



the Messenger

July 2026

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new role at
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The End of an (Eccles-Bech) Era



Jeff Lewis, Manchester Law Society's longest-serving Council member, reflects on the legend that is Fran.

Do you remember how it felt when Queen Elizabeth the Second passed away? Or when Sir Alex Ferguson left Manchester United? Or (for those of a much older generation) when Noele Gordon left 'Crossroads'?!

Sometimes, one person becomes so synonymous with an institution that they come to define the institution itself.

Fran Eccles-Bech is one such person. Anybody who has had any contact with Manchester Law Society over the last 38 years – and many others too – knows Fran.

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GOOD LUCK ON THE NIGHT!

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www.manchesterlegalawards.co.uk #MLAwards

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From the President

Ian McConkey, President



As we enter July, two events dominate the horizon. Firstly the Manchester Legal Awards and secondly Fran's retirement.

I was fortunate enough to be on the judging panel for the Awards interviewing the shortlisted candidates. The standard was great, across all categories. It is fantastic to see the wealth of talent in the region, from those starting their careers as apprentices, trainees and paralegals, to those established individuals and firms undertaking groundbreaking work.

The quality of the other judges is also testament to the importance of the awards and how highly they are regarded in Manchester. The panel included senior members of the judiciary, business leaders, journalists and academics amongst others, all giving up substantial amounts of their time. Huge thanks to all those involved. I look forward to seeing many hundreds of you there on what promises to be a great night as ever. I hear the band, which includes one of our own Council members, is brilliant.

With regard to Fran's retirement, I appreciate that there will be a lot to be said over the coming weeks and no doubt more than a few celebrations, so I am only going to make brief comment on it here. It is impossible to overstate the influence Fran has had on the growth and success of MLS. She has achieved this through her incredible work ethic combined with her unique ability to persuade people to contribute

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It is impossible to overstate the influence Fran has had on the growth and success of MLS

their talent, time and money. This has been for the benefit of MLS allowing MLS to support its members, the Manchester legal community as a whole and perhaps more importantly, the wider Manchester community, particularly the most in need.

For my part, I went to meet her for a coffee many years ago following the Legal Awards and by the time I had left the coffee shop I had found myself agreeing to be on Council and feeling flattered that I had been asked. The same thing happened a number of years later and having met for a drink, I agreed to be President in 2026, something which had not even been in my contemplation 30 minutes before. I am sorry to see her go in my year as President but it will also be an honour to be involved in showing our appreciation for her.

Please do save the date of 8th October when we will be holding a retirement party for Fran in aid of Prevent Breast Cancer. If you want to be amongst the first to hear the details, please email Events@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk .

the Messenger



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Manchester Law Society

Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871

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Jeff Lewis elected as Deputy Vice President of the Law Society

Here at Manchester Law Society, we are absolutely thrilled to celebrate the appointment of Jeff Lewis as Deputy Vice President of the Law Society.

Jeff is not only a highly respected figure across the national profession, but also a familiar and valued presence within our own Manchester legal community. Many of us have worked alongside Jeff, seen his leadership in action, and experienced first-hand his commitment to supporting colleagues and strengthening the profession; not only as a Partner in Brabners LLP, but also as President of Manchester Law Society in 2012, a council member, Chair of the Civil Litigation Committee and Deputy District Judge.

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At a time when regional voices matter more than ever, Jeff will bring a strong Northern perspective to the national stage

His appointment is richly deserved. It reflects years of dedication, sound judgement, and a genuine passion for the role solicitors play in society. Just as importantly, it is a moment of real pride for Manchester. At a time when regional voices matter more than ever, Jeff will bring a strong Northern perspective to the national stage, ensuring that the priorities and challenges of our members are heard and understood.

manchesterlawsociety.org.uk



Jeff Lewis

For us as a Society, this feels personal. Jeff's success is a reminder of the strength, talent and influence of our local community, and of the important contribution Manchester continues to make to the wider profession.

On behalf of everyone at Manchester Law Society, we offer our warmest congratulations to Jeff. We are incredibly proud to see one of our own take on such an important leadership role, (the first person since Rodger Pannone in 1994) and we look forward to supporting him as he begins this next chapter.

Behind the scenes of an election

Elections are something I take very seriously – it is the demonstration of democracy through those who are of an age to vote, which now looks like it's going to be from 16 very soon. It is also so important to me that women can vote; our predecessors fought so hard to get the vote across all sexes and genders, therefore for me it is vital we respect and it and that we all take very seriously the right to vote, and exercise that right. I thought a little insight into the process and preparation for an election might be interesting – a glimpse into the world of the Deputy Returning Officer.

Most City Solicitors, Head of Law. i.e., the equivalent of the Senior Partner of a firm usually are the Deputy Returning Officer, meaning their teams have the responsibility for making sure an election happens.

In recent years, there have been lots of legislative changes introduced to the process of delivering elections in England, and lots more is already planned, such as, as I've already mentioned, the right to vote from 16. This brings large amounts of pressure on the team as some of the changes have not been fully legislated for until very late in the process.

The process needs absolute certainty to make it a deliverable, and an example of this is when Photo ID was introduced, and whilst we knew it was coming, we didn't have the legislation in place or know what type of ID would be acceptable until late in the day. This not only impacts on the stresses it put the team who deliver the election, but also knock on effects such as how we deliver the election on polling day, how we change our training plans for staff, and how we communicate with our electors



so they are aware of these changes, which may be simple for most people, but can be very uncomfortable and challenging for others who still want to have their say and be allowed to use their democratic right to vote.

There are legislative constraints for an election timetable which we follow to the letter. The Returning Officer has the personal responsibility for making sure that the election is fair, accurate and run properly. In Manchester, we have an electorate of over 400,000 with more than 40,000 electors choosing to vote by post leaving 360,000 electors eligible to cast their vote in their allocated local Polling Station, of which we have 240 – quite a challenge!

This process starts with the way that the candidates are 'nominated' to stand in the election. For a local election, two (2) individuals from the ward and on the register must sign to confirm the candidate

Continued on page 8



is able to stand. For a parliamentary election, it is 10 voters in the constituency. The candidate nominated must be from the locality, either living or working locally. As the election team, we are required to take what is put on the paper at face value and not investigate the validity of their application.

We then pursue the rigorous timescale of the election. There is a limit to when you can be registered as an elector, as well as when you can be included for a postal vote. We do not have the ability to change that, although people sometimes pressure us and think we do!

We do our very best to enable people who cannot vote on the day to either be given a postal vote or to ask someone to vote by proxy, for them. Again, there are specific rules around that we are unable to change.

We have several tasks to carry out to make sure everything is ready on the timeline, so we approach the week before the election making sure the ballot boxes are prepared, the ballot papers are watched by security,

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We do our very best to enable people who cannot vote on the day to either be given a postal vote or to ask someone to vote by proxy, for them

and put into the correct pile for collection by those managing the Polling stations on the day.

We have 240 polling stations that we need to manage. We are lucky – or work hard with our communities – so we only have 2 portable stations which have to arrive on site the night before. All the boxes must have the right ballot papers, and checking the specialist printers work is key for all our staff. All the stations need the equipment for the polling station; everything from aids to help those visibly challenged to vote, to the booths to be set up, to lots of stationery for signage to be put up, even temporary ramps in some areas and everything in between.

We train all our Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks to make sure they are equipped to deal with the election day and anything that may happen. This training is in person and online, and is completely up to date. This year, we added a bit around Family voting and asked our teams to record whenever they may need to intervene and advise voters about it being a criminal offence to intimidate or influence another voter. Stations are ready to open dead on 7am, which means getting there quite a bit earlier!

I and about 30 team members are in our central hub dealing with all the questions



on the day. We have a colleague from the Police who helps us to make sure officers are sent to where we need them on the day, in case there are any difficulties happening in or around polling stations. Manchester is however a more peaceful city on election days.

Once it reaches 10pm, no more voters can be included. The final ballot papers are given to those in the queue, but if they arrived after 10pm (even if there is a queue), electors cannot be issued with a ballot paper. Luckily in Manchester, queues are a very rare thing at our polling stations. As soon as the last ballot paper is issued, or it is 10pm and no nobody is waiting to put their ballot paper in the box, there is a requirement for the paperwork to be done to account for all the ballot papers, those used and not used, within the station.

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There is a rigorous check on how many ballot papers were given to each polling station, and then how many were allocated to each candidate

Our staff then bring the boxes and all the paperwork to our Count Venue, which is normally Manchester Central Convention Centre, through a very well-choreographed process of cars pulling up and boxes handed over. In a parliamentary election, these must legally be counted overnight or for local elections, where we have discretion on when the count takes place, are counted the next day.

There is a rigorous check on how many ballot papers were given to each polling station, and then how many were allocated to each candidate. The maths must always add up, and the accuracy has to be perfect. We have a team of Lawyers throughout the process (including myself) to answer any legal questions and, on the count, to advise on any doubtful papers, which usually involve not voting at all (no mark) or voting for too many (a number of marks), thus making the voter's intention unclear. We do everything we can to include votes into the maths that then happen across the Counting tables.

Through all our processes, we are observed and checked upon to make sure we are doing everything according to the process.

At the end of the count, when the maths and pile of ballot papers all add up and are brought together, we announce the successful candidate. We must be really accurate, as any mistake can cause a significant problem. It is one of the few areas that carries personal accountability in respect of the Returning Officer, our Chief Executive, so we double and triple check everything as you can imagine – we don't really want the Chief to go to prison, which is one of the potential penalties for a Returning Officer getting something significantly wrong.

We then pack it all away carefully, just in case it is challenged by petition. We take feedback and listen to how we can tweak and refine the process.

The process is carefully checked and protected all the way along. Until next time... when we start again!

Fiona Ledden
City Solicitor
Manchester City Council



A Word from Team MLS

We couldn't let this issue dedicated to Fran pass without a word from the team in the MLS office.

Throughout this issue, there are lots of people telling you how kind Fran is, how supportive, what excellent advice she gives, and how she can make you feel so welcome. You'll also hear about her remarkable ability to make you leave a meeting convinced to do something you'd never even thought about prior. This is all true.

But there is more!

Fran has an impressive knowledge of the legal sector, from the upcoming changes and consultations members need to know about to helping members of the public who call our office looking for legal advice. We, of course, cannot offer them legal advice

but Fran has taught us all how to signpost callers sympathetically and effectively.

Fantastic at creating new initiatives, under Fran's leadership the Society has implemented:

- corporate membership – one of the key ways we have managed to grow our members to over 5000
- new committees and forums for members to get involved in
- our preferred supplier group MLS Advantage – not only a useful service for members of suppliers who have already



passed due diligence but also providing a regular income for the organisation

- the Manchester Legal Awards – gone from a risky experiment to a blazing success – and that was just the first year. This week we will hold the 17th ceremony and it is as popular as ever!
- the Future Stars Programme – finding a way to make effective use of the money willed to the Education Foundation Fund and now providing participants a fantastic opportunity to get involved in the sector.
- our MLS App – moving with the times to offer members a way to get MLS out of their inbox and on to their phone, a space to network within the Manchester legal community and make use of some fantastic offers

There's much more. More than we know we're sure.

Fran cares deeply about the Society – it's members, staff, suppliers and reputation. We are her home, her family.

She has been driven over her tenure to make sure that it succeeds, and we think she has done an amazing job.

The MLS staff want to wish Fran a long, happy and peaceful retirement. Thank you for leaving the place in such good shape.

We'll dearly miss hearing your witty remarks, the office's supply of Haribo's and Diet Cokes, and most importantly, your sincere guidance and friendship, but we're equally looking forward to continuing your good work and hearing all about what you've been up to once you're free of your inbox!

All our love

Carla, Edricia, Chandre and Grace x





Employment Law Conference 2026

Manchester Law Society's Employment Law Conference took place on 19 May at Manchester Hall, bringing together employment lawyers, in-house practitioners and members of the judiciary for a packed programme of expert-led sessions. Following the recent Employment Rights Act, the conference provided a timely opportunity to discuss, educate and network across the sector and the room was full of professionals keen to get to grips with the changes ahead.

The morning opened with an 'Employment Law Update' from Regional Employment Judge David Franey, who set the scene with a characteristically candid assessment of the challenges facing the tribunal system. REJ Franey's central message was clear: the problem is one of volume and complexity. Caseload statistics for England and Wales showed single receipts in Q3 2025–26 had risen to 13,000, with outstanding cases climbing to 58,000 a stark increase from 45,000 just three years earlier. The mix of cases has shifted too, with open-track matters now accounting for 42% of the caseload compared to just 19% in 2010–11, meaning longer hearings, more case management and greater demands on judicial time.

So what is being done? REJ Franey took delegates through the multi-pronged response: recruitment drives for salaried and fee-paid judges, rule changes introduced in March 2026 (including recognition of dispute resolution appointments and reforms to grounds for claims and responses), efficiency measures such as the Reform Programme portal redesign, increased delegation to legal officers, and even the use of AI by judges. Dispute resolution featured prominently, with judicial assessment, judicial mediation and the new Dispute Resolution Appointments all forming part of the toolkit.

Next up was Chloe Themistocleous, Partner at Eversheds Sutherland, presenting 'Managing Complex Litigation with Litigants In-Person'. Anyone who has ever received 567 new messages at 3am from a claimant in capitals will have understood the struggles during this session. Chloe explored who practitioners are really dealing with, from the genuinely unwell to the truly vexatious (a small percentage, she reassured us), and tackled the added complexity of AI head-on. Just when you think dealing with a persistent claimant cannot get any worse, enter ChatGPT.



Practical strategies included calling out AI use, drafting lean pleadings, leaning into tribunal guidance and, critically, not responding to absolutely everything.

The session covered the power of a well-drafted strategy paper, dealing with claimants who are very unwell (including capacity issues and intermediaries), ground rules for managing correspondence and conduct, and the vital importance of safety and security in the tribunal room. Chloe's parting wisdom on conduct of the case? Set boundaries, be professional always, do not try to befriend the claimant and be the glimmer of light for the tribunal: clear, concise, and organised. The safeguarding of managers, HR, witnesses and solicitors conducting these cases was a powerful closing note, with a reminder to involve risk teams, seek specialist advice and conduct regular welfare check-ins.

After a welcome networking break, Carolyn Miller, Partner at Lewis Silkin, took to the stage for 'Adjustments, Accommodations, and Assumptions: Neurodiversity Through a Legal Lens'. With an estimated one in five people now identifying as neurodivergent and diagnoses of autism having increased by 787% between 1998 and 2018, this is an area of law that is only growing in significance. Tribunal litigation referencing ADHD and autism has surged year on year, from single figures in 2016 to 100 judgments referencing autism and 91 referencing ADHD by 2025.

Carolyn navigated delegates through the legal framework of reasonable adjustments including when duties arise, knowledge requirements and the all-important question of what is reasonable, before turning to the practical realities of managing performance and conduct issues in a neurodiverse workforce. Tips included clear



and literal communication, focusing on behaviours not personality, and adapting disciplinary processes with agendas sent in advance and flexibility around companions. Her top ten tips for supporting neurodiverse employees, from promoting awareness and embracing flexible working to reviewing policies for neuro-inclusion, provided a practical framework that attendees could take straight back to the office.

The conference closed with a lively 'Interpreting the Employment Rights Act: Panel Discussion', featuring Bryn Doyle (Partner, Lewis Silkin), Jo Handler (Partner, Forbes Solicitors), Carolyn Miller (Partner, Lewis Silkin), Chloe Themistocleous (Partner, Eversheds Sutherland), Julie Woosey (Chief People Officer, The Growth Company), Nathan Ross (Michael Page) and Regional Employment Judge Franey. The panel brought together a breadth of perspectives from private practice, recruitment and the judiciary to unpick what the new legislation means in practice for employers, employees and those advising them.

All in all, the conference was a huge success and well received. If you would like to join the [Employment Law Forum](#) @, attend future employment law events, or have topics you would like us to cover, please email enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk @ - we would love to hear from you.

Carys Keeble, Associate, Lewis Silkin



Between Five Stars and Reality: Mind the Gap

Law firms love a glowing testimonial, and they matter more to our marketing efforts than ever. However, a surprising number of firms have been touting only five-star client reviews on their websites, painting an impeccable picture that doesn't always reflect reality.

In one recent survey, an access-to-justice charity found 50 law firms featuring nothing but perfect five star testimonials on their website, all uniformly positive. No one advertises when a matter goes wrong, but regulators are warning that a wall of unblemished praise can cross into "misleading" territory. If every client seems ecstatic, are we giving a balanced, truthful view?

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Code says that our publicity must be accurate and not misleading – something as simple as curating only perfect feedback could raise questions under that rule. In short, cherry-picking reviews comes with compliance risk.

Beyond the legal sector, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has made misleading online reviews a top priority. It's already investigating five companies (from car sales to food delivery) for tactics like hiding bad reviews or engineering inflated ratings,, and while they're not targeting law firms (yet), the CMA has signalled it won't hesitate to intervene in the professional services sector if it's needed.

New consumer protection legislation introduced 2025 now places an outright ban on practices such as posting fake reviews, offering undisclosed incentives for positive reviews, or suppressing negative feedback,

backed by significant fines (potentially up to 10% of global turnover). The message is clear: attempts to game the review system – even subtly – damage consumer trust. And law firms should take note that doing so can backfire legally as well as ethically.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is also on guard. They've already ruled against at least one law firm for exaggerated in ads. In late 2023, a firm's TikTok videos showed actors posing as happy clients receiving big cheques and delivering what appeared to be real testimonials. The ASA wasn't amused: it banned those ads for misleading consumers and told the firm to comply with the CAP Code by using genuine client testimonials in the future.

In case it isn't already obvious, marketing content can't pretend to be something it isn't. If law firms want to spotlight client success stories, they need to get real clients involved and stick to verifiable facts. Otherwise, they risk reputational harm and formal sanctions.

