case studies relating to its unlimited fining powers under ECCTA. We also discussed interesting topics such as ethics training and the practical implications for litigation firms of Mazur.

2026 promises to be another year of regulatory change including the recent announcement that AML supervision will pass from the SRA to the FCA in due course. Consultations on how this will work in practice will inevitably follow and members' views are critical to ensure the profession doesn't "sleepwalk" into a new regulatory regime which has no understanding of how law firms operate. The Forum will continue to represent MLS' members' interests in relation to these changes and provide the necessary support to those who hold the difficult roles of COLP/COFA and MLRO. Please don't feel alone in these roles – the Forum provides the support and comfort that "we are all in this together" so we are always delighted to welcome new members to the Forum.

The meetings are held at Weightmans' offices at No.1 Spinningfields between 8.45 and 10am and dates for 2026 will be circulated soon. Joining virtually is also possible, although those attending do find that meeting in person is more conducive to an open discussion among the group.

We hope to see you in 2026!

Michelle Garlick
Partner
Weightmans LLP

Communications Committee

Review of 2025

2025 was another busy year for the Communications Committee. We continue to be responsible for all forms of communication from Manchester Law Society including the Messenger, the Weekly e-Newsletter, social media channels, the web-site and the Manchester Law Society App and we meet monthly to make sure that we are communicating to our members all of the great work being undertaken across the Society.

A key focus this year has been promoting use of our bespoke Manchester Law Society App which is a great repository of information and news and, just as importantly, contains a wide a range of discounts and offers with restaurants and business in the city centre. Please do download the App and get the benefit of those amazing offers!

Plans for 2026

As ever, our goal for 2026 is to ensure that we continue to keep members fully up-to-date with all of the brilliant work and activities undertaken by Manchester Law Society and its other active committees!

To this end, we are always looking for new members to join the Committee and to support our activities – as the ways in



Matt Taylor

which we communicate with each other continue to develop it is important that we are representative of all parts and levels of the profession so that we can ensure that we are communicating effectively. That being the case, if you would like to spare a small amount of your time to join the Committee and support our work, we would be delighted to hear from you!

Matt Taylor
Partner
Eversheds Sutherland



Corporate and Commercial Forum

We were absolutely delighted to launch the Manchester Law Society Corporate and Commercial Law Forum in 2025! The Forum was created to unite lawyers across Manchester—both in-house and private practice—focusing on non-contentious corporate and commercial work.

We've really enjoyed chairing our first three meetings this year, and have been so pleased that so many lawyers have joined the Forum, contributed and shared their ideas for the Forum over the coming months and years.

Highlights of 2025

Our inaugural meeting in Summer 2025 was really well attended and introduced the Forum's aims, and encouraged participation from lawyers at all levels.



Seraphina Wilkins-Tolliday and Matthew Flanagan-Roberts

In September, we were joined by Jenny Coyle from Diligent, who provided an interesting and engaging update to the Forum members on the upcoming Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 reforms.

Looking Ahead

We're really excited to share that the Forum will host its first major event on 4 March 2026:

"M&A Mixer and Market Update @" – An evening featuring:

- A panel discussion with a market update from private equity and corporate finance perspectives.
- A special guest speaker from the Competition and Markets Authority, offering insights into regulatory developments.

This event promises to be an excellent opportunity for catching up with professional contacts, networking and knowledge-sharing.

We hope to see you there!

If you are interested in joining the Forum, please contact enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk @

Seraphina Wilkins-Tolliday
Senior Associate
TLT LLP

Matthew Flanagan-Roberts
Senior Legal Counsel
Lookers

Crown and Magistrates Committee

We started and ended the calendar year with conferences from HHJ Potter and HHJ Dean, Honourary Recorder of Manchester, both flanked by support speakers centring on wellbeing and stress management from mental health experts.

The Committee are keen to promote wellbeing in the workplace for their friends and colleagues, still entrenched in the struggles of an ever failing and declining criminal justice system.

Avoiding any political rhetoric regarding the state of the CJS and the Government stance of some of the fundamental cornerstone of British justice, I would like to thank all those involved in another year of professionalism and goodwill at the Greater Manchester court centres.

I am grateful also for valuable insight and support from the Judiciary, particular HHJ Dean and District Judge Hogarth. They both appreciate the need for a voice for all professional court users, and as such it was impressed upon the Committee that we need to expand in numbers so we have a broad spectrum of representatives from court user groups. The Committee very much welcome younger member of the Criminal Bar and newly qualified solicitors (albeit this is a rare commodity within criminal defence private practice!)

Hopefully those seeking a vocation rather than a profession will see the benefits of criminal law with its diversity in terms of a working day and client base! Anyone interested in gaining experience please contact me at danielweed@burtoncopeland.com . Anyone interested in being considered a member of the

Committee please email enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk .

The Committee took part in the consultation process regarding legal aid fees for police station advice, magistrates and Crown Court solicitors fees. We are grateful to Adam Foster from Robert Lizars for his contributions in our response.

A recent announcement has confirmed an increase in Magistrates fees by 10% so that a Magistrates trial will now attract £436.35 plus VAT, and guilty pleas fees either at £255.78 plus VAT or £255.35 plus VAT and attendance at a police station has increased to £320 plus VAT.

For clarification - those figures aren't per hour! These are fixed fee, whether it is a murder or making off without payment.

Going forward, we will continue to celebrate and recognise the hard work of the Judiciary, the Bar, the CPS, Probation Service, witness care and the defence fraternity, as well as the unsung heroes behind the scenes with

administrative roles for all of the above. We will also continue to promote wellbeing for all those in the Criminal Justice System.

Our main aim is to expand our opportunities for training and development with a hope to organise a full day training and networking event next year, bringing together professional users and helping all endure what is an ever stressful and demanding vocation with the legal calendar.

Daniel Weed
Director, Managing Partner & Compliance Officer
Burton Copeland



David Weed



ED&I Committee

Can you believe it's 2026 already? As the year starts, I have had an opportunity to reflect upon 2025 and the amazing contributions of the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee to promote inclusivity, educate on and champion equity and celebrate diversity. Thanks to our dedicated and passionate committee members we had an active year to say the least.

By way of re-cap, in the first quarter of the year, we reflected upon and highlighted a successful 2024 and looked ahead to what would be a busy 2025. March had us celebrating and bringing focus to Christianity's Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day, as being the last day before the fasting period of Lent. We also proudly celebrated International Women's Day recognising the achievements of women whilst continuing to advocate for the acceleration of women's equality worldwide and even looked back through the powerful and extensive history of the women's equality movement right back to a letter penned by First Lady Abigail Smith Adams in 1776. It is a founding principle of the EDI network that we are proud to recognise difference and celebrate diversity and so also in March we highlighted neurodiversity week and Transgender Day of Visibility.

In April we were keen to convey a clear message as to why equity, diversity and inclusion is so important and President of Manchester Law Society, whose theme for her presidency was 'equalities' shared her hope of making a difference and being a voice for those who need it. We shared the importance of an effective and informed EDI strategy and how it can positively benefit a business in a plethora of ways. It was also an opportunity to introduced the hard working, dedicated and passionate committee in series of 'get to know us' pieces. We also raised awareness of autism by observing autism acceptance month

by looking at the lifelong neurodivergence, the spectrum of autism and what an accepting environment looks like given the legal protections against discrimination under the Equality Act (2010) entitling those with autism to the necessary support in the workplace.

In May, to Commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Holocaust, we were incredibly grateful to hear from Holocaust survivor Tomi Komoly BEM, an evening facilitated by My Voice, and held at Weightmans. An awe inspiring and thought provoking recounting of Tomi's experience. We also highlighted Mental Health Awareness Week by sharing a piece on LawCare who were taking a moment to shine a spotlight on the power of community, how it supports us, connects us and helps us thrive as one of the main tools we have to protect and improve mental health.

In June, we brought visibility to social mobility focusing on recognising that whilst talent is everywhere, opportunities are not and why social mobility makes business sense. Social mobility is a phrase which has become more prevalent in recent discussions around equality, diversity and inclusion and this committee will continue to bring focus to this topic. In July, we paused to consider the reframing of West African history, a hidden legacy of power and prestige, focusing on Mansa Musa who ruled Mali from 1312 – 1337 as part of our insights into Black History Month.

In August, we celebrated Manchester Pride in style. We hosted our very own Manchester Pride Afternoon Tea. This partnership event, in aid of The Proud Trust, was made possible thanks to the iconic Peter Street Kitchen at The Edwardian Manchester, and our kind sponsors Slater Heelis. We also brought focus to the history of Manchester Pride and why Pride events are important and a reminder that as



Shane Smith

much as Pride is a celebration, it is a reminder of how far the community have come and that there is still a way to go. It is not lost on us that 2026 Manchester Pride might look a little different this year, but watch this space for more on how we plan to celebrate this year.

The momentum continued strongly into September as we concentrated on National Inclusion Week and the 'now is the time' theme of 2025. Mental wellness and wellbeing was a focus of October and November. At our October meeting we were grateful to host guest speaker Majid Iqbal, CEO of the Islamophobia Response Unit, who shared powerful insights into his community and the impact of the IRU and their work.

Last month, we reflected on the history and challenging stigma of HIV/AIDS by observing World Aids Day and bringing an educational and informative piece to our members. We also promoted an awareness of Disability History Month and reflected on disability through a historical lens and how best to consider an intersectional approach to supporting people with disability. To end the year, we celebrated Chanukah, the Jewish Festival of Light, and learnt more about the differing traditions depending on where their Jewish ancestors settled in the Diaspora. We were saddened by the horrific terrorist attack on Bondi Beach in Australia against the Jewish Community and our thoughts and prayers are with those families and loved ones who have been affected, and we stand in solidarity with the Jewish Community; such a poignant reminder of the global need to recognise acceptance so that love wins over hate.

The key to successful incorporation of an EDI mindset is to do more than just talk about it. It is important to be proactive and forward thinking about its development, implementation and maintenance. Achieving a culture that is free from prejudice requires dedicated efforts from all employees at every level. It isn't easy. Change is not achieved overnight and even when implemented, it's critical to keep matters under review, not least because of the ever changing legal landscape but also because of the evolving world in which we live. However, the huge, indisputable benefits to the employees, organisations and clients should far outweigh the effort and work needed to create such a difference and the recognition, acceptance and continual betterment of EDI needs to be protected at all costs.

I hope you will agree that great strides were made in 2025 by the ED&I committee to educate, empower and celebrate our colleagues; to bring focus and visibility to key issues and to recognise the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion for everyone. In 2026, this committee will continue to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is pursued with passion, energy and sheer determination to make a difference and we have an exciting year ahead.

Want to join us and be part of something special? A great opportunity for someone passionate about equity, diversity and inclusion to get involved and help us with our mission. All ideas and contributions are welcome and our network is open to anyone who shares the same passion as us. Let me know if you want to join us, or even if you want a chat first about what it would involve. Our first meeting will take place on Thursday 22nd January at 12pm – please do reach out if you would like to come along.

Shane Smith
Chair of ED&I Committee
Associate Solicitor
Slater and Gordon Lawyers



Employment Law Forum

The Employment Law Forum has had an enjoyable and eventful 2025. Without question this past year has seen the landscape change and uncertainty rule like never before.

The chaos caused by the flip-flopping of the Employment Rights Bill has kept all employment law practitioners busy and this has been the primary focus (and talking point) for our group this year. As such, much of our time in our meetings has been spent sharing intel (strictly following Chatham House rules of course), gut feel and down-right 'finger in the air' in trying to predict where the Employment Rights Bill will take us and, importantly, how we can best advise our clients as a consequence of that. The Forum has been part professional discussion group, part therapy session but it has been a brilliant place to share best-practice and form collective view-points on the varied consequences of the Bill, and beyond.

Aside from the ERB, the highlight of 2025, as ever, was our Employment Law Conference which goes from strength to strength. This year the great and the good of Manchester and the North West's employment law scene were treated to compelling talks from a number of star speakers. Occupying his usual spot as headline speaker was Regional Employment Judge Franey for whom we remain extremely grateful to for giving up his time to update us on the state of the nation in the Employment Tribunals in the North West. As ever, it sparked a lively debate from the delegates. We were also treated to updates and fascinating insight on a range of topics. Look out for next years' event which will be equally spectacular!

