



March 2026

the Messenger

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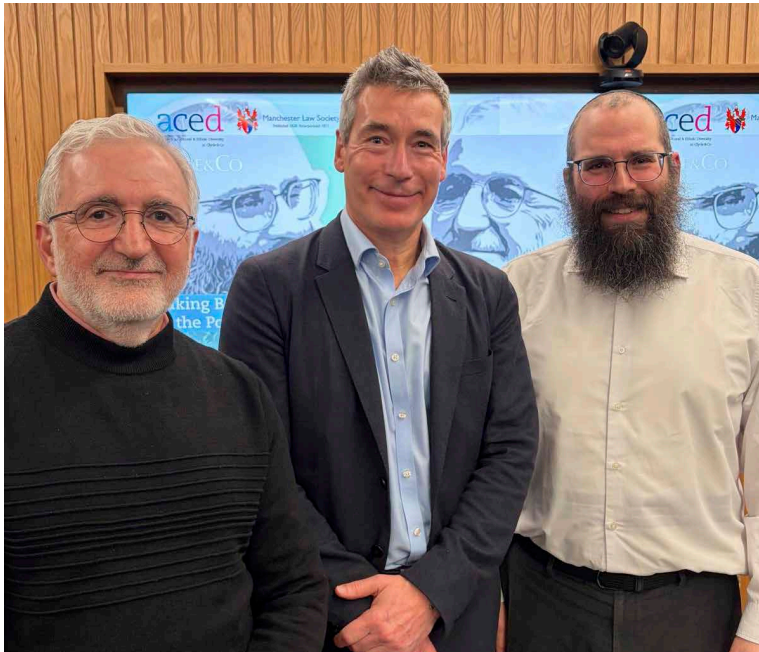
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Listening, Learning and Leading with Care



The Rabbi, The Imam and the Power of Dialogue



On Monday 9th February, it was a privilege for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee to host our 'Breaking Barriers: The Rabbi, The Imam and the Power of Dialogue' event where distinguished faith leaders Imam Nasser Kurdy and Rabbi Dovid Lewis came together to speak to us about the power of discussion, breaking down barriers and co-existing with others who have differing views. They reminded us that friendship doesn't always mean agreeing with each other.

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For more information:

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From the President

Ian McConkey, President



This month I have been out and about to see for myself the range of activities which Manchester Law Society undertakes representing members interests, providing services to members and to promoting the Manchester legal community as a whole.

The activities encompass all sections of the legal community and range from educational activities, wellbeing and social activities, responding to Consultation Papers, creating opportunities for those who wish to enter the legal profession and interacting with the wider community. You will hear more about individual events and the work of the committees in the future, but I wanted to give you a snapshot of what one month looks like. None of this would happen without the support of sponsors, the fantastic work of the MLS team, and also the dedication of those who volunteer and get involved.

At the February Council meeting we heard about the activities of many of the committees but I was particularly struck by the enthusiasm and engagement of the Black Solicitors Network, Manchester Young Lawyers Group and Manchester Trainee Solicitors Group. The future is in good hands (and, it seems, largely sober!).

The Civil Litigation Committee are co-ordinating representation of Court User Committees and the responses to the Consultation on Fixed Recoverable Costs Implementation and the BPC Disclosure Review. For any litigators, these are significant issues with wide ranging

implications. The International Committee showcases the existing breadth and depth of the international links which the Manchester legal community have and how Manchester can be promoted as a global legal hub.

The Property Conference provided an opportunity for property lawyers, including practitioners and academics, to get together and to discuss current hot topics and those issues which are going to be significant.

The EDI Committee met and had a speaker from the LGBT Foundation who great insight into the role law firms can play in creating an inclusive environment. The Committee also hosted the Breaking Barriers event, which has been my highlight so far. The event brought together Imam Nasser Kurdy and Rabbi Dovid Lewis in a powerful, and much needed, discussion about the importance of dialogue, made possible through friendship, respect and empathy. The concept of listening, not with a view to thinking how to respond, but to truly understand someone's point of view was a valuable lesson. This is an initiative in which Manchester leads the way.

All of these activities are the outcome of hard work, but also a commitment from the MLS team and the committee members to make things happen. There aren't meetings for meetings sake and I was impressed by the focus of the committees and the desire for there to be real output. Thank you to everyone who is already involved, and if you aren't, what are you waiting for?!

the Messenger



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Manchester Law Society

Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871

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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?



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Stewarts Law LLP

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

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



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Are you ready for the Manchester Legal Awards 2026?

Entries close on 20th March for the [Manchester Legal Awards 2026](#) ☺. With 23 categories there is something for everyone! Throw your hat in the ring and then join us on 2nd July at the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel to see who wins.

Category spotlights

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

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

We are also pleased to see the [Unsung Hero of the Year](#) ☺ award back to ensure that these remarkable individuals know just how much they are appreciated. Anyone can enter, and anyone can be nominated – from

support staff, including post room staff, PAs and EAs, HR & Marketing, IT and Finance Staff, to solicitors and barristers. So do give a shout out to that colleague who has been making your life easier and let them know they are appreciated!

You can see all the award for 2026 [here](#) ☺.

Who can enter?

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

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

What period do the entries need to cover?

The qualifying period for these awards is 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025. Your entries need to refer to activities within this timeframe.

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MANCHESTER LAW SOCIETY'S

ANNUAL

POSH PUB QUIZ

2026

THURSDAY **07**

AT 18:00 PM

MAY

MANCHESTER HALL



Can I nominate myself?

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

Is there a cost to enter?

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

How are entries judged?

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

The nominations with the highest marks will be included in the shortlist announced on 5th May and all shortlisted nominees will be interviewed by a panel of judges on Friday 12th June.

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

There is one exception to the usual judging process and that is the Lifetime Achievement Award which is awarded by the Manchester Law Society Council.

How to enter

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

different, the nominee.

- Click through to the next page.
- Review the criteria and enter answers of up to 250 words for each of the four questions.
- You can either save your form to review and enter at a later date or submit it immediately.
- Look out for the shortlist announcement on 5th May and make sure you/your nominee keep 12th June free for judging day!

How can I attend?

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

How can I support the event?

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

Key dates

- **20th March 2026** – Entries close
- **5th May 2026** – Shortlist announced
- **12th June 2026** – Judging Day
- **2nd July 2026** – Awards Ceremony

We cannot wait to celebrate your brilliant achievements from 2025 and hear all the ways in which you are raising the bar for excellence.

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

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COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

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TO BOOK!



Supper and socialising at Pip in the Treehouse Hotel

We were delighted on 25th February to bring back our interprofessional networking evenings, formally Manchester Professional Dinner Clubs and now MLS Supper Clubs. We could not have asked for a better venue than Pip at the Treehouse Hotel Manchester.

Cosy and welcoming but also Scandi chic the Treehouse Hotel is a welcome addition to Manchester. Their restaurant Pip is relaxed and welcoming, with guests welcome to pop in for a drink, a meal or a coffee. Run by Chef Mary-Ellen McTague the menu is sustainable, seasonal and low-waste.

You have all been asking us to bring back these dinners so we were thrilled when this one sold out!

As our guests arrived the conversation was flowing, as were the glasses of sparkling wine and elderflower fizz. We could see

everyone making new contacts or catching up with old ones.

These events are run with no seating plan so guests took their places and every table seemed to be having the best time.

Everyone enjoyed a five course tasting menu with very generous portions. With the waiting staff being very attentive to ensure everyone was also well watered.

Reflecting on the evening Ruth Peters, Business Development & Marketing Director at Olliers, said "It was a great event, I really enjoyed meeting some lovely people!"

Echoing this sentiment Andi Howkins, Chief Revenue Officer at Shieldpay added "It was a wonderful event with good food, great company and some very entertaining stories, looking forward to the next one."



Ryan Calderbank-Maughan, Practice Manager at 3PB Manchester, described the event as “An excellent night! Great food, great company and a fantastic opportunity to connect with new professionals. Looking forward to the next one.”

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the night so special. Events like these remind us how strong, supportive, and vibrant our legal community truly is.

We are all looking forward to many more evenings like this!

We will be announcing our next Supper Club soon so if you want to be the first to hear about it please email **Events@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk** to make sure you're on the list.

If you have any suggestions of venues you'd like the Supper Clubs to take place please do let us know. If you are interested in sponsoring them please email me at CarlaJones@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk for more information.

In the meantime we have our **Posh Pub Quiz** coming up on 7th May – make sure you get your teams booked in to test your knowledge and be in with a chance of the grand prize!

If you fancy checking out Pip yourself they are **hosting an art exhibition** in partnership with Gallery Les Bois throughout March in their lobby to celebrate International Women's Day. Why not pop in with some of your favourite international women and enjoy some art and tasty treats!



[Click for more info](#)



GOOD TIMES OFFER

Complimentary upgrade to our hot fork buffet lunch for any event taking place between 1st Jan - 31st March booking our Day delegate package

Contact the Events Team to enquiry
MANTHMC.Events@Treehousehotels.com | 0161 553 0055

T&Cs apply, one offer per event, Offer based events taking place between Dec 2025 - March 2026



Applications open for the Law Society's Diversity Access Scheme

Applications for the Law Society's Diversity Access Scheme are open until 9am on Wednesday 1 April 2026.

About the Diversity Access Scheme

The Diversity Access Scheme (DAS) is an annual scholarship/bursary designed to support aspiring solicitors from lower socio-economic backgrounds who face financial and other significant challenges in pursuing their legal education and careers. Established in 2004, the scheme has supported more than 300 individuals to complete their legal education, many of whom now work across the profession – including in the judiciary, legal aid centres, in-house teams, the City, charities, and academia.

The DAS makes around 15 awards annually and provides tangible support where our awardees need it the most:

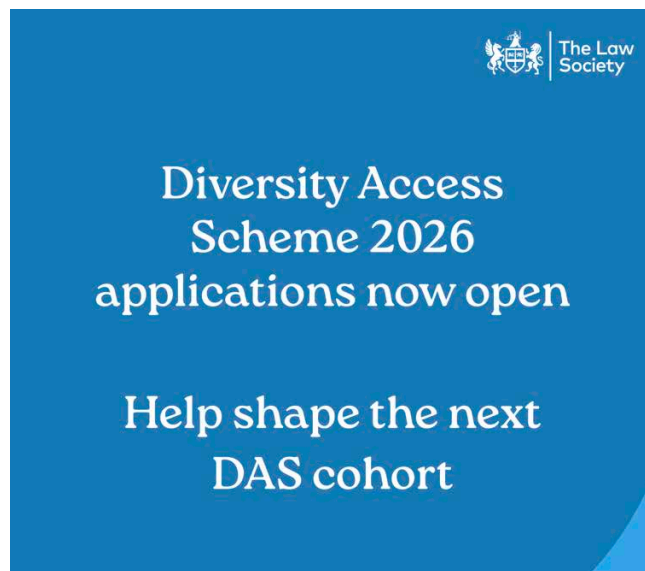
- **Finance:** through the provision of LPC or SQE preparation course and assessment fees
- **Networks:** through being matched with a professional mentor
- **Work experience:** through high quality, paid placements brokered by the Law Society

Further details, including eligibility and how to apply, can be [found on their webpage](#) [Ⓔ]

Get Involved – volunteer for the shortlisting process

The Law Society are also looking for volunteers to support the DAS 2026

manchesterlawsociety.org.uk



shortlisting process. Your role will help ensure the process remains transparent, independent, fair and credible. Shortlisting volunteers will review and score four application questions that are set as part of the DAS application form to assess a candidate on their:

- Resilience
- Motivation
- Understanding and awareness of the legal profession, and;
- Their need for the award.

Volunteers won't be required to make eligibility decisions or wider contextual decisions about applications – those parts of the application are not scored and are kept separately to the set application questions. Each application will be scored by two shortlisting volunteers, who will be paired as part of the review process.

If you think you could be part of the DAS shortlisting process, please register your interest through their [Get Involved platform](#) [Ⓔ]

Time commitment


- Applications will be sent to volunteers for shortlisting the week commencing 20 April
- Completed scoring and documentation must be returned by 20 May
- Each volunteer will review around 25 applications
 - Estimated time commitment:
 - > Up to 4 hours to review and score applications
 - > Up to 1 hour to meet with your paired shortlisting partner
 - > Time spent scoring can be completed flexibly over the four-week period

Mentoring opportunities

The Law Society are also looking for **three mentors** for our 2025 awardees, specifically individuals with experience in:

- Commercial and/or corporate work
- Commercial, IP, entertainment or employment law
- Residential property, immigration or human rights law

The time commitment for mentoring is around 1 hour every 4–6 weeks.

If you have any questions about mentoring, the shortlisting process or the DAS more broadly, please reach out to Leila Lesan at diversityaccessscheme@lawsociety.org.uk 

Committee Spotlight: MLS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Hear from Rob Kinnon-Brett, who joined our ED&I Committee last year, on why he decided to join and what the being part of the Committee means to him.

During Pride last year, I attended the MLS Pride Afternoon Tea, which gave opportunity to watch the Parade go past. I was made aware of the ED&I committee and encouraged to join – which I did. I had been involved in ED&I work in previous law firms and joining the MLS ED&I committee felt like a logical step.

Working for equality and equity has been long part of who I am. My first job in the 1980s was as a secretary. In those less-enlightened times this was deemed as a “woman’s job”. It was a job I enjoyed and

excelled in. I have also always been an out gay man everywhere I worked, which wasn’t an easy ask in the early days. However, I felt I needed to be true to myself to succeed in my employment.

I was an LGBT activist in Bristol in the 1980s/1990s and help to organise the Avon Pride event every year. It was nothing on the scale of Manchester Pride, and very much a community-led event, but it was a great thing to be involved with.