What about negative reviews? It's tempting to fight fire with fire when someone trashes your firm online, but recent cases suggest caution. In a well-known High Court case in 2021, a firm was indeed awarded £25,000 in libel damages over a one-star Trustpilot review that called it "a scam". However, news of the lawsuit went public and

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By all means invite happy clients to share feedback, but resist over-curating to avoid scrutiny – a portfolio of only five-star praise looks suspicious to savvy clients

triggered a wave of new one-star reviews from people who'd never used the firm but objected to its heavy-handed response. In no time, the firm's Trustpilot rating plummeted to two stars amid hundreds of angry posts in a prime example of the "Streisand Effect" at work – the attempt to silence one critic drew far more negative attention than the original gripe. More recently, another firm's libel suit over harsh Trustpilot comments was thrown out by the High Court. The judge ruled the firm couldn't prove that the bad reviews had caused any serious harm by way of financial loss. In other words, even if a review is untrue, without any actual damage any claim designed to vindicate damage to a reputation may end in failure... and a worse reputation.

As ever with law firms, adopting a balanced, sensible approach is best even if the algorithm rewards spectacle. First, you should keep your testimonials genuine and credible. By all means invite happy clients to share feedback, but resist over-curating to avoid scrutiny – a portfolio of only five-star praise looks suspicious to savvy clients (and regulators), and a few mixed reviews underscore authenticity. Never fabricate reviews or bury criticism; aside from the ethical, it's now unlawful and could trigger regulatory penalties.



Steve Kuncewicz

Second, have a plan for negative reviews, and respond constructively wherever possible with an offer to discuss or remedy the issue. Litigation should always be a last resort, reserved for genuinely false allegations causing significant, tangible harm. The SRA's most recent guidance stresses that engaging with criticism and improving service is, unsurprisingly, much more preferable than gagging unhappy clients.

Ultimately, in managing your firm's reputation, honesty and proportionality are key. If you earn stellar reviews through great work and transparency, you won't need to manufacture or burnish, them and you'll be on the right side of public opinion, regulation and the law.

Steve Kuncewicz

Partner – Head of Creative, Digital & Media
at Glaisyers ETL Global
ETL Global Innovation & Creativity Working
Group Lead



Shaping Wellbeing Together: Member Feedback with Mark Evans

[The Law Society](#)  are hosting an online wellbeing session led by their President, Mark Evans, on Wednesday 15 July, 12:00 – 13:00, via MS Teams.

This online interactive session is an opportunity for the Law Society to hear from you about what matters most for wellbeing in the profession.

Wellbeing is an increasingly important issue for members, shaping both day-to-day experience and long-term sustainability. Through live polling and group discussion, you will be invited to share your insights, help prioritise the themes collected from member wellbeing roundtables, and suggest practical ways the Law Society could make a meaningful difference in these themes. Your input will directly shape the Law Society's approach to their wellbeing work over the coming years.

Build understanding of the wellbeing strategy

Leave with a clear understanding of the Law Society's approach to wellbeing and its key focus areas across the multiyear strategy.

Prioritise wellbeing themes

Agree the priority wellbeing themes across individual, leadership and organisational workstreams to inform upcoming focus areas and longerterm direction.

Cocreate practical, measurable actions

Contribute specific and measurable action ideas for priority themes to inform

consideration within the wellbeing strategy.

How to sign up

- This event is open to Law Society members with a verified MyLS account who can access *Get Involved*, our volunteer platform.



- Please register via [Get Involved](#)  and select "wellbeing" as an area of interest. You will then receive a notification about this session, along with a welcome email which will highlight it, along with any other relevant opportunities. You can also find the event listed under 'current opportunities' and register to join that way.
- Please note the session is limited to 300 participants, so early registration is recommended.
- The opportunity will be automatically shared with all registered Get Involved volunteers who have selected wellbeing as an interest.

New Book Club for Manchester Lawyers

Calling all bookworms and avid readers! A new book club, aptly named 'Between Cases' has just launched for the Manchester legal community.

Originally started by Emily Mcloughlin and Ebony O'Donnell, both Litigation Assistants at Kennedys Law, the book club is now expanding to all lawyers and future lawyers within Manchester.

This will be an after work event, with a different theme each month, and hosted at Gail's Bakery with surplus food provided.



Members will vote on a theme at the start of each month, then will be asked to put in their recommendations based on that theme. Once the book has been decided, the book club will meet at the end of each month to discuss!

You can join their exclusive WhatsApp group chat [here](#) @, as well as the dedicated LinkedIn group [here](#) @.

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Apprenticeship Levy: 5% to 25% Change Explained for Law Firms

Act before the funding rate changes.

Datalaw has opened two final levy-funded cohorts before the employer contribution rises from 5% to 25%. The Chartered Legal Executive and Advanced Paralegal cohorts close on the 15th of July 2026. Starts logged before then continue at the current 5% rate for the full apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship levy is changing in 2026. The employer contribution is moving from 5% to 25%, which means the same levy pot will fund far fewer apprentices once the new rate applies. For law firms with unspent levy, this is the moment to look at where that money could go before the change takes effect.

This article walks through what is changing, why it matters, and which staff in your firm are likely to qualify.

Understanding the Apprenticeship Levy

If you have an apprentice, the apprenticeship levy is the funding pot you are already paying into. UK employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million pay 0.5% of that bill into HMRC each month. That money sits in your firm's digital apprenticeship account and can be used to fund apprentice training.

Today, training providers draw from your levy pot to cover 95% of the cost of an apprenticeship. The remaining 5% is the employer contribution. Most firms barely notice it.

That is about to change.

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The employer contribution is moving from 5% to 25%, which means the same levy pot will fund far fewer apprentices once the new rate applies

What is changing in 2026?

Before August 2026, the employer contribution will rise from 5% to 25%. The way the levy is paid into HMRC stays the same. What changes is how far each pound in your account goes when you spend it.

The change in one line

- **Today:** levy pays 95%, firm pays 5%.
- **From August 2026:** levy pays 75%, firm pays 25%.

Why this matters for law firms

The same unspent levy pot will fund significantly fewer apprentices once the new rate applies. A start logged before the change costs your firm five times less in direct contribution than the same start logged after.

There is a second point that is easy to miss. Unspent levy expires 24 months after it is paid in. So funds in your account are already on a clock, whether or not the rate changes.

What that means in practice

- Levy you have already paid is committed. The question is how to put it to work.
- Starts logged before the change continues at the 5% rate for the full duration of the apprenticeship.
- Any credible candidate not enrolled before the change becomes a more expensive hire to develop afterwards.
- Timing has direct commercial value, not just convenience.

Who in your firm could qualify?

The clearest routes for law firms to progress staff on are the Advanced Paralegal Apprenticeship and the Level 6 Chartered Legal Executive Apprenticeship offered by Datalaw. Both are levy-eligible. Both lead to a recognised legal qualification. And both are built around staff who continue to work while they train.

Strong candidates usually look like this

- **New paralegals** running case files, drafting documents, handling clients and managing matters. Often a strong fit for the Advanced Paralegal apprenticeship.
- **Experienced paralegals** that would like to formalise their qualifications and gain practice rights. Often a strong fit for the Chartered Legal Executive apprenticeship.
- **Career changers** who have moved across from another department and need a structured route to qualification.
- **Long-serving staff** whose competence is well established but whose progression has stalled because they lack a formal qualification.

The firms doing this well are auditing the team and the levy balance in parallel. They are not waiting for the funding deadline to land on the partners' desk.

The Datalaw Levy Cohorts: A Final Window at 5%

Datalaw has opened two dedicated levy cohorts so firms can act before the contribution rate changes. Both cohorts close on the 15th July 2026. Any start logged before then continues at the current 5% employer contribution for the full duration of the apprenticeship.

The Two Routes Open

- **Chartered Legal Executive Apprenticeship** Ⓢ: leading to qualification as a Chartered Legal Executive through CILEx. Ideal for experienced paralegals who are looking to gain specialised practice rights in their chosen area of law.
- **Advanced Paralegal Apprenticeship** Ⓢ: designed for new paralegals who are looking to gain more advanced practical skills and progress as a trainee solicitor.

How Datalaw Can Help:

- **Levy review:** we look at where your levy currently sits and what is realistically available to deploy before the change.
- **Candidate audit:** we work with firms to identify staff who would qualify against the Advanced Paralegal and Chartered Legal Executive route.
- **Enrolment planning:** we map out which starts can be logged before the contribution change and the documentation required to do so.

Continued on page 20



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- **Structured programme:** apprentices join a cohort with scheduled workshops, 1-2-1 tutoring, assessment and end-point assessment built into the calendar.

Key Dates to Hold

- **15th July 2026:** closing date for Datalaw's dedicated Chartered Legal Executive and Advanced Paralegal levy cohorts.
- **August 2026:** apprenticeship levy employer contribution moves from 5% to 25%.
- **Rolling 24-month window:** unspent levy expires on a rolling basis, so check which contributions are closest to expiry.
- For firms still building out a wider development plan, Datalaw offer broader law apprenticeship programmes including the [Level 3 Paralegal Apprenticeship](#) [Ⓢ] which sit alongside the levy cohort and give newer staff a clear progression path.

Key Takeaways

The employer contribution rises from 5% to 25% before August 2026. The same pot will fund significantly fewer apprentices once that happens.

Starts logged before the change continue at 5% for the full duration of the apprenticeship.

Paralegals can progress their qualifications through the Advanced Paralegal and Chartered Legal Executive apprenticeship.

Datalaw has opened dedicated cohorts closing on 15th July 2026, with a built-in levy review and candidate audit.

Timing decides the value of your levy. The audit happens now or not at all.

Next Step

Make your levy work at 5% while it still can. Register your interest on Datalaw's [levy cohorts](#) [Ⓢ] before they close on the 15th July 2026.

Messenger deadlines for 2026



Please find the deadlines for forthcoming issues of The Messenger.

published on the first working day of each month.

Make sure to get your copy in before these dates to ensure that your article is featured in your chosen edition. *The Messenger* is

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

Aug 2026 24/07/2026

Oct 2026

18/09/2026

Dec 2026

20/11/2026

Sept 2026 21/08/2026

Nov 2026

23/10/2026

Free cyber training for lawyers from police-funded cyber prevention organisation

Law firms continue to be targets for cyber fraudsters in 2026 as new technology such as AI enables more sophisticated cyber attempts. Lawyers are often targeted by cyber attackers because they deal with sensitive data and often handle large amounts of money.

New [Government statistics](#) [Ⓔ] have highlighted the growing scale of cyber threats facing small businesses, with more than 612,000 UK businesses reporting a cyber breach or attack over the past 12 months. This equates to 43% of all businesses in the UK.



DI Dan Giannasi

DI Dan Giannasi, who heads up the team at the [North West Cyber Resilience Centre](#) [Ⓔ] (NWCRC), said: “We work closely with all businesses, including law firms, solicitors and professional bodies, right across Greater Manchester to help build their cyber resilience.

“It’s never been more important for law firms to ensure that every employee understands the risks of cyber breaches and the simple steps they can take to protect against them.

“We recommend that every law firm in Greater Manchester makes cyber resilience a key business priority to protect their business and their clients against the growing cyber attacks.”

Many online and cyber crimes have an overseas nature, which makes it incredibly difficult to investigate or gain a conviction. This is one of the reasons that the Home Office has funded the North West Cyber Resilience Centre (NWCRC), which focuses on building cyber resilience through free training, guidance and support.

The Government stats also found that phishing attacks have affected 38% of businesses over the past 12 months. Among those businesses that reported a cyber breach, phishing now accounts for 51% of those incidents, up from 45% last year.

On top of that, 37% of businesses have experienced ransomware attacks, while 12% of businesses have experienced an impersonation breach or attack.

Many small or medium businesses do not have their own cyber security teams, so it’s really important for individual employees to have access to cyber training. Just one click onto a phishing email can take down a whole IT system, so awareness and insight training is vital for cyber resilience.

The NWCRC offers free 1-2-1 training for law firms for small to medium businesses across the region.

Sign up for more information [here](#) [Ⓔ] or contact Niomie Haynes, Cyber Resilience Manager: Niomie@nwcrc.co.uk [Ⓔ]



The Next Generation of Legal Professionals Conference

Last month, we held our annual 'The Next Generation of Legal Professionals Conference' – designed to support our junior colleagues and assist them in navigating the legal sector by providing a collaborative and knowledge-sharing environment.

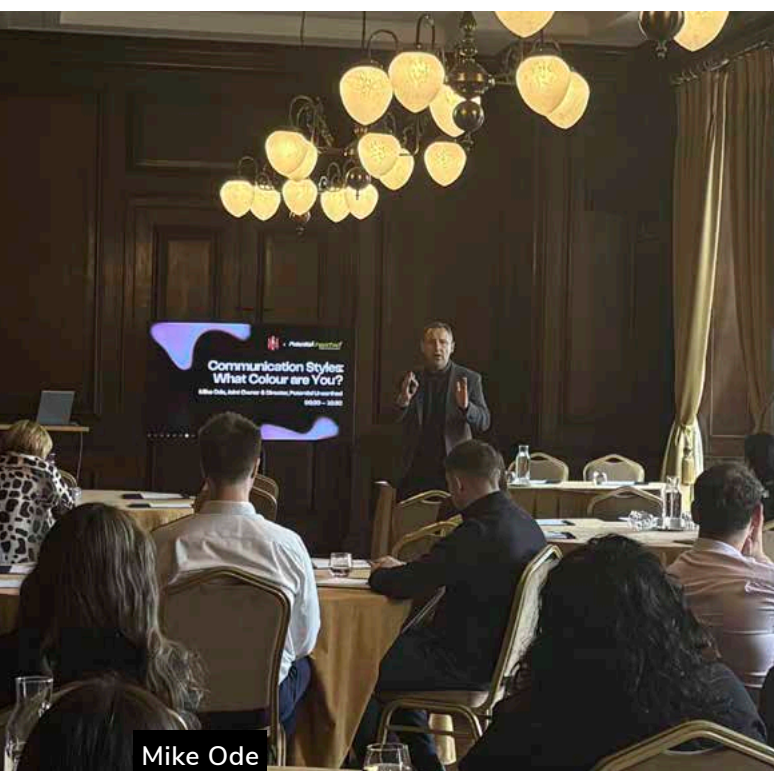
This event is held in partnership with [Potential Unearthed](#) and their joint owner and director Mike Ode. Mike is involved in the entire process for this event – from helping shape the programme and topics to running his own sessions and chairing the conference on the day!

Two sessions from Mike 'bookended' the conference, with the opening presentation on differing communication styles (where attendees found out what 'colour' their communication style was after completing a

quiz) and the concluding session on public speaking and improving presentation skills.

Throughout the day, we heard and learned from an incredible lineup of speakers. We had a panel session on client communication, care and experience featuring some senior and leading figures in the Manchester legal community – James Brown (Co-Founder & Managing Partner at Hall Brown), Daniel Weed (Director, Managing Partner & Compliance Officer, Burton Copeland), and Chris Ross (Corporate Partner and Head of the Manchester Office, Mills & Reeve. Drawing on their years of experience, they shared advice on managing clients and ensuring every client feels positive and well-informed.

We also heard from a brilliant panel of speakers who shared their tips and



Mike Ode



Client Care Panel

“

Attendees found out what ‘colour’ their communication style was after completing a quiz

tricks for building a personal brand and conveying your personality in a professional but purposeful way. Our panellists were representatives from a number of local community groups and networks: Dan Adejumo (Senior Associate at Eversheds Sutherland & Chair of the Black Solicitors Network North), Kirsty Wright (Trainee Solicitor at DWF & Co-Chair of the Manchester Trainee Solicitors Group), and Kirsty McKenzie, (Chartered Legal Executive at Hall Brown & JLD (Junior Lawyers Division) Director at Manchester Young Lawyers)

Her Honour Judge Sarah Singleton KC also delivered a fantastic session packed with practical advice to help attendees feel confident and competent when presenting a case at a Court or Tribunal hearing.

Nick Gallagher, CEO of The Solicitors’ Charity, then led an insightful session on wellbeing in the legal profession. Nick explored the people, situations and support behind the latest stats, shining a light on the safety net organisations available to solicitors and other roles across the sector. He also spoke about how the next generation (the very people in the room!) can play an active role in helping to highlight and promote wellbeing in the profession.

Hear from one of our speakers, Emma Hamnett (Trainee CILEX Lawyer at Fletchers Solicitors) on her session on neurodiversity below.

Emma shared the session with Kathryn Lloyd, Senior Associate at Olliers Solicitors. The pair split their session, with Emma discussing her lived experience as a neurodivergent legal professional while Kathryn shared her expertise with supporting neurodiverse clients.

“I had the privilege of being asked to speak at this year’s Manchester Law Society ‘The Next Generation of Legal Professionals Conference’, where I discussed my journey as a Neurodivergent person working in the legal sector.

I talked about my legal journey, which started over 8 years ago; the milestones I have achieved, and the path I have navigated being neurodivergent, working in the legal sector for the past 5 years as a paralegal, and now as a Trainee CILEX



Nick Gallagher

Continued on page 24



Lawyer at Fletchers, on the pathway to becoming a CILEX Lawyer.

I discussed the incredible development journey and support I have had as a neurodivergent person working in a fast-paced legal role. For example, how Fletchers have support plans for staff who are neurodivergent or suspect they are not yet formally diagnosed, and the support parents get who have neurodivergent children.

One of the biggest milestones for me, however, was in October 2023, during a conversation after a meeting with our CCO, Zoe Holland MBE, when I was made our Fletchers Group Neurodiversity Champion, from which the NeuroNetwork was created as a safe place where all colleagues in the network can come together and share thoughts, feelings, ideas and share their neurodivergent experiences. We have held social events, I told how I would be shortly holding a fireside chat and it would be about my neurodivergent journey followed by a Q&A and how I would share my story, how I was feeling and spoke about how

“

I discussed the incredible development journey and support I have had as a neurodivergent person working in a fast-paced legal role – Emma Hamnett

being neurodivergent in the legal sector has affected me and it would be an honest, open conversation where I felt comfortable to share my highs, lows and vulnerability in a safe space where I felt comfortable to do so.

In addition to being the Group Champion, I created internal office support for our 10 Neurodiversity office champions across our office network. I then concluded by stating that don't worry if you wish to enter the legal sector, as a Neurodivergent individual, there is incredible support out there.