Speaking of next year, as we look forward to a new dawn in Employment Law we will no doubt be grappling further with the implementation of the Employment Rights Bill (and Act!). We have given up predicting what it will look like in the end but one thing is for sure, the MLS Employment Law Forum will be a lively place for debate, interpretation, intelligence and best practice share as well as a welcoming and caring environment for those of us trying to navigate our way through the choppy waters of Employment Law in 2026.

We hope to see you there – you are very welcome.

Bryn Doyle
Partner
Lewis Silkin

Jo Handler
Partner
Forbes Solicitors



Jo Handler and Bryn Doyle

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Family Law Committee

The past year has been a strong and rewarding one for the Manchester Law Society Family Law Committee. Our focus has been on delivering practical value for members through relevant, timely topics, high-quality speakers, and opportunities for colleagues across the region to connect and share experience.

Throughout the year, we held regular committee meetings which were consistently well supported and strengthened by excellent contributions from external speakers. One of the highlights was a session led by counsel and a Deputy District Judge, providing an insightful and highly practical update on the enforcement of orders in the family courts. The presentation prompted useful discussion around common enforcement challenges, as well as effective approaches to securing compliance and progressing enforcement applications efficiently and proportionately.

We also explored emerging and increasingly relevant issues in financial remedy work, including cryptocurrency and digital assets. Experts in Bitcoin and the tracing of digital assets joined us to explain the realities of identifying, valuing and recovering crypto holdings, and what these developments mean in practice for disclosure and fairness within family proceedings. This session was particularly valuable in demystifying an area that many practitioners are encountering more frequently, and highlighted the importance of asking the right questions early, especially in cases where there may be concealment or complexity.

Alongside our speaker programme, the committee has also benefited from frank and constructive discussions between members about the practical issues we face day-to-day. Topics raised included the impact of court delays on case progression and client expectations, the ongoing debate around fixed fees versus hourly rates (including the risks of under-pricing where case scope changes or disclosure is incomplete), and concerns around payment and sustainability for legal aid practitioners. These conversations are an important part of the committee's role: providing a space where experienced professionals can share challenges, compare approaches, and support one another.

Our flagship event of the year, the annual Family Law Conference in October, was once again a major success. The conference attracted strong attendance and provided a varied programme that balanced legal updates with broader themes affecting family law practitioners. We were delighted to welcome judicial input and case-based insights, which remain a key draw for attendees. In addition, the conference benefited from contributions from



Iwona Durlak

professionals outside the traditional legal sphere. Mental health and wellbeing were explored in a compelling session led by the Director of the Manchester Stress Institute, reflecting the reality of the pressures faced across family practice. We also welcomed an expert from LexisNexis to discuss the growing impact of artificial intelligence on legal work, professional development and service delivery.

Beyond our educational programme, committee members have continued to support wider Manchester Law Society initiatives. We were pleased to support events such as the Manchester Legal Walk for Justice, and we remain keen to strengthen collaboration across the Society

and encourage participation in activities that connect members outside formal meetings.

Looking ahead, we are committed to building on this momentum. Our priority is to continue securing engaging speakers and topical content for the year ahead, while also developing opportunities for members to connect through social and networking events, including participation in initiatives organised by the Social Committee. We welcome suggestions from members for speakers, topics and ideas as we develop the committee calendar for next year.

Iwona Durlak
Senior Partner
IMD Solicitors

Future Stars Committee

Review of 2025

2025 was our first full year with our first cohort of Future Stars and it has been a pleasure to see them grow and develop through the scheme over the year. At the end of the year, we undertook a rigorous selection process to appoint our second cohort of Future Stars and we were delighted to invite them to our AGM in December to have their first taster of life working alongside Manchester Law Society and its members.

Plans for 2026

The plan for 2026 is very simple and straightforward – to integrate our second cohort of Future Stars within the Programme and to provide them with mentoring, training, and introductions to various parts of the profession.

The Future Stars Programme is a superb offering from Manchester Law Society and we will be working hard as a committee to deliver a successful experience for our Future Stars. We will be seeking support and input from members during the year, but we are always on the lookout for volunteers and help at any stage. If you would like to offer some time or support to the next generation of lawyers, please get in touch!



Matt Taylor

Matt Taylor
Partner
Eversheds Sutherland



Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee

The Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee champions and supports the voluntary provision of free legal assistance by the legal profession across the region. Our mission is to improve access to justice for those in need by bringing together representatives from the judiciary, law firms, chambers, in-house counsel, universities, and frontline organisations throughout Greater Manchester.

Affiliated with the Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee, we contribute to national pro bono efforts and provide a regional voice to the Attorney General's Office.

The Committee comprises formally elected members, and we welcome representatives from all organisations within the legal sector to attend our open meetings. These hybrid meetings, held three times a year, provide an opportunity to share updates on pro bono initiatives, collaborate on projects, and identify new ways to support the Greater Manchester community.

“

Our flagship event, the Greater Manchester Pro Bono Awards, takes place annually

Our flagship event, the Greater Manchester Pro Bono Awards, takes place annually during Pro Bono Week. This year, we were proud to bring together nearly 200 individuals to celebrate outstanding pro bono contributions across the region, raising over £4,000 for local frontline agencies.

We are keen to hear from organisations across the legal sector that are not yet involved, particularly those without a formal pro bono programme and who would like guidance in establishing one.

Sophie Cartwright KC, Nick Johnson
Chair / Vice Chair, Greater Manchester Pro Bono Committee

Manchester@probonocommittee.uk 



Nick Johnson



Sophie Cartwright



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International Committee

The International Committee was established in 2025 with a clear, ambitious purpose: to promote Manchester as a global legal hub and ensure that our city is recognised internationally as a centre of legal excellence, capability, and cross-border expertise.

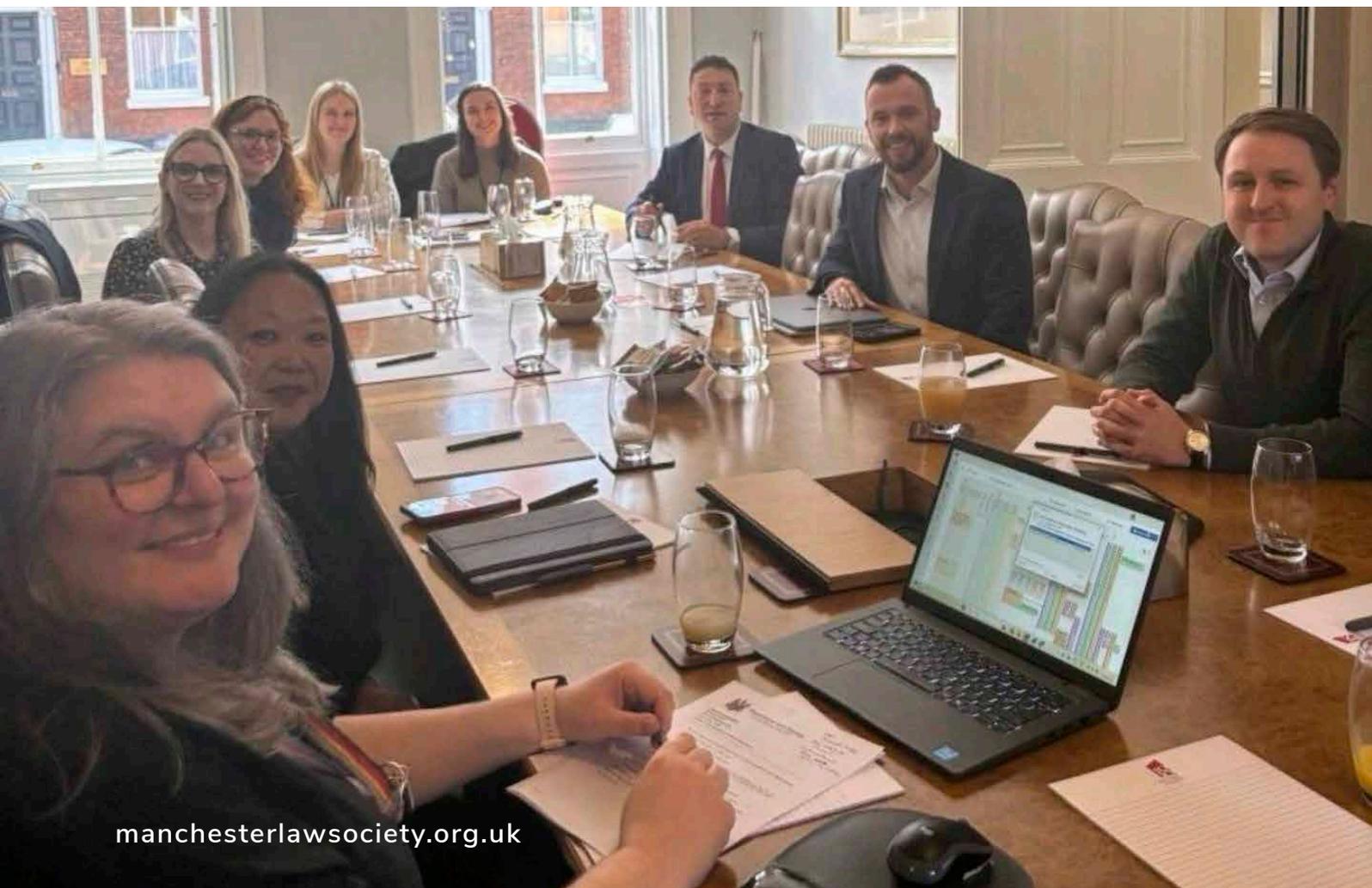
Since its formation, the Committee has grown rapidly, now bringing together around thirty members from across the legal profession, academia, government, and the wider local ecosystem. We are proud to include representatives from leading law firms and chambers, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Law, the Department for Business and Trade, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and MIDAS. This breadth of participation reflects the

collaborative spirit that underpins our work and the shared belief that Manchester has a powerful international story to tell.

Key Achievements in 2025

1. Building strategic partnerships

A major achievement this year has been securing the active support of The Law Society. Through our engagement with The Law Society International Team, we now have access to their extensive global network and support in promoting committee-led initiatives. We have also begun exploring opportunities to host international delegations in Manchester, strengthening our position on the national and global map.



2. Establishing the Committee's first overseas collaboration

Our first formal overseas working group has been created with the Hong Kong Law Society, led by several committee members who already have strong personal and professional links to the region. This marks the first step in a wider programme to develop structured relationships with key international bars.

3. Aligning with Manchester's wider international strategy

Working closely with GMCA and MIDAS, the Committee has been invited to contribute to early discussions around Manchester's refreshed international strategy, advocating for legal services to feature prominently in the city-region's global narrative.

4. Developing future outreach and visibility programmes

We have begun scoping a series of co-branded webinars with Manchester Law Society and external partners, focused on showcasing Manchester-based expertise, international legal career routes, and specialist cross-border practice areas. These early steps will pave the way for more outward-facing activity in 2026.

Plans and Priorities for 2026

Looking ahead, the Committee will focus on delivering a series of ambitious initiatives designed to elevate Manchester's international profile even further. Key priorities include:

- Launching multiple international subcommittees, beginning with Hong Kong, Europe, and North America.



Marcin Durlak

- Delivering our first Manchester-hosted international webinars, promoted globally through The Law Society International Team.
- Supporting inward delegations visiting the UK and positioning Manchester as a key strategic stop.
- Exploring opportunities to bring international legal events to Manchester, with a long-term ambition to establish a Manchester International Legal Conference.
- Strengthening ties with global bar associations, universities, and business-trade networks.

2025 has been a year of foundation-building and momentum. In 2026, the Committee will convert that momentum into visible international presence, deeper collaborations, and meaningful impact for Manchester's legal community. The Committee remains member-driven, open to new ideas, and always welcoming additional contributors who share our vision of positioning Manchester as a global legal hub.