Being involved with the ED&I committee is, I feel, a practical way to further conversations on equality and equity. Creating a climate where everyone is their true selves, and where prejudice has no place is something we should all strive for.



Property Law Conference 2026

In January, we were delighted to host our annual Property Law Conference, kindly sponsored by [Landmark](#) and [Searchflow](#).

After an introduction from our Committee Chair Stephen Lintott and Landmark's Allie Parsons, Andrew Williams, Barrister at Exchange Chambers kicked off the day with his session 'Landlord and Tenant Law: What's Going On?' (the Marvin Gaye reference was acknowledged). Andrew focused on commercial landlord and tenant law, referencing key legislation and using cases such as *London Trocadero (2015) LLP v Picturehouse Cinemas Ltd* [2025] EWHC 1247 (Ch) as case studies.



The day's opening session from Andrew Williams

Following this, James Greenhalgh, Partner & Tax Specialist at Cowgill's, walked us through the entire lifecycle of a development business, from site assembly to practical completion and sale. During his session, James highlighted key considerations at each stage, including company structure, shareholder agreements and their impact on acquisitions.

Louis Doyle KC, Barrister at Kings Chambers, delivered an informative session on insolvency, covering avoidance provisions

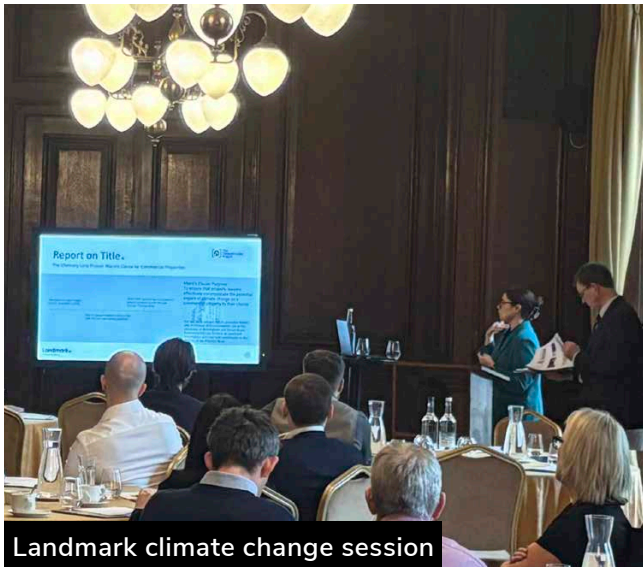


Louis Doyle's session

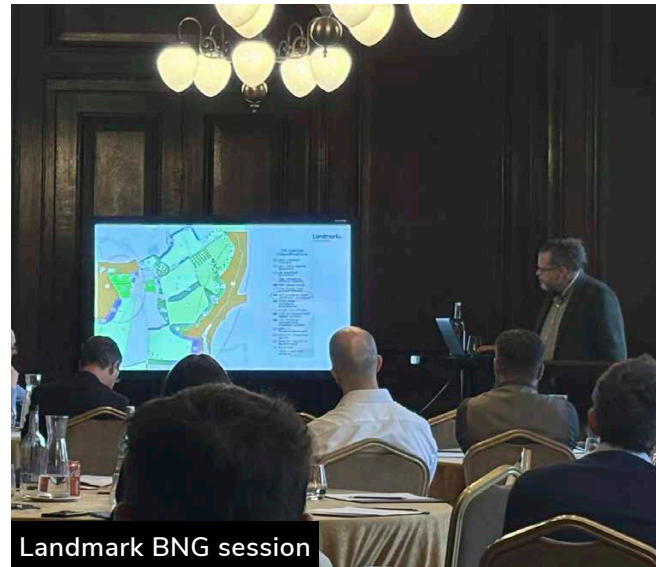
under the Insolvency Act 1986, transactions at undervalue, preferences, transactions defrauding creditors, and related vulnerable transactions. Louis used handouts and scenarios to invite our attendees to deliberate and debate with one another, resulting in some interesting and insightful discussions.

Stephen Warren, Technical Solicitor & Property Support Lawyer at Forbes Solicitors, followed with a practical session underlining the dangers of overlooking the basics, considerations around AI integration within internal procedures, and also frequent thorny issues and easy mistakes to make relating to HM Land Registry.

Luke Parsons and Simon Boyle from Landmark were then joined by Jacqui Bourke, Managing Associate at TLT LLP, who together discussed climate change and how this impacts property transactions. Luke explained the recent guidance from the Law Society's Practice Note on climate risk in property transactions, focusing on flexible reporting approaches, data interpretation and risk assessment. Jacqui then supported this by offering a lawyer's



Landmark climate change session



Landmark BNG session

perspective, highlighting the legal risks and key considerations to make when advising clients during property transactions. Simon closed the session with a comprehensive report on Marni's and Isabella's Clauses.

After we were treated to a delicious lunch from Manchester Hall, Michael Beatty, Director at GIA Surveyors, explained the procedure around rights of light. Michael spoke about the acquisition and assessment of rights of light, transferred rights, and abandonment, as well as provided insight into the recent *Cooper & Powell v Ludgate House Ltd (2025)* case.

We then heard from Landmark again with Simon Boyle and Stephen Poole alongside Pamela Chesterman, Partner at Irwin Mitchell, who together spoke on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and how this impacts property planning. Pamela examined the recent *Morris Homes v Bolton Council* case, while Stephen Poole provided some insight into BNG from a landowner's perspective, discussing farmland and habitat types, costs, and risks to consider. Simon wrapped things up by exploring the use of satellite data and technology in assessing BNG and outlining Landmark's Argyll Environmental Site Solutions Biodiversity Report.

Nigel Brook, Barrister at St John's Buildings, then outlined key legislative updates in leasehold reform, including the Renters Rights Act 2025, the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and the Draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill 2026. Despite very recent legislative changes, Nigel kept his presentation extremely relevant and up to date.

To close the day, Chris Fortune from PMJ Capital was joined by our Committee Chair, Stephen Lintott, for a fireside chat on funding. The pair reflected on the 2025 market and their predictions and expectations for 2026.

A massive thank you to [Landmark Information Group](#) and [SearchFlow](#) for their support with sponsoring, our speakers for sharing their expertise and to everyone who joined us on the day. We can't wait to host more property law events this year – watch this space!

If you would be interested in joining the Property Law Committee, please email enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk. You can find out more about the Committee [here](#).

Feeling like a fraud – Imposter syndrome in the legal sector

We all have bad days at work. Worrying that your best isn't good enough and that you're not up to the job. It's hardly surprising in the legal sector, where workplaces can be highly competitive and mistakes can have serious consequences.

For some people, this feeling persists and develops into imposter syndrome. They feel unworthy, set themselves unrealistically high standards, and dwell on negative feedback. They constantly worry that they aren't the right person to work in law and that it's only a matter of time before they will be 'found out'. This can be particularly common when you're new to the sector, but people at all levels, including senior partners, can be affected.

Imposter syndrome is not a clinical diagnosis, although it is closely linked to anxiety, depression and burnout. It isn't simply low-self-esteem or being modest. Imposter syndrome is when there is a persistent struggle for someone to recognise their abilities, despite clear evidence of their achievements. Left unchecked, it can have a significant and ongoing impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

What LawCare is hearing

On LawCare's support channels, many people describe experiences that strongly suggest they are struggling with imposter syndrome. Common themes include:

- Feeling inferior to others when applying for roles

“

Imposter syndrome is not a clinical diagnosis, although it is closely linked to anxiety, depression and burnout

- Taking complaints or criticism personally
- Struggling with inadequate training, meaning tasks take longer than they do for more experienced colleagues
- Feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of their role
- Putting on a brave face at work despite self-doubt
- Approaching qualification and feeling undeserving of their place
- Experiencing renewed self-doubt after returning to work following a career break

Many of these people describe a sense of isolation, believing they are the only ones struggling, while everyone else seems to be managing just fine.

Why imposter syndrome affects so many people in law

1. **High standards and perfectionism** – There's no room for error in the law and



there's an expectation for legal teams to get things right every time.

2. **Constant comparison and competition**

– Law tends to attract high achievers, and many people's sense of identity and self-worth becomes closely tied to their qualifications and professional status.

3. **Lack of meaningful feedback** – Some people in the legal sector, especially those working independently or remotely, receive little day-to-day feedback about how they are doing. Without this, it is easy to assume the worst and become anxious about performance. Where people do get feedback, people struggling with imposter syndrome often hyper focus on the negative. They struggle to keep perspective and often take it as evidence that their 'deception' is about to be uncovered.

4. **Fear of mistakes** – If you work somewhere with a blame culture, you may worry excessively about making mistakes and catastrophise about the negative implications they might have for your client and your career. Heavy workloads, exacting targets and lack of supervision can make this worse.

How imposter syndrome can hold you back

Imposter syndrome can inhibit progress in your career and affect your mental health and wellbeing. You may struggle with:

- anxiety
- depression
- burnout
- exhaustion due to overworking
- procrastination
- social isolation

You are also likely to perform less well at work and miss opportunities to develop, learn and succeed.

Imposter syndrome can also have a negative impact on workplaces. People may be reluctant to suggest different ways of working or make decisions because they worry about making mistakes.

Ways to tackle imposter syndrome

Imposter syndrome is not a personality flaw, and you are not alone if you are feeling that way. You'll be pleased to know there are ways you can manage your imposter syndrome:

- **Talk about it** – Imposter syndrome thrives when people stay quiet. Simply talking about how you feel can really help. Not only does it feel good to get it off your chest, but it also helps other people who may be feeling the same way. It can be particularly powerful when leaders show vulnerability too. If you can't talk about it with your manager or colleagues, you can talk to LawCare.
- **Reframe mistakes** – Everyone makes mistakes, and in many cases, they are a good way to learn and develop. When you make a mistake try not to catastrophise.
- **Be kind to yourself** – A bit of self-compassion goes a long way. Think how you would talk to someone else about this, and make sure you talk to yourself in the same way. Be kind, patient, and keep everything in perspective. You could see if therapy or coaching might help you build self-esteem and develop new ways of thinking.

Continued on page 18



- **Build connections** – Working in isolation can fuel imposter syndrome. Take time to make connections with the people you work with. This doesn't have to be in person, although this can really help when you are early on in your career or new in an organisation. There are also many supportive groups and networks that can help. All you need is a space where you can listen to other people, share your thoughts, and feel part of something bigger.
- **Create psychological safety** – If you are a manager or leader, think about how you respond when someone tells you about a mistake. Do they feel safe to talk to you about this? Do they trust you to not hold it against them? Make sure you

respond with empathy and encourage people to learn and develop. Don't create an environment where imposter syndrome can flourish.

Support from LawCare

If imposter syndrome is affecting your mental health or wellbeing, you don't have to deal with it alone. LawCare has a confidential helpline, email and online chat where you can talk to someone with direct experience of working in the legal sector. LawCare is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Call LawCare on **0800 279 6888**, email support@lawcare.org.uk or access the online chat on our [website](#), where you can also find helpful information and resources.

Click for more info

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Annual conference and Dinner

26 March 2026, 9.30am to late

**Kimpton
Clocktower Hotel,
Manchester**

**The Laws of
Contract & Unjust
Enrichment
in 2026**



The BICBA Annual Conference is returning to Manchester in 2026. It will follow the usual format of a day of informative talks and panel sessions, followed by a dinner. There is an outstanding line-up of special guests and speakers from across the four jurisdictions, including:

**Lord Burrows JSC, UK Supreme Court
Woulfe J, Supreme Court of Ireland
Barnville J, President of the High Court of Ireland
Henshaw J, Head of the Commercial Court in England & Wales
Birss LJ, The Chancellor of the High Court of England & Wales
Humphreys J, High Court of Northern Ireland
Representatives of the Scottish senior courts**

Plus many other senior members of the judiciary, practitioners and other experts, providing insight into this important area of commercial law.

Book your place today: [CLICK HERE](#)

Conference kindly sponsored by



Law firm marginal gains

I was speaking about the topic of marginal gains last week with one of our law firm clients. One of the Partners explained that outside of work she had adopted a number of 1% changes to her lifestyle. Nothing major, just minor tweaks.

One of them included the toast. She explained how she normally eats two slices of toast every morning. She has reduced this to one slice. During the week, she's removed five slices of toast from her diet (she has weekends off!). Over a month, she's removed the equivalent of a loaf of bread from her diet. Small changes, that added together can make a massive difference. A great example of marginal gains.

Back in July, I wrote an article in the Messenger about marginal gains. I spoke about it from a management perspective and how teams can adopt this mentality of looking for slight tweaks to help improve efficiency and save time etc. [You can find the article here](#) [Ⓔ].

In this article I'd like to build on that by looking more specifically at law firms. Here's a selection of questions you could ask your team:

Strategy & Positioning

- Where are we losing small percentages of work to competitors? Why?
- What 1% improvements in client experience would most increase repeat instructions?
- How could we refine our practice area focus to improve cross-selling by 5%?

Client Experience & Relationships

- How quickly do we respond to new enquiries — and can we reduce that by 10-20%?

- Do we proactively update clients, or do they chase us?
- Could clearer fee transparency reduce friction and improve trust?
- What one small improvement would make working with us easier for in-house counsel?

Process & Efficiency

- Where are fee-earners duplicating work that could be templated?
- Could better use of practice management systems save 15 minutes per fee-earner per day?
- Are meetings shorter and more structured than they were last year?

Data & Measurement

- What KPIs do we measure monthly — and are they the right ones?
- Are we benchmarking against firms of similar size and geography?
- Where are small inefficiencies compounding into large cost centres?
- If we improved 1% every month for 12 months, where would that leave us?
- What are our "hidden friction points" that irritate clients?
- Where are we relying on habit rather than evidence?
- If we started this firm today, what would we design differently?