Networking panel

I concluded the talk with: if you wish to have a chat with me or ask about applying to a firm such as Fletchers that supports Neurodivergent colleagues, then don't hesitate to reach out, as I am on LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram under @neurodiversitychamp1, where I share inspirational quotes and my neurodivergent journey to becoming a lawyer one step at a time.”

A massive thank you to Mike, our wonderful speakers, and everyone who attended this year's conference - you all made it a truly fantastic day! We hope the sessions gave you plenty to think about and that you left with some valuable new skills, insights, and connections to take forward in your career.

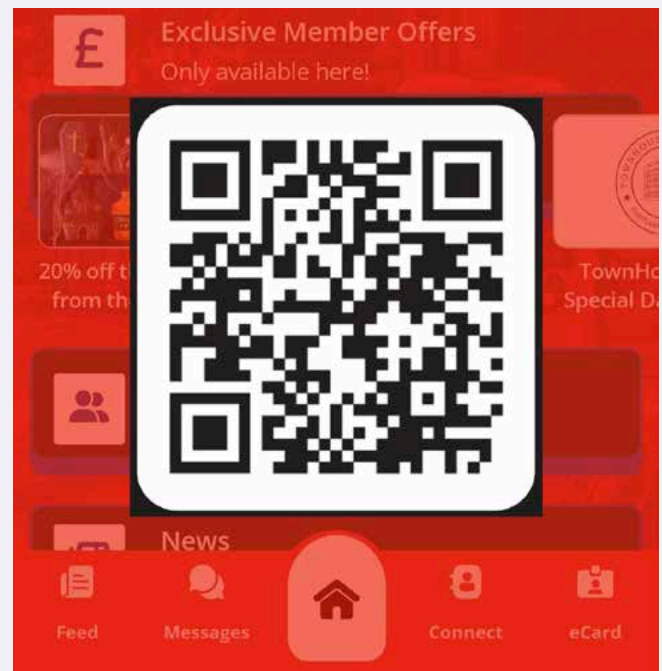
The MLS App is Your All-Access Pass to the Manchester Legal Awards!

The Manchester Legal Awards are just around the corner and, with almost 650 guests confirmed to attend, this year's going to be packed! However, we've been working on ways to get all our members involved, whether you're in the room or enjoying from elsewhere.

To do this, we're going to use our exclusive MLS App to keep you updated and engaged throughout the whole day, with exclusive content and even some prizes to be won...

Download the MLS app for the Manchester Legal Awards and unlock:

- Live winner announcements: Find out who's won before anyone else, as results are revealed on the night in real time. No more scrolling through social media and endless refreshing.
- An app-exclusive photo competition: The one award remaining with the winner undecided... For those in the room, capture the atmosphere, the people, the moments with your best 'table selfie!' The winning table will receive two complimentary bottles of champagne, so get snapping! Instructions of how to enter are on the app!
- Behind-the-scenes content: Ever wondered what the MLS Team are getting up to behind the curtain? See the set-up and backstage moments as we share exclusive content you won't find anywhere else.
- See where you're sitting: Can't remember if it was table 6 or 16? Beat the queues for the table plan and check it on your phone instead!



Download the app today and make sure your notifications are switched on ahead of the night. Enjoy exclusive content, community, competition, and live results all in one place, and all for our members.

You can download the app from the [App Store for iPhone](#) or the [Play Store for Android](#) and have MLS in your pocket at all times.

If you prefer, you can also [access the platform on a web browser](#) which can be easier for registering your account and downloading papers.

If you have any issues downloading or accessing the App please contact GraceLindsay@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

Leading change: challenges for leaders and how to overcome them

In today's fast-paced business environment, change is inevitable. Organisations must continuously adapt to evolving technologies, market demands, customer expectations, and competitive pressures. Effective leadership is critical during periods of change, as leaders play a key role in guiding employees through uncertainty and ensuring successful transformation. However, leading change is rarely straightforward and presents several challenges that leaders must overcome.

One of the most significant challenges leaders face is resistance to change. Employees often become comfortable with existing processes and may fear the unknown. Of course, this is only natural. Concerns about job security, increased workloads, or a lack of understanding about the reasons for change can create resistance. This reluctance can slow implementation and negatively impact morale if not managed effectively.

Another common challenge is communication. During times of change, employees require clear, consistent, and transparent information. When communication is inadequate or inconsistent, rumours and uncertainty can spread throughout the organisation. This can lead to confusion, mistrust, and reduced engagement among team members.

Maintaining employee motivation and commitment is also a major challenge. Change initiatives often require employees to learn new skills, adapt to different ways of working, and move outside their comfort zones. Without strong leadership support, employees may become disengaged or overwhelmed, reducing productivity and the likelihood of successful change.

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One of the most significant challenges leaders face is resistance to change

Leaders may also face difficulties in balancing short-term performance with long-term goals. While organisations need to maintain day-to-day operations, leaders must simultaneously focus on implementing strategic changes. This balancing act can create pressure and competing priorities for both leaders and employees.

To overcome these challenges, leaders should prioritise effective communication. Clearly explaining the reasons for change, the expected benefits, and the impact on employees helps reduce uncertainty and build trust. Regular updates and opportunities for feedback encourage open dialogue and allow concerns to be addressed promptly.

Employee involvement is another important strategy. When individuals feel included in the change process, they are more likely to support it. Leaders should seek employee input, encourage participation in decision-making, and recognise valuable contributions throughout the transition.

Providing adequate training and support is essential for helping employees adapt. Leaders should ensure that team members have access to the resources, guidance, and development opportunities needed to succeed in new environments. This investment increases confidence and reduces resistance.

Finally, leaders must demonstrate resilience and lead by example. By maintaining a positive attitude, remaining adaptable, and showing commitment to the change, leaders can inspire confidence in others. Celebrating small successes along the way can also help maintain momentum and reinforce progress.

Leading change can be tricky, however, by addressing resistance, communicating effectively, involving employees, and providing ongoing support, leaders can successfully navigate challenges and create a culture that embraces change and continuous improvement.

Do you need a hand developing your managers and leaders?
Contact Mike direct for a chat at mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk ☎

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18 St John St Chambers has one of the busiest Personal Injury, Clinical Negligence & Costs Departments in Manchester, recognised by Legal 500 and Chambers UK as market leaders.

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Job descriptions are available on Chambers website [here](#) ☎ .

Further information can be obtained by contacting:

Emma Bowie, Chambers Manager

Tel (dl): 0161 278 8208

Email: ebowie@18sjs.com ☎



Closing date for applications is: Friday 10th July 2026

Why managers matter more than they think

By **Trish McLellan**, LawCare's Director of Engagement, and Niamh Warnock, LawCare's Engagement and Relationship Manager.

Managers can make a huge difference to how people feel about working in law, often without realising it.

Usually, it's not one big thing that affects someone's wellbeing at work. It's the small everyday things. Whether someone checks in properly. Whether people feel trusted and supported. Whether anyone notices when someone is struggling. Whether people feel able to switch off at the end of the day without worrying about how it will look.

LawCare's new guide, [10 ways to be a better manager](#) ², was shaped by the experiences people shared in the Life in the Law 2025 research about what helps at work, and what makes working life harder.

Behind the practical tips is a bigger point: managers help shape people's day-to-day experience of work.

Small actions add up

One thing that came through clearly in the research is that people often want very ordinary things from managers. To be noticed. To be asked how they are. To be treated like someone with a life outside work.

One person who took part in Life in the Law 2025 said they wanted to:

"Chat more about non work matters. They know nothing about me and my life even though I have been there 6 years,

they are not interested. I don't expect full on friendship, but some interest in me as a person as opposed to a worker would be welcome."

It's a reminder that people often remember the small things most. A manager checking in after a difficult meeting. Someone noticing they seem overwhelmed. A quick thank you after a hard week. None of it is complicated, but it can make work feel less lonely and help people feel more supported.

Managers set the tone

The way managers behave has a big impact on the working environment. If someone senior is sending emails late at night, never properly switching off on annual leave or replying instantly at all hours, people notice. Nobody needs to say anything directly for the message to land.

That is how habits spread. People start to feel they should always be available too.

Managers can help by paying attention to the signals they are sending. That might mean avoiding unnecessary messages outside working hours, encouraging people to take breaks, or saying clearly that nobody is expected to reply in the evening.

Managers are under pressure too

It's also important to remember that many managers are under pressure themselves.



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Find out more!



From page 28

In the legal sector, people are often promoted because they are good lawyers, but that does not automatically mean they have the skills, time or support to manage people well.

Managing people properly takes time. So does checking in with someone, supporting workloads, handling difficult conversations and creating a healthy team culture. But many managers are expected to learn all of this as they go, alongside demanding jobs of their own.

As one person in the Life in the Law 2025 research put it:

“People management is a special skill... It does not follow that because someone is a good lawyer, they are a good manager.”

Life in the Law 2025 found that only 54.6% of those with managerial responsibilities had received training to support them in managing people. Less than a third (31.3%) said their targets or billable hours were adjusted to reflect the time needed to manage others or undertake training.

If firms want healthier workplaces, people management needs to be treated as an important skill, with proper training, support and time to do it well.

Creating space for honest conversations

Another important part of good management is creating an environment where people feel able to be honest about how they are doing. In some workplaces, people worry that saying they are stressed or overloaded will make them look weak or as though they can't cope.

That can mean people keep things to themselves until they are already really

struggling. It can also make people less likely to ask for help, admit mistakes or speak honestly about workload pressures.

Most people are not expecting their manager to fix everything. Often, they just want someone to listen, take them seriously and help them feel supported.

One person who responded to the survey said:

“Have a genuine conversation about how you are getting on and not a quick passing by ‘catch up’ most of the time which is had in front of the whole office.”

The legal sector does not need managers to become counsellors or mental health experts. But it does need workplaces where people feel comfortable speaking up early and know they will be listened to.

Many of the suggestions in the guide are simple and practical, because that is often what people need most. Done well and done often, they can change how work feels and help people build careers they can actually sustain.

People may forget the detail of a case or deadline, but they remember how they were treated when things were hard. Feeling trusted, listened to and supported can stay with someone.

Good managers do not need to get everything right. People are usually looking for honesty, consistency and support. Most of the time, good management is making time for people, communicating clearly and treating them with respect.

Read LawCare's new resource: [10 ways to be a better manager](#) .



MANCHESTER LAW SOCIETY

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15 SEP

18:00 PM
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TIME

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Regulation Update & News



By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans

The areas covered in this month's update won't come as a surprise to regular readers, but the direction of travel is getting sharper. The SRA and Legal Ombudsman are both focusing less on what policies say, and more on how firms actually operate, AML regulations have been amended, requirements for a data protection complaints process introduced and details from the consultation regarding the move to the FCA as sole AML regulator have been released. You can read it [here](#) [Ⓔ].

Supervision, AML and complaints handling all remain firmly in scope, and firms are increasingly expected to evidence that their frameworks work in practice. Nothing here is entirely new, but expectations are tightening. Firms that rely on historic policies or light-touch oversight may find it harder to justify their position. This is a good moment to step back and make sure your compliance framework reflects reality, not just intention.

Supervision post Mazur

The SRA has issued [expanded guidance on supervision](#) [Ⓔ] following the Court of Appeal's decision in Mazur, supported by practical case studies, and it's worth a careful read.

The core message is clear: there is no "safe" model. Firms must take a risk-based approach to supervision, considering who supervises, how many people they oversee, the nature of the work, and how oversight is exercised day-to-day.

In practice, firms should now be able to evidence:

- Active and regular file oversight
- Clear supervision structures with accountability

- Supervisor capacity aligned to workload
- Escalation routes that are used in real time

There is no one-size-fits-all model, but the expectation is that firms can demonstrate clear oversight, appropriate supervisor capacity and real-time escalation where needed. Firms need to show that supervision is active, effective and properly resourced. Reliance on nominal or overly stretched supervision, particularly in high-volume or heavily delegated work, will be difficult to justify if challenged.

Client money – tighter controls coming

The SRA is continuing to strengthen its approach to client money, including mandatory accountants reports and greater separation between decision-making and compliance roles.

The SRA recently opened another [consultation](#) [Ⓔ], part of its 'Consumer Protection Review – focused on protecting client money held by solicitors.' The consultation includes proposals to make a rule to require firms to notify it of events that it will prescribe from time to time, and give the SRA the option of using fixed financial penalties (FFPs) to help ensure compliance. It will use the new power in the



first instance to require firms to pre-notify of a merger or acquisition that has reached the Heads of Term stage or equivalent, and notify when beginning to receive or hold client money, having previously reported that the firm does not do so. The consultation period ends at 9.00 on Monday 17 August 2026.

Some of these changes may not come into force until 2027 or later, but firms should not treat them as a distant issue. The regulator's focus is clearly on early visibility of risk and stronger internal challenge.

Now is a good time to sense-check whether your governance, finance function and compliance roles would stand up to scrutiny.

Consultations

Other consultations remain open on:

- Continuing competence reforms (July 2026)
- Legal Ombudsman changes (September 2026)

These all point in the same direction: greater accountability, stronger consumer focus and closer scrutiny of how firms operate in practice.

AML

Action required now

With changes to the Money Laundering Regulations taking effect from 30 June 2026, firms should be taking stock now.

In particular, review your FWRA and update it to reflect your current risk profile, PCPs

should be refreshed and aligned to current requirements, and updates should be documented and communicated clearly to staff.

The key point is that regulators expect these documents to drive behaviour, not sit on a shelf. If your FWRA does not reflect how your firm actually operates, it is unlikely to assist if challenged.

Same issues, same outcomes

Recent enforcement shows little change in theme, but continued failures in practice. Common gaps remain, including outdated or generic firm-wide risk assessments, weak or unused PCPs and missing or incomplete client/matter risk assessments.

It is reported that the SRA has fined 59 firms £600,000 in recent months for these types of failings, underlining that basic AML controls are still not being applied consistently. Firms are, and will continue to be, fined for earlier breaches of MLR that are no longer ongoing, and the clock cannot be turned back, but all firms should ensure present processes are fully compliant to avoid higher sanctions being imposed. As fines are based on turnover and banding determined by the SRA, a number of matters will be referred to the SDT as the fines are over the SRA limit of £25,000, leading to additional costs, reputational risk etc. for firms.

Data collection exercise

The annual AML and sanctions data collection exercise is also underway, placing further emphasis on firms having accurate, up-to-date records. The form opened on

Continued on page 34



29 June 2026, and we advise you don't leave it until the last minute to complete it! Information is required relating to work carried out within scope of MLR, any contact / involvement with the sanctions regime and any persons designated under it, and submission of suspicious activity reports to the NCA. There is useful guidance about completing and submitting the form, together with Q & A [here](#) ².

Complaints – rising expectations

The Legal Ombudsman has launched a wide-ranging consultation following a 37% increase in complaints. A striking point is that many complaints escalate simply because firms fail to issue a timely final response. For firms, the takeaway is straightforward, namely complaint handling needs to be treated as part of core risk management, not an administrative task.

In addition, from 19 June 2026 all organisations must have a process in place for people to make data protection complaints, which includes acknowledging them within 30 days, investigating without undue delay, keeping complainants informed, and communicating outcomes promptly. The ICO has published guidance [here](#) ³.

Existing complaints procedures can be amended to reflect the requirements, or a separate procedure put in place, which, we suggest would be preferable, as there are different time limits and data protection complaints may be directed to a different individual.

Whistleblowing and culture

The SRA's designation as a prescribed whistleblowing body means individuals now have clearer protection when reporting concerns externally.

“

Complaint handling needs to be treated as part of core risk management, not an administrative task

Firms should assume that if internal processes are not trusted, matters may go straight to the regulator. Firms should ensure clear and accessible reporting channels, strong non-retaliation safeguards and proper investigation and documentation of concerns. Culture, reporting channels and escalation processes therefore remain squarely in scope for compliance teams.

Disciplinary decisions

12-month suspension, suspended for 2 years (under appeal) for bullying and abuse of position

A law firm owner engaged in sustained bullying, coercion and inappropriate behaviour towards junior staff over several years, with over 40 allegations proved. The tribunal identified a clear imbalance of power and repeated misconduct across multiple individuals. The SRA has confirmed an appeal, indicating the sanction may be insufficient to reflect the seriousness of the conduct.

12-month suspension, suspended for 2 years with restrictions for offensive social media posts

A solicitor posted offensive and discriminatory antisemitic content on social media over an extended period. While insight and remediation were accepted,

the tribunal emphasised the reputational damage to the profession and imposed restrictions on future conduct.

Struck off for misuse of client funds and concealment

A criminal solicitor kept a matter outside firm systems and required a client to pay fees into a personal account, concealing the arrangement over a period of months. The conduct was found to be deliberate and dishonest.