Marcin Durlak
Managing Partner
IMD Solicitors



Membership and Social Committee

We are looking to put together another packed schedule of events in 2026 and hopefully there will be something for all MLS members in there!

As always, our objective is to put together events for Manchester's legal community that allow opportunity to mix, socialise and network in an open, inclusive and fun environment.

We will have many of our signature events that are popular with the membership including the 'Posh Pub Quiz' where we, as lawyers, can show that we are not quite as clever as we think we are.

Notwithstanding the publicised financial difficulties with the organisers of the Manchester Pride Parade, we are still very hopeful that we will again be able to put together a fantastic event.

MLS's third annual 5 a-side football tournament will take place so start your firm's 'team trials' and let's see if anyone can try and break JMW's stranglehold on the prestigious trophy.

Due to popular demand, we are aiming to re-commence the MLS dinner clubs this year. Now re-branded as 'Supper Clubs' the get togethers will provide opportunities for Manchester professionals to network, make friends, and enjoy some of the fantastic restaurants the city has to offer. The first one is taking place at Pip – the Michelin Guide listed restaurant at the Treehouse Hotel – on 25th February 2026. [You can find out more about it here](#) [Ⓞ].

The committee is pleased to announce that we will also organise and host our first ever netball tournament in 2026. Plans are

currently underway and if your firm would like to enter a team to try and become the first winners of the tournament, please register your interest with the MLS team.

Our showcase event will once again be the unrivalled [Manchester Legal Awards](#) [Ⓞ] in July where the good and the great will put on their glad rags and be recognised for their achievements in the luxurious Kimpton Clocktower Hotel. Nominations open on 26th of this month so get thinking about your entries now.

There will almost certainly be at least one other very big party this year for a certain stalwart/legend of Manchester Law Society who will be retiring. Tickets will be like gold dust and when a venue big enough to host all her fans is located, we'll make an announcement – watch this space.

We are always looking for new committee members to bring ideas and to help with the organisation of our events so if you'd like to get involved, please contact us!

Stuart Cartwright
Head of Business Development
JMW Solicitors



Stuart Cartwright

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence Committee

The Manchester Law Society's Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence Committee was set up in October 2025 to promote collaboration, knowledge sharing, and advocacy for practitioners in these specialist areas.

Our Purpose and Progress

Our mission is clear: to support and represent practitioners, promote best practice, enhance professional development, and influence policy and procedural reform. We have set up meetings to provide a platform for lively discussion and strategic planning, ensuring that the voices of both claimant and defendant practitioners are heard.

We want to focus on building networks across the practice areas in Manchester, and foster links with medical experts, barristers, and other stakeholders, creating opportunities for junior lawyers to engage with experienced practitioners. We will also encourage Committee members to feed into consultations, ensuring that Manchester's legal community plays an active role in influencing developments in personal injury and clinical negligence law.

Highlights of 2025

At our inaugural meeting in October, we introduced the Committee's objectives and gathered valuable input from members on priorities for the months ahead. Since then, we have worked on planning events and webinars designed to address topical issues, share best practice, and provide CPD opportunities. These initiatives reflect our commitment to the professional development of our members.

At our most recent meeting, members confirmed plans for an in-person panel event in March 2026 to promote collaboration



Kathryn White

Cheryl Palmer-Hughes

between Claimants and Defendants in PI and Clinical Negligence cases. Further webinars are planned to cover expert evidence and instructions – exploring training, common pitfalls, and how lawyers can better support experts, and mediation and dispute resolution – including perspectives from both claimant and defendant practitioners.

Further ideas, such as AI in litigation and emerging therapies in cerebral palsy cases, will be tracked for future sessions.

Looking ahead, the Committee began scoping a major PI/CN conference for spring 2027, aiming to feature judges, experts, and external speakers. Sponsorship opportunities and venue are under consideration to ensure accessibility and impact.

Get Involved

We welcome ideas and contributions from all members with an interest in these areas. We hope to build a vibrant, supportive community that drives professional development and promotes best practice.

Kathryn White
Associate
Hill Dickinson

Cheryl Palmer-Hughes
Partner
Stewarts



Practice Management Forum

A new addition for 2025 the Practice Management Forum brings together Practice Managers, Chambers Managers, Office Managers, and all those involved in the business of running firms and chambers.

From the reception to the announcement of the Forum, and its initial meeting, it has been apparent that there has been a need for this space in the Manchester legal community.

While national associations like the LPMA, ILFM, and PDA Legal offer valuable resources, they often lack a local focus, social engagement, or cover only niche areas. That's where our Forum steps in — bringing together professionals from across Greater Manchester to share knowledge, support one another, and stay ahead of the curve in legal practice management.

We are delighted to announce that founder members of the Forum, Deborah Jackson from Burton Copeland Ltd and Vicky Griffin from Hugh James, have agreed to co-chair the Forum.

Still in its early days the Forum aims to provide:

Local Networking

Meet like-minded professionals in your area, build lasting relationships, and benefit from ongoing peer support.

Knowledge Sharing

Learn from experts and peers about best practices, emerging trends, and practical solutions to everyday challenges.

Professional Development

Access training, events, and resources tailored to the needs of legal practice managers in Manchester.

Private Client Committee

This year has been a time of transition for our committee as Rebecca Clarke stepped down as Chair. Filling her shoes has certainly been a challenge but I am grateful for her and the committee's support this year.

Our biggest moment of the year was our annual conference in September, which proved to be a huge success. We welcomed an excellent line-up of speakers covering a range of key topics. The focus was the upcoming changes to Inheritance Tax in April 2026 and our speakers shared practical advice on how to guide clients through these changes and offered valuable insights into how their firms are preparing.

The conference closed with a fireside chat, giving attendees the chance to hear directly from experts and ask questions in an open, interactive setting. It was a fantastic way to wrap up an event and interesting to hear



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Forum Discussion Topics Include:

- Compliance & Regulatory Management (AML, GDPR, Lexcel, SRA, HMRC, ICO)
- Financial Management (profitability, budgeting, SAR breaches)
- Legal Technology & AI
- Cybersecurity & Data Protection
- Remote & Hybrid Working
- People Management & Employment Law
- Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Marketing & Business Development
- Local Market Trends & Opportunities

All meetings are conducted under Chatham House Rules offering a safe space to



Vicky Griffin



Deborah Jackson

discuss the challenges you may be facing while offering others the benefit of your experience and advice on best practice.

Plans for 2026 include:

- To meet once every 2 months either hybrid or virtually
- Work toward an in-person conference
- Feature guest speakers at a selection of Forum meetings

If you're interested in getting involved in this Forum please email enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk @



how we are all incorporating AI into our everyday work.

Our meetings will continue to combine problem solving and knowledge sharing discussions. The committee feels that these meetings really are invaluable, especially for our more junior members. We will also invite external speakers to give their views and advice on relevant topics.



Nicole Chadwick

We gained two new members after our conference in September and we hope to see a few more join us in 2026!

Nicole Chadwick
Legal Director
Harrison Drury



Property Law Committee

The Property Law Committee of the Manchester Law Society aims to foster a collaborative and informed legal community working in real estate in our city region.

We have spent most of 2026 preparing for our upcoming [Property Conference](#) [Ⓔ] which we are holding at Manchester Hall, 36 Bridge Street, Manchester on 29th January.

The conference is deliberately designed to be different – delegates will enjoy talks from legal experts on technical areas of law and from other property professionals, balancing the requirement for training in the evolving legal and commercial environment in which we all work.



Stephen Lintott

For the first time, we are offering a conference in two halves, so that the event appeals to property lawyers working across the different areas of practice for lawyers in Greater Manchester. Delegates can book for the whole or part of the day.

The morning session will focus on key topics of interest for all commercial property lawyers, including an update on landlord and tenant law; sessions on tax and insolvency risks and a talk on title, drafting and registration issues faced by practitioners, with a closing session on climate change.

In the afternoon, we will focus on topics relevant to lawyers who work in development, or buy, sell or lease premises in new build developments. Delegates will hear from experts on rights of light, planning and BNG, together with leasehold reform and the latest developments in case law. The closing discussion will cover funding transactions, including funding solutions for residential and mixed-use projects.

We will also be arranging other events in 2026, such as webinars. One of these will focus on the strategic Cyan Lines project, which is of interest to everyone who lives and works in Manchester and its surrounding areas, not just property practitioners. We are also looking to arrange events focused on networking and collaboration, with other property professionals.

If you are interested in joining the Committee, please contact enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk [Ⓔ].

We would very much welcome new members as we look to build the work of the Committee, including in the following areas.

Professional Development:

Offering opportunities to engage with current issues in property law, share best practices, and contribute to consultations from bodies like the Law Society and the Ministry of Justice.

Networking and Collaboration: Creating a platform for members to connect with peers, exchange insights, and build relationships across the legal sector.

Career Enhancement: Encouraging participation as a way to boost personal and professional growth, with committee work seen as a valuable addition to a solicitor's career portfolio.

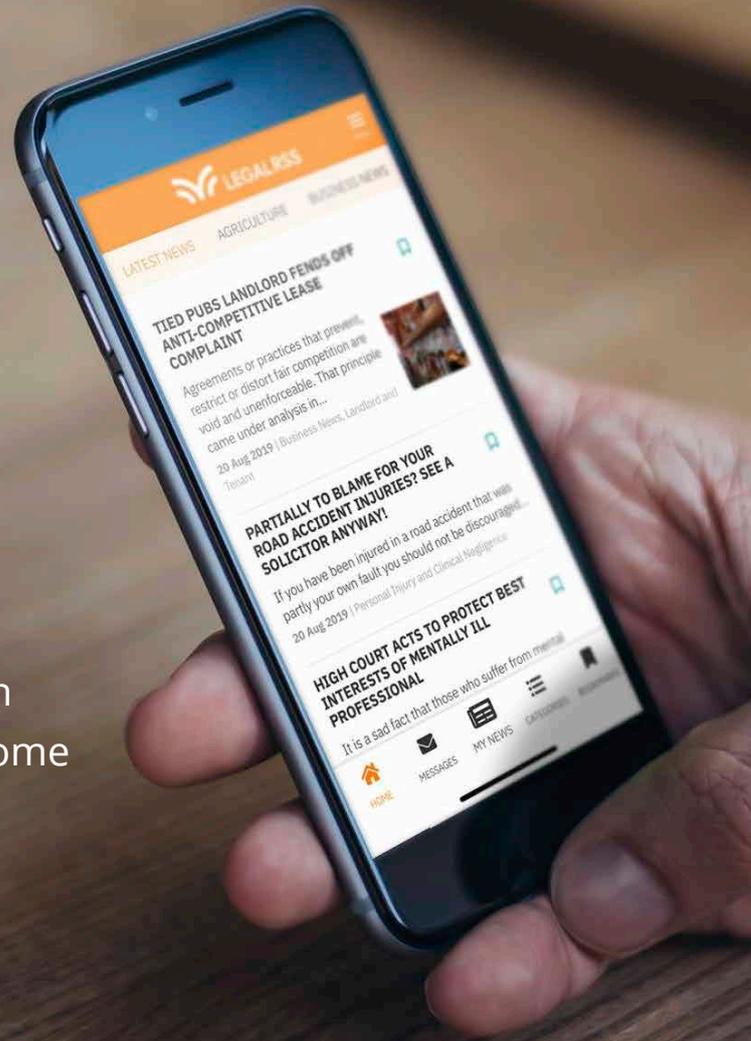
Inclusive Engagement: Welcoming practitioners from diverse backgrounds and areas of property law, and promoting a culture of openness and support.

Stephen Lintott
Partner
Clyde & Co

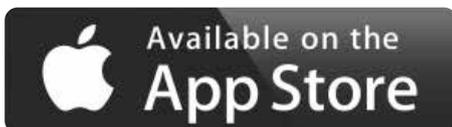


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Employee Engagement – Don't be like Fred

Meet Fred the Foreman. It's 1980 and Fred's out of control moustache and curly perm are slowly taking over his whole face. He stands in his brown camel coat with clip board in hand watching as the staff slowly clock in for another riveting day at the jam factory.