These types of questions can be asked in team meetings on a regular basis to help create a culture where everyone is thinking with a marginal gains mindset

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Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



As we move into March, regulatory activity remains elevated across all areas, including anti-money laundering and sanctions, claims management, client care, and, at the date of writing, the profession watches reporting of Mazur appeal with much interest (live streaming of the proceedings having been restricted to those applying for, and obtaining permission to observe).

The SRA continues to emphasise transparency in high-volume consumer work, while OFSI has introduced a more structured enforcement framework and invited feedback on ownership and control. Complaint pressures remain high at the Legal Ombudsman, and recent tribunal outcomes underscore the centrality of integrity, robust systems and clear client communication.

Regulatory focus on claims management and fee transparency

Regulators continue to scrutinise the conduct of claims firms, with intensified attention on the clarity of no-win, no-fee arrangements. Recent commentary from the Legal Services Board and the SRA, as well as FCA, highlights persistent issues around transparency, client understanding and the management of high-volume consumer claims. Firms offering these models should review client-care materials to ensure that risk, cost and termination implications are explained in plain language. The SRA recently issued a warning notice “No win, no fee’ and other fee arrangements in high-volume consumer claims’ and advised that as at the end of December 2025, it had 83 open investigations relating to 72 firms working in the claims market, and has contacted some firms requiring them to confirm that they understand and are following the rules. As with previous declarations, e.g. in relation to AML FWRAs and PCPs, it is likely that such declarations will be considered by the SRA if those firms are subsequently investigated and found not to be following the rules.

Joint messaging from the SRA and the FCA also flags poor practice in multiple representation, termination charges and motor-finance claims. Firms should stress-test conflicts procedures and ensure costs provisions are fair, well-documented and communicated early—especially where clients may be vulnerable or unfamiliar with litigation funding.

Client care and complaint trends

The Legal Ombudsman reports sustained, record-level demand. The most common themes remain delay, gaps in communication and uncertainty about costs. Firms investing in proactive updates, realistic timelines and clear costs information continue to see fewer escalations and faster resolution. As referred to previously, we have noted a large increase in complaints to our firm clients drafted by/ with the assistance of AI, which can run to many pages, produce responses in minutes and cause additional stress to fee earners.

AML developments

The SRA has updated the Sectoral Risk Assessment - Anti-money laundering and terrorist financing (4 February 2026) and its section, “Your AML obligations’ although, rather unhelpfully, it has not indicated what changes have been made. There is a link to the searchable database of designated persons and entities on the sectoral risk assessment, and the tab, ‘Historic high-risk third countries list’ has been updated to add Kuwait and Papua New Guinea, but as there is no version control and no way to access



the previous versions, that may not be the only update. If anyone has any further details, please get in touch.

If your FWRA and PCPs include dates of guidance referred to, now may be a good time to revisit them.

Financial Sanctions

A user guide has been published to accompany the UK Sanctions List search tool, which sets out the functions and features of the search tool, how it works and how to use it, and helps to explain a number of features to help determine if a person, entity, or ship is included on the UK Sanctions List, including exact matches and partial matches of a search term, fuzzy searching etc.

OFSI has implemented updates to its enforcement and monetary penalties guidance, including penalty reductions for prompt notifications, clearer outcome signposts and fixed monetary penalties of £5,000 and £10,000 for specified information and reporting offences.

It has launched a call for evidence on how the ownership and control test operates in practice, including scenarios of 'hypothetical control'. The focus is on practical challenges, impacts on compliance costs and whether current concepts remain proportionate and workable. Responses are invited until 13 April 2026.

As you will be aware, the sanctions regime applies to all areas of legal services, so it is worth noting that OFSI recently issued a £160,000 penalty to Bank of Scotland for breaches of Russia sanctions after processing payments linked to a designated person. OFSI's commentary stresses the configuration of screening tools, clear escalation routes and training that reflects geopolitical



developments. Prompt voluntary disclosure attracted a 50% reduction in this case.

Mazur

While this part of our update may be redundant by the time this article goes to print following the appeal hearing which starts on 23 February, in the event that it isn't, it is worth noting that the Law Society updated its practice note on 29 January 2026, although, at the date of writing and in similar fashion to the SRA, without a summary of changes, and unhelpfully not including the previous version dated 18 November 2025 in the archived versions. With the assistance of Copilot, the January version includes a new, expanded explanation confirming that Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeal Tribunal proceedings are not within the reserved activity of conducting litigation, clarifies distinctions between tribunal types falling inside/outside reserved litigation, re-emphasises when CILEX authorised entities or individuals may be authorised and provides more streamlined examples, particularly round escalation points and the division of responsibilities between authorised and non-authorised staff. It notes changes are evolution, not redirection, which is helpful to firms refining internal processes following the Mazur judgment. The Q&As have also been updated, but again without an indication of the changes/additional questions.

New/updated practice notes and guidance

SRA

- [Sanctions regime – firm-wide risk assessments](#) 
- ['No win, no fee' and other fee arrangements in high-volume consumer claims](#) 

Continued on page 24



- [Claims management activity | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)
- [Complying with the UK Sanctions Regime | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

Law Society

- [Mazur and the conduct of litigation](#)

Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

Latest SRA fines for AML non-compliance

A series of recent fines, ranging from £3,500 to £25,000 highlights recurring weaknesses in basic AML hygiene – customer due diligence, ongoing monitoring and lack of non-compliant documentation, with one firm being fined for not maintaining in writing its record of PCPs from 2011 – 2017. Quite clearly, firms cannot turn the clock back, but present FWRAs, PCPs etc. should be in order, and if your firm has not yet had an independent AML audit, now is the time to consider one so that you can be in the best position possible in the event of a SRA visit/investigation.

Struck off for lying on CV

A recently qualified solicitor has been struck off the roll after the SDT found that he deliberately falsified his academic record to secure a role at a City law firm. The tribunal concluded that such dishonesty undermined trust in the profession and breached the fundamental principle of integrity required of solicitors. He also had to pay over £5,000 costs.

Struck off for covering up late court arrival

The SDT has struck off a solicitor who attempted to conceal his late arrival at court by submitting a deliberately misleading statement from the attendance note, giving

false reasons for the matter being adjourned. He said he requested an adjournment because of a lack of instructions and that defence counsel had not received certain documents, but he had actually arrived late for the hearing, by which time defence counsel had left and the judge decided to adjourn the case.

Dishonesty ends solicitor's 50-year career

A solicitor with a career spanning over 50 years, who was being investigated for backdating a document and then denied on an indemnity and insurance application that he was subject to any SRA investigation, was struck off, the SDT deciding that the two incidents were not isolated or a momentary lapse of judgment as they occurred 15 months apart. He was also ordered to pay almost £15,000 costs.

Senior solicitor suspended following misconduct at work social event

A former senior partner was suspended by the SDT and ordered to pay £30,000 costs, following findings that he made unwanted sexually inappropriate comments to colleagues during a firm Christmas party. He was suspended from work after internal disciplinary proceedings were commenced and retired before those proceedings concluded. The tribunal determined that his behaviour, which included remarks that were unwelcome and offensive in nature, fell seriously below the standard expected of a solicitor, even in a social setting and amounted to professional misconduct.

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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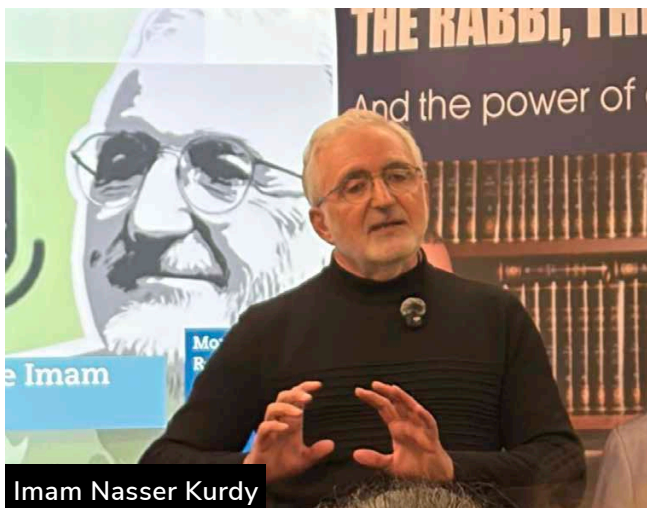
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From page 1

The Rabbi, The Imam and the Power of Dialogue (continued)



On behalf of the committee, I am hugely grateful to Imam Nasser Kurdy and Rabbi Dovid Lewis who, through humour, anecdotes and serious discussion, explored themes such as faith and identity, community cohesion, the role of religion

in modern society, and the transformative power of interfaith dialogue and initiatives.

It was heartwarming to see two individuals with opposite and conflicting views talk through their differences and share their life experiences, the good and the bad, and through that they spoke to their joint message which is that we can have different views but still co-exist and even be friends who disagree. In Imam Nasser Kurdy's words: 'We stand on a platform of equal empathy and equal respect.'

In the words of Mark Schweiger, one of the founders of The Rabbi & The Imam Initiative, about the event, 'The event was a powerful reminder of what is possible when we choose conversation over confrontation... Bringing people together





across difference is never simple but when it's done with openness, respect, and courage, it creates space for understanding rather than division... Dialogue doesn't erase difference, it humanises it.'

Fran Eccles-Bech, CEO of Manchester Law Society, said, "The conversation highlighted the profound impact that honest, respectful dialogue can have in building understanding across difference. At a time when the world can feel increasingly divided, this night reminded us that coming together to listen, learn, and talk openly is not only possible — it is essential."

The discussion was incredibly powerful and inspiring, and I am hugely grateful to committee member Andrea Cohen for bringing this event to life and to Clyde and Co for hosting our event with such warm hospitality. Thanks also to committee member Nouman Bhatti and Yusouf Kaj for facilitating this – both Fran and I strategically placed ourselves close by the very scrumptious nibbles that you kindly provided. You can hear more from Imam Nasser Kurdy and Rabbi Dovid Lewis by downloading their podcast: 'The Rabbi, The Imam and the Power of Dialogue' [here](#) @.

“

Dialogue doesn't erase difference, it humanises it”

Next Committee Meeting

At our last committee meeting, we were joined by guest speaker Sam Turner from the LGBT Foundation who spoke to us about the amazing and much needed work they do, and how we, as both individuals and firms within Manchester, can help and do more for the community. A huge thanks to Sam for taking the time to come and speak with us.

Our next meeting is taking place at 12pm – 1pm on Thursday 23rd April. If you want to come along, please let us know.

Shane Smith

Associate Solicitor, Slater and Gordon
Lawyers
Chair of EDI Network





For this edition's Talking Heads, we had a bit of fun while shining a spotlight on the incredible talent across our profession, especially as *nominations have now opened* for the Manchester Legal Awards. We asked...

“If you could choose any superpower to help you excel in your legal career (or to give you the winning edge at this year's Awards), what would it be and why?”

Judith O'Brien
Partner
Prosperity Law

“My superpower would be the ability to keep granting myself further superpowers to deal with any situation, but I'm guessing that is against the rules.

Prediction of the lottery numbers is obvious, but perhaps to help in a work situation, the ability to see a little way into the future

would be a great help. The number of times clients ask me, ‘But what if?’ ... which is understandable given the massive changes they are usually facing. I usually advise taking one step at a time, and dealing with one issue piece by piece, so it isn't as over facing. It would be wonderful to be able to say ‘Let's not worry about that as that isn't going to happen, or, you will definitely sell your house within six months.’



It would also help knowing well in advance which way the Judges were going to decide any particular case!”

Stacey Mabrouk
Commercial
Director
Olliers
Solicitors

“If I had a superpower as Commercial Director, it would be the ability to slow time! While our lawyers are focused on clients and cases, I'm juggling SRA compliance, Lexcel audits



and financial forecasting, usually all at once and preferably before coffee. A little extra time would mean everything runs as smoothly as it should: deadlines comfortably met, nominations calmly submitted, and

spreadsheets reaching their final version without anyone asking whether this one is ‘definitely the one.’

Legal brilliance is essential, but keeping a firm compliant, organised and profitable at the same time is the quieter work that keeps everything standing, and explains why I flinch slightly when someone says, ‘It'll only take two minutes.’”

Nicola Young
Employment Partner
Bexley Beaumont

"I would choose precognition, being able to see into the future and to accurately predict outcomes, such as how an employment tribunal judge is likely to respond to an application or decide a case, how a witness will perform on the witness stand during cross examination, whether a claimant will actually issue

a claim or just threaten to do so and the point at which the other side will concede in settlement discussions. Such insight would shape how you advise a client, draft, and negotiate. You would be able to anticipate human behaviour, tribunal reactions, and decisions as well as commercial consequences before they fully unfold which would be invaluable. Seeing future outcomes would make decisions



clearer in terms of career progression. I can also see the benefits of this superpower outside of work too, particularly when parenting my three daughters!"

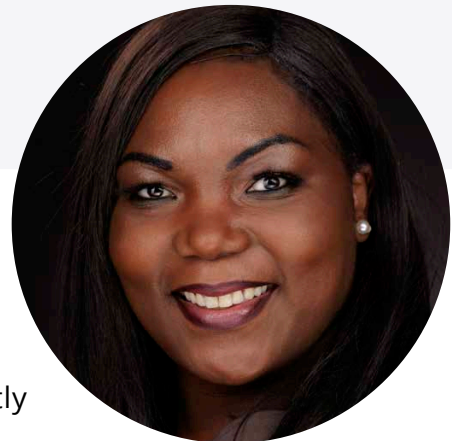
Sylviane Kokouendo
Associate Partner
Slater Heelis Solicitors

"If I could choose any superpower to enhance my legal career and perhaps give me the winning edge at this year's Manchester Legal Awards, it would be the ability to see around corners.