Two-year suspension for misleading information on insurance documents

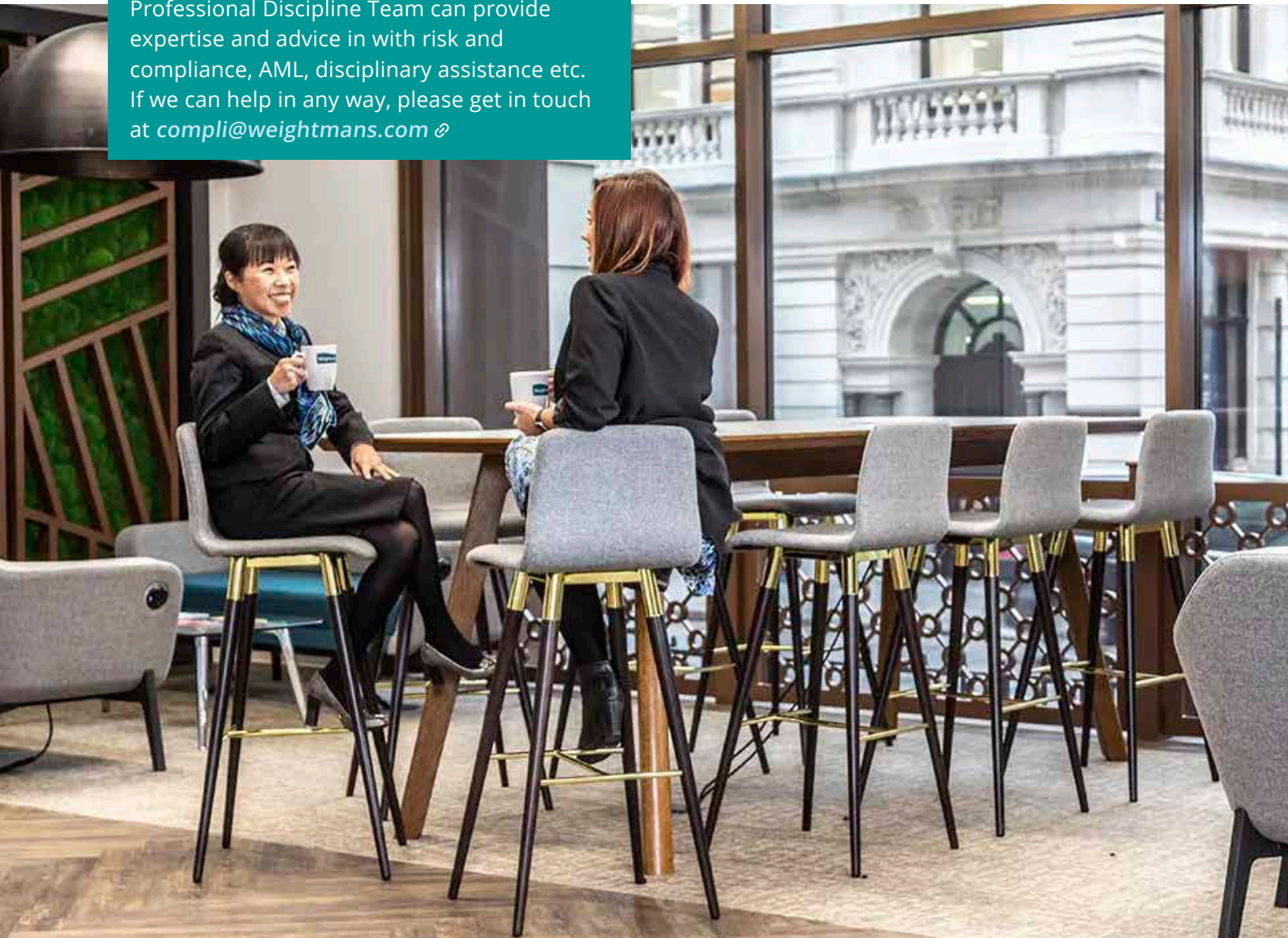
A solicitor provided misleading information on professional indemnity insurance documentation and allowed the firm to continue practising without proper cover, creating risk to clients and the wider profession.

Strike-off for fabricating documents

A solicitor fabricated and backdated a disclosure letter to give the impression that court directions had been complied with and maintained that position when challenged internally.

How Compli can help...

The Compli Solicitor Regulatory and Professional Discipline Team can provide expertise and advice in with risk and compliance, AML, disciplinary assistance etc. If we can help in any way, please get in touch at compl@weightmans.com @



From page 1

The End of an (Eccles-Bech) Era

Indeed, one of my favourite Fran stories is of the time she was called to do jury service – and had to be discharged because she was known to the prosecution counsel, to the defence counsel, and to the judge!

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Because Fran's journey with MLS began an astonishing 38 years ago, when she joined the organisation as a secretary, to two male titans of the Manchester legal scene, Arthur 'Tiny' Miles (perhaps best known as the man who set up the Military Police in Berlin after the Second World War, and who co-ordinated the last big spy swap at Checkpoint Charlie) and Laurie Overington. At that point, neither a nervous Fran nor anybody else would have thought that she would go on to head up the organisation at all, let alone for so long.

Yet, Fran so impressed her colleagues, the Officers and Manchester's lawyers that, after 'Tiny' passed away and Laurie

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Fran brought to the role the same skills that had marked her out in her early years: conscientiousness, creativity and liveliness – qualities that define her to this day

retired, Fran was the person to whom the organisation turned to lead. This itself was quite a remarkable achievement: back in those days, the idea of having a female lead a group of lawyers was quite revolutionary...and some of the profession's elder statesmen (there were no elder stateswomen in those days!) were not entirely happy with the idea!

But it didn't take long for Fran to win over any doubters. Very soon, she brought to the role the same skills that had marked her out in her early years: conscientiousness, creativity and liveliness – qualities that define her to this day.

Never afraid to try new things, Fran can truly claim to have pioneered concepts that now underpin MLS and indeed other local Law Societies (and other organisations).

Indeed, when you sit down at the Manchester Legal Awards on 2 July (for what will be Fran's last MLA event as Chief Executive), take a moment to reflect that the whole concept was her brainchild. 17



- Fran and Jeff Lewis



years ago, seeing that the Annual Dinner (a stuffy, formal, black-tie event, with boring speeches and tedious toasts) was 'on its last legs', she created the Manchester Legal Awards – and did so in her own mould; it's a fun evening, with plenty of drama and excitement, a great atmosphere, and lots of chances to renew old acquaintances and meet people. Indeed, it is telling that, when events companies queued up to take over control of the event, Fran knocked them all back, insisting that she wanted to retain control of the event so as to ensure that it truly met the needs of Manchester's legal community.

Indeed, every word of the Manchester Legal Awards is written (or at least scrutinised) by Fran. I remember, when I was President of MLS, having to send her my 'words of welcome' for scrutiny. She approved them – but warned me that if I deviated from the script I was in big trouble!

The Legal Awards are so successful now that it may look like it was a 'no-brainer' that MLS embarked upon them, but that would be to judge with the benefit of hindsight. At the time of their inception, they were

a revolutionary concept – and one which carried great financial risks. Fran was the only person who was confident that they would work – so much so that, for the only time in her MLS career, she said to the Officers that if she was proved wrong and the Society lost money, she would resign her position. The fact that she is still in post 17 years later says it all! As does the fact that all of the other large local Law Societies have followed suit and introduced their own awards dinners.

And it's not only the Legal Awards events where Fran can claim to have been a pioneer. The concept of a Charity Ball is one which Fran introduced. For many years, the Charity Ball was one of the centrepiece events on the MLS calendar. Eventually, fund-raising events became so commonplace that the Charity Ball lost its lustre, but only after other professional organisations had copied MLS by holding such events.

And Fran's initiatives aren't limited to social events. It was under her authority that almost 30 years ago MLS's Civil Litigation

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Her work for local charities is legendary, and she has become famous for her powerful charity appeals at the Manchester Legal Awards

Committee innovated a process of surveying solicitors' firms in order to establish the true cost of practice, which led to persuading the local District Judges to award costs to successful parties on something akin to a tariff, depending on the grade of fee-earner concerned. This concept is now familiar to civil litigators nationally and is fully embedded within the civil justice regime as Guideline Hourly Rates - but it started here in Manchester, under Fran!

When tragedy struck Manchester, Fran was first to react. When the 1996 IRA bomb exploded, devastating the city centre, Fran and the then MLS President Anne Kershaw were straight on the scene to assist those solicitors' firms who were suddenly



'homeless' and unable even to access their offices to retrieve their files. 21 years later, in the immediate aftermath of the Manchester Arena bomb in 2017, Fran was there again – springing into action to set up a helpdesk to give free legal advice to those families affected by the incident.

Fran herself has not been spared some tough times, facing some health and family challenges during her tenure. But, being the indomitable person she is, Fran just 'battled on', never losing her sense of humour or



her sense of perspective. In fact, Fran being Fran, she turned her health challenges into a force for good, undertaking many challenges and raising many funds for breast cancer charities. Typically, even her MLS retirement party in October is in aid of Prevent Breast Cancer.

Her work for local charities is legendary, and she has become famous for her powerful charity appeals at the Manchester Legal Awards. There have been times when professional speakers have been unable to control the noisy, drunken crowd – but then Fran has stepped up to speak and you could hear a pin drop.

I realised, when I first joined the Council of the (national) Law Society, just how well-known and highly-regarded Fran was. Even within the faraway corridors of Chancery Lane, Fran was spoken of with great affection. And perhaps Fran's greatest attribute is that she leaves an indelible impression on everyone she comes into contact with. It's no coincidence that many of the professionals with whom she has worked (including many former Presidents of MLS) have become personal friends; she in fact gave the eulogy (at his family's request) at the funeral of one former President, Paul Boucher.

Fran is straight-talking, direct and totally lacking in 'airs and graces'. Her disarming honesty has often been the key to unlocking negotiations with would-be sponsors as well as to resolving the tensions that have from time to time cropped up within MLS. She has never been afraid to 'say it as it is', even if what she's saying isn't what people want to hear. But, crucially, she's always the person to 'smooth the way' afterwards.

And it's those personal characteristics – as well as her professional accomplishments



“

Her disarming honesty has often been the key to unlocking negotiations with would-be sponsors

and qualities – which mean that a large hole will be left at MLS Towers when she retires this month. But, to go back to the start of this article, just as the Royal Family, Manchester United and, er... Crossroads Motel carried on (albeit in slightly different guises), so MLS will carry on too – not least because Fran's replacement, Carla, has worked under Fran for many years and has been trained up by her.

But there's no doubt that Fran will be missed. We will miss the self-deprecating humour, the disarming honesty and the characterful personality. But, ultimately, none of us would begrudge Fran a long and happy retirement... with huge thanks for all that she has done for Manchester Law Society.

Jeff Lewis



Fran-ecdotes

To honour Fran's incredible 38 years of service, we have used our regular *Talking Heads* feature as a space for people who have worked closely with Fran to share their favourite stories and 'Fran-ecdotes.'

Whether this was a particularly funny memory (probably involving rosé champagne if we know Fran well enough!) or perhaps a more sentimental moment where she helped people, either professionally or privately, we asked people to share whatever they thought encapsulates Fran and her role at Manchester Law Society.

Jon Hainey
Partner at TLT LLP
Manchester Law Society
President (2017-18)



"Fran is truly unique. She knows everyone in Manchester, and everyone knows her. She has a rare gift for turning opportunities into reality, somehow securing sponsorship and support where others might struggle. She made the role of President, for me and many others, so much easier – I remember colleagues from other societies saying, 'We'd love to do that, but we don't have a Fran!' Above all, Fran is a genuinely warm and caring person who looks after those around her. I will always be grateful for her support when my parents were in their final days. She will be greatly missed and is a very hard act to follow."

John Hyde
Deputy News Editor
Law Society Gazette



"My favourite Fran memory is from several years ago after I asked for help in writing a positive Manchester story as an antidote to coverage of firms closing.

Within a week, Fran had nine senior leaders sat round a boardroom table ready to tell me why the local legal sector was thriving. It was a great example of Fran's can-do attitude, her incredible list of contacts and her inexhaustible love for the region. Plus no doubt her unique ability to twist a few arms!

She is a one-off, a treasure and a delight to work with."

“

Fran is a genuinely warm and caring person
who looks after those around her

Ruth Shearn
Managing Director
RMS



"There are lots of daft anecdotes I could share – among them, trying to erect a tent at Gawsorth, doing superman poses on a kitchen chair, wearing traffic cones as bras and sporting ninja outfits from an auction box.

However, focusing on those alone would do Fran a disservice because behind the powerhouse exterior is a kind, considerate and highly intelligent soul – someone who's always there with astute observations, thoughtful insights and sound advice.

What started out 18 years ago as a purely professional relationship has evolved into a close friendship that I value greatly.

Fran, have a wonderful and well-deserved retirement. The Women's Institute won't know what's hit them!"

Matt Flanagan-Roberts
Head of Legal at Lookers
Manchester Law Society
Council Member (2024 – present)



"I remember meeting Fran when I was a fresh-faced trainee at Turner Parkinson (Bridge Street neighbours to MLS at the time) in 2015. First impressions – fierce (I was terrified) but I felt a strong presence of genuine care. Little did I know that our professional relationship would grow into a brilliant friendship. Fran took an interest in my career development from an early stage in my career and has been an excellent sounding-board / mentor on many occasions, and for that, I cannot thank Fran enough. You know you're in good company when a civilised dinner ends up in a karaoke bar until the early hours! Too much gratitude to share in such few words – Fran has had such a positive impact on so many."

Tony Healey
Manchester Law Society President (1999 – 2000)

"I was with a mutual friend of Fran and I, Suzanne Nickson, at the weekend who told me about a trip she had made to somewhere in Spain. Suzanne was with her husband in a restaurant in Spain. They were having a quiet dinner together when Suzanne heard a very distinctive and familiar voice... quite loud!! ... and it was Fran. Quite a coincidence as neither Fran nor Suzanne knew the other was in Spain but that unmistakable voice of Fran holding forth on some subject dear to her carried over the hubbub of a busy Spanish restaurant! They were both so surprised to see each other!"



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JULY 2026



Seraphina Wilkins-Tolliday
Managing Associate at TLT LLP
Manchester Law Society Council Member (2023 – present)

“My favourite memory of Fran is from Christmas 2024: Fran had assembled a table of brilliant women from the Manchester Legal community to attend a Festive Charity afternoon, with the money raised going towards helping a friend receive life-saving cancer treatment. It was an unforgettable afternoon, full of laughter and dancing, as well as emotional stories. Plenty of pink fizz also featured! For me, that afternoon represented what Fran is all about: doing good, thinking of others, bringing people together, and having a fabulous time whilst doing it!”



James Brown
Managing Partner at Hall Brown
Manchester Law Society Council Member (2025 – present)



“When we were setting up Hall Brown and getting going, Fran not only encouraged and supported us every step of the way, but was also our biggest cheerleader. She is so passionate not just about the legal community but all firms, large and small so that there are firms that can meet the needs of anyone who might need legal advice. Whether it is connecting people, press ganging you into volunteering or just giving you some good old hard truths, she does it in such a way that you exit the conversation with more love for her than when you went in! What a force!”

Derek Sands
Manchester Law Society President (1985 – 1986)

“The story I want to tell relates to all the evenings we spent at a Lebanese restaurant in Didsbury opposite the Christie Hospital. We would take over the top floor and when we had eaten, we would play charades. This lasted for about 3 or 4 years in the early nineties. The people present were Fran, Chris Graeme, Jenny Jump, Michael and Jean Green, Philip and Diane Hodson, Katherine Mellor and Lawrence Hass, and my wife Kathy and myself.”



Paul Jonson
Senior Partner at Pannone
Corporate LLP
Manchester Law Society
Council Member (2025 –
present)



"I have known Fran since 2004 when I came back to Manchester as a partner at Pannone & Partners having qualified in the city in 1994. During that time I have got to know Fran over lunches and the odd glass of something. Fran has been a constant source of support, ideas and wisdom. There is nothing she hasn't seen or heard in her time at MLS. Her energy and dynamism has propelled the Society to where it is now, one of the largest local law societies in the country. The thriving and diverse organisation we enjoy and are proud of is a reflection of the hard work and effort that Fran has put in over the years.

We will miss Fran and her force of personality very much although she leaves the Society very strong and in good hands.

Congratulations and thank you Fran"

Matthew Gibbons
Senior Clerk
Deans Court Chambers



"Fran has been a remarkable force in the Manchester legal community. Her vision, warmth and humour have shaped the Society for the better, and the success of the Manchester Legal Awards stands as just one example of her instinctive leadership. I've valued her friendship over the past twenty years and admired the energy she brought to everything she touched. She leaves an extraordinary legacy and will be missed more than she realises. Wishing her a long, happy and richly deserved retirement."

“

**She leaves an extraordinary
 legacy and will be missed
 more than she realises**

Vicky Griffin
Practice Director at Hugh James
Manchester Law Society Council Member (2026 – present)



"Fran, I've known you for almost 20 years, and throughout that time you've been one of the constants in Manchester's legal community.

As a non-lawyer, it would have been easy to feel like an outsider, but you never let that happen. You always made me feel welcome, valued and part of the conversation, regardless of role or job title – that's a rare gift.

Our paths have crossed at countless events over the years - where you were as likely to comment enthusiastically on my shoes as you were to champion the legal community you served so brilliantly. Your warmth, wit and straight-talking honesty will be hugely missed, but your impact on Manchester's legal community will be felt for many years to come. Wishing you all the very best in your well-deserved retirement."

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**Matt Taylor**

**Senior Office Partner (Manchester) at Eversheds Sutherland
Manchester Law Society President (2020 - 2021)**

"There are too many stories to pick from! Being serious first, there is no one more loyal and supportive than Fran. She makes time for absolutely everyone regardless of who they are and she goes out of her way to help others. Manchester Law Society is in good hands going forwards, but Fran will undoubtedly be missed.

Now to funnier memories – I'll take liberties and pick two. Most of my time as President was during Covid. Fran and I hosted an

entire Manchester Legal Awards virtually, the two of us filming a 'skit' beforehand and then presenting from a tiny studio in the Convention Centre – still funny now if anyone wants to watch [here](#). We also attended a very long and very dry virtual meeting when I was President. Bored, I bet Fran a bottle of LP Rose to take the ornate "Sword of Friendship" from Lodz, Poland off the wall of the MLS office and waive it around her head. Needless to say she did. Thank you for everything, Fran x"

Julie Mogan

**Partner & Regional
Director at Excello Law
Manchester Law Society
Council Member (2022 –
present)**



"I went to MLS' office to meet Fran some years ago, only to enquire about Excello becoming a member of the Society. Fran had other ideas and 'decided' on the spot that I was going to be on the Council (I was too scared to object). Fran has become a true friend. We share a love of dogs, sparkling wine and family. My husband Tom and I have been lucky to spend social time Fran and the equally lovely Peds. Love you to the moon and back mate – thanks for all the support and friendship and I look forward to sharing more fun times in the future."

John Moriarty

**Former Bristol Law
Society President**



"I can't swear to it as it was before even my time, but at a TLS Conference (in 1999?) I first met the force of nature who was reputed the previous year to have stood on a table and ordered people around before a formal function – getting High Court Judges into line!!"

Emma Carey

**Managing Partner
msb Solicitors**



"As new kids on the block in Manchester, Fran was an integral part of making us feel so welcomed, encouraging us to get involved in events where the champagne flowed and extending a hand of friendship that we'll be forever grateful for."