He watches them as they unenthusiastically put lid after lid on pots of sticky jam. Fred shouts at them if they go too slow or if they are doing it wrong. He never pats them on the back for doing well. The day ends and he watches as they rip off their hair nets and run to the door to clock off again. Fred comments to his peers that this is the quickest they've moved all day.

Fast forward 40+ years and some managers are sadly still managing in this way. The perms have probably made way for a fancy flick, the moustaches may have turned into carefully preened beards and the brown coats have been replaced with business suits, but management styles in some cases haven't moved on at all. I meet managers all time who micro-manage and display zero trust in their people. What they fail to realise is that there is an undercurrent of disengagement bubbling away.

These types of managers will no doubt sit in their management meetings chatting about why their teams aren't performing, why they are disengaged, why no one looks interested. They don't realise that they are the reason why people feel the way they do.

If I met a manager like Fred in his Monday morning meeting, I'd love to ask him:

- Do you empower your team? In what ways? Do you hand over responsibility and accountability for projects and targets?



Mike Ode

- Do you provide regular and timely honest feedback?
- Do you recognise great team performance and encourage the sharing of best practice?
- Do you instil a healthy, positive and transparent culture? A culture where employees feel safe to work in?
- Do you trust your employees? Do they trust you?
- Do you ask your team for their thoughts, opinions and ideas?
- Do they know that you've got their back?

Chances are, Fred would answer no to all the questions above

What about you? Grab 10 minutes today and reflect on these questions. If you're brave enough, why not ask your own team to answer them and then discuss the responses in your next team meeting and in individual 1:1s.

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



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Happy New Year 2026

Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



We hope you've had a good break. The start of a new year is always a good time to reflect on the previous year, and do some horizon scanning and anticipate what's in store for 2026, as well as providing our usual update on regulatory matters, risk and compliance, and recent disciplinary decisions

2025 year in review and future legal trends

2025 was no different to previous years for lawyers, with constant juggling between client requirements, keeping up to date with changes in the law, ever increasing regulatory obligations etc. while running and growing a business, and keeping an eye on what is on the horizon so that we don't get left behind by competitors.

There have been a range of significant milestones, from major regulatory reforms to advances in legal technology, the news that the FCA will become responsible for all AML regulation from, it is anticipated, around the end of 2027, and cases that sent shock waves through the profession e.g. Mazur, together with swathes of SRA guidance, Law Society practice notes, updated LSAG guidance alongside new statutory requirements and regulations etc. - there's never a dull moment in the world of regulatory compliance!

Regulatory shifts and compliance pressures

The SRA's updated sectoral risk assessment on AML and terrorist financing led firms to review and document their FWRA and PCPs, and the annual AML and sanctions data collection has led to 100s of firms receiving letters from the SRA in the last few weeks. The SRA have indicated there will be a thematic review around PCPs early 2026, and no reduction in inspections, investigations etc.

The decision in Mazur led to much commentary and speculation in the legal press, LinkedIn etc. with comments ranging from the decision causing widespread panic and nationwide disruption, particularly in firms dealing with high volume claims who employ a large proportion of non-admitted staff, to firms having to evidence processes in the event they are queried at a later date, with the possibility of satellite legislation relating to earlier pleadings. The Law Society has produced guidance, the latest version (as at the date of writing) on 18 November 2025. CILEX have been granted permission to appeal, but that may not be heard for some time.

The introduction of ECCTA created a new offence for failing to prevent fraud in large organisations and removed the cap on SRA fines for certain economic crime breaches, and mandatory identity verification for company directors and PSCs made non-compliance a criminal offence for both companies and individuals.

These changes have forced firms to update their policies, procedures, and training, emphasising the need for strong compliance frameworks.

The impact of AI and technology

The rapid adoption of AI has been both a boon and a challenge for the profession. While AI offers efficiencies in drafting documents and responding to client queries, it also introduces risks—such as



the use of fabricated case citations and the proliferation of AI-generated complaints. Courts have issued warnings about the misuse of AI, and firms are advised to implement clear policies and ensure that all advice and submissions are checked for accuracy.

Cybersecurity has also remained a critical concern, with several high-profile breaches affecting firms' finances and reputations.

Disciplinary trends and professional ethics

Disciplinary decisions in 2025 have highlighted the SRA's continuing willingness to impose substantial fines and take decisive action against both firms and individuals. Notable cases include a law firm fined £58,000 (plus £20,000 costs) for lacking an AML risk assessment and independent audit, and a director fined £32,500 (plus £50,000 costs) for failing to verify the source of funds for a PEP and misusing the client account.

Other disciplinary actions have addressed issues such as misleading clients, falsifying emails, misuse of client account and over-recording time. These cases serve as stark reminders of the importance of ethical conduct and the risks of succumbing to commercial pressures or poor leadership. The LSB has voiced concerns about declining ethical standards, prompting consultations on upholding professional duties and the potential for regulatory reform.

Future legal trends: navigating the road ahead

Looking ahead, several emerging trends

promise to shape the legal profession:

- Evolving regulatory landscape:** Regulators are expected to further embrace dynamic, risk-based approaches to supervision and enforcement. This could include, as is already the case with the FCA, real-time data collection, greater use of technology to monitor compliance, and a greater shift toward focused regulation that emphasizes results over processes. While we don't know what AML will look like under the FCA, getting 'in shape' now, with up-to-date FWRAs, independent AML audits etc is sound advice.
- AI and automation:** AI will continue to revolutionise legal practice, from streamlined document review and contract analysis to predictive case outcome analytics. While these technologies boost efficiency, firms must remain vigilant about accuracy, ethical use, and regulatory compliance.
- Data security and privacy:** The rise in cyber threats means robust data protection is more important than ever. Firms will be expected to invest in advanced cybersecurity, staff training, and incident response plans. Regulatory focus on both data breaches and client confidentiality is likely to intensify.
- Flexible and hybrid working:** Firms must adapt management, supervision, and training practices to support distributed teams, ensuring that high professional standards and quality client service are maintained regardless of location.

Continued on page 46



- **ESG and social responsibility:** Environmental, social, and governance considerations are now central to clients and regulators alike. Firms will be required to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, diversity and ethical business practices, both in advice and in their operations.
- **Access to justice and innovation:** Technology will play a pivotal role in expanding access to justice, with online dispute resolution, virtual hearings, and digital legal services becoming mainstream. Firms that balance innovation with strong compliance and ethical standards will be best positioned to thrive.

Together, these trends signal a profession that is increasingly defined by adaptability, innovation, and social consciousness. By both reflecting on the achievements of 2025 and proactively preparing for the road ahead, we can continue to deliver value to clients and society while upholding the highest standards of integrity and service.

SRA consultations and thematic reviews

On 11 December 2025, the SRA published its consultation on client money in legal services, a follow up from the 2024 consultation, and, in addition to proposals regarding accountants' reports, it proposes that in firms that meet specified risk thresholds, namely annual turnover of over £600,000 and/or firms holding more than £500,000 client money at any point in the most recent accounting period, any individual who can unilaterally determine or direct significant management decisions in a firm cannot be the COLP or COFA. In relation to sole owner-manager firms, the consultation says 'it is more likely that these firms would have to take on an

appropriate employee / contractor to carry out the compliance roles' as there may be difficulty in finding people with sufficient seniority internally, with an exemption, on a proportionality basis, to separate just the COFA role. Alongside the consultation, the SRA published a thematic review relating to compliance officers, following visits to 25 law firms and speaking with 36 individuals.

The consultation closes 20 February 2026.

A further consultation in the area, relating to the SRA's oversight over firms changing their profile, including possible new notification and information requirements, is expected to be published around end May 2026.

On the same date, 11 December 2025, the SRA published another report 'Growth strategies thematic review: Accumulator, Acquisition and Consultant models'.

Sanctions

New pages have been launched on [GOV.UK](#) following the cross-government sanctions review and user requests for clearer guidance. The consolidation of the UK Sanctions List into a single list from 28 January 2026 will simplify monitoring obligations and firms should revise screening systems and compliance frameworks accordingly.

New practice notes and guidance

SRA guidance

[Money laundering and terrorist financing suspicious activity reports](#)

[How we make decisions and the criteria we apply](#)

Law Society practice notes and guidance

[Protection for client accounts](#) 

[Conflict of interests](#) 

[Criminal Finances Act 2017](#) 

[Anti-terrorism](#) 

Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

Fine for failing to spot fraud

A solicitor was fined £15,000 for failing to spot indicators of sophisticated fraud in two loan matters, having not identified or responded to warning signs and contributing to breaches of regulatory requirements. The SDT noted that although he did not act dishonestly, his approach fell below expected standards, particularly in relation to due diligence checks.

Struck off using drug money to pay mortgage

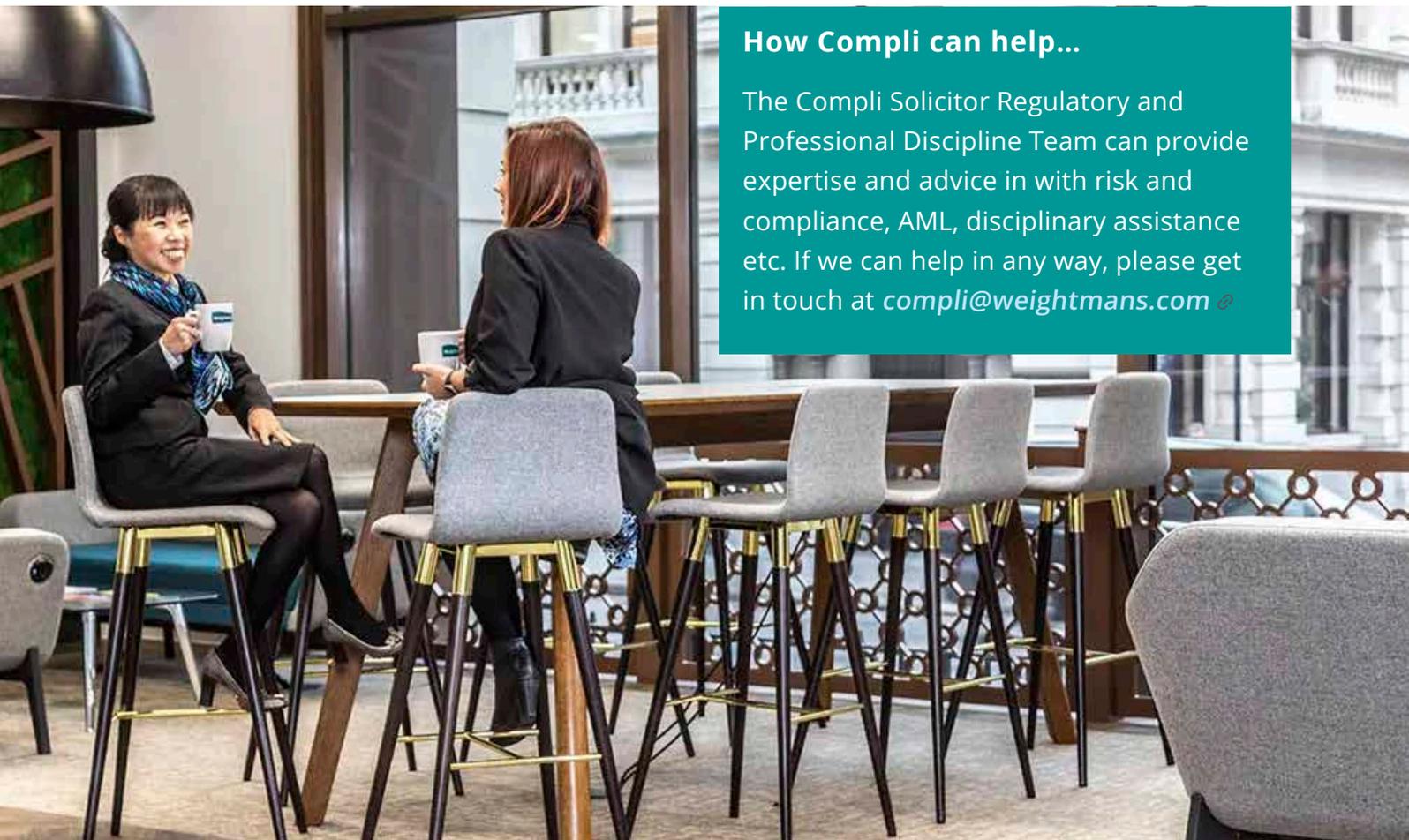
A solicitor was struck off by the SDT after it found that he had knowingly used money derived from his brother's drug-trafficking to pay his mortgage. The tribunal held that the solicitor's conduct demonstrated serious dishonesty and a failure to uphold the standards expected of the profession, and removal from the roll was the only appropriate sanction.

