



the Messenger

October 2026

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from Fiona
Ledden



A new winner crowned at the MLS 5-a-side Charity Football Tournament



Everyone may have been struck by football fever this summer with the World Cup dominating the zeitgeist but September saw the highlight of the football year for us – the MLS 5-a-side Charity Football Tournament!

This year the tournament was in aid of the [Greater Manchester Law Centre](#), and we were delighted to once again be sponsored by [G2 Legal](#).

We were delighted by this event's ongoing popularity – it had been sold out for months and we had a waiting list of teams waiting to be subbed in should the opportunity arise. The final list of competitors consisted of Burton Copeland Limited, Capsticks LLP, Engage Solutions Group, Fieldfisher LLP, G2 Legal Ltd, JMW Solicitors LLP, Johnson Law

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From the President

Ian McConkey, President

As I enter the twilight of my presidency, the number of activities increases.

This month I get to attend, and make at least one speech, in honour of two of the legal greats of this generation. Sir Geoffrey Vos, Master of the Rolls, visits Manchester on his farewell tour on 13 October. There will be a round of speeches from the bench, barristers and me on behalf of the solicitor community. This will be followed by polite chit chat.

In contrast, the other legal great we say farewell to this month is Fran. Back from her travels to celebrate in style and raising money for [Prevent Breast Cancer](#). If you're quick you may still be able to secure a ticket [here](#). I suspect the similarities between the two events will be few and far between.

October also marks the start of the Legal Year, always regarded by outgoing Presidents as the highlight of the year. I am very much looking forward to attending the ceremony in Westminster Abbey and in the Houses of Parliament. There should be some great outfits on display.

Away from the glamour, the hard work of MLS continues. It has been good to get around a few more committees where I've seen the hard work being put into planning events and building community within the legal sector.

You'll see in this issue the successful events the team have put on recently – everything from a [football tournament](#) to [Pride afternoon tea](#) to [supper at The Rex](#).

There are lots more coming too with our first ever [netball tournament](#) coming up on 16th October. I believe there's still space for a couple of teams if you're tempted to play!

Our [Local Authority Conference](#), held in partnership with 11KBW Chambers, returns on 14th October. We are delighted this year to be offering some subsidised places to those attending from public bodies and local authorities.

October also sees the return of the [Family Law Conference](#) which is taking place on 21st October, kindly sponsored by Smokeball.

In addition we have some free webinars on [wellbeing](#) and [international surrogacy](#).

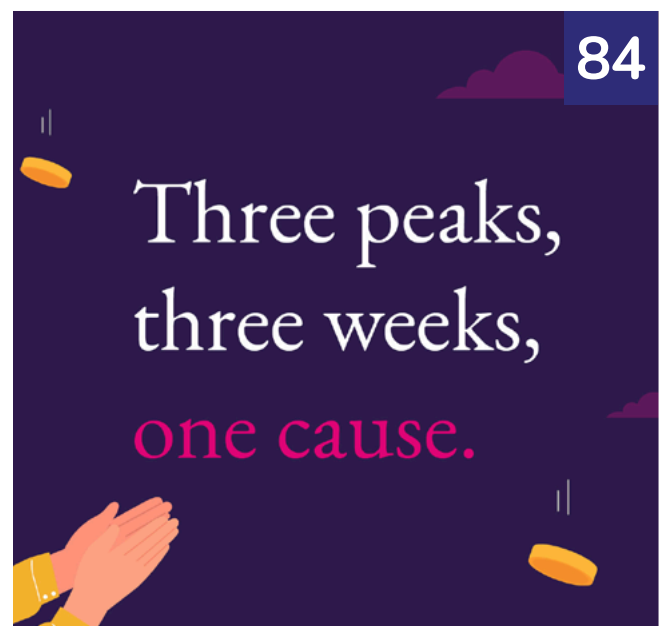
While all this is going on we also have applications open for our third cohort of Future Stars. If you know anyone who might be interested please [direct them here](#) for more information and ask them to apply by 23rd October. If you'd like to be a mentor to those on the scheme [please complete this form](#).

the Messenger



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Manchester Law Society

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Manchester Law Society

4th Floor, Arkwright House, Parsonage Gardens,
Manchester, M3 2LF

www.manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

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

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Communications Committee

Brigid O'Malley
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Chandre May
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Cheryl Palmer-Hughes
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St John's Buildings

Emma Bowie
18 St John Street Chambers

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Celebrating with Pride!