Graeme Jump
Manchester Law Society
President (1991)



"I always knew when Fran thought I'd said the wrong thing in a President's speech!"

Sam Hall
Senior Partner
Hall Brown



"Where do I begin with our dearest Fran. I've had the privilege of calling this lady my 'work mum' for nearly 20 years. Fran is always there with a bit of wisdom and sometimes even a shoulder to cry on. Sometimes I can do no wrong and other times I get a clip around the head a mumbled '..you need to give your head a wobble, love' speech! And I do, I do give my head a wobble.... because Fran said so!

On a more serious note, Fran IS the Manchester legal community. She is leaving massive shoes to fill but has really put the work into the succession plan. As a result, Carla and the team will absolutely fly and the Manchester Law Society is in very safe hands..... because Fran said so!

Be well, but don't be a stranger. Enjoy your retirement, dearest Fran. x"

Martyn Best
CEO/Founder of Document
Direct & Legal RSS



"To the tune of 'How do you solve a problem like Maria', I'd like to reflect upon 'How do you describe a person like our Fran?'

For me it would start with 'loyal and enduring friend'.

Fran has led MLS for 40 years and has stamped her personality and character to such remarkable effect. I feel as if I've known Fran for all of those years – and although it is obviously a little less, it certainly seems like 40 years.

Fran is an exuberant breath of the freshest of air, and once you've been judged by her, and I hope I have passed the test by now, she becomes the staunchest ally and it's been my joy to have known her well.

She won't be missed, because her legacy will always be with us, and she has ensured the succession is in such fine hands. She also won't be missed, because it will be my aim to maintain our friendship for another '40' years."

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Fran has led MLS for 40 years and has stamped her personality and character to such remarkable effect

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JULY 2026

**Michelle Garlick****Partner at Weightmans LLP****Manchester Law Society President (2019)**

"I first met Fran back in 2008/9 when Weightmans' Compli service was just getting off the ground—and within about five minutes she had not only secured her/MLS's support, but also completely convinced me (against my better judgement at the time!) that joining Council and setting up the COLP/COFA forum was a brilliant idea. As it turns out, she was absolutely right—something that has become a recurring theme over the years!

We've worked closely together ever since, and while I may have started out as a somewhat reluctant President, Fran's trademark combination of encouragement, persistence and gentle (and occasionally not-so-gentle!) persuasion eventually wore me down(!) —and I'm so glad it did. Being President was an experience I loved from start to finish, and I owe a huge part of that to Fran.

Along the way there have been countless laughs (many involving bubbles, karaoke, and possibly decisions that seemed like a



good idea at the time!), and what started as a professional relationship has become a genuine friendship.

Fran's dedication, energy and unwavering commitment to MLS over so many years is nothing short of extraordinary. She has been at the heart of so much of its success, and her impact will be felt for a long time to come.

Quite simply, MLS won't be the same without her—but she leaves it in a far better place than she found it. We will miss you hugely, Fran!"

Shane Smith**Associate at Slater & Gordon****Manchester Law Society Council Member (2023 - present)**

"I actually met Fran for the first time in person on 23rd November 2017 – which happened to be my birthday – at the first meeting of the Manchester Pro Bono Legal Panel in response to the Manchester Arena bombing. I was very quickly captivated by Fran and I am hugely grateful to the opportunities, guidance and wisdom (and many laughs and memories) she

has shared with me which have enabled me to grow both professionally and personally. Fran is a credit not only to the Manchester Law Society but the legal profession as a whole for her selflessly dedicated service, enthusiasm and determination which has undoubtedly made a difference to Manchester legal community."



Jeff Lewis**Partner at Brabners****Manchester Law Society President (2012)**

“My year as President of Manchester Law Society evokes all sorts of anecdotes involving Fran, but probably the one that most personifies her is ‘the Philadelphia story’.

Three of us (not including Fran, who couldn’t attend) went to Lyon for the biennial celebration of the Lyon Bar (with which Manchester Law Society is twinned).

Whilst there, we met up with various people from different jurisdictions, including a lovely group from Philadelphia. We nonchalantly issued the standard invitation ‘If ever you fancy a trip to Manchester, we would love to host you.’ We were safe in the knowledge that, being so far away, we would never hear from them.

Three months later, they made contact. ‘We’re coming to London in two weeks, and we would love to come to Manchester to see you whilst we’re in England’. I told Fran and said that we would have to make good on our promise to entertain them.



After the first (lengthy) barrage of expletives from Fran, she set to work. Two weeks later, our Philadelphian guests were treated to a meeting with the Lord Mayor in the Town Hall (where he ratified a twinning arrangement between Manchester Law Society and the Philadelphia Bar), a meeting with the Recorder of Manchester (dressed in his judicial finery, as he was midway through a murder trial!), a walk along the inner glass wall of the Civil Justice Centre, and afternoon tea at Cloud 23 in the Hilton Hotel. All of it arranged by Fran in the space of just 2 weeks.

The visit was a huge success. Our guests from Philadelphia loved their time here. As they said their thank-you’s and goodbyes, Fran leant over to me and whispered ‘Don’t you ever f***** invite anyone over here again without speaking to me first!’”

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“My year as President of Manchester Law Society evokes all sorts of anecdotes involving Fran, but probably the one that most personifies her is ‘the Philadelphia story’.



Bexley Beaumont tops Codex Edge growth report for fourth year in a row

Bexley Beaumont has explained how a focus on excellence and a clarity of vision has seen it top an influential legal industry study for the fourth successive year.

It was found to be the fastest-growing platform or fee share firm in new research compiled by the legal technology and market intelligence specialist Codex Edge.

The report also concluded that Bexley Beaumont had one of the sector's highest talent retention rates.

Codex Edge described the firm as "perhaps the best example of more focused Platform firms....executing with real clarity and purpose".

Bexley Beaumont's co-founder and Chief Executive, Karen Bexley, said that the findings demonstrated the benefits of having an "uncompromising" attitude towards recruiting based both on legal skill and alignment to the firm's core values.

"We have not lost sight of our original intention of becoming the firm of choice for those lawyers looking to really develop their careers.

"The research shows not only that we can attract very capable individuals but that they choose to stay with us because they recognise how they can prosper in an environment based on a combination of autonomy, collaboration and excellence of support not available elsewhere.

"Even though we are still a relatively young firm compared to some of the others mentioned in the Codex Edge study, our strategic growth shows that our approach clearly works."

Codex Edge has outlined its belief that this year's edition of its report marks something of a watershed.

It has identified how the number of lawyers working in platform and fee-share firms has exceeded 5,000 for the first time, "confirming the platform and fee-share model's transition from alternative choice to established market force".

Codex Edge found that four of the 10 "highest-hiring firms" across the entire UK legal industry were platform practices.

Ahmed Shahin, Codex Edge's Director of Technology and Analytics, outlined how the figures reflected "a fundamental shift in where experienced lawyers are choosing to build their careers".

He added that platform firms were "investing in infrastructure, support and culture to operate effectively at scale, attracting lawyers who want autonomy and financial transparency without sacrificing quality, collaboration or professional support".



Of all the firms which featured in the research, Bexley Beaumont had the highest five-year Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 74.83 per cent.

Codex Edge has remarked that Bexley Beaumont's performance had seen it quickly flourish from its start in 2020 into a well-established mid-tier firm.

It was also able to boast one of the highest lawyer retention rates for any platform firm of 95.1 per cent.

The report's outcome is the latest justification for Bexley Beaumont being one of the platform sector's most successful operators.

Employee-Owned Law Firm Myerson Launches ESG Initiative “Myerson IMPACT”

Myerson Solicitors  has officially launched **Myerson IMPACT** , the firm's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) initiative, alongside the publication of its first ESG report.

Myerson IMPACT brings together the firm's long-standing commitment to supporting its people, community and environment through a clear and focused ESG strategy.

As a 100% employee-owned business, Myerson IMPACT reflects Myerson's collaborative approach to governance, with people from across the firm playing an active role in helping shape its future direction through the ESG Committee and Employee Engagement Committee.

The newly published ESG report outlines Myerson's environmental ambitions, including reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 34% by 2027, transitioning to 100% renewable energy and achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

The report also highlights the practical steps already being taken across the business. From diverting 100% of the firm's waste from landfill and removing single-use



plastics from meeting rooms, to supporting local charities, schools and community initiatives, Myerson IMPACT reflects the belief that every action can make a meaningful difference.

Supporting social mobility and creating opportunities for future talent also form an important part of the initiative, with Myerson continuing to invest in solicitor

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Joanne Perritt

apprenticeships, trainee programmes, work experience opportunities and careers engagement with local schools and young professionals.

community. Employees also support a range of fundraising and charitable initiatives throughout the year, including the Cheshire Three Peaks Challenge in support of Francis House Children's Hospice, the Paint Altrincham Pink campaign for Prevent Breast Cancer, and donation drives for local foodbanks and charities.

Joanne Perritt @ , Head of ESG at Myerson, commented: "Our dedication to ESG runs through everything we do, and Myerson IMPACT is how we turn that commitment into real, measurable change.

Since Myerson was founded in 1982, supporting our people, our community and the environment has always been incredibly important to us. Myerson IMPACT brings together the initiatives, values and ambitions that already exist across the firm and provides a clear framework for how we continue to grow responsibly in the future.

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“Our dedication to ESG runs through everything we do, and Myerson IMPACT is how we turn that commitment into real, measurable change.

Employee wellbeing also remains a key focus of Myerson IMPACT, with the firm recognising that supporting the health, wellbeing and development of its people is an essential part of responsible governance and long-term success.

Community impact remains central to the firm's culture. Every employee at Myerson is given a paid volunteering day each year, enabling them to dedicate their time and expertise to causes that matter to them and generate social value within the local

As an employee-owned business, our people genuinely care about the impact we make, and that is what drives this initiative forward.”

The launch of Myerson IMPACT also coincides with the release of a new campaign video, showcasing the people, projects and initiatives helping shape the firm's ESG journey.

To download Myerson's ESG Report, visit [here](#) @



Manchester Law Society
Instituted 1838 Incorporated 1871



BEYOND IMPOSTER PHENOMENON

22.09.26

Strategies to Strengthen Confidence and Performance

13:00 — 14:00
ONLINE VIA TEAMS

FREE WEBINAR



Sara Duxbury

Why do capable, high-performing professionals still experience **persistent self-doubt**?

What else might be going on **beneath the surface**?

Learn how **confidence, performance, and environment** intersect — and why this matters more than you might think.



MORE INFO:

CLICK HERE



CFG celebrates Investors in People Gold and continued growth across specialist teams

CFG ☞ has once again been awarded Investors in People (IIP) Gold accreditation, alongside welcoming new colleagues across its personal injury, clinical negligence, Court of Protection and risk and compliance teams.

The firm has retained its Gold accreditation from Investors in People; a standard it has held since 2020. This marks the third time the firm has achieved the award. The recognition reflects CFG's ongoing commitment to creating a workplace where colleagues can thrive and develop their careers, whilst delivering outstanding support to clients.

At the same time, CFG continues to strengthen its specialist offering, with seven new colleagues joining the business between June and September. These

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We're incredibly proud to have achieved Gold accreditation from IIP once again

appointments span its personal injury, clinical negligence, Court of Protection and risk and compliance teams, supporting continued growth across its key practice areas.

The IIP Gold accreditation recognises the firm's sustained investment in its people at every stage of their career, from development opportunities and clear progression pathways to colleague engagement and wellbeing initiatives.

Helen Riley, Head of People and Culture at CFG, said: "We're incredibly proud to have achieved Gold accreditation from IIP once again. Having held Gold since 2020, achieving it for a third time reflects the culture we've worked hard to build – one where people feel supported, encouraged to develop and connected to the part they play in our wider purpose.

"Creating a great place to work isn't a one-off achievement. It takes ongoing listening, learning and investment, and this recognition reflects the commitment our colleagues show every day."

The latest recognition comes at a time of continued momentum for CFG, as the firm grows its team and expands its capability across complex and high-value cases in serious injury, medical negligence and Court of Protection work.



Hall Brown hat-trick as one of UK's best places to work

Hall Brown Family Law  has been named one of the UK's Best Places to Work for the third year in a row.

The firm is once again recognised as one of the 10 very best medium-sized companies in the annual listing compiled by the Sunday Times.

In addition, Hall Brown has earned a first commendation as one of the country's four best workplaces for women.

The Sunday Times' list is made up of organisations believe by independent researchers to have Britain's leading workplace cultures.

Managing Partner James Brown said the latest honour from the Sunday Times was particularly special as it came just weeks after Hall Brown's 10th anniversary.

"When we launched, we were determined not only to provide the very highest standard of client support possible but to be the kind of place where people really wanted to work.

"In that sense, being classed with the other great organisations on the Sunday Times' list is a genuine achievement and source of immense satisfaction.

"To retain our place on that list three years in a row shows that we have certainly not rested on our laurels but have continued to live up to our original objective.

"Being included as one of the best workplaces for women is something which we are also incredibly proud of.



James Brown

"What it all shows is that we place an emphasis both on recruiting some very talented individuals and investing time and effort looking after them once they join us."

In all, the latest edition of the Sunday Times' Best Places to Work list features 567 organisations across multiple business disciplines, broken down into the UK's most capable Very Big, Big, Medium and Small employers.

Hall Brown is highlighted in the Best Medium Places to Work category, which is open to those companies or charities with between 50 and 249 staff.

The Sunday Times' classification also identifies the best workplaces for women, the LGBTQIA+ community, disabled employees, ethnic minorities, younger and older workers, and those where staff enjoy the highest rates of wellbeing.

It is the largest such study in the UK and based on research conducted by the employee experience platform WorkL.

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Using a survey devised by behavioural scientists, data analysts, psychologists, business leaders and academics, WorkL scored nominated companies based on their performance in relation to employee engagement and staff well-being.

Zoe Thomas, Editor of The Sunday Times Best Places to Work, said that, regardless of size and sector, firms making the final list were helping staff to forge careers for the future.

"The thread joining them is the belief that a happy workforce is a stepping stone to better performance, faster growth and bigger profits.

"More than that, there's a collective instinct that a contented rank-and-file is a worthwhile business goal in and of itself."

The Sunday Times' finding means that Hall Brown has once more completed a clean sweep of the UK's most significant legal and employer rankings, having already placed in the top tier of Doyle's, Legal 500, Chambers and Partners, eprivateclient and the Times' Best Law Firms listings.

It also caps a remarkable first decade for the boutique family law practice.

Having opened its headquarters in Manchester in April 2016, it now also has offices in London, Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham and - most recently - in Liverpool as a result of continued strong demand for its services.

The firm now employs 84 staff nationwide, 62 of whom are fee earners.

Clarke Willmott announces strong financial results for 2026

Ahead of filing annual accounts, **Clarke Willmott LLP** is pleased to announce another year of strong financial results.

At the end of the second year of its three-year strategy, Clarke Willmott reports that it is on track to deliver on all key strategic goals and metrics. Revenue has increased to over £68 million and the firm is on track to meet its three-year ambitious growth target.

The success was underpinned by strong performances across the firm, notably in the firm's private client, litigation and strategic property sectors.

Core profit grew for the third consecutive year and Clarke Willmott's commitment to



Peter Swinburn

its diversity of practice areas continues to deliver strategic benefits as some markets feel challenges while others are more buoyant.

Clarke Willmott CEO, Peter Swinburn, is now looking to the future. He said: "Activity really built over the course of the last financial year, to record levels in the last quarter - 17% ahead of the previous year.

"This has meant that we have carried excellent momentum into the new financial year and we are optimistic for the future. Our people are committed to sustainable, profitable growth and we are attracting new clients and new people in greater numbers than ever."

Reflecting on feedback from staff and clients, Swinburn added: "Whilst we are delivering on our financial and growth goals, as CEO it was especially pleasing for me that during the year, our clients continued to rate our service highly.

"Over eight in ten clients rate us as 'excellent' and recognise the quality of relationships as a specific strength. Our strong, inclusive culture underpins continued positive feedback from our people, over 90% of whom state that they are proud to work for the firm."

Clarke Willmott, which has seven regional offices across the country, prides itself on maintaining high financial standards and reports that it is entirely committed to maintaining and building upon its financial strength sustainably.

The firm has maintained a debt-free cash position of over £8 million at the financial year end. Lock-up was the best in the firm's history, surpassing its strategic goal a year earlier than planned.

Peter Swinburn reflected on this, saying: "Compared to many of our mid-sized competitors, we have an enviable financial position that increases our strategic flexibility to support both investment and growth."

Having met 2030 net zero targets for Scopes 1 and 2 carbon reduction ahead of schedule, the firm is pushing harder and faster.

To date, Scope 1 and 2 emissions have reduced by 91% from the firm's baseline year of 2021/22. The firm has rolled out Carbon Literacy training to staff and to a client, equipping participants with the knowledge, confidence and practical actions needed to support the behavioural change required to address climate change. The firm has also achieved Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation status, reflecting an ongoing commitment to tackling climate change.

Supporting a more inclusive and accessible legal profession has always been important to the firm, which has led to the launch of 'Clarke Willmott Catalyst'. Catalyst brings together a range of activities into one central space from outreach and mentoring to skills development and career support. The name, Catalyst, came from the talented students the firm worked with as part of the University of Birmingham Impact Challenge.

Looking to the future, Swinburn adds: "Our financial strength and strong leadership creates opportunities for strategic growth via both lateral hires and acquisition.

"Despite the challenging environment we are purposeful in relation to our strategy and have entered the new financial year with performance stronger than ever. We look forward to further developing our firm for the benefit of our clients and our people."

MSB Solicitors' Michael Boland celebrates British LGBT Award win

MSB Solicitors is proud to announce its associate solicitor Michael Boland has been presented with the Future Leader prize at the British LGBT Awards.

The awards recognise individuals, organisations and businesses which have made a significant contribution to advancing equality, inclusion and support for LGBTQ+ communities across the UK.

Michael was presented with the Future Leader award in recognition of his commitment to championing diversity, inclusion and equal access to legal representation for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Commenting on the award, Michael said: "I was delighted to be shortlisted alongside so many inspiring individuals, but to win this award is an incredible honour and something of which I am extremely proud.