Solicitor cleared over discounted sale of elderly client's home

A solicitor was cleared by the SDT over the handling of a discounted sale of an 82-year-old client's home. The SDT said that practitioners cannot be expected to second-guess the instructions of a client who has full mental capacity, and the allegations of misconduct were dismissed after it concluded the solicitor acted appropriately in the circumstances.

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 





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Talking Heads

January is a time for starting over and new beginnings, but it can also be the time when the mid-winter slump hits! Blue Monday takes place on the third Monday of January, and has been deemed by some psychologists as 'the most depressing day of the year.' However, it doesn't have to be all doom and gloom! This is why we're asking...

How do you prevent getting the January blues?

Ruth Peters
Business Development & Marketing Director
Olliers Solicitors

"January can feel heavy, but exercise is my antidote to the blues! I make time for the gym, even a short workout lifts my energy and clears my head. On days when I need fresh air, I go for long dog walks;

there's something about being outdoors that resets your mood. And when the weather isn't playing ball? A good cuddle with my beautiful dog works wonders for comfort and calm.



Exercise, nature, and a little furry affection, that's my recipe for staying motivated on Blue Monday and beyond."

Caroline Walton
Partner
Bexley Beaumont

"By setting work and personal goals to achieve in the calendar year ahead, providing clear focus and objectives to work to, beginning in January. Having just



joined Bexley Beaumont as a new partner, I have high ambitions for 2026, and these can only be achieved through planning, hard work and focus. I am looking forward to January and the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead.

It is the same in my personal life. The Summer tennis competition season begins

in April and the period before is all about training, getting fit and match ready. In winter, when daylight hours are short, it is tempting to want to stay at home after finishing work. However, I think that exercise in the evening is so beneficial. There are the obvious physical benefits, but sport also boosts mood; socialising with others, being active and knowing that it is doing you good!"



Phillip Rhodes

Partner

Irwin Mitchell

“For me, January is never a depressing month! Many restaurants in the city and surrounds offer great discounts, so it’s the perfect opportunity to arrange to catch up with friends and colleagues and take advantage of some fantastic deals. Plus it’s great to support local businesses and combat what is traditionally a quiet



trading month in the hospitality industry. We are so lucky to have some amazing bars and restaurants right on our doorstep. I also like to take advantage of the January sales and look at what holiday bargains are to be had: what better way to beat the January blues than having a trip to look forward to later in the year!”

“
I like to take advantage of the January sales and look at what holiday bargains are to be had

Kaleel Anwar

Partner

Slater Heelis

“January can feel like a difficult month for many people and sadly in family law we see a surge in demand of divorces too. We are meeting clients during some of the most vulnerable and emotionally demanding periods of their lives, so maintaining my own wellbeing is essential to offering the calm, steady support they need. To prevent the January blues, I start with routine and perspective. Getting outside



for even a brief walk between meetings helps reset my mindset. Natural light and fresh air make all the difference during these darker months.

Connection is also key. I find it really helps (both ways) to check in regularly with colleagues, friends and family, because staying grounded in supportive relationships helps me stay fully present for my clients.”

“
Connection is key. I find it really helps to check in regularly with colleagues, friends and family



Myerson Wins ‘Transition of the Year’ in the UK Employee Ownership Awards 2025

Myerson Solicitors @ is proud to announce that it has won ‘Transition of the Year’ in the UK Employee Ownership Awards 2025, hosted by the Employee Ownership Association (EOA).

This national award recognises organisations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment, vision and impact in adopting more inclusive forms of business ownership.

Myerson’s win acknowledges a transition that was the result of a long and carefully considered process, firmly embedded in the firm’s long-term vision to protect its independence, strengthen its culture, and ensure its people remain at the heart of

the business. With only around 30 law firms in the UK operating under this model, Myerson’s move represents a forward-thinking step in the legal sector.

In September 2024, **Myerson became the first law firm in Greater Manchester to move to employee ownership** @ via an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT), established to benefit all 160 employee-owners. The process was supported by Myerson’s own Corporate Team, who have acquired extensive **EOT transition expertise** @ .

Since making the change, governance has evolved to reflect the principles of the EOT framework, reinforcing a strong sense of being “in it together” across the



firm. The new structure has supported enhanced engagement and accountability among employee, and the firm is already seeing operational benefits and positive market impact. The transition has also strengthened Myerson's ability to attract and retain talent, while clients have responded positively to the clarity of purpose and consistency the model brings.

Carl Newton, CEO of Myerson, commented: "We are absolutely delighted to have won 'Transition of the Year'. This is a meaningful award for us and a proud moment for all 160 of our employee-owners. Our transition was years in the making and reflects our belief that our people truly are the foundation of our success. Every single person in the firm has played a role in this journey, and this recognition belongs to all of them. Well done to all the nominees; every organisation shortlisted shares the same passion for this model, and it's inspiring to be recognised alongside them."

James de le Vingne, Chief Executive of the EOA, added: "Congratulations to Myerson on delivering the EO Transition of the Year from the pool of exceptionally high calibre entries we received this year, taking great care to ensure your business is in the best position to deliver Great EO impacts."

"Myerson is an exemplar in the sector of proudly employee-owned businesses working with us to lead the way in developing Great EO practices, and delivering People Powered Growth in the UK."

The award was announced at the EOA Annual Conference on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at the Telford International Centre.





Anthony Collins reports a year of strong growth and social impact delivery

Anthony Collins is announcing another year of significant growth, with a six per cent increase in annual turnover in 2024-25.

Generating revenues of £30.2 million, the firm reported a net profit of £7.8 million. In 2024-25, the firm has undertaken some major projects for clients. Its teams have advised on millions of pounds in funding to support the development of 3,300 new affordable homes, enabled an important town centre regeneration project in Stafford, and supported the interests of many vulnerable people and their families, often in challenging situations.

In addition to these achievements, Anthony Collins is proud to have published its seventh annual Social Impact Report. Data shared in the report underlines the importance that the firm's leadership team places on social value delivery.

The firm's 389-strong workforce donated a total of 823 volunteering hours in 2024-25 – a 59% increase from the previous year. This time was spent on activities such as a sponsored hike, abseiling and fund-raising curry nights. Over the year, the firm raised over £76,000 for local charities and other community-based initiatives.

Anthony Collins also delivered over 23,000 hours on legal aid matters in 2024-25, supporting people who wouldn't otherwise have access to justice. The firm also launched an apprenticeship scheme, providing a dedicated career pathway for young people without a law degree.

Improving access to justice is a key concern for all, and earlier this year the firm's matrimonial team launched 'Aida', a free-to-use, digital assistant to inform people experiencing a relationship breakdown.

This strong overall performance in 2024-25 – both financially and in terms of social impact – has contributed to another year of strong rankings in Chambers and Partners and The Legal 500 legal directories, solidifying the firm's position as a major player locally and nationally.

Committed to its core purpose of shaping lives, society and communities, the firm's new 2030 Strategy has pledged to double its social impact in the next five years. Anthony Collins has also been officially



Matthew Wort

recertified as a B Corp, reaffirming its commitment to people and the planet, and providing a framework to help deliver on Strategy 2030. The 2025 scores rose across all B Corp impact areas, Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, and Customers, driven by initiatives that embed social and environmental responsibility across the firm.

In the past 12 months, Anthony Collins has improved representation and inclusivity at the board level, introduced diverse reverse mentoring, successfully completed skills-based training for 75% of staff, launched its new client insights programme and embedded sustainability questions into the supplier onboarding process, among many other initiatives. Anthony Collins has committed to building on these achievements by continuing to champion community, environment, diversity and inclusion through measurable outcomes.

Matt Wort, senior partner at [Anthony Collins](#) , said: “Supporting our clients and having a positive impact on their activities through the work we do is what drives us. This is our shared purpose, and to see our actions rewarded with a strong set of financial results is confirmation that we are doing the right thing.

“Our growth this year is largely down to the skills, drive and determination of our people. Every one of our employees embodies the firm’s passion for supporting clients and leading from the front when it comes to having a positive impact on individuals and communities across the country.

“To support us on our growth journey and ensure we stay focused on delivering social impact, our new five-year strategy includes a pledge to double our social impact by 2030. We will be monitoring our progress against this goal - supporting our clients and continuing to invest in our people – and we are sure that our strong financial performance will continue.”

“

Every one of our employees embodies the firm’s passion for supporting clients and leading from the front when it comes to having a positive impact on individuals and communities across the country.”



Foot Anstey appoints first Chief Client Officer as it sharpens growth strategy in line with Manchester development and Northern Ireland expansion

Foot Anstey [®] has appointed Stephen Arnold as its first Chief Client Officer (CCO), strengthening the firm's senior leadership team and reinforcing its focus on client-centred growth and strategic clarity.

Stephen Arnold joins Foot Anstey at a pivotal moment for the firm, following a year of strong performance and continued investment in its national growth strategy.

This includes expansion into Northern Ireland through its combination with McKees and the firm's increased focus on Manchester as a key hub for future growth.

Stephen brings extensive senior experience from leading international law firms. He began his legal-sector career at Linklaters, before moving to Clifford Chance where he helped shape the firm's global client strategy and worked with some of the world's most significant financial institutions. He later served as Global Business Development & Marketing Director at Clyde & Co, delivering major growth

initiatives, strengthening global client programmes, and supporting integration activity during a period of active expansion.

In his new role, Stephen will lead Foot Anstey's client function and help advance the firm's next phase of growth by strengthening how the firm serves clients, deepening collaboration across teams, and sharpening the clarity and direction of its go-to-market approach.

Tom Kershaw, partner in Foot Anstey's Manchester office, commented: "Stephen's arrival comes at a really important time for our Manchester team and for the wider North West market. The region is seeing significant investment, innovation and growth across multiple sectors, and strengthening our client leadership is a key part of supporting that momentum. Stephen's experience working with major national and international clients will help us deepen our relationships here in the North West and continue building Manchester as a strategic hub for the firm."

Managing Partner Martin Hirst commented: "Stephen's appointment reflects the scale of our ambition at a critical moment for the firm. His experience in shaping client strategy at leading international firms will be invaluable as we continue to grow and strengthen our market position."

Stephen Arnold added: "Foot Anstey has a clear strategy and strong momentum. I'm excited to join at this stage and to work closely with the firm's impressive partners to strengthen how we support clients and build the next phase of our market position."



Stephen Arnold

DWF Foundation celebrates 10th anniversary after reaching £1.5m in donations

The DWF Foundation has surpassed £1.5m in donations as it marks a decade of supporting communities around the world.

Launched in 2015 by [DWF](#), the Foundation continues to be a central pillar of the business' commitment to responsible business.

Over the past decade, the Foundation has remained dedicated to its core aim: providing funds, resources and mentoring to help individuals, groups and communities achieve their full potential. It supports charities in locations where DWF operates and focuses on delivering meaningful, long-term impact.

The DWF Foundation supports registered charities working in one or more of its five priority areas: Homelessness and Poverty; Health and Wellbeing; Employability; Education; and Environment and Sustainability.

In reaching the £1.5m milestone, the Foundation has supported more than 700 charities and food banks worldwide, creating opportunities for people to believe, inspire and change. This includes charities in Manchester, Liverpool and the wider region.

Colleagues across DWF play a central role in the Foundation's success, taking part in fundraising, volunteering, team challenges, mentoring and a wide range of initiatives to support local communities.

A significant milestone in its journey came in 2019 when DWF partners gifted 1.8 million shares as part of the Group's listing on the London Stock Exchange, which

significantly strengthened the Foundation's long-term ability to support charities around the world.