Saturday 29th August saw us celebrate our fifth Pride event.

We were back at the [Peter Street Kitchen](#) at [The Edwardian Manchester](#) for another delicious afternoon tea in aid of [The Proud Trust](#). This year we were kindly sponsored by 18 St John's Street Chambers.

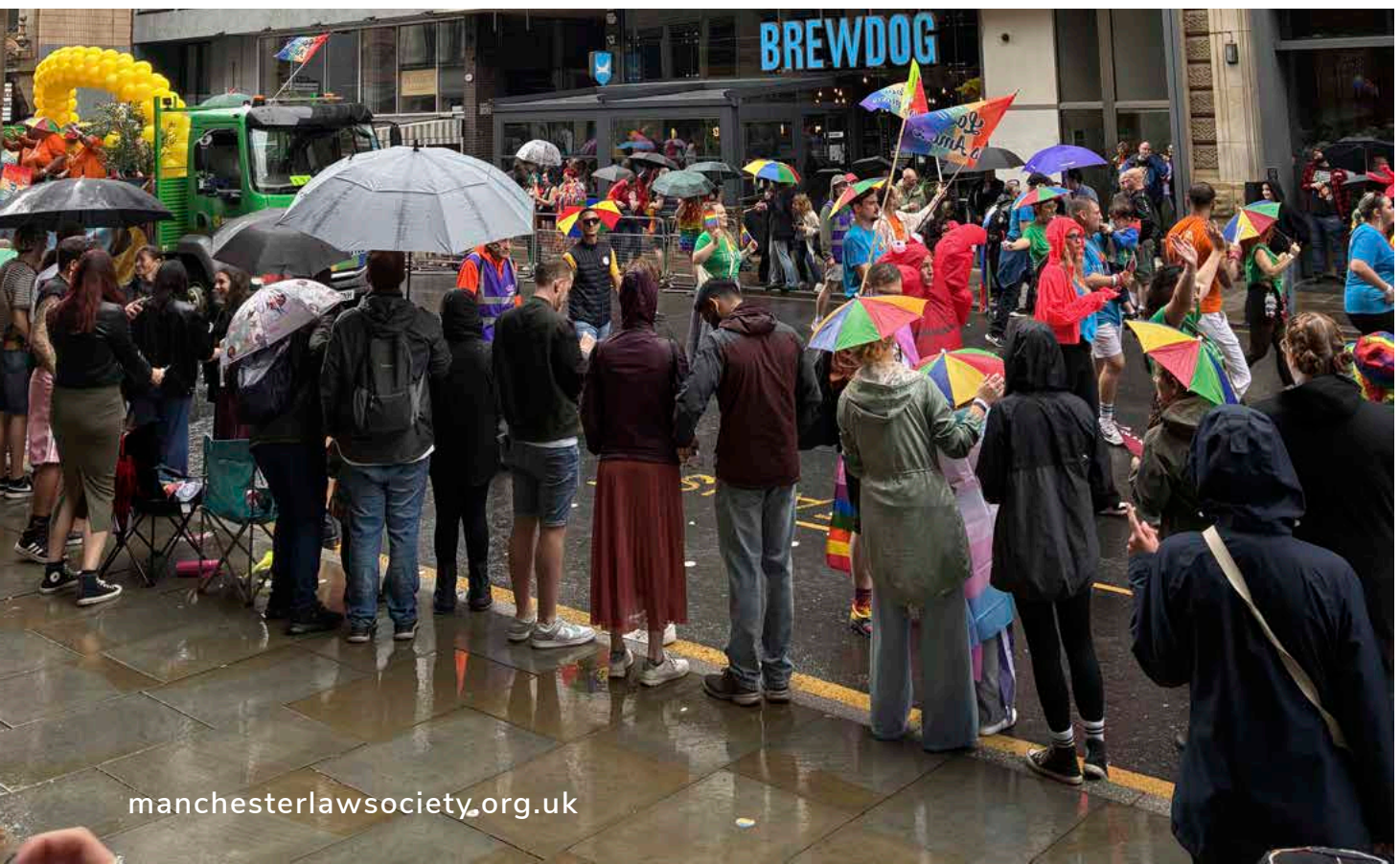
Sadly, after a summer of heatwaves, the weather had decided to bless us with the much needed rain. But as the late, great Dolly Parton says "if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain" and rainbows were plentiful as this year's parade had The Wizard of Oz inspired theme of "No Place Like Home".