"Early in your career, it can sometimes be difficult to feel completely comfortable in being yourself. I've always tried to be open and authentic, and I hope this recognition shows that you don't have to hide who you are to succeed professionally.

"Being a positive role model for members of the LGBTQ+ community is something that means a great deal to me, and I'm grateful to work for a firm that places such importance on diversity, inclusion and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive."

MSB Solicitors' LGBTQIA+ subcommittee was also shortlisted for the Network Group award at the ceremony and managing partner Emma Carey was shortlisted for the Business Ally award.



Michael Boland

Emma Carey added: "We are incredibly proud of Michael and this well-deserved recognition. His passion for creating a more inclusive profession and ensuring people feel represented and supported is evident in everything he does.

"Receiving this recognition during Pride Month makes it particularly meaningful. While significant progress has been made, it remains vital that the legal profession continues to champion inclusion, representation and equal access to justice for all.

"Michael is a fantastic role model, both within MSB and across the wider legal sector, and this award is a reflection of the positive impact he continues to make."

Olliers Solicitors and Greater Manchester Youth Network launch partnership to help prevent neurodivergent young people getting caught up in justice system

Olliers and **Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN)** are launching a three-year programme aimed at reducing the number of neurodivergent youngsters falling foul of the criminal justice system.

Data from University College London suggests that approximately 80% of children cautioned or sentenced in the youth justice system have special educational needs or are neurodivergent.

Frontline experience at Manchester-based criminal defence firm Olliers Solicitors reinforces a system that routinely mistakes neurodivergence for defiance, aggression or lack of remorse.

‘Seen, Heard, Diverted’ is a cross-sector initiative that combines the legal expertise

of Olliers, the youth-led co-production of GMYN, and the specialist networks of Respect for All and the GM Neurodiverse VCSE Collective.

The programme, inspired by Olliers’ observations, will be delivered over three years across three strategic strands:

- **Young People:** A prevention and rights awareness programme co-produced by neurodivergent youth. This includes safe, activity-led learning (such as cycling or gaming) to help young people understand their rights and how to respond safely in high-pressure interactions with authority

Continued on page 58



(L-R) Alex Fairweather, Ruth Peters, Matthew Claughton, Stacey Mabrouk, Jo Campbell



From page 57

- **Parents and Carers:** The development of accessible tools and face-to-face sessions across all 10 Greater Manchester local authorities to help families navigate system interactions and support their children
- **Professionals:** The creation of a practical 'toolbox' for police, solicitors and magistrates to help them avoid misinterpreting neurodivergent behaviours and adapt their responses to achieve safer outcomes

Ruth Peters, Business Development Director at Olliers, has led the collaboration with GMYN.

She said: "The team at Olliers has always raised funds for charity but for 2026 we wanted to focus our efforts on an issue we are passionate about – neurodiversity and the criminal justice system.

"The work we are planning with GMYN is firmly rooted in our areas of specialism and feels like an authentic way of making a difference to young people in the Greater Manchester region.

"We are able to commit our own funds, direct fundraising and our expertise and advice to stop neurodivergent youngsters having needless encounters with the criminal justice system.

"We hope that this landmark partnership will make a real difference for young people in Greater Manchester and that this scheme will inspire other regions to try to address this national problem."

Alex Fairweather, CEO of GMYN, said: "For neurodivergent young people, the journey to a positive future is often obstructed by a system that doesn't speak their language.

“

For neurodivergent young people, the journey to a positive future is often obstructed by a system that doesn't speak their language

"Olliers sees this every day in practice. At GMYN, we work with many of the same young people earlier, before things escalate. There's a clear opportunity to connect those two perspectives and make a difference here in Greater Manchester.

"The idea has been shaped through discussions with Olliers, who have first-hand experience of representing neurodivergent young people and who have identified both the scale of the issue and the need for earlier, more effective intervention.

"It is a huge advantage for us to be working with experienced, private-sector professionals who have a thorough understanding of the processes and procedures which can impact young people. Their advice and guidance will be invaluable.

"This partnership allows us to intervene early, providing young people with the practical tools to navigate the world safely while educating the professionals who hold power over their futures."

The project aligns with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) child-centred policing approach. While the initiative launches as a three-year project, the partners are taking a phased approach to delivery, with the first year focusing on "Listening, Design and Testing" through a lived-experience cohort.

Pounds for pounds – 10k runners from Bromleys raise cash for the Christie Charity

A six-strong team from [Bromleys Solicitors](#) raised funds for The Christie Charity when they pounded the streets in the AJ Bell Great Manchester 10k Run.

Managing partner Paul Westwell, solicitors Joe Diver and Chris Eaton, associate solicitor Hannah Williams, paralegal Oscar Southan and financial controller Sam Harris have so far raised more than £900, including Gift Aid donations.

The Christie Charity supports the work of The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in providing life-saving cancer treatment, pioneering research and additional care and services for patients and their families.

It is Bromleys' chosen charity of the year, and staff at the firm are undertaking a variety of other activities to raise funds during 2026.

Paul said: "The Christie carries out incredible work, providing vital support to individuals and families whose lives have been affected by cancer.

"Many of us have seen first-hand how the exceptional care that people receive there makes a huge difference, and we all wanted to give something back.

"We're immensely grateful to everyone who has contributed so far, and would be delighted to receive further donations for this great charity."



Joe Diver

He added: "Everyone ran the 10k really well and it was a great day, with several of the team achieving personal best times. More importantly, they reflected the commitment across the firm to support a cause that means so much to us all.

"One colleague who'd earlier run the Great Manchester half-marathon even came along to support the 10k team.

"There are a lot of keen participants in the Bromleys Thursday running club, and we've already seen a groundswell of entries for next year's half-marathon on the back of the 10k team's success."

Donations can be made [here](#)



(L-R) Paul Westwell, Michelle Heywood, Sam Harris, Chris Eaton and Oscar Southan

Manchester Young Lawyers – Charity Partners For 2026/27

Manchester Young Lawyers are delighted to announce their chosen charities for the 2026/27 year!

Introducing **Reuben's Retreat** and **Team Verrico**...

Both Reuben's Retreat and Team Verrico focus on providing support for families who are experiencing one of life's most difficult events, having a loved one with a severe or terminal illness.

Please read below a comment from the charities themselves:

"We would like to send a huge thank you for choosing **Reuben's Retreat** as one of your chosen charities. Here at Reuben's Retreat, we support families after child loss and families whose children may face an uncertain future, by providing a place to relax, recharge, remember and rebuild. We are currently supporting over 800 individuals through a range of wellbeing sessions, memory making days, counselling and peer support groups. As a non-government funded charity, we are sincerely grateful for your support. We couldn't do this without kind-hearted people like you!



look forward to seeing what we can achieve together.

With heartfelt thanks,

All the team at Reuben's Retreat"

"**Team Verrico** is delighted to have been chosen by Manchester Young Lawyers as one of its chosen charities this year. Team Verrico is a small volunteer charity which helps families facing really difficult times as a result of cancer. Team Verrico always aims to provide assistance which will provide the most practical help. This help might range from ensuring children can continue to eat healthy while a parent undergoes treatment, providing counselling to families dealing with cancer and bereavement, to identifying and helping to fund medical opinions and supported alternative treatments."



Manchester Young Lawyers' Charity Directors have lots of exciting events in the pipeline, such as Puppy Yoga, a Sponsored Walk, Charity Socials and of course their annual Charity Quiz night!

For more information about their events, please head to their webpage [here](#) and be sure to follow them on Instagram @ [mcryounglawyers](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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Your Monthly High Five

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



The second World Cup to be held in the USA during our adult lifetimes has all the potential to halt productivity for the entire summer.

Or at least that's what the employment lawyers would have us believe.

Our inbox has already been swamped by hectoring press releases urging moderation and caution around access to matches during the working day. Staff should not attend work under the influence of alcohol. Unauthorised absences will be investigated. Patterns of lateness may result in disciplinary action.

As sure as night follows day, every major football tournament is accompanied by legal professionals reminding employers that football fever is not recognised as a protected characteristic.

Meanwhile, FIFA has spent the best part of a decade constructing the largest World Cup in history: 48 teams, three host nations, 104 matches and a commercial operation of such scale that one suspects there may soon be an official World Cup partner for staplers.

The old tradition of the one-team-per-person office sweepstake has inevitably been ravaged by expansion. Small businesses now face the prospect of allowing staff multiple teams from the hat, though pity those who emerge with a portfolio including Haiti, Cape Verde, Canada and Scotland.

The expanded format has similarly disfigured the once enjoyable task of filling in an office World Cup wall chart. What was once a pleasant workplace diversion now resembles the operating manual for a





nuclear power station, so densely packed with fixtures and permutations as to be largely indecipherable to anyone over the age of 40.

Yet for all FIFA's grand talk of growing the game, the World Cup's greatest achievement remains its ability to transform ordinary office workers into football authorities almost overnight.

For three years and eleven months these people display no detectable interest in the sport. Then suddenly they are discussing pressing systems, squad depth and tactical flexibility with the certainty of someone who personally selected the Brazil starting eleven.

By the second week of the tournament they will be confidently explaining how Portugal v Congo is likely to shake down, while also offering unsolicited views on whether Three Lions was a better football song than New Order's World in Motion.

It wasn't.

This annual phenomenon can be particularly trying for genuine football supporters. Following a club side throughout the year is a commitment involving disappointment, irrational optimism and occasional emotional trauma. To endure all that only to be lectured by someone who last watched a match during Euro 2021 can feel somewhat unfair.

Yet the World Cup's temporary converts deserve some sympathy too. The tournament remains one of the few events capable of drawing in people who would otherwise have little interest in football. Part of its appeal is precisely that everyone gets involved.

Including those who would rather not.

Indeed, spare a thought for the office's non-football contingent. For them, the next month represents a form of corporate purgatory in which every conversation becomes football-adjacent. Every management presentation acquires a sporting metaphor. Every coffee break turns into a discussion about formations.

Somewhere in Britain, a sales director is already preparing to compare quarterly performance to "getting out of a difficult group".

The convenience of a mainly evening televised line-up has the potential to divide the nation over who we can be irritated by the most, with ITV mounting a strong challenge for that crown through the combined efforts of Gary Neville, Roy Keane and Ian Wright, while Duncan Ferguson remains available for moments of sheer, unbridled malevolence. All are marginally more likely to make a sentient human being quietly grind their teeth with rage than the prospect of spending an evening with the BBC's Wayne Rooney, Alan Shearer, Micah Richards, Joe Hart, Paul Robinson, Steph Houghton and Ellen White. Though the inclusion of Danny Murphy does feel something of an outlier in that regard.

However, the tournament also holds the prospect of reinforcing an entire country's open hostility towards ITV's inexplicable persistence in selecting Lee Dixon as a co-commentator.

For employers, at least, the North American time zones offer a degree of protection. City centres are unlikely to grind to a halt as workers dash out for the 5pm screening of South Africa versus the Czech Republic.

Continued on page 64



Productivity losses will instead arrive in the modern fashion: through WhatsApp groups, social media clips, fantasy football updates and endless debates conducted on Microsoft Teams.

And then there is LinkedIn.

No major sporting event is now complete without an endless stream of earnest posts drawing profound leadership lessons from a group-stage draw between Uruguay and Saudi Arabia. By the second week of the tournament, senior executives and self-styled thought leaders will be explaining what businesses can learn from Norway's defensive organisation, Argentina's team culture or the resilience shown by a substitute left-back from Ecuador.

Most of these insights will be posted at around 11pm on a Saturday evening, prompting uncomfortable questions about both work-life balance and whether anyone should be treating a goalless draw as a masterclass in transformational leadership.

Somewhere, a man who has described himself as a disruptor, catalyst and change-maker will be typing, "Football teaches us that success is about people," before attaching a photograph of himself looking thoughtfully into the middle distance.

One advantage of this tournament is that the extraordinary cost of attendance, coupled with the prospect of spending several weeks navigating airports, security checks and modern America, makes it less likely that offices will be forced to endure the return of fans armed with exaggerated tales about how wonderful it all was while watching England lose 2-1 in Dallas, before triumphantly putting three past Panama in a dead rubber ten days later.

“

The World Cup may only last a month. The LinkedIn content could take considerably longer to recover from

The modern World Cup exists simultaneously as a sporting event, a cultural festival, a geopolitical exercise and a money-making machine of extraordinary sophistication. At the top sit FIFA executives discussing global audiences, sponsorship activations and broadcasting revenues measured in billions.

Back in the office, however, the conversation will centre on whether England are going to win it, why VAR is ruining football and whether somebody can please stop Steve from Accounts pretending he has always been an expert on the tactical nuances of the Moroccan midfield.

For all the money, politics, commercial partnerships and corporate hospitality wrapped around the modern World Cup, some traditions remain reassuringly intact.

Chief among them is the certainty that every workplace in Britain will suddenly contain at least half a dozen football experts.

None of whom watched a single qualifying game.



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Social Mobility: A Students Perspective

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee are proud to be working closely with law students at The University of Manchester—an institution shaping the future generation of legal professionals in our city and beyond. Through this collaboration, we are committed to championing social mobility within the legal sector, recognising that talent and potential should never be limited by background, access, or opportunity.

Social mobility remains a critical issue within the legal profession, where pathways have historically favoured those with existing networks or early exposure to the industry. By engaging directly with students from diverse backgrounds, we aim to help widen access, amplify underrepresented voices, and support aspiring lawyers in building the confidence, skills, and networks they need to succeed.



Shane Smith

As part of this initiative, we are providing a platform for students to share their lived experiences. These first-hand perspectives are vital in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future for the profession. In the piece that follows, Jade Ly, a second-year Law LLB student at The University of Manchester, offers a powerful reflection on her journey into the legal industry.

Shane Smith
Associate Solicitor, Slater and Gordon
Lawyers
Chair of EDI Network

My experience as a first generation, working-class law student navigating the middle-class legal sphere

The Sutton Trust defines social mobility as “the link between a person’s occupation or income or their parent’s income”. Notoriously, law has been a career associated with those who have attended private school or have connections which have enabled them to access legal opportunities.

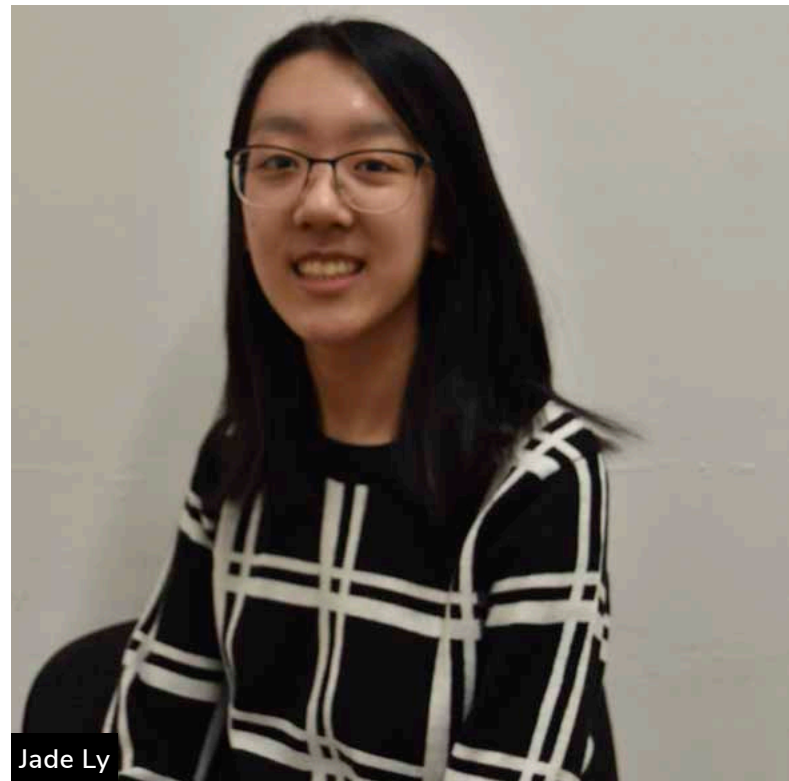
Personally, I never viewed a legal career as being within my reach until I came to college and even now at university, I still

have my doubts on whether I will truly succeed within the legal sphere due to my background. I grew up in Stockport, which has been known to have high deprivation levels and inadequate educational facilities with a peer once re-iterating to me that they were surprised that “I had such good literacy” after becoming aware of my hometown. I also come from a working-class family with my dad working diligently in a family-owned restaurant whilst my mum maintains the household so as you can see,

I had little knowledge of the legal career path.

Now at university, the biggest obstacle I perceive students with similar backgrounds to myself to be facing is the process of gaining awareness and access to networks to support them in navigating the complex legal space. Unlike many of my peers who joined initiatives which educated them early on within their education about their future career paths, I only became aware of these support networks after attending a Law Society event, leading to me initiating an application to upReach, a social mobility charity focused on aiding socially disadvantaged students in realising their career potential. It was after this successful application, that I was able to reap the benefits of becoming an associate (a participant in the upReach 3 year programme), enabling me to advance my awareness into the world of employment. This programme gave me the essential opportunity to visit various law firms, allowing me to build my professional network whilst also educating myself on the foundational skills needed to ace law applications. Without important charities focused on elevating social mobility, it would be difficult for students like myself to advance my knowledge of the legal world and learn about the process required to reach this aspiration.

Another big barrier is gaining work experience and legal opportunities. To even be able to participate in these opportunities, they are largely dependent on individuals passing through multiple stages such as the Watson Glaser test, situation judgement test and then a final interview. When arriving to university, I recall having no prior knowledge of the pathway to actually becoming a solicitor with many of my peers also experiencing this shock. Learning about the multiple stages within legal



Jade Ly

“
Being a law student in 2026
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challenges when you come
from a different background
compared to your peers

applications initially felt quite daunting as I had no experience of participating in an interview or of even what a Watson Glaser was, so I did feel behind knowledge wise compared to my peers. Through constant practice and consistent applications early on during my second year, I advanced through the multiple stages which has proven fruitful, but I recognise that it took extra determination and initiative to ensure this success compared to some

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of peers who were taught about these processes earlier on so they were more familiar in completing these processes. Even after obtaining these experiences, many remain unaware of what these opportunities entail: workshops? Case studies? Shadowing? Simple thoughts such as what to wear to an insight day can also be a constant stressor when coming from a background where you have never even entered a prestigious law firm environment.