Joel Heap, managing partner of DWF in Manchester, said: "Marking the Foundation's 10th anniversary and surpassing £1.5 million in donations is a proud moment for DWF. Colleagues and clients here have played a vital role in supporting charities across Greater Manchester, helping the Foundation make a real and lasting difference in our communities. As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening that impact across our region."



Kathryn Tighe, fundraising lead at Wood Street Mission, a charity that has received funding from the DWF Foundation, said: "Support from the DWF Foundation has helped strengthen our Family Basics project which reaches more than 2,500 children living with the effects of poverty and ensures they can access the essential items they need. This grant from the Foundation played an important part in helping children and their families move towards greater stability and a more secure future. We're truly grateful for this support."

Jim Davies OBE, founder patron of the DWF Foundation, said: "When we established the DWF Foundation in 2015, our aim was to create a lasting, positive impact for the communities connected to DWF. A decade later, having donated more than £1.5 million and supported over 700 charities worldwide, I could not be prouder. Thank you to all DWF colleagues for their generosity and continued support. Here's to the next decade of helping our global communities!"



The Manchester Law Society are delighted to have teamed up with the Law Firm Supplier Network and will be partnering with them on their events this coming year.

This fits in very nicely with our policy of providing a wide range of membership benefits and coincides with the relaunching of our Supper Club in February.

Fran, as you might well conclude, is very curious about this AF event, and we hope to see many of our members join us and our lovely friends from the Law Firm Supplier Network.

NetworkingAF is BACK!

The Law Firm Supplier Network is starting 2026 with their fantastic NetworkingAF in January to help us all start the New Year in fine style. [Book your tickets now!](#) @

What is NetworkingAF?

What? Alcohol-free networking for lawyers and senior employees of law firms. Please note that this event takes place in an entirely alcohol-free venue.

When?: Thursday 29th January 2026 12.00 – 2.00 at Hinterland Bar, Manchester.

Why AF?: Because not everybody wants to drink! And because we are aiming for a genuinely inclusive event series.

Like all Law Firm Supplier Network events, NetworkingAF aims to provide an opportunity for lawyers to meet and mingle without suppliers dominating the room.

Obviously, there will be the Founding Suppliers there, as we fund the events, but the idea is very much about making space for professionals to get to know each other, build relationships and create a relaxed environment for chatting, sharing experiences and creating headspace away from the office.

Once attendees have been to a Law Firm Supplier Network event they tend to come back – I think we bring together groups of nice people, with no agenda, just enthusiasm for good conversation, building relationships and meeting new people.

Law Firm Supplier Network

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Clarke Willmott named on the Times Best Law Firms list

Clarke Willmott LLP  has once again been named in the prestigious Times Best Law Firm rankings.

The firm was commended for its inheritance and succession planning advice in the 2026 guide which lists the top 250 legal practices in England and Wales.

The firm's leading private client team received commendation for its work supporting a client with a significant interest in an international company, in creating multiple trusts, which made long-term inheritance tax savings to support surviving family members.

The firm worked with other international advisers to ensure that any international tax implications were also considered. It also had to negotiate a change in UK legislation to consider the likely rises in capital gains tax.

Also noted was Clarke Willmott's work acting for a wealthy multi-generational family, giving advice on wills, lasting power of attorney, capacity issues and a family foundation that is a registered charity. The firm supported the family with reorganisation and the appointment of family trusts, which affected inheritance tax planning.

The accolade follows another year of strong growth at Clarke Willmott, with its latest results showing a turnover of 64.7 million.

Peter Swinburn , CEO of Clarke Willmott, said: "This latest recognition for the work of our private client team is very well deserved."



Peter Swinburn

“

This latest recognition for the work of our private client team is very well deserved.”

“Many of the cases we handle are complex and involve high net worth individuals with significant business and personal assets. Our private client team handles each one with passion and compassion, demonstrating the commitment and sensitivity needed for this type of work.

“The ranking comes shortly after another great year of Chambers and Partners and Legal 500 results which reflect the high standard of legal expertise across the whole firm.”



Venus Legal marks five-year milestone with strongest year on record

Niche litigation firm announces landmark growth and national recognition as it targets leading boutique status in the Northwest.

Venus Legal, a specialist litigation firm founded in 2020 during lockdown by CEO Lorna McGlone, has marked its fifth anniversary with its highest performing year to date, as it remains firmly on track to become the Northwest's leading boutique litigator.

Over the past five years, the firm has grown from a start-up operation to a nationally recognised business with a distinct focus on complex, large-scale litigation. With a core mission of supporting individuals whose health and wellbeing have been affected by their work, the firm prides itself on delivering outcomes that genuinely transform lives.

Playing a central role in holding major automakers accountable for consumer and environmental misconduct, the firm was appointed as Claimant Committee members of the High court case in The Pan-NOx Emissions Group Litigation, one of the largest consumer group actions in UK legal history, with the trial commencing in October.



Lorna McGlone

CEO and Founder Lorna McGlone said: "We are working alongside Leigh Day, Pogust Goodhead and 18 other exceptional law firms on behalf of 1.6 million vehicle owners in this landmark group action.

"A decade on from Dieselgate, motorists finally have the opportunity to seek justice, and we are incredibly proud to be representing our clients in what is the largest group claim ever brought in England and Wales."

The firm has achieved an exceptional 50% growth rate since launch, transitioning from a start-up into a mature, litigation specialist. Over the past 12 months, the business has strengthened its operational capacity with five strategic hires, enabling two internal promotions and expanding its ability to support the UK's largest group claim.

Alongside its legal successes, the firm continues to champion responsible business practices and is committed to meaningful

environmental action through the Greener Litigation Pledge and its partnership with Bee Net Zero. They have also been recognised in multiple high-profile accolades, including The Sunday Times Top Small Places to Work 2025.

Looking ahead, Lorna added: "We're on an incredible trajectory, and 2026 will be a pivotal year for us. Our ambition is to build a UK-wide firm recognised as a force for justice and meaningful change.

"We've doubled the size of our team this year, bringing in exceptional talent that positions us strongly for the year ahead. While we remain a small business and



committed to preserving the culture that defines us, we're equally proud of our ability to stay dynamic, nimble and agile as we grow."

Hugh Jones Solicitors secures panel deputy appointment for the next decade

Earlier this year, the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) invited applications from deputies to join their prestigious panel of approved professionals. This process ensures that the panel comprises highly skilled and trusted individuals capable of managing the financial and property affairs of those who lack capacity.

Hugh Jones Solicitors is pleased to announce that Hugh Jones Trust Corporation Limited has been successfully appointed to the OPG's panel of deputies. This appointment will commence on 1st January 2026 and will run for a ten-year tenure. The firm has a longstanding reputation for excellence in this area, with Hugh Jones himself having served as a panel deputy for many years

Reflecting on this milestone, Hugh Jones said, "It has been a privilege to serve as a panel deputy for so long. While I



have chosen not to renew my personal appointment, I am delighted that Hugh Jones Trust Corporation Limited will continue this important work. This appointment reflects our firm's commitment to providing the highest standard of support to vulnerable individuals and their families."

The OPG's updated annual list of panel deputies will be publicised in January 2026.



JMW launches Signature – specialist legal services for ultra-high net worth individuals and family offices

JMW Signature will provide bespoke legal advice across multiple disciplines, tailored to meet the needs of UK and international entrepreneurs, families, and their businesses

JMW [®] has launched a new specialist offering: JMW Signature, catering to the complex needs of ultra-high net worth (UHNW) clients and family offices.

Led by family law partner Ruben Sinha, JMW Signature will focus on both private and business issues and will be strategically aligned with teams at the firm which operate in the fields of tax and succession planning, trusts, foundations for family assets, corporate structures, real estate and family law issues as well as other areas where those clients require legal expertise.

The Signature team works closely with handpicked accountants, CSPs, private

banks and trustees in order to provide the bespoke knowledge and capabilities vital to meeting the needs of Family Offices and international families on the complex issues they may face at any time.

JMW's Head of Business Development, Stuart Cartwright, explained: "Unlike many others in the legal industry, we are a truly full-service law firm so can deliver expert advice and guidance across multiple related sectors in an entirely seamless fashion."

Ruben Sinha joined JMW in 2022 and has spent most of his career in top-ranked family teams at leading City and international law firms in both London and Hong Kong. He has acted for many UHNW and high-profile families in cases with assets between £100m and £1bn+, and is primarily focused on complex, international, divorce cases and asset protection.

He said: "We have seen a substantial increase in instructions from UHNW and family office clients seeking carefully crafted strategies designed to protect their private wealth.

"In addition, Signature's corporate and real estate experts are advising these clients on transformational business structures, including acquisitions, reorganisations, or exits.

"A full-service law firm providing highly specialised advice which is tailored to the unique needs of UHNW and family office clients is already proving to be a winning combination."



(L-R) Ruben Sinha, Thomas Pearson, Stuart Cartwright, Joe Cobb and Craig Harrison

Aequitas Legal Wins Claimant Team of the Year at National 2025 Personal Injury Awards

Aequitas Legal has been named “Claimant Team of the Year” at the 2025 Personal Injury Awards, held on Thursday 27th November at the Hilton Deansgate, Manchester.

The category was hotly contested, with Aequitas Legal one of 9 firms shortlisted (including industry giants Irwin Mitchell and Express Solicitors). According to the judges, Aequitas Legal stood apart from other shortlisted firms because of their 2nd Chance scheme. The scheme is designed for clients whose claims have been rejected or discontinued elsewhere, providing a fresh opportunity for justice and meaningful outcomes. 2nd Chance also offers referring firms a reputationally safe route for denied liability or complex serious injury claims and Aequitas Legal has a 100% success rate for cases accepted under the scheme.

This gives claimants renewed access to justice when other firms have been unable to help. The judging panel highlighted the firm’s creativity, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to client care.

Rhys Davies, Managing Director at Aequitas Legal comments that, “The Award is a testament to the team at Aequitas Legal, where we believe that every case deserves more than a standard approach, especially when the stakes are high and the path forward isn’t obvious. Whether it’s thinking differently, persevering when others have given up, or challenging assumptions that stand in the way of justice, our team is committed to doing what’s right for our clients.”

As part of the submission for the coveted Award, Aequitas Legal shared a case where their client, a construction worker, suffered



(L-R) Sucheet Amin (Senior Partner), Rhys Davies (Managing Director), Nicola Perry (Solicitor & Team Leader), Laura Baddeley (Solicitor), Rachel Bird (Operations Manager)

catastrophic injuries when run over by an excavator at work and was left unable to work as a result. His previous solicitors struggled with liability between multiple parties and allegations of contributory negligence. As they were not making progress and the client did not believe they could secure a positive outcome, they turned to Aequitas Legal after reading online reviews for help.

Despite no admission of liability from the defendants, Aequitas Legal secured funding from the defendants for vital rehabilitation and medical treatment, ultimately achieving a life-changing settlement of £2.2 million.

The Christmas before the case settled, the client and his wife received donated presents from a local charity to give to their grandchildren – this is a stark reminder of the extent to which a serious accident had affected their finances and family life and a reminder of the positive impact the work Aequitas Legal undertakes as personal injury solicitors can have.

You can find out more about Aequitas Legal’s 2nd Chance scheme [here](#) 

From all of us here at The Proud Trust we wanted to wish you all the best for the festive season. Our hope for 2026 is to continue providing life changing support for LGBTQ+ young people locally, regionally and nationally. This note is to say a massive



THANK YOU!

for your support this year and we hope we can build on our partnership to support even more LGBTQ+ young people, who need us now more than ever...

Thanks to your support so far this year...



Here are a few highlights of what your support has made possible in 2025...

"The Proud Trust are an amazing service they help so much. Without this people will feel so alone they deserve to be funded. The staff are lovely and friendly I want them to know how thankful me and my family are for their service. They help so much and without this so many people would be lost."

~ Sprinkles (under 13s) young person & family

"These LGBTQ+ youth groups have supported me through my horrible time at high school and prevented me from spiralling into a worse mental state, and I am forever grateful."