Employment law is constantly evolving, shaped by legislative reform, shifting workplace cultures and economic pressures. The ability to anticipate not just the legal risks but how tribunals, regulators and businesses will respond to emerging issues, would be invaluable.

Clients don't just want technical advice, they want foresight. They want to know what's coming next and how to prepare for it. A superpower of strategic prediction would mean being able to guide them confidently through uncertainty, helping them stay compliant while remaining commercially agile.

While I don't have a crystal ball, I strive to achieve the same result through staying ahead of developments, understanding my clients' objectives and thinking several steps ahead."



“
 Clients don't just want technical advice, they want foresight”



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Higher rights of audience training launches in Manchester



Delivered by the UK's Only SRA-Regulated Assessment Provider

Face-to-Face Higher Rights Training Comes to the North

[The University of Law](#) is bringing its Higher Rights of Audience (HRA) advocacy training to Manchester this Spring, offering practitioners in the region the opportunity to undertake high-quality, face-to-face advocacy training with the UK's sole SRA-regulated provider of the Higher Rights assessment.

Why Obtain Higher Rights of Audience?

Obtaining Higher Rights of Audience enhances your professional standing, broadens the range of work you can undertake, and supports your long-term career development.

For many solicitors and CILEX members, Higher Rights open the door to appearing in the higher civil and criminal courts, taking greater ownership of cases and developing a more advocacy focused practice.

The training also equips delegates with practical skills that can be applied immediately in day-to-day professional work.

Higher Rights Advocacy Training at The University of Law

The University of Law provide Higher Rights training with unmatched flexibility and practitioner led expertise. We deliver Civil and Criminal Higher Rights Advocacy Training, designed for trainee solicitors, qualified solicitors and CILEX members.

Each pathway is structured to mirror the format of the Higher Rights assessment and is split into two distinct elements:

Part 1: Written Advocacy

Focuses on ethics, evidence, procedure, analysis and drafting effective written submissions.

Part 2: Practical Advocacy

Develops oral advocacy skills through realistic case scenarios, interim applications, mini trials and structured tutor feedback.

While undertaking training is not a prerequisite for sitting the assessment, our courses are specifically designed to support delegates in becoming assessment-ready while also developing practical advocacy skills that can be applied immediately in practice.

Why Choose Face-to-Face Training in Manchester?

We are the only major provider offering both face-to-face and online Higher Rights training, with Manchester set to become our flagship regional centre outside London.

In-person delivery offers clear benefits:

- Small group sizes
- High levels of interaction
- Live advocacy exercises
- Detailed, individual feedback from experienced practitioner-tutors

This immersive environment allows delegates to build confidence, refine technique and engage fully with advocacy skills in a supportive setting.

Course Format, Pricing and Delivery Options

Each training course element runs over two days and is priced at **£555 + VAT**, with written and practical elements available to book separately.

We also offer **in-house delivery** for firms wishing to train groups of delegates.

Higher Rights Assessments

Higher Rights assessments are scheduled throughout the year, both online and in person, with full details and specimen materials available on the University of Law's website.

A New Opportunity for Northern Practitioners

With Manchester launching from Spring, this represents a valuable opportunity for Northern practitioners to progress their advocacy careers locally.

To book or enquire, visit their webpages [here](#) and [here](#)

Messenger deadlines for 2026



Please find the deadlines for forthcoming issues 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.

If you have any queries, please email messenger@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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



London expansion and record revenues drive next phase of growth at Brabners

Annual trading update for the year ending April 30th, 2025

Brabners [®] has reported its eighth consecutive year of growth, with turnover surpassing £60m as the firm grows to almost 600 colleagues and prepares to enter its next phase of client-centred, scalable growth.

The purpose-led independent law firm saw revenue rise by 11.7% to £60.2m for the financial year ending April 2025.

Pre-tax profits (before members' remuneration and profit shares) also increased to £20.3m, up from £18.1m the previous year.

Strategic Expansion: London

Building on this momentum, Brabners has confirmed its plan to enter the London

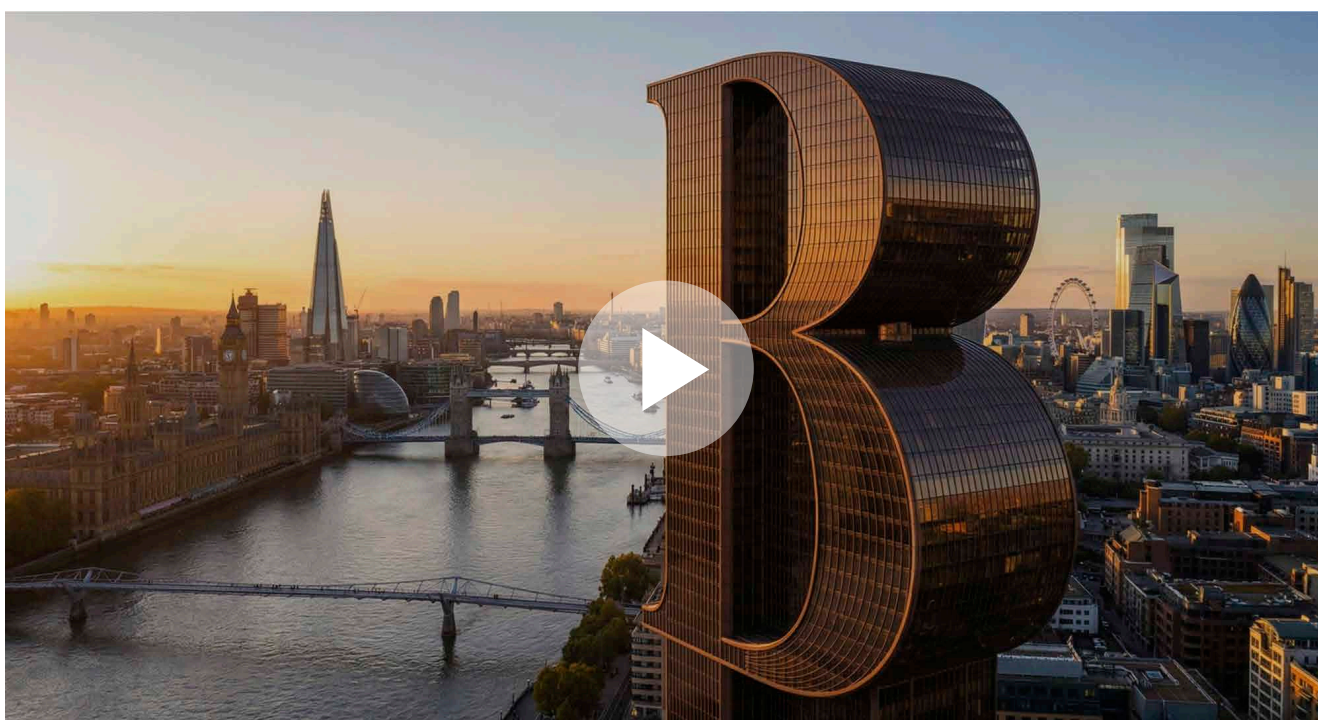
market marked by the opening of its office in the City in mid-2026 — a landmark step that reflects both the firm's sustained growth and the evolving needs of its clients.

Brabners' move into the capital represents a natural progression for the firm and will amplify its national reach as well as the support it can offer to clients operating across the UK and internationally.

The move follows the firm's successful entry into the Leeds market in 2022 and further strengthens its position as a leading independent law firm.

The London office will be anchored by the appointment of two senior partners.

Corporate Partner Stuart Hatcher joins from Forsters, bringing extensive experience in advising privately-owned businesses alongside deep sector expertise in sport,



including his role as a director of Brentford FC; and Litigation Partner Russell Strong joins from Gunner Cooke, specialising in high-value commercial litigation and international arbitration.

They will join existing London-based real estate and tax partners Ross Shine and Euri Yoon respectively, establishing a permanent platform in the capital and laying the foundations for Brabners to play an active role in the London market over the coming years.

Operational Excellence and Sector Highlights

Brabners corporate team remained one of the UK's most active dealmakers, advising on transactions worth more than £500m in the first half of 2025 alone, double the value of the same period in the previous year.

Standout mandates included advising on the sale of a majority stake in the £350m turnover engineering firm William Hare Group.

The firm's litigation practice also secured a landmark defamation victory in the Supreme Court, while its specialist sports team continued its growth with new mandates for the World Boxing Championships and Wrexham AFC.

The Brabners True North network — which brings together like-minded businesses, business leaders and other organisations who are keen to play their part in unlocking the true economic potential of the North — continues to go from strength to strength and has now grown to over 580 members. The network continues to build its influence in advocating for the positive role that purpose-led business can play in driving economic growth and inclusive prosperity.

Innovation remains central to the firm's strategy, with significant investments planned in its AI capabilities, technology infrastructure and data analytics — all aimed at enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency.

Culture and Excellence

Central to the firm's performance is its continued investment in its people.

During the period, Brabners was ranked as the UK's best law firm to work for and the sixth best large company to work for in the UK, reflecting its longstanding commitment to creating an inclusive, supportive and high-performing workplace.

A key pillar of this approach is social mobility. Brabners actively removes barriers for candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring that access to careers in law is based on potential rather than privilege. As a result, 36% of its current trainee cohort identify as having experienced high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

This focus forms an integral part of the firm's wider strategic goal to lead on social impact, a commitment the firm intends to carry into London and its growth plans as it builds its presence in the capital.

The firm's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace has been recognised with various industry accolades, including winning Equality, Diversity and Inclusion awards at both the Manchester and Liverpool Legal Awards.

ESG and Social Impact

Brabners continues to make progress against its environmental and social targets

Continued on page 36

MARCH 2026



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and remains proud of its certification as a B-Corp. The firm reported a 19% reduction in energy consumption across its office estate during the last financial year, supported by its transition to more sustainable, modern workspaces in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds.

The firm also continues to support social mobility and community initiatives, notably through the Maurice Watkins Bursary, which provides financial support for aspiring lawyers from diverse backgrounds, alongside its ongoing commitment to the peatland restoration project at Kingsdale Head.

In addition, the Brabners Foundation continues to reinvest the firm's success into the communities it serves. Since its inception in 2019, more than £210,000 has been donated through 86 grants to charitable organisations across the North. Including £30,000 donated to eight charities in the last year. Current charity partnerships include Wakefield Hospice in Yorkshire, the Be Free Campaign in Liverpool and the North West Air Ambulance.

Robert White, CEO at Brabners, said: "This year's financial performance provides a fantastic springboard as we begin the next

Fletchers Solicitors' Leanne Devine achieves APIL Senior Litigator accreditation

Fletchers Solicitors is proud to announce that **Leanne Devine**, an Associate and Birth Injury Solicitor based in the firm's Manchester office, has achieved Senior Litigator status with the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

This prestigious accreditation is reserved for solicitors who have proven their expert ability in handling high-value and complex cases with both sensitivity and skill. It is a mark of unwavering commitment to the highest standards of client care and legal practice within personal injury law.

Among her most recent achievements, Leanne and the Birth Injury team at Fletchers helped to secure £6.5 million for a family whose daughter was left with a hypoxic brain injury during a traumatic birth.

The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) is a not-for-profit organisation

established in 1990 to champion the rights of injured people. With thousands of members across the UK, APIL promotes excellence in legal representation for victims of negligence, provides specialist training and accreditation for lawyers, and campaigns to ensure access to justice for those who have suffered injury.

APIL's accreditation scheme is a mark of professional competence and expertise, recognised throughout the legal industry.

Trevor Ward, Partner and Head of Birth Injury at Fletchers Solicitors said: "Leanne's accreditation is testament to her determination to go above and beyond for every family or individual who instructs us. It is richly deserved and also stands to show Fletchers' commitment to nurturing our solicitors' professional development, and to ensure the best possible service for our clients."

phase of our growth. Most notably marked with our entry into the London market.

What we have achieved in the last year — and in the past eight years — is testament to the quality of our firm, the ambition of our clients and the strength of our relationships with them, as well as the aspiration and commitment of our people.

“Surpassing the £60m revenue mark is a significant milestone. And as we look ahead, our focus remains on delivering client-centred, scalable growth that enhances our ability to invest in exceptional talent, technology and innovation — and above all else that supports and protects our independence.”

Leanne said: “I’m delighted to have been recognised by APIL and reached Senior Litigator status in my field of law. It is a privilege to hold this accreditation while representing clients who are often facing one of the toughest experiences in their lives. I’m extremely proud to be a part of the team at Fletchers, which works tirelessly to secure the best result for every individual and family affected by a traumatic birth.”

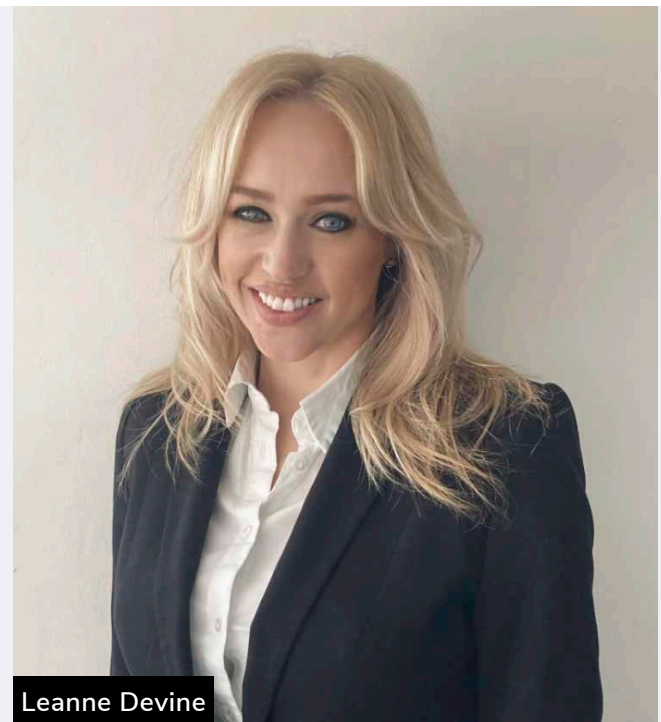
APIL chief executive Mike Benner said: “Being injured through negligence is never planned for and many victims feel vulnerable and uncertain about the future. The APIL accreditation logo lets injured people and their families know that they are in the very safest hands and that their lawyers are dedicated to getting their lives back on track.