Overall, being a law student in 2026 does come with multiple challenges when you come from a different background compared to your peers and lack the networks to access legal professionals. However, with support from charities and programme which elevate social mobility and university support through bursaries, social mobility within the university and legal sphere is steadily improving. To further improve social mobility, it is vital for law firms to make their insight events more accessible such as making them virtual or having them being more open to socially diverse students because this would improve student outreach, enabling students to gain more insight earlier on before making an application. Moreover, mentorship opportunities could prove essential in helping to bridge students in building their professional networks and be able to access support from someone thriving in their aspired career because this can help students stay motivated during rejections, which are common within the legal sector.

Jade Ly

**2nd Year Law LLB Student
The University of Manchester**

‘Unity in Diversity’

This year’s South Asian Heritage Month theme, ‘Unity in Diversity’, provides an opportunity to celebrate the richness, diversity and contribution of South Asian communities across the UK and beyond. It is a theme that resonates strongly within many communities, where individuals from a wide range of South Asian backgrounds have helped shape the social, cultural and economic fabric of society.

South Asia is home to an extraordinary range of cultures, languages, faiths and traditions. Communities with roots in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and many more, each bring unique perspectives, histories and cultural practices. This diversity is one of the greatest strengths of South Asian heritage, reflecting centuries of tradition, innovation and cultural exchange.

At the same time, there are many values and experiences that unite South Asian communities. Across the different backgrounds, there is often a shared emphasis on family, respect for elders, education, hospitality, community service and collective responsibility. These values continue to shape the lives of individuals and families across generations and help foster strong, resilient and connected communities.

South Asian Heritage Month offers an opportunity to recognise both the distinct identities that make our communities unique and the common threads that connect us. While traditions, languages and religious practices may differ, there is a shared commitment to preserving cultural heritage, supporting future generations and making a positive contribution to the wider community. These shared values create a sense of belonging that transcends

differences and strengthens relationships between people from all backgrounds.

Across the UK, this spirit of unity can be seen in the many ways, people come together to celebrate cultural festivals, support charitable initiatives and contribute to the community. Whether marking occasions such as Eid, Diwali, Vaisakhi or any other cultural celebrations, communities often gather in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. These moments not only celebrate and honour individual traditions but also create opportunities to learn from one another and build stronger lasting connections.

One of the most visible examples of South Asia's contribution to British life can be found in its culinary heritage. The introduction of South Asian spices, ingredients and cooking traditions has had a lasting influence on the nation's food culture and economy. For generations, South Asian owned restaurants, cafes and food businesses have supported families, created jobs and served as important community hubs. Today, South Asian cuisine is firmly embedded within British culture, with dishes and flavours enjoyed by people from all walks of life. Much like the nation's fondness for a cup of tea, sharing a curry has become a familiar and cherished part of British social life, demonstrating the lasting impact of South Asian heritage on our everyday experiences.

The histories of South Asian communities are also deeply intertwined. Generations of South Asians have contributed significantly to public service, healthcare, education, business, politics, sport and the arts, helping to shape modern Britain. Their contributions and achievements have enriched our community and strengthened the multicultural society we are proud to be part of today.



Rubecca Rahman

As we celebrate South Asian Heritage Month, it is important to recognise that diversity and unity are not opposing ideas. Rather, our diversity enriches our collective experience, bringing new perspectives, creativity and understanding. By embracing both our unique identities and our shared values, we can continue to build communities that are inclusive, welcoming and cohesive.

This month provides an opportunity to reflect on the achievements, contributions and experiences of South Asian communities, whilst looking ahead to a future built on mutual respect, understanding and collaboration.

By celebrating both what makes us different and what brings us together, we honour the true spirit of South Asian Heritage Month and the theme of 'Unity in Diversity.'

Written by Rubecca Rahman

Paralegal at McAlister Family Law – Beyond Law Group

Member of Manchester Law Society Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee



Anthony Collins announces 13 promotions, including in the Manchester office

Anthony Collins  has made a number of firm-wide promotions, including a promotion to senior associate for Catherine Gibbons in the Manchester office. Her promotion further strengthens the firm's governance team, and she will continue her work supporting a diverse range of charity clients across the firm's faith, housing and health and social care sectors, as well as acting as an interim manager of charities where appointed by the Charity Commission.

Catherine Gibbons, senior associate in the charities governance team in Anthony Collins' Manchester office, said: "It's fantastic to see so many well-deserved promotions across the firm including for those colleagues that I work closely with on a regular basis. One of the brilliant things about working at Anthony Collins is that all teams are genuinely collaborative;

everyone is always willing to support each other and go the extra mile. It creates a positive working environment where we're all focused on doing our best to provide excellent support both to our clients and to one another.

"My role is very varied, as I work with charities of all shapes and sizes, so no two days are quite the same. Following my promotion to senior associate I'm excited to take on greater responsibility for looking after our clients, continue supporting charities with complex legal issues and leading on larger governance projects. I'm particularly looking forward to doing more to help charities get back on track where they have experienced governance failures or mismanagement. This can involve supporting charities when they are being investigated by the Charity Commission and helping trustees navigate what can often be

Catherine Gibbons



a very challenging time. It can also involve being appointed by the Charity Commission to be the interim manager for a charity. It's a fascinating area of work that I'm keen to do more of to ensure that public trust and confidence in charities, and the meaningful work that they do, is maintained.

"I am also looking forward to growing our offering to charities in the North West. Having grown up in the North West, studied here, and built my life here, I'm thrilled to be developing my career in the firm's Manchester office. The city is an exciting place to be based, with ongoing redevelopment and a growing number of organisations with a strong social purpose committed to making a positive impact on people and planet. Manchester offers a real opportunity to connect, collaborate, and build partnerships with like-minded organisations that are working towards these shared goals and not just focussing on profit.

The firm has also promoted Edwina Turner, a highly experienced charity specialist, to the partnership, to further strengthen the firm's reputation for client service excellence in the charities sector.

In the governance team, Esther Campsall has been promoted to legal director, specialising in education governance and charity law. Laura Mynott joins her as legal director in the property team, supporting social businesses and faith organisations.

In the housing litigation and management team, Penny Bournes' promotion strengthens the firm's service to registered providers, due to her expertise in providing non-contentious specialist housing management advice and training. In the property team, Amy Barons' promotion will allow her to provide further support for public bodies, registered providers

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It's fantastic to see so many well-deserved promotions across the firm

and charity clients on the acquisition, sale or lease of affordable housing and development land. In the personal injury team, Sarah Owen's will continue her work representing individuals pursuing compensation claims following medical negligence or an accident. The final promotion to senior associate is Hazel Findlay in the employment and pensions team, whose experience sees her support clients across all aspects of business immigration and employment law.

A further four colleagues have been promoted to associate – Ben Bray in the property team, Ravinderjit Dosanjh in the commercial litigation team, Sike Olawale in the projects team, and Gail Saunders in the private client team. Also in the private client team, April Hill has been promoted to executive caseworker. These promotions demonstrate Anthony Collins' ongoing commitment to investing in its people at all levels.

Matthew Wort, senior partner at [Anthony Collins](#) , said: "Promoting our people is a mark of our ongoing success and our commitment to delivering excellent client service now and in the future. It's proof that the support we provide to employees – both personally and professionally – helps them to build successful careers and brings benefits for the firm and the clients and communities we serve. Importantly, we know that by investing in the leaders of tomorrow, we are creating a business model with sustainable growth built in."



Hugh Jones celebrates promotions and new joiners

Hugh Jones are delighted to celebrate a number of well-deserved promotions and new arrivals across the firm.

Firstly, congratulations to Kirsty Nickson, who has been promoted to Senior Associate Solicitor. Kirsty has received excellent feedback for her client care, "I thought Kirsty was amazing at engaging with the client, understanding his wishes for the future, promoting his independence while balancing his parents' enthusiasm in supporting him."

Hugh Jones are also pleased to announce promotions for Karen Robinson, Lindsay Savage, Martyn Jones and Ian O'Neill to Associate, alongside Danielle Tittensor and Chelsea Hamilton to Senior Case Worker, and Michelle Sharp to Senior PA.

Further promotions include, two members of their accounts team, Laura Metcalfe (Senior Administrator), and Rosie Dobson (Trainee HR Advisor), Elisse Charnley (Case Worker) and Manisha Gadhia (Case Worker) and Petra Puterova, who has been praised for her calm and positive approach: "Petra is very calm and her approach to each day has a great effect on those around her."

They are equally committed to developing future talent. Annabel Morgan-Platt and Maddy Hemstedt will begin their training contracts in October 2026, while Kate Barnett and Megan Jones are on track to qualify as solicitors in the coming months and will be continuing their careers with the firm upon qualification. Hugh Jones looks forward to welcoming them as qualified members of the team.

Mills & Reeve promotes 17 in the North West

Mills & Reeve has announced the promotion of 17 people in the North West, including one person to partner.

Effective from 1 June 2026, 17 people have been promoted in the firm's Manchester office across a wealth of roles and practice areas. This includes corporate, commercial, real estate, employment, regulatory, family, and insurance disputes, as well as business services, reflecting the breadth of the firm's client offering and continued investment in key sectors and regions.

As part of the latest round of promotions, Andrew Moore has been promoted to partner in the family team.

Andrew is a family law solicitor, acting predominantly for business owners. He leads the family and children team's business sector nationally, advising on a range of complex and sensitive matters, including financial arrangements and relationship breakdown.

Chris Ross, partner and head of office at Mills & Reeve in the North West, commented: "Firstly, huge congratulations to everyone who has been promoted – people who have demonstrated strong commitment, hard work, and a real appetite to succeed. Each person brings deep expertise and strong client relationships to our Manchester office, and they will play an

They also welcomed 17 new joiners over the past year with more arriving this summer, as they continue to strengthen their team.

Managing Director Liz Hughes commented: "We're delighted to announce these well-deserved promotions which recognise the achievements of colleagues across the firm. From a Senior Associate appointment to solicitor qualifications and a high number of non-qualified staff promotions this year, these milestones reflect the exceptional talent we have in all teams across the firm. All those being promoted have demonstrated a strong commitment to our clients and our values, and I'm excited to see them continue to grow and contribute to our future success."



If you're interested in joining the Hugh Jones team, they would love to hear from you, please send your CV to jenny.roberts@hughjonessolicitors.co.uk [Ⓔ]. You can also view current vacancies on the website here: [Careers | Hugh Jones Solicitors](#) [Ⓔ].

important role in shaping the future of the firm - both in the region and across our key markets."

Overall, 97 people have been promoted at Mills & Reeve, including eight to partner. It takes the total number of partners to 195 across the firm's seven offices.

Ross added: "The latest round of promotions shows our continued investment in supporting, developing and empowering our people, as we strive to deliver our long-term growth strategy. This commitment is reflected in our recent Investors in People (IiP) platinum accreditation – a standard we have proudly retained and one that is achieved by only 8% of assessed organisations."



Chris Ross



TLT continues strategic Manchester growth with partner hire duo

TLT  has further expanded its Real Estate practice in Manchester with the appointment of two new partners – Julie Simms and Andrew Batterton – the second and third to join in the past month. John Webster is also joining as a Partner in London.

They join the firm from DWF and bring a collective 60 years wealth of experience in real estate development, infrastructure planning, and regeneration, with a strong track record advising public and private sector clients across a range of urban development, energy, utility and infrastructure projects.

They are nationally recognised for their expertise in advising on complex grant funded projects requiring partnership working between local authorities, government agencies and the private sector. They have acted on some of the most recent nationally significant transformational regeneration projects including Guildford's Weyside Urban Village, the redevelopment of Wythenshawe Town Centre, Tameside's

Godley Green Garden Village and Festival Gardens Liverpool and North Leigh, Wigan.

Julie Simms co-led the UK National Regeneration Development and Infrastructure Team at DWF and was office managing partner of the Liverpool Office. She leads on site investigation and assembly, development agreements and real estate funding structures.

Andrew Batterton led the National Development and Infrastructure Planning Team at DWF and was office managing partner of the Leeds office. He leads on strategy for statutory consenting, land assembly by compulsory purchase and delivery of major projects.

Julie and Andrew are the second and third Partners to arrive in Manchester this month, following the [arrival of Felicity Tulloch](#) . Their arrival brings the number of colleagues in Manchester to over 250, including more than 30 partners, and demonstrates the important role the office plays in the firm's broader growth strategy.

James Chadwick, Partner and Head of Location for Manchester said: "The arrival of Julie and Andrew reiterates our commitment to continued growth in Manchester. Between them, they will significantly enhance the range of advice we can offer to our clients across multiple sectors and will be a strong addition to our Real Estate team in Manchester and across the country."

Julie Simms added: "We're delighted to be joining TLT at such an exciting time for the firm's Real Estate, Infrastructure and Planning practices. With growing demand for advice on complex development,



regeneration and infrastructure projects, TLT's strong reputation, national platform and integrated approach provide an excellent foundation to support clients across the full project lifecycles. As the real estate landscape continues to evolve, clients are increasingly seeking clear, commercially focused and technically robust advice to unlock ambitious schemes, and we look forward to working with colleagues to help deliver high-profile projects and drive continued growth."

Andy Bell, Partner and Head of Real Estate Investment & Asset Management at TLT, commented: "We are delighted to

welcome Julie, Andrew, and John to TLT. Their combined expertise in real estate development, infrastructure planning, and public sector projects will be invaluable as we continue to support our clients with top tier real estate advice across the public and planning sectors.

"Their arrival reflects our ongoing commitment to investing in top talent and expanding our capabilities in key growth areas, particularly in the public sector, energy, and infrastructure. We look forward to working with them as we help our clients navigate an increasingly complex and dynamic market."

Gateley Legal bolsters North West residential development team

Gateley Legal @ has strengthened its specialist residential development team in Manchester with the appointments of partner Billy Poulter and associate Shay Moore.

Poulter brings more than 13 years of residential development and regeneration experience to the team, having previously held roles with Clarke Willmott, DAC Beachcroft and Trowers & Hamblins. During his career, he has built a strong reputation in the industry advising housebuilders, developers, registered providers and the public sector on land acquisitions and disposals for development purposes. This includes acting on development sites involving collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Moore joins Gateley Legal as an associate, following roles with Clarke Willmott and Butcher & Barlow. He brings more than five years' experience to the team, advising housebuilders on a wide range of residential development matters.



(L-R) Shay Moore, Dan Kendall and Billy Poulter

Poulter and Moore will work closely alongside partners Dan Kendall, Louise Ilhan and Nick Molloy, as well as the wider team, as Gateley Legal continues to develop and expand its offering for the North West residential development market.

Dan Kendall, residential development partner at Gateley Legal, comments: "The appointments of both Billy and Shay are a real show of our commitment to the region. They are high calibre hires with excellent reputations, and will make brilliant additions to our team, enhancing our support for housebuilder and developer clients."



Ward Hadaway appoints tax partner as corporate team expands

Ward Hadaway  has appointed Nicola Williams as Partner advising on corporate tax and share incentives, bolstering the firm's specialist tax expertise.

She will work closely with clients across Ward Hadaway's national network of offices in Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Teesside.

Recognised by The Legal 500 as a Next Generation Partner, Nicola advises on the tax aspects of mergers and acquisitions, private equity investments, reorganisations and real estate transactions, as well as employee, director and investor reward structures.

Her work focuses on reducing tax risk for buyers, protecting tax-related value for sellers and advising businesses on tax-efficient structures to retain and reward key people.



(L-R) Nicola Williams with Nik Tunley, head of corporate at Ward Hadaway

Nik Tunley, Head of Corporate at Ward Hadaway, said: "Nicola brings niche tax and share incentives expertise that sits directly alongside the work our corporate department is undertaking. She will also bring her tax expertise to support the work of other colleagues across the firm, including in the real estate, commercial and private client teams.

Pannone Corporate strengthens team with raft of hires

Pannone Corporate  has bolstered its team with a raft of hires. The Manchester law firm has appointed five lawyers across employment and real estate.

Naomi Goldsmith joins the firm as an associate in the employment team, previously having worked at Eversheds Sutherland and Fox Williams. Naomi will support clients with both litigious and non-litigious employment issues. Naomi brings a wealth of experience in advising large international companies and high net worth individuals on all aspects of employment law.

Naomi is joined in the team by Julie Sabba, who has been appointed from DWF as a director in the employment team. Julie brings over 20 years' legal experience, advising public and private sector clients on complex and high value employment law and HR issues. Julie's experience includes disciplinary and grievance matters, absence, and performance management in addition to redundancies and restructurings.

Frances Smith and Holly Spokes have also been appointed as solicitors in the employment team. Joining from Addleshaw

"Tax advice is a key part of many transactions, particularly where businesses are buying, selling, raising investment or putting incentive structures in place. Her appointment gives us greater technical strength in this area and adds further value to our work supporting growing businesses."

The move follows continued investment in Ward Hadaway's corporate team, including its 2025 merger with Teesside-based The Endeavour Partnership which added scale and depth across the firm's national network, alongside the new partner appointments of Paul Wigham and Alex Cooper so far this year.

Nicola Williams said: "Ward Hadaway is at an exciting stage in its growth. As the corporate team grows, there is a strong opportunity to extend our integrated tax offering alongside that work. I was attracted by the firm's culture and the chance to help develop a service that works across our national client base."

Goddard, Frances and Holly will support the team in advising clients on a broad range of day-to-day employment and HR issues.

Zoe Tempest completes the current round of appointments, joining Pannone as a solicitor in the real estate team. Zoe will support the team on both high value residential transactions and commercial property transactions.

Paul Jonson, senior partner at Pannone, said: "We're delighted to welcome Naomi, Julie, Frances, Holly, and Zoe to the firm.