~ LGBTQ+ young person in Bury



• [THEPROUDTRUST.ORG](https://theproudtrust.org) •



Introducing young people to the arts...

Across our youth groups LGBTQ+ young people got creative this year! From animation and poetry, to music creation and fashion design. Their creativity, expression and confidence to share their view of the world is inspiring. Our Bury young people worked with a queer non-binary musician to produce a song based on the theme of "freedom". During its debut performance at an event in Bury, the audience were stunned into silence as the song filled the room with a powerful tension. Please have a listen for your self by scanning the QR code.



Festive Carol Concert

We lead a Manchester wide collaboration of LGBTQ+ organisations to host our annual festive carol concert. Welcoming over 850 LGBTQ+ folks and their family and friends to Manchester Cathedral where through a blend of our expertise and corporate partner support we curated an evening of queer joy, something our community truly needed after a difficult year.



Video clip summary



One attendee said "Its my favorite event of the year, bringing so many people together to share in community is such a powerful and beautiful thing"

Welcome to this very special carol concert for the LGBTQ+ community, our supporters, allies and friends

Manchester at Cathedral

Sponsors: Sparite, GEORGE HOUSE TRUST, akT, LGBT FOUNDATION 50 YEARS, VOICE

Sprinkles

Created in response to identified need, this year our Sprinkles group, designed specifically to support LGBTQ+ young people between the ages of 8-12, has gone weekly and has a series of regular families attending the space. One family told us: "Our child has been waiting for years to be able to come to a group but no one offers them below 13 years old. Thank you so much for doing this, it means so much to be able to bring them somewhere to connect with other kids like them."



Time to Be Proud: Awards and Recognition



What's Next?

We have been consulting with our young people and team about our future priorities and have created our new five year strategy!

We warmly invite you to book in a call in early 2026 so we can talk you through our exciting plans and look to strengthen our work together. We look forward to working with you to make an even greater impact on LGBTQ+ young people's lives.

MLS Advantage



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Compli provides regulatory and compliance advice and assistance to law firms and



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others in the legal sector. Whether you are a partnership, limited company, ABS or sole practitioner, our flexible, tailor-made service is designed to support you in meeting the evolving regulatory, compliance and risk challenges you face. This is underpinned by incisive commercial advice on business management and structure, all delivered by specialist teams with outstanding experience in their disciplines. Confidentiality, legal professional privilege and peace of mind is assured.

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Continued on page 68

JANUARY 2026



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Mitigo provides cybersecurity and cyber risk management services to members. Mitigo will give you visibility of your cyber risks, and secure you against attacks and business disruption. Cybersecurity is not the job of IT support: it requires independent advice from cyber risk management specialists.

Without adequate protection in place, victims face ransomware attacks, serious disruption, email account takeover, theft of confidential information, financial loss, as well as reputational damage, and potential for regulator actions and fines.

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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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Mann Roberts Solicitors strengthens business law offering with Senior Consultant appointment

Mann Roberts Solicitors [®] has announced the appointment of **Stephen Marais** as Senior Consultant in its Manchester office, further expanding the firm's capability in non-contentious business and finance matters.

Stephen, who brings more than 25 years of experience from leading City firms, has developed extensive expertise across financing, shipping, offshore and export finance. His practice spans debt financing, leasing, restructurings, workouts and enforcements, acting for both lenders and borrowers. He also advises corporates on a range of commercial and security matters, including guarantees, mortgages, assignments, debentures, charges and financial instruments such as letters of credit.

Stephen has undertaken several client secondments during his career, most recently with the in-house legal team of a major US investment bank, providing him with valuable insight into the commercial pressures and operational realities facing businesses.

Speaking about his appointment, Stephen Marais said: "I am honoured to be joining Mann Roberts, a firm known for its clear, commercially focused approach and its commitment to supporting business clients through every stage of their journey. I look forward to contributing to the continued growth of the firm's business law offering and working closely with clients to help them navigate increasingly complex financial and commercial environments."



Stephen Marais

David Mann, Managing Director of Mann Roberts Solicitors, welcomed Stephen to the firm, commenting: "Stephen's arrival represents an important step in the evolution of our business law practice. His depth of experience, both in private practice and in-house, strengthens our ability to provide seamlessly integrated advice across contentious and non-contentious matters. We are committed to being the trusted partner for business owners and entrepreneurs, and Stephen's expertise will bring significant value to our clients."

This strategic appointment supports Mann Roberts' continued growth and its mission to deliver pragmatic, results-driven legal solutions to businesses across the UK.

Hamza Mustafa joins Glaisyers ETL's private client team as senior associate

Glaisyers ETL has appointed Hamza Mustafa as a senior associate in its Legal 500-listed Private Client department.

Mr Mustafa joined Glaisyers ETL from AFG Law, where he was head of Private Client. He has expertise in the full range of estate planning and personal affairs management, with a particular focus on advising families in relation to inheritance tax planning and the creation and management of trusts.

Commenting on Mr Mustafa's appointment, Chris Burrows, partner and head of Private Client at Glaisyers ETL, said, "Hamza has hit the ground running and is proving to be a fantastic addition to our team. Joining us at a busy time, he is making a real difference for clients, delivering timely, expert advice in what are often highly complex situations.

"Our department has seen a significant spike in demand following the changes to the inheritance tax regime announced in last year's Budget, with various changes to other taxes announced this year adding further complexity, particularly – but far from exclusively – for the owners of family and agricultural businesses. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for a team like ours, and I would like to welcome Hamza on board at this exciting stage in our evolution."

The private client team at Glaisyers ETL specialises, in particular, in managing the affairs of business owners and their families. In many cases it works closely with the firm's well-respected corporate team to provide a comprehensive service.

It also collaborates with Glaisyers ETL's highly regarded litigation practice on



Hamza Mustafa

matters of contentious probate and other disputes relating to the handling and distribution of individuals' assets.

The department has received significant recognition in recent years, and has been ranked by the Legal 500 in its last four editions.

At an individual level, Mr Burrows has been highly commended in the "Lawyer of the Year – Tax and Trusts" category of the Modern Law Private Client Awards for the past two years running. Solicitor Iya Hashim has been shortlisted for the "Lawyer of the Year" category of the 2026 Made in Manchester Awards, the winners of which will be announced in February.

The department continues to expand and is currently looking for a solicitor to join the Private Client team.

Glaisyers ETL, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, has since 2018 been part of the ETL GLOBAL network of professional services firms, which employs 28,000 people across more than 60 countries worldwide



Mills & Reeve strengthens construction practice with double partner hire and new leadership

Mills & Reeve has appointed two senior industry specialists to support the growth of its construction practice, as Dominic Jones takes the helm to lead the team into the next phase of expansion.

Ian Hardman joins Mills & Reeve as a non-contentious partner and Jody Kite as construction disputes partner, both arriving from Shoosmiths.

Ian led the Manchester construction team, where he advised on large scale infrastructure projects and commercial developments across sectors such as hospitality, energy, retail and education. He'll play a pivotal role in strengthening Mills & Reeve's non-contentious offering, and his expertise will help strengthen the firm's growing real estate and energy practices.

Jody Kite is a leading construction disputes lawyer with 18 years' experience acting for high-profile clients across diverse and specialist sectors including water/waste infrastructure, gas and oil, nuclear energy and building safety. Jody's appointment marks a significant expansion of Mills & Reeve's construction disputes capability in the North, and a key part of the strategic growth of the firm's national and international contentious construction, engineering and energy platform.

Ian comments: "I'm delighted to have joined Mills & Reeve and their market-leading construction practice. I look forward to working with my fantastic new colleagues to deliver an exceptional service to companies operating in the development, construction and engineering sectors."



(L-R) Jody Kite, Dominic Jones, and Ian Hardman

Jody adds: "It's a privilege to join Mills & Reeve and their outstanding construction team, and I look forward to playing a significant role in the continued growth of the firm's top-notch construction, engineering and energy disputes practice across the North of England, nationally and beyond."

Their appointments come at a time of significant expansion for Mills & Reeve's construction practice, as well as a recent change in leadership for the firm's construction team. Dominic Jones has taken over the role as head of construction at Mills & Reeve, after nearly three years as partner in the firm's Oxford office.

Dominic comments: "It's brilliant to welcome Ian and Jody to Mills & Reeve. They are both class acts, and their arrival will expand and enhance the whole of lifecycle service offered by our national construction and engineering team. They are also joining at a time when the sectors we serve are facing real opportunities – and a few challenges – and I'm very much looking forward to working alongside Ian and Jody to help our clients navigate both."

Darren Malone joins 18 St John Street Chambers

[18 St John Street Chambers](#) are delighted to welcome Darren Malone.

Darren Malone joined 18SJS in November 2025. He is a specialist costs and litigation funding barrister who has a wealth of experience in the area of costs law.

Prior to joining chambers, Darren was an advocate and technical costs specialist within a leading national law firm, having worked in the costs arena since 2012 on behalf of Claimants and Defendants.

Darren's arrival further strengthens the [Costs Department at 18 St John Street](#). Our members have a broad range of expertise in diverse areas of law including [Tax law](#), [Personal Injury](#), [Clinical Negligence](#), planning, judicial review, and all aspects of [Business and Property law](#).



Darren Malone

Members of the Department appear regularly on lengthy, high value or complex detailed assessment hearings or at provisional assessment review hearings, as well as in the [Senior Court Costs Office](#), or in complicated or high value Case and Cost Management Conferences.

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

We look forward to hearing from you!

Feb 2026	23/01/2026	June 2026	22/05/2026	Oct 2026	18/09/2026
Mar 2026	20/02/2026	July 2026	19/06/2026	Nov 2026	23/10/2026
Apr 2026	20/03/2026	Aug 2026	24/07/2026	Dec 2026	20/11/2026
May 2026	24/04/2026	Sept 2026	21/08/2026		

Management Matters



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

This Month

- **Key Challenges and some essential New Years Resolutions and Activities**

When someone during their education and personal development decides to become a lawyer/solicitor - it is done for many reasons but mainly because of interest in the law via the multi work-types but also to represent people and communities (plus businesses) and help them recover from issues or challenge other items. Becoming a leading light in the sector and contributor to social wellbeing is often what it is about.

In most cases at that during that period there is little consideration about becoming a managing partner/director, department head or team leader. Plus - owner/ shareholder. It is surprising how quickly that can change.

Maintaining the personal desires and challenges is one thing but no longer can we deny that law firms have to be commercial businesses.

Generating profitability and working capital, meeting the compliance and regulation demands, being skilled, efficient and productive in work achieved against standards and budget costs. This means of course that funding and banking relationships are key, a clear business plan is essential with a strategy and the right people in place at the right time, the right marketing plans are in place, effective IT is being used with availability and security, the right compliance and regulation processes are in place and being effectively used (this includes fundamental gaps in compliant workflows and authorisations) – the last thing needed is action by the FCA or SRA. Failure here is very damaging for the image of the firm as well as unavailability of the

necessary insurance and even if so at a cost. Too many firms are just failing to analyse their risks (which is increasingly including shortage of fundamental skills within the staff team – hence even more bookkeeping outsourcing) let alone look at market opportunities in the right way

There are essentials – like being able to recruit and develop and retain key staff – ensuring that the image of the firm is right for existing clients, potential clients and staff.

There are also essentials in terms of resourcing the firm with necessary skills. Third parties can be considered for additional legal skills expected by clients, production of documents that can no longer be seen as justified delays for action, effective bookkeeping – volume but also necessary skills, financial advice from profitability to cash flow management

If someone becomes an owner or potential owner of a firm and would like to see a return based upon the equity value in a M&A agreement this has to be clearly developed – yes profitability is key but so is the asset value – client retention base but also the Will Bank valuation where applicable. 10,000 Wills could be worth a lot for the current firm or also an acquirer.