“APIL members who are awarded accredited status must demonstrate expertise and experience and be up-to-date with the latest legal training and developments in the law.

“As an organisation we are committed to driving excellence in the personal

Nik White, Managing Partner at Brabners, said: “Our success is driven by our people, and we are incredibly proud to be approaching 600 colleagues across the firm. Fundamental to who we are — and underpinning our ability to attract and retain outstanding colleagues — is our culture.

“Launching in London is a landmark moment for Brabners. It allows us to build our presence in the capital while staying true to our values, strengthening our offering to clients and playing our part as an engaged and responsible member of the London business community.”



Leanne Devine

injury sector and fighting for prompt and fair redress for victims of negligence. APIL has been doing this for over thirty years and is the trusted voice of injured people. Negligence can happen to anyone, so it worth remembering that an APIL accreditation logo is the one to look for if you are ever injured and believe it could and should have been prevented.”



Clarke Willmott celebrates 15 years of growth, community impact, and client service in Manchester

Last week, [Clarke Willmott LLP](#) celebrated the 15th anniversary of its Manchester office, marking a significant milestone that highlights the firm's long-standing commitment to the city and its continued growth across the North West.

Hosted at Manchester's iconic Cloud 23 bar, the event brought together clients, colleagues and professional contacts to celebrate 15 years of growth and partnership in the city, and to look ahead to the next chapter of Clarke Willmott's Manchester story.

Since opening in 2011, Clarke Willmott has built a thriving Manchester office that is a key part of the firm's national footprint. Over the past 15 years, the Manchester team has advised nearly 5000 clients across a wide range of sectors, including Corporate and Commercial, Commercial Property, Commercial and Private Client Litigation, Construction, Employment, Family, Probate, Tax and Estate Planning, Housing Management, Insolvency, Personal Injury and Planning & Environmental, reflecting the deep expertise within the office.

Beyond client work, the Manchester office has maintained a strong focus on responsible business and community engagement throughout its 15-year history. The law firm has supported charities including the Ghazali Trust and St Anne's Hospice, and now focuses its charitable efforts on Rise Up and the Social Mobility Foundation, both at a firm-wide level and with particular emphasis on engagement in Manchester.

The Manchester team has also been instrumental in driving a number of sustainability and environmental initiatives in

the region, collaborating with organisations such as CyanLines, the Manchester Carbon Literacy Committee and the Manchester Climate Change Partnership to deliver meaningful, lasting environmental impact.

As a further demonstration of its long-term commitment to Manchester, Clarke Willmott has recently signed a new 10 year lease for its office, reinforcing the firm's plans to remain a key part of the city's professional landscape for the decade ahead.

Peter Swinburn, CEO of Clarke Willmott LLP, commented: "Reaching 15 years in Manchester is a proud moment for the firm. We've watched the office go from strength to strength – it is a great example of our long-term, sustainable approach to growth. We look forward to continuing to invest in the region for many years to come."

Ed Foukes, Head of Clarke Willmott's Manchester office, said: "Our success in Manchester is driven by our people, our culture and our commitment to building trusted relationships with clients. Our team is passionate about delivering excellent service for our clients, while also making a meaningful contribution to the local community. This anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on what we've achieved and to look ahead with confidence."



Document Direct findings show how one decision can unlock £75k in revenue

In a world where time really is money, how much of your working day is spent on tasks that don't directly generate revenue?

For many legal professionals, document production, transcription and administrative work quietly consume hours that could be better spent on client relationships, or business development.

It's time to shift the balance.

Typing up attendance notes, formatting documents or refining long reports are essential tasks – but they don't need to be carried out by fee earners. When lawyers spend time on document production and admin, they're pulled away from the work only they can do: advising clients, progressing matters and generating income.

The numbers quickly add up:

- Just **one hour a day** spent on admin or typing equals **five hours a week**
- That's over **250 hours a year**
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Lewis Silkin's Manchester team moves office again following rapid growth

Lewis Silkin [Ⓔ] has announced its move to larger premises in Manchester city centre, having outgrown its office space three times since first opening in in September 2022.

The team has moved from its previous location in the retail district to office space in **Trinity Manchester** [Ⓔ], which is located in the central business district, and close to many of the firm's clients.

The new premises cover 8,000 sq ft, a significant increase on the 2,000 sq ft of the previous office. This includes a much-needed increase in meeting room space, and also allows for future expansion over the coming decade – and beyond.

As well as offering improved facilities for client meetings, the new office has strong sustainability credentials, with a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'. (This is Lewis Silkin's second BREEAM-rated office after the Arbor building in London, which has an 'Excellent' rating.)

Initially set up with a four-strong employment team in September 2022, the Manchester office has grown rapidly since. Today the team numbers 46 colleagues, including seven Partners working across employment, corporate and commercial.

Examples of Lewis Silkin's recent work in Manchester include:


- Providing employment law advice to a large range of clients including Whitbread (who own Premier Inn), Well Pharmacy, West Midland Trains, Moneysupermarket, Mitie and Simplyhealth.
- Advising on deals with a total consideration value of around £180m, including the sale of Capital Injection Ceramics to Siemens Energy, and an investment by Beech Tree Private Equity in Inspiro Learning



- Supporting Maven, Mercia and Pembroke Venture Capital Trusts on multiple investments, including Pembroke's recent investment in AI-enabled video telematics company Exeros Technologies
- Advising UK companies **Tiny Dragon Productions** [Ⓔ] and **Dream Awake** [Ⓔ] on their involvement in the groundbreaking immersive theatre experience "The Deal", which premiered in Shenzhen, China, in late 2025. Set aboard a transformed 1960s French cruise liner, visitors are transported to a reimagined 1920s Paris – with shopping districts, homes, offices and jazz bars brought to life across the Minghua's seven decks – which they can stroll through as they interact with an international cast of 36 performers.

Sally Hulston, Partner and Head of Manchester Office, said: "It's just over three years since Lewis Silkin opened in Manchester, and I'm proud to say that we've outgrown our office space for the third time. We've taken a 10-year lease on our new premises, demonstrating our long-term commitment to the city. With four times more space than previously, we've got plenty of room to grow into, and we will be continuing to add to the team over the coming weeks and months as we move towards a complete 'Ideas and People' offering."

Clarke Willmott appointed to multi-million pound framework


Clarke Willmott LLP  has been appointed to a multi-million pound framework agreement by Torus, the North West's largest affordable housing provider.

Clarke Willmott is among 11 firms appointed to Torus' multi-lot framework having secured a place in the housing management legal services lot.

The estimated value of the framework is £6.48m and the contract is expected to run until 2029 with the possibility of four optional 12-month extensions until 2033.

Alongside legal expertise, Clarke Willmott will deliver measurable social value outcomes aligned to Torus' mission of growing stronger communities.

Clarke Willmott's dedicated Housing Management and Leasehold teams provide specialist services to registered providers on all aspects of housing and leasehold management including succession, disrepair, tenancy and lease enforcement, nuisance behaviour, possession and leasehold asset management.

Lynn James , partner in the property litigation team at Clarke Willmott, will head up the work with Torus. She said: "We are delighted to be working with Torus and supporting the delivery of their goals over the next four years.

"Our national social housing team is going from strength to strength, and this latest client win is testament to our abilities and reputation as leading legal advisers in the sector."

Torus Group Chief Executive, Steve Coffey,




Lynn James

said: "Expanding our framework reflects the ambition of our growth strategy which will require significantly more legal support and expertise.

"The response, quality and quantity of tenders received to the legal framework was excellent with some existing law firms retained and new companies added.

"We are really pleased to welcome Clarke Willmott on board as they will play an intrinsic role as a key partner helping us delivery crucial services to our tenants and communities."

With over 40,000 properties in its portfolio, Torus, is an affordable homes provider and a fast-growing developer and commercial contractor. Aside from building, managing and maintaining its portfolio, Torus aims to make a social impact and support local people by investing in their future and in communities.

For more information on Clarke Willmott's social housing work visit [here](#) 



Record half year for criminal defence firm Olliers Solicitors

Olliers Solicitors [®] has announced record growth after celebrating its biggest fee month on record.

The announcement comes as Olliers Solicitors celebrates its first anniversary in its new location on the fourth floor of 44 Peter Street Manchester.

Fee income from the last six months, shows that the firm is on track to generate £6.38m in fee income in this financial year – a jump from £4.92m from the previous financial year. (Almost 30% growth from year-end figures for 2025).

The Manchester-headquartered criminal defence specialists said that this growth, particularly from private client work, is allowing the firm to expand its team, with five new roles already appointed.

Matthew Claughton, Olliers Solicitor's Managing Director, said: "This exceptional growth is testament to the unmatched brilliance of our team, who have carved out a reputation for exceptional client care and legal expertise.

"We have seen a significant increase in private work and pre-charge representation from August 2025 onwards and each month since then has been stronger than the last.

"This January was our biggest month ever thanks in part to private work but also significant legal aid cases, proving that our strategy to maintain both types of instruction is proving to be successful.

"The first 12 months here at 44 Peter Street have also seen us celebrated as Manchester Law Society's Crime Team of the Year – an accolade of which we are immensely proud.

"The move to a new office signalled a major step-change for us as a firm and a commitment to future growth. It is great to see that investment and the excellent work of the Olliers' team paying off."

Olliers, recently recognised as a Times Best Law Firm 2026, is also leading the way in client care accreditation, setting a new industry benchmark for client service across every touchpoint.

The scheme, launched last September, was created to formalise the firm's core value of providing exceptional client care, with all lawyers passing the accreditation in January.

Olliers are now developing an AI accreditation to ensure the firm stays at the cutting edge of AI literacy across all aspects of legal practice.



Ruth Peters, Olliers Solicitors Business Development Director, who forms the senior management team with Matthew and Commercial Director Stacey Mabrouk, added: "Our record-breaking performance is the direct result of a proactive, long-term strategy to redefine how a criminal defence firm connects with its clients.

"Our commitment to marketing and high-value website content has driven a significant surge in direct enquiries from individuals seeking specialist criminal defence representation.

"This 30% jump in fee income proves that when you combine specialist legal brilliance with a modern, commercial approach

to business development, you create a platform that serves the client's best interests.

"This growth allows us to reinvest in the very best talent, ensuring that we remain the first choice for those facing the most challenging legal situations."

Recent new starters:

- Austin Anderson-Brettell, Associate Solicitor
- Catherine Baird, Associate Solicitor
- Sophie Young, Support Team Member
- Rachael Latto, Support Team Member
- Charlotte Shovlar, Legal Cashier

Stacy Fox appointed President of Bolton Law Society

Stacy Fox has been appointed President of Bolton Law Society for the 2026–2027 term.

Stacy, who works at [Cartwright King](#) as Regional Head within the firm's Child Care Department, has been closely involved with Bolton Law Society throughout her career and has most recently served as Secretary for the past six years.

Her appointment reflects her long-standing commitment to the local legal community and her role in supporting solicitors and practitioners across Bolton and the surrounding areas.

As President, Stacy plans to continue the Society's work in delivering legal update seminars, networking and social events for members. She is also keen to strengthen links with neighbouring law societies, helping to share ideas and promote best practice across the profession.



Stacy Fox with outgoing President David Kitchen

Stacy said: "I am extremely proud to have been appointed President of Bolton Law Society for the 2026–2027 period. The Society plays an important role in supporting local solicitors, and I am looking forward to building on the excellent work already in place."

Stacy succeeds David Kitchen, who served as President during the 2024–2025 term.



Bexley Beaumont achieves new milestone with B-Corporation status

Bexley Beaumont [®] has announced that it has become one of the few UK law firms to achieve a prestigious international standard for sustainability and governance.

It is now among only 38 firms nationwide to become a B-Corp, recognised for their social and environmental performance.

Bexley Beaumont reached the landmark after a rigorous two-year assessment, recording one of the highest scores of any qualifying legal practice in England and Wales.

Bexley Beaumont co-founder and Chief Executive, Karen Bexley, has described the process as an important stage of the firm's evolution.

"Becoming a B-Corp is yet another major statement about how far we have come and how responsible we are as a business

"The accreditation process was very lengthy and detailed, really challenging us to prove

that we are doing the right things, in the right way and for the right reasons

"In that sense, it has been of immense benefit because we could see the progress which we have made. Yet it has also helped us review and refine what we do and how we do it.

"Although it is a significant milestone for us, it is certainly not an end in itself but a reminder of the importance of staying accountable and conscious of our obligations to the wider community as we continue to grow the business.

"We also believe that attaining B-Corp status will be a valuable addition to our business development efforts, demonstrating to prospective clients how we adhere to the very highest standards of business practice and stakeholder governance as well as providing expert legal advice.

"Given the need to continue meeting the B-Corp standards as they evolve in order to retain our certification, we have even more incentive to strive to be an even better business.

"I believe that is something which is to the advantage of everyone in Bexley Beaumont and our external stakeholders both now and well into the future."