"We're truly committed to hiring the brightest talent in Manchester – people with technical excellence and emotional intelligence who can deliver a personal,

The appointment follows Ward Hadaway's recent recognition in Experian MarketIQ's annual M&A review, where the firm was ranked sixth nationally for completed transactions after advising on 119 deals. It was also ranked first in Yorkshire and the North East.

Managing Partner Steven Petrie said: "Bringing Nicola on board reflects our continued investment in specialist expertise that assists clients across the full life cycle of their business.

"As companies grow and their requirements become more complex, they need advisers who can bring different areas of law together around their corporate and commercial objectives. Nicola's experience adds to that capability and will be a real asset to our work with businesses, investors and management teams nationally."



client-focused service. I'm confident all our new team members will be real assets to the firm as we look to not only grow our employment and real estate teams but also the wider firm."

Management Matters

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



This Month

- **Markets perceptions of business priorities for law firms (not always recognised challenges)**
 - Image
 - Safe integration of AI
 - Client price sensitivity and impact
 - Compliance ramification
 - Cyber threats
 - Resourcing challenges
 - Private equity involvement
- **Work – type Performance**
 - Private Client – revenue, profit and asset value

In recent months, we have been reviewing the importance of active management within law firms and those with responsibilities having strategies, plans, and actions and being proactive in making things happen and certainly not to assume anything.

Just because the firm has a COLP and COFA, we cannot assume that the necessary actions are actually being performed to maintain compliance and regulations. Too many firms being fined and struggling for Pii, and even with financial leads running out of cash or making errors with client accounts.

The top commercial issues currently facing UK law firms centre on margins, compliance, and structural market evolution.

The UK legal sector is currently navigating a highly volatile corporate landscape. Law firm leaders—from regional mid-tiers to the elite Magic Circle—are managing a complex mix of rapid technological change, regulatory updates, and shifting client demands.

We also have about 1,000 less smaller law

firms than a couple of years ago.

A recent networking session with multiple managing partners and suppliers to the sector gives an impression.

My [May article](#) [Ⓢ] summarised some key areas to attack – Regulation and Compliance, Upping the Asset value of the firm, getting Accounting right, Resourcing, New Clients and IT

In [June](#) [Ⓢ] we picked up not automatically assuming all is okay, plus some real basics that need following through in the firm.

Both available in [Messenger](#) [Ⓢ] – 'Management Matters' always available around page 70.

Image

It is so important to get the right image in place for a firm, with major impacts on retaining clients and upping the work done for them, getting referrals for new business, along with being attractive for direct contact, referrals and of course retaining staff at a time when finding the right resources is getting very difficult.

Safe Integration of Generative AI

For many law firm managers, the mention of AI is a very quick turn off. However, in reality, it is moving forward very quickly. The question for law firms has shifted from whether to adopt Generative AI (GenAI) to how to scale it safely while maintaining professional indemnity. It is also so important that it integrates in a known way with existing or new PMS/CMS systems – where again many firms are considering the adoption of new vendors, or at least ensuring the best use from current



suppliers meeting business priorities.

Firms are beginning to aggressively using AI for high-volume tasks like document review, legal research, and drafting. However, recent High Court rulings have placed an absolute burden on legal teams to verify AI-generated output after instances of tools fabricating case citations. Furthermore, firms must navigate data privacy boundaries to ensure client information is never leaked into public LLM training sets.

Client Price-Sensitivity and the Decline of the Billable Hour

Sustained economic uncertainty and modest GDP growth have made corporate clients intensely cost-conscious. Clients are increasingly demanding transparent, fixed-fee, or subscription-based alternative fee structures (AFSs) rather than open-ended hourly billing. This shifts the commercial risk onto the law firm. If a firm hasn't optimised its internal workflows, fixed-fee arrangements can quickly erode profit margins.

The most effective use of PMS/CMS for performance and benefits is very key.

Not all clients make a decision based on price – they want to believe in added value and confidence with their communication.

Escalating Regulatory Burden and Shifting AML Oversight

Compliance is becoming vastly more complex, expensive, and critical to risk management.

Regulators are flexing their muscles. The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) has intensified its focus on Anti-Money

Laundering (AML) non-compliance. Concurrently, the transition of high-level AML supervision over legal providers toward the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is introducing a stricter, risk-based enforcement landscape. Non-compliance risks catastrophic fines and reputational damage.

Severe Cyber Security Threats and Data Litigation Risk

Law firms are prime targets for sophisticated cybercriminals because they hold vast amounts of sensitive corporate data and financial assets.

A 25% year-on-year spike in legal sector data breaches has put leadership on high alert. Compounding this, UK case law (such as **Farley v Paymaster**) established that there is no “minimum threshold of seriousness” required for individuals to claim damages for distress over data misuse. Consequently, even a minor data breach now represents an immediate class-action or individual litigation risk.

Serious damage to the firm's image too. Due diligence is essential on IT source.

Talent Scarcity, Burnout, and Remuneration Pressure

Attracting and retaining high-calibre lawyers remains a significant bottleneck to growth.

Over half of UK law firms report persistent recruitment difficulties, particularly for specialised talent in high-demand practice areas like ESG compliance, intellectual property, and data privacy. Meanwhile, workplace stress has hit critical levels – there are some that say “industry

Continued on page 86



wellness data indicates nearly 70% of legal professionals have experienced mental ill-health or burnout.” Firms face the double challenge of paying top-of-market salaries to compete while actively restructuring workloads to prevent attrition. Nearly 60% of younger staff within firms are looking to leave because of performance and communication issue plus the profile of the firms they are working for.

Are you really a business that potential high performers want to work for? Do you seriously need to consider outsourcing to make sure the right level of skills are there – allies to legal, as well as to accounts, marketing, and risk.

Market Consolidation and the Rise of Private Equity

The structural shape of the UK legal market is rapidly shifting through domestic and international mergers.

Scale is becoming a primary defensive and offensive strategy. Mega-mergers and increased cross-border expansions into hotspots like the Middle East are forcing mid-tier firms to rethink their identity. Additionally, legal leaders are increasingly turning to Private Equity (PE) investment to fund expensive tech infrastructures and growth strategies, challenging the traditional partner-owned business model.

The firms thriving in this environment are those treating technology not just as an IT expense, but as a core pillar of their commercial strategy to protect margins, automate compliance, and offset talent shortages.

Massive Client, Revenue from new and Existing and Asset Value Growth

Recent work, personal profiling and Added Value activity has proven that there are aspects of the law firms' business that carry great potential – but in many cases not being actioned for the satisfaction of the firm, their clients or potential new ones. Private client activity with many firms seems to fall behind. It would not be difficult to do product marketing plans for all functions in the firm – services, benefits to clients, target market, route to market, timed action plan and making sure personnel and systems are ready for it. Believe it or not, it can be motivational for teams within the firm.

- 50% of the adult population has not got a Will – major issues for many
- With law firms, there is limited access to multiple databases. It's scary to look at the state of the will databases in many firms – alive or dead? Last time updated? Covering all issues in terms of beneficiaries or not, accountants, IFAs, property ownership, business ownership
- With law firms, they are not actively looking after their clients properly and advising why Will updates are needed – data with image, updating IHT issues, property, care?
- It is hard for Will owners to access their documents and say add or remove – this can be done securely with modern technology, a benefit for the firm also as the client can contact them with a request
- There are multiple disputes within families where members do not know the consequences of deaths – benefits, business and property ownership

- Private client teams seem to be the worst at wanting to do business development
- MLS about to introduce a business that can find those missing probate individuals

It is all about to change.

WBT | Bring your Will Bank to life without all the hassle Your Will Bank Is An Asset | WBT 

- National Will register growth. People need to be able to find the Wills
- An organisation such as our WBT sorting out the data and databases for creativity (more firms signing up at the moment)
- Firms beginning to realise the asset value of their Will bank and the revenue, GP, working capital available

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

MLS sponsorship opportunities

Manchester Law Society represents one of the most active and vibrant legal communities in the UK, connecting sponsors with a highly engaged network of legal professionals across the region.

Please look through our sponsorship packages below and let us help you raise

your company's profile by gaining direct access to our unrivalled network of the legal community in Manchester and beyond.

Get in touch by emailing enquiries@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk  – we'd love to hear from you.



The Solicitors' Charity explores burnout and “always on” culture in latest Legal Pause podcast episode

The Solicitors' Charity has released Episode 7 of The Legal Pause podcast, featuring Richard Martin, CEO of the Mindful Business Charter, in a candid conversation about burnout, workplace pressure, and the realities of modern legal life.

Titled “When ‘Just Keep Going’ Stops Working in Law”, the episode explores how inhumane working practices can lead to stress and ultimately, burnout. And that signs and symptoms can quietly build over time within the legal profession, and why many solicitors still find it difficult to ask for help before reaching crisis point.

Hosted by Nick Gallagher, CEO of The Solicitors' Charity, the discussion draws on Richard's personal experience of mental health breakdown and recovery following a successful legal career in London. Together, they explore the warning signs of stress, the impact of “always on” workplace culture, and the importance of creating healthier and more sustainable ways of working across the profession.

The episode also considers the emotional impact of legal work itself, including the pressures associated with demanding workloads, constant availability, and vicarious trauma transferred from their caseload.

Nick Gallagher, CEO of The Solicitors' Charity, said: “Many solicitors are incredibly resilient people, but that can sometimes mean stress and pressure build quietly over time before support is sought. This episode is an important reminder of the value of recognising warning signs early and creating



professional environments where people feel able to speak openly.”

Richard Martin added: “The legal profession attracts highly capable and conscientious people, but that can sometimes make it harder to stop, reflect, or ask for help. Conversations like this matter because they help normalise wellbeing and encourage people to seek support earlier.”

Alongside discussing Richard's own recovery journey, the episode explores the wider work of the Mindful Business Charter and ongoing conversations around workplace culture, respect in business, and sustainable careers within law.

Mentioned in the podcast, individuals and firms are urged to look out for and act on the warning signs of potential mental health breakdown in themselves and colleagues.

The conversation also highlights the support available through organisations such as The Solicitors' Charity and LawCare, while encouraging greater openness around mental health and wellbeing within the profession.

The Legal Pause – Episode 7 is available now on all major streaming platforms.

[Listen here](#) 



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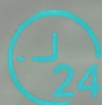
Corporation

WHAT MAKES A WINNING TEAM?

FLEXIBLE SUPPORT

Strength in depth.

Summer holiday cover
for transcription and
document production
support that keeps
your firm performing.



24/7/365
support when
you need it



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Legal Costs Update

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



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

Within a month of the Civil Justice Council publishing its first Report into the possible reform of Part III Solicitors Act 1974 (the Act), two decisions involving the Act have just been handed down by the Court of Appeal. The first, **Winros Partnership v Global Energy Horizons Corporation** [2026] EWCA Civ 654 started life in the Senior Courts Costs Office on 31st March 2016! A decade later, the court refused permission to appeal against the judge's ruling below that the defendant (GEHC) had not been guilty of an abuse of process in having raised an objection in its Points of Dispute which could have been argued before the Master earlier in the proceedings.

The second issue in Winros concerned a conditional fee agreement (CFA) made in March 2013. GEHC had committed a repudiatory breach which Winros elected to accept and to sue for damages. Winros subsequently billed GEHC £3m for work undertaken pre-termination. Below, GEHC contended successfully that Winros was not permitted to do that because at that point, there had been no win achieved under the CFA, so there was no contractual entitlement to payment and the bills should be assessed at nil. Winros's case on appeal was that the repudiatory breach constituted a "failure of basis" and that it had been justified for the firm to appropriate funds belonging to GEHC on a quantum meruit because GEHC had been enriched to the value of the firm's work. The court disagreed, holding that the law of unjust enrichment cannot be deployed to subvert

the express risk allocation freely negotiated by parties to a valid contract. Winros could not escape its contractual bargain by electing to accept the repudiatory breach and claim its fees through the law of unjust enrichment. Its appeal failed, so the £3m bill remained assessed at nil, although it is to be assumed that the claim for damages will continue, so the decade long case is not over yet.

The second case under the Act is **Broadfield Law UK LLP (formerly BDB Pitmans LLP) v Barnes** [2026] EWCA Civ 698. It concerned whether the retainer between the claimant and her solicitors had been a contentious business agreement (CBA) within the definition of s.59 of the Act, viz an agreement as to remuneration by reference to an hourly rate. If it had, the solicitors would be required to apply to court to enforce it and to seek a determination of its validity and effect under s.61. Below, the courts held that the agreement was insufficiently clear and certain to be a CBA. That decision was correct. An agreement as to remuneration was an agreement as to the amount that the solicitors were to be paid for their services. The essence of a CBA was certainty. If the agreement provided that the solicitor be paid «between £150 and £250 per hour» depending on the nature of the work and the complexity of the case, there was no certainty at all and no agreement as to remuneration by reference to an hourly rate. The rate payable was not identified so the client would not know what he was letting himself in for, even though there was a maximum

hourly rate set within the range. In the present case, whilst the rates were set out for certain named fee earners, even those rates were subject to unspecified increases at unspecified times, for example, on promotion or attaining professional qualifications. Accordingly the appeal was dismissed.

Away from the Act, in **Cook v Skeggs** [2026] EWHC 1132 (KB) Sweeting J gave a useful reminder of the general rule that costs should normally follow the event. Below, the defendant had successfully resisted the claimant's strike out and summary judgment application but had been ordered to pay 80% of the claimant's costs. The judge reasoned that the application had been substantially justified when first made and that late amendments to the defence had completely changed the picture. Sweeting J disagreed, holding that the touchstone for deciding the incidence of costs was an assessment of who had won. Not only had the decision below deprived the defendant of her costs of the application, but she had also been ordered to pay the claimant's costs, despite the fact she had succeeded. He replaced the order by directing that the claimant pay 75% of the defendant's costs of the application, with the 25% reduction reflecting her conduct in applying to amend the defence late.

Back in the Court of Appeal, in **Dentons UK and Middle East LLP v Solicitors Regulation Authority Ltd** [2026] EWCA Civ 655, the court allowed an appeal by Dentons, itself made on appeal from a decision of the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal ("SDT") in proceedings brought by the Solicitors Regulation Authority Ltd ("SRA"). The SRA contended that no

costs order should be made against it to reflect the fact that it was a regulatory body discharging its responsibilities as a regulator which set it aside from an ordinary litigant in civil litigation. That submission failed. The SRA had the benefit of a determination by the SDT and had challenged it on appeal. Thus its position was more akin to that of a normal litigant. Dentons was entitled to 65% of its costs of the two appeals with £200,000 to be paid on account by the SRA within 21 days.

Following her 1121 paragraph trial judgment, in **The New Lottery Company Ltd & Anor v The Gambling Commission** [2026] EWHC 1311 (TCC), Joanna Smith J dealt with the costs of the failed action. The claimants had sought damages of over £1 billion together with a declaration of ineffectiveness which, if granted, would potentially have brought the National Lottery to a standstill. The Commission sought its costs on the indemnity basis and succeeded. The claimants' conduct had been out of the norm. The touchstone for that was unreasonableness, which needed to be "to a high degree", and that did not mean merely wrong or misguided in hindsight. This had been a huge and important claim, billed by the claimants, as "the most financially significant procurement process in UK history". Numerous serious and wide-ranging allegations (including of impropriety and dishonesty) had been made from the start and by the end of trial, the list of issues, which had originally run to 64 issues in relation to the Process Claim and 17 issues in relation to the Modifications Claim, had been very substantially reduced, often without any proper notice. That had caused

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very significant disruption to the Court and to the other parties. It was not appropriate to “salami slice” the costs by reference to individual issues or periods of time. Nor was there anything in the authorities to suggest that proportionality was a relevant factor in considering whether to make an order for indemnity costs. It followed that the Commission, as the winning party, was entitled to recover all its costs.

In “Dieselgate” -see [Various Claimants v Mercedes-Benz Group AG](#) ^② [2026] EWHC 1335 (KB) - Constable J and Rowley SCJ gave their judgment in the third tranche of costs budgeting. The costs management hearing dealt with expert evidence, namely Loss Assessment, Mechanical Engineering, Software Engineering, Consumer Behaviour and UK Vehicle Valuation and/or Pricing. It also addressed the proposed budgets for ADR. On behalf of the claimants, it was submitted that earlier judicial criticisms had taken on board the “over lawyering” resulting from there often being a number of layers of solicitor representation on the claimant side being involved. Nonetheless, the court found that the sums claimed in the proposed budgets were still excessive and allowed £5,411,181.65 for the claimants and £12,858,057.16 for the defendants.

Finally, after over 8 years of litigation, the end might be in sight in [Innsworth Capital Ltd, R \(On the Application Of\) v The Competition Appeal Tribunal](#) ^② [2026] EWHC 1393. In funded collective proceedings brought against Mastercard by Walter Merricks, as class representative, there was a settlement in which Mastercard agreed to pay £200 million, a tiny fraction of the sum claimed. On judicial review, the funder, Innsworth, challenged the order made by the Competition Appeal Tribunal (‘the CAT’) for the distribution of the proceeds of that settlement. That challenge failed. The CAT had determined

that despite the very poor outcome of the claim, a just and reasonable return for the claimant funder would be reimbursement of its expenditure of between £41 million and £46 million, together with a profit of 50% of that expenditure. That conclusion was one which the CAT was entitled to reach and was well within the wide powers conferred upon it as an expert and specialist tribunal, so the judicial review failed.

Finally, again in the Court of Appeal, in **Ward v Donnellan** [2026] EWCA Civ 729, the court reversed the judgment below. The key issue in deciding the liability for costs in that case was allegations of dishonesty. Below, the court had made no order for the costs of the action. That had been wrong. The starting point for the consideration of any order for costs of an action was CPR 44.3(2)(a), that costs should follow the event. From this point, the court would, in an appropriate case, consider the conduct of the parties under 44.3(2)(b), but Lewison LJ held that there is no general rule that a finding of dishonest conduct by the successful party will replace the usual starting point. Accordingly, on the facts, the judge’s starting point should have been an order for costs in the defendants’ favour subject to adjustments to ensure that they did not recover any costs which may have been incurred in advancing a dishonest case, so the appeal was allowed.

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 ^② or Colin.Campbell@kain-knight.co.uk ^②

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