Coming back in the New Year some essentials to consider early on - Resolutions

[My December 2025 article](#) following the Managing Partners Forum summarised many of the amazing challenges at last being recognised – maximising return on business development, brand and image of the firm, alertness to the benefit of outsourcing, regulation and risk management analysis and recognition



Some Jobs to be done

- **Director and Senior Management**

Stocktake – open disclosure by all is key to the business strategy and delivery. We need to know plans and ambitions for careers but also departure/retirement. Resourcing plans – not only by volume but also essential skills and that needs to cover legal work but also Finance, IT, HR and BD. Irrespective of scale of firm there is a major demand across the spectrum – hence the increase in outsourcing and part time guidance

- Every year the firm needs to do a **3 year strategy** with the ambitions, action plans and timing very clear. Year one becomes the budget – work type, revenue, GP – a key measure that needs to be at expectation level by work-type, working capital, profitability however each month the operations meeting will review performance against expectations with further exploitation or recovery plans becoming the perpetual forecast. This would also include a valuation of the business in terms of asset value (includes the Will Bank, property, client base) and working capital.
- Reports expected from every department – not just legal – in terms of activity – looking at results and forecasts – by month – (YTD and BOY does not say enough – **perpetual forecasting is key**) because of actions agreed. Each work-type should include a review by fee earner of all open files with WIP, expected billing and dates plus of course what is expected from business development activities – essential to be able to see expected profitability by month going forward but also
- A study of **enquiry conversion** by the firm and by department is another essential to get return on marketing. Achieving 60%+ is much better than 20%

– worth a lot of money but also credibility with the market.

- Client/prospect and personal interface is key but also the process and data management of the handling of inbound enquiries – systems available
- **The right image of the firm** is key - obviously performance and communications with clients is key but we need to add to that how the market sees us. The right skills with the right topics, the dedication to clients and potential clients, great communication. We need to downsize our egos and make it clear we are up to date with the world, efficient, communicate well, have a social conscience, support the community. Not only does this help with clients but is also key to younger staff – we can do without 60%.
- People – Many firms are finding it very hard to recruit at the moment. Potential legal staff wanting to change their lifestyles is obviously a factor. So, brand and image are contributors.
 - Also, essential when people come on board the management process is very important. Firms need to recognise the needs of individual groups – younger folks need to know daily how they are performing whereas some older members of the team are not so keen. Firms need to make sure the appropriate communication is available through KPI, MI & BI methods as well as spoken with supervision
 - Many firms need to review their performance management and make sure in place there is an appropriate appraisal and people development system – a big frustration for many staff and a real negative impact on achievement of necessary performance. This covers not only personal development but also the



right interaction with clients and potential clients and staff members from multiple teams within the firm

- Too many firms are still not aware enough of the essentials of **Compliance and Regulation management**. The result is fines, PII problems and image. Education of all staff is essential plus the enhancements of work methodology through workflows on systems (such as client account management) including authorisation by key members/managers (such as AML). All firms should be undertaking a risk survey either internally or through recognised experts with the appropriate technology. Not only is this a methodology for minimising risk but also a big efficiency opportunity
- Perhaps a little **less exciting for many now is that of IT**. There have been many changes over the last few years in terms of where the IT sits, the use of cloud technology, the reliability of the systems internally and if hosted. Firms just cannot afford to be without their IT and even printing capabilities. Third party suppliers have had mixed performance over the last few years. It is highly recommended that firms get not only a meet with their suppliers to assist in guaranteeing the necessary performance but also the ramifications of failure. There are a few reliable suppliers who have helped bail people out of failures.
- **Practice and Case Management Systems**. Another area of crazy change over the last few years. There have been multiple acquisitions by groups, often VC led, of the long-standing suppliers plus over the last few years some new suppliers from overseas who are beginning to make a mark. There are many added value essentials that firms really need – some are available through the PMS/CMS suppliers but others are very dependent upon third party suppliers because of the need now – such as on boarding methodologies

including AI, data collection, managed follow ups – client communications – advising of status of the case if nothing else – secure access to files through portals for example with Wills without the risk of security/e-mails – essential KPIs, MI, BI – the appropriate workflows not just for document production but for compliance/ regulation and security.

- All firms need to consider their ways forward. There are multiple queues at the moment of firms **looking to leave** their current suppliers – some of whom are responding much better than others in terms of client added value and relationships. Each firm should have a meeting with its current PMS/CMS supplier and demand a timetable for enhancement of the products for added value or a methodology with third party added value suppliers.
- There are **third party added value solutions** available – that can be added independently - for example for enquiry handling, on boarding, client communication, MI/BI, consultant support, secure portals, generation of added value assets like Will Banks, compliance workflows, risk assessments, working capital management, forecasting and impact of operational changes

Recommended Reads

Check out my articles below for more on this:

[November 2025](#) 

[October 2025](#) 

[September 2025](#) 

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I. Stephanie Boyce FKC, FRSA, appointed as Chair Elect of The Solicitors' Charity



The Board of [The Solicitors' Charity](#) is proud to announce that, following an extensive and rigorous search process, I. Stephanie Boyce FKC, FRSA, has been appointed as a trustee and Chair Elect of The Solicitors' Charity.

Stephanie will join the Board of Trustees immediately and will take on the role of Chair in March 2026.

As Shams Rahman, Outgoing Chair of The Solicitors' Charity and Senior Equity Partner at Edwin Coe LLP, explained: "Stephanie is an extremely accomplished and high-profile solicitor and understands only too well the issues affecting our profession and how they impact on wellbeing. The Trustees felt that she would represent the Charity superbly and help increase awareness of us, and the vital work that we do, with new audiences.

As many will know, recently in her impressive career, Stephanie was President of The Law Society from March 2021 until October 2022, in a time of significant upheaval and disruption during and after the COVID pandemic.

I can't think of a better qualified person to step into these shoes when I hand over the Chair role in March 2026."

Nick Gallagher, CEO, of The Solicitors' Charity, concurred: "The team is delighted about this appointment and the choice of Stephanie Boyce as the Charity's next Chair. Stephanie will be a brilliant advocate for our work, across the profession: what we can offer to solicitors in times of need and



why it is more important than ever that the profession supports us in carrying out that vital work.

I would also like to acknowledge the superb job our current Chair, Shams Rahman, has done in successfully leading the Charity through the introduction and bedding in of our new strategy as we continue the significant transition to a focus on wellbeing. We now support solicitors with not only the financial pressures they may be facing, but also their emotional, professional and physical wellbeing too.

of wellbeing support to solicitors and their families at the moments they need it most.

Throughout my career, grounded in the principles of law, leadership and legacy, I have been privileged to use my voice to highlight the issues that matter to our profession. I believe in fostering informed debate, encouraging collaboration and working collectively to reach solutions that strengthen our legal community.

I now look forward to bringing that same commitment to championing the wellbeing needs of the profession more visibly, and

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“The team is delighted about this appointment and the choice of Stephanie Boyce as the Charity’s next Chair. Stephanie will be a brilliant advocate for our work”

Nick Gallagher, CEO, The Solicitors' Charity

Shams has been Chair during a period of unprecedented demand and growth for us as an organisation and we have been fortunate to have his wise and steady counsel and benefit from his highly collegiate approach.”

On taking up the role of Chair-Elect, I. Stephanie Boyce said: “I am delighted to be stepping into this new role and wish to express my sincere thanks to Shams Rahman for his leadership and for shaping a charity that now delivers an enviable range

to raising even greater awareness of The Solicitors' Charity across the sector.

My aim is to deepen understanding of the Charity’s vital role and to advocate for meaningful, tangible support from businesses, institutions, firms, suppliers and individuals alike.

It is an honour to be entrusted with this responsibility, and I look forward to taking up the position of Chair in March.”

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.

The award for Case of the Year, for which there was no real competition, goes to **Mazur v Charles Russell Speechley Bircham LLP** [2025] WEHC 2341 (KB). Sheldon J has sent shivers down the spine of the legal profession in holding that unqualified fee earners cannot conduct litigation under supervision of an appropriately qualified fee earner without committing a criminal offence under s.14(1) Legal Services Act 2007. They can only support the qualified fee earner following the issue of proceedings in the High Court or County Court: that, at least, is the current law, but CILEx Regulation has obtained permission from the Court of Appeal for a further appeal in Mazur, so Sheldon J's judgment could still be reversed!

Back in the courts, Trower J has ordered the largest payment on account of costs ever, following the trial in **JSC Commercial Bank PrivatBank v Kolomoisky & Ors (Rev1)** [2025] EWHC 2909 (Ch). The bank succeeded and obtained an order for indemnity costs. Those costs were £110,524,169.99 and £80m of that was sought on account under CPR 44.2(8). The judge reduced this for "uncertainty" having commented that grade A solicitors' hourly rates at £1,028 were too high. But that merely dented the request by £3.6m, meaning that the defendants would need to pay £76.4m within 14 days of the order!

Still with the big money, in **Merricks v Mastercard Inc** [2025] CAT 69, Sir Peter

Roth dealt with consequentials following approval of the settlement for £200m. In issue was how the settlement pot should be distributed between class members, Innsworth (the funder), legal costs, and the destination of any unclaimed funds. The judge refused Innsworth's application that its costs of intervening to oppose the settlement, should be paid out of the settlement pot. Innsworth's intervention had not been made to assist the Settling Parties in satisfying the Tribunal that the arrangements proposed were reasonable, but was a determined attempt to defeat the settlement proposal, including the amount of the return that would be paid to Innsworth. The Judge also directed that solicitor-client costs of the Class representative to be paid or reimbursed out of the Settlement Sum, would be limited to reasonable costs, with any assessment to be conducted by an expert assessor without points of dispute, and with his report to be submitted to the tribunal upon which submissions could then be made.

Next, contested probate. In **Kaur v Kaur & Ors (Re the Estate of Raj Kaur)** [2025] EWHC 2806 (Ch), ten children disputed the will of their late mother. One son (SS) had been a defendant and was subsequently joined as a claimant. Later, by e-mail he indicated that he was "resigning from the case". At trial, Simon Gleeson considered the consequences, observing that CPR r. 38.2 (2) provides that where there is more than one claimant, no claimant can

discontinue unless every other claimant consents in writing or the court gives permission: neither of those conditions had been satisfied. On the first day of trial, SS was still a party to the action as a claimant, despite the fact (according to the judge) that he probably believed that he was not. In these circumstances, the judge was prepared to treat him as having ceased to be a claimant as of the first day of the trial, with representations as to whether he should pay the costs upon discontinuance to be addressed when the question of costs arose for determination.

Lee v BDB Pitmans LLP [2025] EWHC 2955 (Ch) deals with consequential costs following amendments to the Particulars of Claim made by consent. The court departed from the usual costs order holding that costs were to be in the case because (1) there was virtually no wastage or duplication as a result of the new particulars being introduced, and (2) the first defendant had not stated its position on liability earlier in the process.

Back to the big money and the high-profile privacy claim involving Prince Harry and other celebrities. In [Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon v Associated Newspapers Ltd](#) [2025] EWHC 3207 (KB) Nicklin J, sitting with Master Cook, decided the claimant's costs liabilities should they lose: each claimant would be severally liable for their own costs specific to their individual claims, but jointly and severally liable for all costs common to the claims. That was important because the claimants' After-the-Event insurance might need to be adjusted to reflect the liability for common costs, should any of the other claimants fail to pay their share. In addition, the court approved variations to the costs

budgets under CPR 3.15A, including a mere £200,000 each for the claimants and defendant respectively for a prospective third case management conference!

Finally, we end with the Rule that just keeps giving – Part 36. In **Thomas v Secretary of State for the Home Department** [2025] EWHC 3274, the claimant had made four Part 36 offers, the last in the sum of £15,000 in a claim for unlawful detention. A Consent Order had been made for payment of £16,000 after the claimant had succeeded at the liability trial, but before the quantum trial. The principal issue which then arose was whether the costs consequences set out in CPR 36.17(4) were engaged. It was The Defendant's submission that there must be a judgment before that rule came into play under which the successful party would be entitled to benefits such as an additional sum and enhanced interest. HHJ Freedman rejected that argument, holding that the mere fact that the word "judgment" did not appear in the Consent Order was of no consequence when considering its effect. Indeed, an Order made by the Court following a Trial could have been drafted in precisely the same terms as the Consent Order. It followed that the claimant received his additional sum of 10% of damages under CPR 36.17(4).

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

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