This year marks the 20th anniversary of B-Corp status being created by the not-for-profit B Labs organisation in order to recognise and foster those businesses meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.



Rather than focusing solely on profit, B-Corps are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on workers, clients, suppliers, community and the environment.

Organisations pursuing certification are scored on a series of key areas. If approved by a Standards Advisory Council made of leading international business figures, they must also produce annual impact reports and undergo verification every three years to demonstrate their continuing adherence to their obligations.

More than 10,000 companies across the globe involved in 163 different industries have secured B Corp accreditation so far, 2,700 of which are based in the UK.

The UK contingent includes 38 firms offering legal services, with Bexley Beaumont now becoming only the third based in the North West and the largest anywhere in the country with a fee-share operating model by partner numbers to have reached the B-Corp landmark.

Bexley Beaumont also succeeded in achieving one of the highest overall business impact scores of any B-Corp law firm operating in England and Wales.

Ms Bexley outlined how Bexley Beaumont had rolled out its own Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework even before beginning the B-Corp certification process.

The firm has its own Climate Action Plan, setting out a series of environment standards to which it abides.

Two years ago, it also established its own charitable foundation, BBFoundation, to formalise an impressive track record in supporting good causes.

“

Becoming a B-Corp is yet another major statement about how far we have come.”

The Foundation is currently partnering with three projects – the Ocean Conservation Trust, Law Care, an organisation offering support to individuals working in the UK legal profession, and the Sutton Trust, which pursues social mobility initiatives nationwide - indicating the breadth of its commitments.

Joining the ranks of the UK's B-Corps is the latest sign of Bexley Beaumont's growing strength as a business.

The last year has seen it generate further positive momentum, with the addition of senior figures to all of its main legal functions, including Real Estate, Commercial and Employment, and the creation of a new Tax Dispute Resolution unit.

Within the same period of time, the firm's partner numbers increased to 75 out of an overall staff roll of 123 and it topped an influential ranking of growth by firms outside the country's top 50 legal brands compiled for the second successive year.

Earlier this month, Bexley Beaumont announced the setting up of a Senior Leadership Team to support the firm's board by taking the lead in day-to-day oversight of its key finance, compliance and marketing functions.

The Team is made up of Nick Capper, Bexley Beaumont's Head of Compliance and Risk, Head of Finance Sharaz Hussain and Jacob Bewicke, its newly-promoted Senior Marketing Executive.



Venus Legal expands into military claims with specialist support as partner is appointed on the APIL Committee

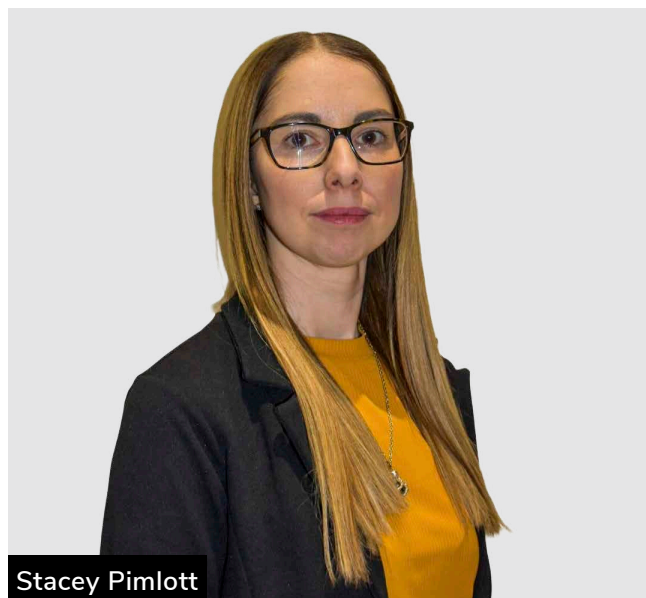
Venus Legal [®] has announced its expansion into military claims, strengthening its ability to support current and former members of the Armed Forces who have suffered serious injury or abuse during service.

Based in the Northwest, the boutique firm will represent clients pursuing justice in cases including military noise-induced hearing loss, non-freezing cold injuries (NFCI), and sexual abuse or assault suffered during military service. Recognising the highly sensitive and high-stakes nature of such claims, the firm will operate with a survivor focused and discreet approach.

Founded on a commitment to turning lives around, Venus Legal has built a reputation for handling complex, traumatic cases with care, expertise and determination.

Lorna McGlone, CEO and Founder of Venus Legal said: "This is an extremely sensitive area of law, involving individuals who have experienced trauma during their service. We are proud to stand alongside those who show immense courage in coming forward. Our responsibility is to provide clear, expert advice while protecting our clients' wellbeing and dignity at every stage of the process.

"Through targeted investment in technology and advanced AI capabilities, we have also developed a dedicated online platform to support military clients. The platform provides accessible information, real-time case updates and a streamlined process for managing claims – reducing paperwork and removing unnecessary delay in what can



Stacey Pimlott

already be a highly stressful experience. What once took months can now be handled far more efficiently, allowing clients to focus on their wellbeing while remaining informed and supported throughout their case.

"Given the nature of the work we do, wellbeing isn't just an add-on for us, it's part of our DNA. That's why we've also recently retained a mindset specialist and performance coach to support our team, providing a safe space to offload when needed. Supporting our people properly allows them to support our clients with the care and strength these cases demand."

The announcement coincides with Stacy Pimlott's appointment as Joint Coordinator of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers' (APIL) Military Special Interest Group, alongside Marie-Joelle Théanne of Bolt Burdon Kemp. The appointment marks the first all-female leadership panel in the group's history.

APIL is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to securing justice for injured people and improving safety and accountability across the legal sector.

Stacy brings extensive experience in complex, high-value litigation, including her work on the Pan NOx Emissions Litigation – the largest class action ever brought in the UK – where Venus Legal is involved in multiple group actions representing tens of thousands of claimants.

Stacy Pimlott, Partner at Venus Legal commented: “It’s a privilege to take on this role at a time when military claims demand both specialist knowledge and a deep understanding of the personal impact on those affected. Our military clients deserve clear routes to justice and

proper accountability for the harm they’ve suffered.”

“Having worked on some of the most complex group litigation in the UK, I’ve seen first-hand the importance of robust process, collaboration and clear advocacy. I’m committed to working collaboratively within APIL to strengthen expertise in this area. People deserve access to justice that recognises not only the legal issues, but the lasting effect these injuries and experiences have on their lives.”

The firm’s new service line reflects their continued growth. Following their fifth year in business, this strengthens their position as a specialist litigation firm focussed on turning lives around and recognised for their expertise, compassion and impact.

Brabners delivers fourth consecutive year of dealmaking growth

Brabners’ corporate team has delivered a 16% jump in deal making activity in the past year, as the gross total value of deals that the firm advised on surpassed £900 million.

Despite ongoing headwinds in the UK M&A market during 2025, the leading independent law firm delivered a more than £130 million increase in annual dealmaking values, having advised on more than £940 million-worth of activity across 168 separate deals (188 in 2024). This was driven in part by a number of significant deals with key long-term clients such as William Hare Group and Matcher Technologies Limited.

Recognised as one of the UK’s most active dealmakers, the firm’s more than 60-strong team supports businesses across the full lifecycle and also provides complementary



Mark Rathbone

deal advisory services through its specialist team of corporate finance accountants. It is one of the largest corporate teams in

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From page 47

the North and was named Corporate Law Firm of the Year at the Insider North West Dealmaker Awards 2025.

Notable deals and high-growth sectors

This marks the fourth consecutive year of growth for the team – which operates across Brabners' Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire and Leeds offices – as it continues to support clients through growth, investment, succession and exit. Activity was driven by strong interest in employee ownership, with more than a quarter of deal values (27%) accounted for by transitions to Employee Ownership Trusts. Notable transactions included advising digital marketing agency The SEO Works and training provider Partnership Training Limited on their moves to employee ownership. Share sales and purchases retained the highest proportion of deal value, representing almost £600 million-worth of transactions and showing sustained acquisitive demand from larger corporates.

The team also continued to support clients across a number of high-growth sectors, particularly healthcare, logistics and manufacturing and engineering. In one example, Brabners advised engineering consultancy Omnia Projects on its acquisition by Egis and separately delivered the buy-in management buyout of Associated Polymer Services, a collaborative effort between DSG Chartered Accountants and Brabners' legal and deal advisory teams.

Brabners retained its leading market position, achieving a top-tier ranking in The Legal 500 2025 for corporate and commercial matters, and was commended in the 'company and commercial' category of The Times Best Law Firms 2026. Head of

corporate, Mark Rathbone, has also been nominated for Corporate Lawyer of the Year in the Legal 500 Northern Powerhouse Awards.

The corporate team's continued success remains a key growth driver for the firm, which surpassed £60m in revenue in the trading year ending April 2025. Brabners recorded pre-tax profits of £20.3m – compared to £18.1m in 2024 – marking its eighth consecutive year of profitable growth.

Mark Rathbone, partner and head of corporate at Brabners, said: "It's been yet another strong year for our team, exceeding £900m in deal value, driven by an increasing number of high-value, complex mandates and a continued focus on supporting clients through the full lifecycle of their business. Despite continued market headwinds, the appetite to transact remained relatively resilient. We have been pleased to see stronger activity return in Q4, which hopefully bodes well for 2026.

"We've supported a diverse range of clients – from owner-managed businesses to international groups – and have seen particular growth in employee ownership, cross-border M&A and complex joint ventures and work in sectors like engineering, logistics, healthcare and technology. Deal readiness is ever more critical – it's clear that those businesses which invest early in preparation are best placed to take advantage of opportunities in what remains a selective market.

"As we look to 2026, cautious optimism is returning. Interest rates are easing, buyer confidence is improving and our pipeline reflects that momentum. With our full-service capability and national reach, we're well placed to help clients navigate the next phase, and we look forward to building on that in the year ahead."

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DWF's UK corporate team advises on 148 deals worth £5.84bn in 2025

DWF has advised on over 150 corporate deals in 2025, with a combined deal value of over £6 billion, reflecting another strong year for the firm's UK & Ireland corporate team.

Throughout 2025, DWF's corporate team remained focused on its core sectors, advising clients on a broad range of complex, high-value and strategically significant transactions globally. Activity was strongest in technology, followed by real estate and financial services, with continued momentum across energy and industrials and consumer. The team's cornerstone private equity and venture capital deals continued supporting clients on investment processes from seed capital and development capital through to ultimate exit.

In the technology and telecoms space, the team advised Daisy Communications Holdings Limited in relation to its merger with Virgin Media O2, creating a £1.4 billion turnover business-to-business communications group and one of the UK's most significant telecoms transactions of the year.

The team also advised a number of financial services and private equity clients, including Tatton Asset Management plc and Inflexion on an investment into a newly established IFA consolidator backed by £115 million of funding, Elyssian Capital on its investment into IMS Euro Group Ltd, and Horizon Capital on its disposal of Ascent ai.

Further highlights included advising Furrows Limited on a complex group reorganisation and subsequent sale to an Employee Ownership Trust.



Frank Shephard

Frank Shephard, global head of corporate at DWF, commented: "2025 was a strong year for our corporate team, with sustained activity across our core sectors and continued demand for high-quality transactional advice. We have remained committed to delivering complex and strategically important advice to our clients in our chosen locations with the support of our international footprint and specialists in our commercial and regulatory, and real estate teams.

"Our focus on key markets such as TMT, consumer, energy, insurance and financial services have been crucial to maintaining momentum in a challenging market. As we move into 2026, we remain optimistic about opportunities across private equity, venture capital and strategic M&A, as investors continue to seek growth and long-term value."



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Eid ulFitr and Muslim Heritage Month: Practical Inclusion for the Legal Profession

Eid-ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival of “Breaking the Fast,” marks the end of Ramadan and will take place on the evening of 19th / 20th March 2026, depending on the sighting of the new crescent moon.

For Muslims, Eid ulFitr is the celebration that concludes Ramadan and is amongst the most important days of the year. It follows a month of fasting (from dawn to sunset) during Ramadan, a core pillar in the Muslim faith.

Fasting in Ramadan is so much more than quenching your thirst and hunger, it fosters self-discipline, empathy for the poor and gratitude for all that we have. This truly humbling experience teaches Muslims, through the abstinence of food and drink, of the fragility that is life and of our innate responsibility to help others.

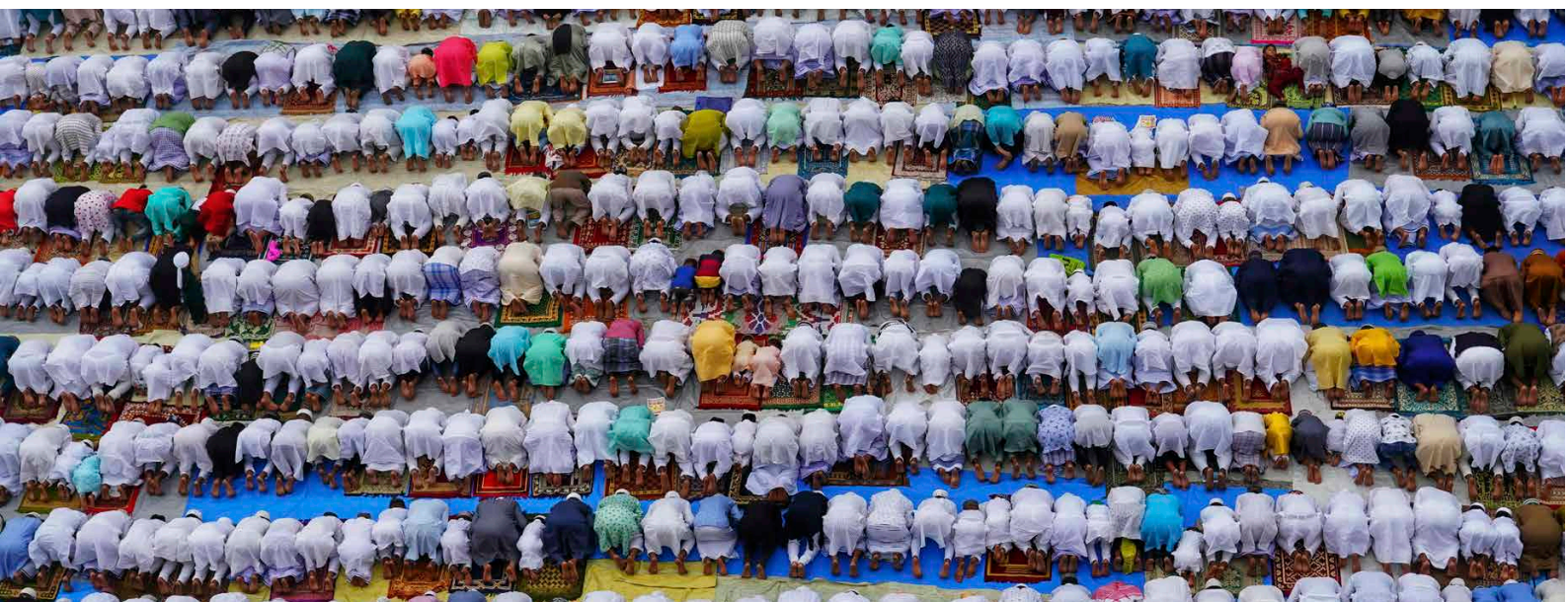
With this in mind, Muslims use this month to serve their communities, through charitable donations. This can also be in the form of sharing their nightly “iftar”, fast-breaking meals, amongst neighbours, friends and their community. Muslims are

“You will not attain righteousness till you spend in charity of the things you love”

[Quran 3:92]

also required to make obligatory charity, known as “Zakat al Fitr”, to help those in need, within their own families and communities, before they can celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. This act of kindness only strengthens community bonds and allows for all to benefit from this joyous occasion.

This year, Eid-ul-Fitr falls within Muslim Heritage Month. The significance of both, provides an opportunity to recognise the depth and diversity of Muslim contributions within the community of Manchester. Through the lens of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), both occasions are



“Charity does not decrease wealth.”

Sahih Muslim (2588)

significant beyond cultural recognition, they offer practical real-life opportunities to strengthen respect, equity and belonging.

Why this matters in law

Legal services are fundamentally human-centered, and are dedicated to addressing human needs, welfare and social issues. As lawyers, we are often required to have compassion and empathy, but it also requires us to be culturally competent. As working professionals, we live in an ethnically rich and diverse society, where many of our colleagues and clients have their own distinct cultural background and religious traditions.

These differences are present in each one of us and forms part of our very own unique code of values. Should we not, within our professional roles, incorporate a practice of respect, tolerance, and understanding of each other’s religious and cultural values?

Demonstrating a high level of cultural competence and insight includes understanding that, for Muslims, fasting during Ramadan can result in altered sleep patterns. Inclusive management around these periods improves wellbeing, retention, and team resilience.

For Muslims, booking annual leave around Eit-ul-Fitr can be problematic, as it depends on the sighting of the new moon. This means the announcement of Eid takes place late into the evening the night before. Proactively inviting annual leave requests around likely Eid dates is one way to address this issue, to lessen the pressure of last-minute annual leave requests. It

also ensures flexibility. A good starting point would be to ask (not assume) about availability around Eid.

In relation to Muslim clients, Ramadan should be taken into consideration when case planning. Fasting Muslims often wake up very early for their pre-dawn meal and may go to bed later than usual due to prayers. Think about their change in eating times and waking hours when arranging case activity. Simple things such as asking your client when they would prefer to have a meeting could make a big difference to their experience. Additionally, consider if it is wise to undertake certain activities during your client’s fast, such as considering trial availability and when to take long and detailed witness statements

“Do not look down on any act of kindness, even if it is just meeting your brother with a pleasant smile on your face.”

Sahih Muslim (2626)

This Eid-ul-Fitr, reach out to your fellow Muslims colleagues and clients to extend your recognition of their festive holidays. A simple “Eid Mubarak” (Blessed Eid) is warmly received; and during the month of Ramadan, “Ramadan Mubarak” or “Ramadan Kareem”. When in doubt, ask privately and respectfully.

So, during this Muslim Heritage Month, as it coincides with Eid-ul-Fitr, herein lies an opportunity to showcase our practices of inclusion and demonstrate with celebration, understanding and cohesion, we can make a fairer and stronger legal profession.

Bilal Hussain and Charlotte Abbott, Serious Injury Solicitors at Irwin Mitchell LLP



Hugh Jones solicitors grows Court of Protection team

Hugh Jones Solicitors @ has grown its Court of Protection department with the appointment of a new associate solicitor.

The boutique firm has welcomed Rebecca Marshall, increasing the rapidly expanding Court of Protection team to a total of 36. Rebecca has seven years of legal experience and specialises in supporting clients with serious injuries. She also collaborates with Headway, the brain injury charity, underscoring her commitment to vulnerable individuals.

Rebecca will support the team across the full scope of Court of Protection work, handling complex deputyship matters and ensuring that clients' funds are managed responsibly to maximise their quality of life. This appointment reinforces the firm's position as a national leader in this niche area of law, dedicated to providing specialist support to families and individuals navigating the complexities of the Court of Protection.

Speaking of her new position, Rebecca said: "It is a privilege to join a firm that is so highly regarded in the Court of Protection sector."

Asserson strengthens Manchester team with real estate finance specialist



Asserson @ has bolstered its Manchester team with the appointment of Michael Francos-Downs to its real estate finance practice.

Michael acts for borrowers, banks, institutional and private lenders and development finance funders on complex and high-value secured finance transactions across diverse asset classes.

These include landed estates, healthcare properties, industrial and logistics sites, buy-to-let portfolios, large-scale residential developments and multi-let retail buildings.

He has joined Asserson as a legal director from Brabners, where he was a senior associate.

Michael said: "I'm delighted to be joining Asserson at a time of real momentum for the firm."

Hugh Jones Solicitors has a fantastic reputation for putting clients first, and I look forward to working alongside such a knowledgeable team. My focus has always been on supporting vulnerable individuals and their families during challenging times, and I am eager to continue that work here."

Managing director Liz Hughes comments: "We are delighted to welcome Rebecca to the team. Her specific experience with brain injury cases and her work with Headway make her a perfect fit for our client base. As demand for our specialist services continues to grow, it is essential that we bring on board solicitors who not only have the technical legal skills but also the compassion and understanding required for this sensitive work. Rebecca perfectly fits the bill."



Rebecca Marshall

“
The calibre of our existing talent, together with the impressive new hires the firm continues to attract, really stands out.

"The calibre of our existing talent, together with the impressive new hires the firm continues to attract, really stands out.

"I look forward to using my experience to support the growth of the real estate finance practice and to strengthen Asserson's presence in the market."

Michael Clavell-Bate, partner and head of Asserson's Manchester office, said: "Michael's arrival further strengthens our real estate finance team, where he will work on commercial projects in the north west and across the UK, as well as supporting colleagues based internationally.

"His appointment is another milestone in our continued growth in the region, and we look forward to further expansion in 2026 across all our practices, including disputes, corporate and commercial and real estate."

Asserson's Manchester team is based in Arkwright Buildings in the city centre and supports a regional, national and international client base, practising English law.



Anthony Collins sees in the new year with four senior hires

Anthony Collins [Ⓞ] has appointed two legal directors and two senior associates as part of its ongoing growth strategy, including a new addition to their Manchester office.

Selina Kong, Kelly McDonnell, and Beth Williams bring a wealth of expertise to the firm's expanding property team, with over 50 years' experience between them. Sian Brown joins the commercial team, with specific expertise in the health and social care sector.

Beth Williams joins the firm's social housing team in the Manchester office, and Sian Brown joins the governance team in Birmingham. Building on the strong recruitment into the social housing team last year, Beth's appointment supports the firm's ongoing investment into its property

services. With over ten years' experience advising registered providers and local authorities, her appointment will further enhance the firm's affordable housing and regeneration counsel offering in the Northwest. She also sits on the board of Crosby Housing Association, Liverpool, and has been accredited by Legal 500 and Chambers 2026.

Beth Williams, senior associate in the property team in Anthony Collins' Manchester office, said: "Throughout my career I've supported many affordable housing providers. With 10 years' experience in the sector, joining the social housing team and taking a position as senior associate at Anthony Collins was a perfect step for me. It's fantastic to work with a team that is deeply embedded in the



Beth Williams

affordable housing sector and brings real expertise, and I'm really looking forward to working alongside them.

"My key areas of expertise include development and regeneration, including site acquisition and assembly. In my new role, I'll be working on affordable housing projects across the North of England, and helping Registered Providers to make the most of the new grants and programmes coming online, which are already keeping us busy!

One of the most rewarding parts of my role, and something I'm really looking forward to at Anthony Collins, is forming new relationships, and also supporting the development of the junior team. The mindset here is fantastic – everyone here is totally invested in our social purpose goal to improve lives, communities and society. It really is a lovely place to work and a place where you can make a difference.

"I'm really enjoying being based in Manchester. Our office is based in Ship Canal House, which is steeped in history and makes an inspirational workplace. As the team at the Manchester office continues to expand, I know that Anthony Collins' future in the North West is going to be very exciting and I'm proud to be part of that growth."

Sian Brown brings additional depth to the firm's commercial team, providing strategic advice to third-sector, public, and private organisations. Having worked in-house for 20 years, Sian has an extensive understanding of the legal issues and operational challenges affecting the social care sector, and brings a practical, solutions-based approach to her role.

Having built her legal career in-house in the charities and not-for-profit sector,

“

What better way to welcome in the new year than appointing more new faces as we aim to build on the successes of 2025

Selina Kong specialises in property matters for charities which has included strategic restructuring of property portfolios. Prior to joining Anthony Collins, she led the restructuring of a major property portfolio for a leading, registered social care charity which involved the sensitive rehousing of multiple vulnerable residents.

Kelly McDonnell joins the team as legal director and head of conveyancing. She is responsible for leading plot sales, home ownership and right-to-buy teams. With over 20 years' conveyancing experience, she will be supporting Registered Providers, Local Authorities and private clients with all types of property transfer, whilst focusing on managing risks, ensuring efficiency and securing the desired outcome.

Matthew Wort, senior partner at Anthony Collins, said: "What better way to welcome in the new year than appointing more new faces as we aim to build on the successes of 2025. Our teams are at the centre of everything we do, and it's our priority to ensure that they are supported with all means necessary to succeed, both individually, and collectively. Importantly for us, each one of our new hires shares a commitment to our social purpose goals and I am looking forward to seeing the contribution they make."

Management Matters

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



This Month

- The reality of the need to change
- Added value options
 - AI
 - > Added value essentials
 - > Effective use
 - Effective Use
 - > Getting basics right for business essentials
 - Outsourcing
 - > Skills availability

Over the last many years and especially the last few months, I have had many conversations with the management in law firms of all sizes. Initially discussions about business change but also about how it is being dealt with.

When touching on Artificial Intelligence (which is being spoken about a lot), the responses have been quite scary, with a mixture between firms of all sizes and the individual management approach – “love it we can afford the IT investment” and “hate it as it is operational involvement through IT trying to monopolize our operation.”

“

Whether we like it or not, law firms of all shapes and sizes are getting a big increase in risk and failure to perform.”

Whether we like it or not, law firms of all shapes and sizes are getting a big increase in risk and failure to perform, and whether individual managers like or dislike – reality has to be faced. It covers so many key topics of key importance to all firms:

- Achievement of annually reviewed strategy and positioning
- Performance in terms of revenue, profitability and cash flow (bigger challenge) – this is a daily, weekly and monthly challenge, with a need of real time forecast updates
- Client satisfaction with performance – leads to repeat business and referral – not just in legal performance at effective costing but also communication – they want to know what is going on and what happens next for their files. Plus, a belief in the firm understanding the needs of the marketplace
- Brand and image of the business – leading to more opportunities – the firm needs to demonstrate that it is proactive in terms of needs in a changing market – such as rules around inheritance tax
- The ability of the firm to gain more new business – yes from marketing, but also image and the effective handling of inbound enquiries – when handled well success is at least 65% conversion as opposed to 20% - revenue, profit, cash and referrals
- Value of the assets – of the business if a potential M&A or argument with the bank - repeat business, referrals and value of the Will bank



“

One major thing that also has to be recognised is that there are many younger people with great attitude”

- Achievement of regulation needs – compliance, AML, client account management – the firm doesn't need the fines or the resultant image
- The service being offered needs to be secure and effective from an IT point of view – so much hacking going on – with also people with the positive attitude talking with the clients and prospects
- It is essential across the whole of the firm that there is access to appropriate skill levels and availability. These days, with many, the appropriate level is not available within the business and alternative sourcing is key for some or the whole activity
- The ability to recruit great staff, develop them and retain them is a challenge that's not recognised by all. Plus, once the right people are on board their appraisals and personal development challenges need so much more

The Source

The result of firms not handling this right leads to some fairly obvious nonperformance.

People and Data - One major thing that also has to be recognised is that there are many younger people with great attitude and skills looking to leave the firms when they can because millennials are not like much older people who don't necessarily want to see performance data – time capture, WIP potential, next action expectation is not necessarily welcome. The younger community wants to hear on a daily basis how well they are doing, supervisory comments and planned positive steps. AI plus some simple modifications to PMS/CMS and added value add-ons can make this happen

Getting staff on board with the challenges is key. Attitude in reception, through to call handling, being cheerful and available, has to be part of appraisals and people development, and certainly the personal profile for recruitment.

Amongst the basics referred to at the beginning are workflow efficiency, time capture, production, proof of compliance action, on boarding, financial MI and forecasting.

- Essential to this, and not necessarily recognised by all, is the capability of the existing PMS/CMS system. Is everyone in the firm using it as they should be? What is it capable of and where does it let folks down? What are the added value solutions that already interface with it (such as MI, on boarding, client communication) and where can solutions involving AI be a great assistant to meet all those extra needs?

Continued on page 66



- Unfortunately, there has been variable performance by the established PMS/ CMS solutions in terms of account development and there are also a number of new kids on the block. Firms however need to be clear about the solutions they need, the priorities, and the timetables to make changes effective. So, proper use of what they have now, added value integrated options, AI or replacement needs to be considered against the business priorities.
- Demands need to be very clear for existing suppliers. Failure to beat up account managers is a disappointment. They should be advising all on the product capability and put in place third party integrations that will assist the business achievement. It is not just an IT interface with the account managers that is needed, but legal teams, business development, finance and management, and risk and compliance.
- Similar multi-function reviews of new suppliers on the block should also apply
- There are then available some added value options – more that can be discussed
- AI – currently available within the UK market
 - [Forsyte](#) – Risk assessment
 - [Lexidesk](#) – Effective on boarding and relationships
 - [WBT](#) – Effective management of a key asset
 - [Katchr](#) – MI and BI availability

Skills availability

- [Document Direct](#) – document production and transcription, skills 24 hours a day, removes delays
- [Moneypenny UK](#) – phone answering full or part time, web communication
- [Cashroom](#) – outsourcing of book keeping and accounting, growth in demand for all or part of the process where necessary skills are missing
- [Legal RSS](#) – firms able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- [Armstrong Watson Menzies LLP](#) – Accountants are now beginning to offer much wider services to law firms, from M&A to getting your profitability and cashflow right
- [The 'Think Brand - not bland' Guy - Phil Strachan](#) – Getting the image right with the marketplace is key
- [etiCloud](#) and [Quiss](#) – Getting IT managed well and secure needs experience and track record

Related articles

[Professional Choice Consultancy](#) as a general source as well as [The Messenger](#). Recent specifics: [February January December](#).

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

NAVIGATING THE 2026 REGULATORY LANDSCAPE IN COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LAW

The commercial property sector is heading into another significant period of regulatory change. The next reform cycle will reshape disclosure requirements, planning processes, environmental obligations, and due diligence expectations across the industry.

- Land Registry reform
- ESG obligations and the rise of green leases
- Property planning reform
- Building safety and compliance
- Data centre planning rules
- Validating Customer Application Data (VCAD)

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Outgoing Chair of The Solicitors' Charity, Shams Rahman, on “Listening, Learning and Leading with Care” – a personal reflection

Shams Rahman has served on Board of [The Solicitors' Charity](#) for the past decade. He is a Partner at London firm Edwin Coe where he is a member of the firm's Management Board and Head of Contentious Trusts and Estates.

As his term of office as Chair ends, he shares his insights: “As I step down as Chair, it feels like a wonderful journey, where brilliant progress has been made and will continue. After serving as a Trustee for ten years and as Chair for the past two, no one moment stands out from the rest – our work stretches well beyond any single initiative or headline. I have witnessed transformation both within the Charity and across the legal community.

“More people now know who we are and what we do and feel able to come forward. We've done immense work in building our c.170-year-old brand and reputation to become known as the leading support for solicitors, whatever their needs may be.”

As the legal profession confronts rising pressures – from cost-of-living challenges to emotional strain and professional uncertainty – so too has the demand for support from The Solicitors' Charity grown. The latest Big Report highlighted a 33% increase in the number of solicitors helped in a single year, alongside £1.2 million directed towards wellbeing support. This surge reflects not just need, but also confidence: more solicitors now know the Charity exists and feel empowered to reach out for help.





Shams says: "The legal profession is often defined by competence and resilience. Yet one of the clearest truths I have learned is that lawyers are not immune to life's disruptions. Illness, job loss, financial strain, and personal crisis do not distinguish between junior and senior, or between those who advise others for a living and those being advised."

"Bad things happen to good people, including highly capable solicitors who never expected to need help themselves and have devoted their professional life to helping others. Providing support with dignity, discretion, and care has been at the heart of everything we do."

"A defining shift during my tenure has been a move beyond traditional financial assistance to a holistic approach that embraces emotional, professional, and practical wellbeing.

"Collaborating with specialist partners, from counselling services to career transition advisors, has extended our capacity and enriched the support we can provide. These partnerships recognise the reality that hardship rarely fits into neat categories and that truly effective support must be interconnected.

"Some of the most powerful moments during my time as Chair have been the least visible. Helping someone regain independence by funding essential equipment such as a specialist wheelchair;

supporting a solicitor who has lost their job and needs time, space, training, and guidance to find a way forward again."

"Being named Charity Collaboration of the Year at the Association of Charitable Organisation's annual awards, for our partnership with LawCare, was a meaningful moment. It recognised years of quiet, practical collaboration around mental health and wellbeing, and reinforced the idea that charities supporting the legal profession are strongest when they work together."

He adds: "By strengthening ties with local law societies, we have made sure solicitors throughout England and Wales understand that support is accessible, personal and rooted in their own communities. The example set by organisations such as the Bournemouth & District Law Society reminds us that local commitment drives national impact."

Shams concludes: "As I hand over the leadership to I. Stephanie Boyce, former President of The Law Society, I am confident the Charity's direction is strong and its mission more vital than ever.

The Charity is reaching more people, responding to more complex needs, and doing so through collaboration rather than isolation. "

Legal Costs Update

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



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

A bumper crop of judgments this month so our summaries are, of necessity, brief. First, Part 36. In **Gagliardi v Evolution Capital Management LLC** [2025] EWHC 3488 (Comm) 19, Calver J was required to decide whether the CPR 36.17(4) benefits were payable where the claimant had offered to settle for \$3m and obtained judgment for \$5.38m. The issue was whether 21 days had elapsed between the date of the offer and the start of trial: if not, CPR 3.17(4) could not apply. The judge held that judicial reading days relied on by the defendant in the calculation could not affect when a trial commenced for the purposes of the consequences of a Part 36 offer. The "the start of trial" for CPR 36 was the date on which the parties were required to attend court with their lawyers and the trial actually commenced. As there was nothing unjust in applying CPR 36.17(4), the claimant was entitled to its benefits.

Still with Part 36, in **Smithstone v Tranmoor Primary School** [2026] EWCA Civ 13, overruling *Mundy v Tui* UK [2023] Costs LR 153, the Court of Appeal held that a Part 36 offer to split liability 90/10 was to be treated as a genuine offer to compromise. In a case where liability was to be tried before quantum, the benefits of a liability-only offer in saving costs and court time were obvious. However, it could not be said that the outcome of the case, being a settlement for £2,650, was a finding that that was more advantageous to the claimant than a 90:10 apportionment of liability. Accordingly, without a determination on liability, CPR 36.17(4) was not engaged,

and the costs fell within the fixed costs regime, since the defendant's refusal to admit liability or to engage in settlement negotiations before reaching the door of the court, did not make it unjust for that regime to apply.

In **McGann v Eldonian Community Trust Ltd** [2026] EWHC 66 (Ch), the court exercised its jurisdiction under Section 194(3) Legal Services Act 2007 to order the losing petitioner in a winding up petition to make a payment of £20,325 to the Access to Justice Foundation in respect of the services provided free by counsel. The section expressly applied to proceedings in a civil court, including insolvency proceedings and there was no breach of the indemnity principle in making the order.

In **Município De Mariana v BHP Group (UK) Ltd & Anor** [2026] EWHC 73 (TCC), O'Farrell J determined costs issues after the Stage 1 trial in claims under Brazilian law for losses suffered following the collapse of the Fundão Dam. The claimants sought a payment on account in the sum of £113.5 million, together with pre-judgment interest. However, taking into account their failure to establish any liability under Articles 116 and 117 of the Corporate Law and the paucity of information available to the court, a very cautious approach needed to be taken for the purpose of determining any payment on account. The claimant had to be satisfied with "just" £43m with the remaining costs not to be assessed until the conclusion of the proceedings.

Next third party costs orders (TPCOs) under s.51 Senior Courts Act 1981. In [Nigeria v VR Global Partners LP](#) [2026] EWCA Civ 25, the court upheld the order below staying an application by Nigeria for a TPCO until after the conclusion the detailed assessment (“DA”) of its costs, claimed at £44m plus interest. Nigeria contended that as the defendant did not carry on business and had no assets, both matters should proceed in tandem. Males LJ held that the trial judge had been extremely familiar with the case and had not regarded it as overwhelmingly likely that Nigeria would be entitled to the £24.2 million which it claimed, over and above £20 million which it had already received. He added that the court was dismayed to be told that the DA would require at least 50 days, potentially lasting almost twice as long as the trial. That was “the worst kind of satellite litigation” and a sampling approach should be adopted, so other court users would not be prejudiced.

In [Limited Liability Company Air Company Air Manas v GTLK Middle East SPV Three Ltd](#) [2026] EWHC 177 (Comm), Bright J decided the appropriate figure for security for costs under CPR 25 where the underlying arbitration had been reasonably straightforward and did not require the most expensive solicitors on the market to conduct it. Expressing surprise that two Grade A partners were to attend trial, along with three further lawyers, it was unclear what benefit would be derived from such numerous representation. Against a claim for £300,000, the judge allowed £125,000 based upon hourly expense rates only just above the guideline rates.

Also with security for costs in an action for damages for personal injuries, in [Choksi v India](#) [2026] EWHC 217 (KB) Mansfield J

stated that three elements were relevant to the exercise of discretion (i) the merits of the claim (ii) the risk of non-enforcement of an order for costs against a Claimant resident out of the jurisdiction and (iii) the Claimant’s ability to provide security and continue the claim. On the facts, there was no evidence that the claimant had assets in the jurisdiction and he was on remand in Belgium pending proceedings to extradite him to India. Without any real evidence that an order for security would stifle the claim, the judge ordered security in the sums of £425,000 for the second and fourth Defendants and £252,000 for the fifth and sixth Defendants.

Next a case about the costs of an intervenor. In [CR Construction \(UK\) Ltd v Barclays Bank Plc \(Costs\)](#) [2026] EWHC 228 (TCC), the issue before HHJ Stephen Davies was whether a party intervening in proceedings for an injunction involving a tripartite contract should be entitled to costs and to a summary assessment. He held that in principle the intervenor should have its reasonable costs of its involvement in the proceedings but limited to reading into the case on receipt of the evidence, of responding via witness evidence and submissions, and of attending the hearing. Those costs he summarily assessed at £75,000.

In [Cubic Transportation Systems Ltd v Transport for London](#) [2026] EWHC 211 (TCC), in a procurement case, Roger Ter Haar KC considered the factors to take into account in deciding whether costs an interested party’s costs should be reserved to the trial judge, with no payment on account. He held that within the costs of £233,599 claimed, a significant sum was unrelated to the application to

Continued on page 72



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an application to lift an automatic stay. It followed that it was appropriate to reserve the issue of those costs to the trial judge.

Next costs budgeting and a lesson against “overlawyering”. In **Various Claimants v Mercedes-Benz Group AG** [2026] EWHC 267 (KB) the court considered whether there should be a departure from the usual order in costs management hearings that the costs should be in the case. Cockerill LJ held that the claimants’ conduct had taken them onto the wrong side of the line by resolutely pursuing an unrealistic or overly ambitious budget. It followed that the appropriate order was that the claimants’ costs of and incidental to the costs budgets, budget discussion reports and Precedents R, if awarded, would be allowed at 80% (the defendant’s to be 100%) with the costs of attending the CMH to be costs in the case.

Also with costs budgeting, **Parsons v Convatec Ltd** [2026] EWHC 300 (Pat) concerns complicated patent litigation in a specialist area, relating to seven patent families and 73 individual patents with the trial listed for 27 days. Having helpfully set out the applicable principles (as many as 13), Richards J made the interesting observation that with the benefit of only a partial snapshot of what had happened so far, he could not form any view on the reasonableness or proportionality of the costs incurred to date. As regards hourly rates claimed by Freshfields’ solicitors, he held that the mere fact that £1,100 per hour was claimed for Grade A, did not, of itself, mean that this was unreasonable or disproportionate if the partner was able to do a task in one hour that a more junior member of staff would take three hours to do. The judge went on to set the budget for both parties, making reductions where appropriate, as has become customary at costs management hearings.

For an interesting decision on discontinuance under CPR 38, see **KXO & Anor v Devon County Council** [2026] EWHC 203 (Admin). Paul Bowen KC had to decide whether permission of the court was needed to discontinue (on the facts, it was not) where the claimants had been minors acting through their litigation friend. He held that only if the discontinuance amounted to a settlement or compromise was court approval needed under CPR 21.10. Where notice was served otherwise than on agreed terms, it was not.

Finally, in **R (on the application of ABB) v SS for the Home Department (SSHD)**, the Court of Appeal make a rare intervention when it overruled the decision of the court below to allow the applicant in judicial review proceedings just 75% of his costs. He had got what he wanted, was wholly successful and was entitled to recover his costs in full unless there was some good reason to the contrary or some special circumstance. As there were none, a 100% costs order was made with Nugee LJ observing that in legal aid cases, the ability to recover costs at inter partes rates where the claim had succeeded, had a practical importance in terms of the financial viability of running a legal aid practice, and hence in terms of access to justice. It was of real importance that where an order for full costs was merited, that such an order was duly made.

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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