As guests arrived they were treated to a mimosa and offered flags, fans and bubbles to help celebrate the parade. The traditional glitter bar was on hand to make sure everyone looked the part.

Everyone then cheered on the dedicated parade participants who kept going despite the torrential downpours. Our guests luckily had the option to watch the festivities from the relative dryness of the hotel steps or the comfort of the restaurant's floor to ceiling windows.

The parade always sparks joy, perhaps even more so when the weather is more challenging! If you've not watched it before I recommend you get it in your diary for 2027 and see the vast array of community groups, charities, businesses and more that come out to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride.

Once the parade had finished it was time for the afternoon tea! Guests were spoilt with some delicious sandwiches, scones, sausage rolls, mini-quiches, and desserts



along with free flowing tea and coffee. We were all stuffed by the end of it!

After the tea was supped and the last cake crumb nibbled the more energetic guests went on to further celebrations around the city. Some of us were more in need of a lie down...

Please do help us in supporting The Proud Trust who are a Manchester based charity providing support for LGBTQ+ young people both locally and across the UK.

Who are The Proud Trust?

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

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

Why did we decide to support them?

The MLS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee decided to vote on which charity to support for this event. The Proud Trust were the clear winner with their roots in Manchester and their calling to support LGBTQ+ young people and their families.

How you can support The Proud Trust

#DeserveBetter – A Pride 365 Campaign by The Proud Trust

Every LGBTQ+ young person deserves to grow up feeling safe, accepted, understood and able to be themselves. That's why we've launched #DeserveBetter, shining a spotlight on the realities facing LGBTQ+ young people while calling for greater

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Every LGBTQ+ young person deserves to grow up feeling safe, accepted, understood and able to be themselves

understanding, safer spaces and better support. As part of our Pride 365 campaign, we're asking people across the UK to stand alongside LGBTQ+ young people and help ensure life-changing support is available everyday of the year, not just during the summer Pride season. [Read more about it here.](#)

Corporate Partnerships

If you are interested in becoming a local partner of The Proud Trust, you can find more information [here](#). Packages start from just £750 and it is a wonderful way to give back to the community.

If you are an organisation outside the local area, you can find more ways to support through corporate partnership by clicking [here](#). Current corporate partners include Primark, AutoTrader and Schuh.

If you are interested in corporate partnerships and/or having The Proud Trust as your charity of the year, please email: fundraising@theprouddtrust.org

Room Hire

Another great way of supporting is by hiring the spaces in their Manchester city centre headquarters, The Proud Place. They have flexible spaces from their training room for up to 25 to their community lounge that can host a reception for 75. The whole building is accessible and welcoming. To see the range of spaces on offer and to book, please visit their webpage [here](#).

Diversity Training for your team

The Proud Trust also offers corporate training for organisations to improve and maintain



their diversity and inclusion efforts. Learn more about their training packages [here](#).

Volunteer your time

If you want to contribute on a more individual basis why not volunteer with the Trust? They have a range of roles from mentoring LGBTQ+ young people to being a Trustee of the charity. [See the roles available and what they involve here](#).

Or perhaps you'd be interested in volunteering your legal expertise to help empower LGBTQ+ young people to advocate for their legal rights?

For more information on supporting The Proud Trust please email fundraising@theproudsttrust.org



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Supper Club at The Rex

September saw the return of our Supper Club series – this time at [The Rex](#). Recently rebranded from Hotel Gotham the team at The Rex were keen to show they still had all the style and substance that had made Hotel Gotham such a popular destination in Manchester. And show us they did!

Starting with a drinks reception on the roof terrace at the bar [Reserve](#) – we even managed to get the rain to hold off for the duration – guests were treated to a delicious glass of fizz with their brilliant views of the city. The terrace was all a-buzz with reconnections and new contacts.

After getting to know each other over views and drinks guests were then invited to be seated in the new restaurant [Reign](#). We run these events with no seating plan so you

can make connections with people on the day. It seemed to work this time with a gang of cyclists finding each other and a marshal arts instructor and student reconnecting after many years!

The sumptuous food was served and enjoyed by all while the conversations flowed as easily as the drinks.

Jenny Oh, general manager at The Rex, explained the history of the building and the thoughts behind the new brand. The building has been known as the King of King Street as when it was first built it was the tallest building in Manchester. After Leonardo Hotels acquired the hotel, they wanted to create a new brand for the space and settled on Rex, Latin for king, to reflect its history but not conflict with other local brands.

Guests were invited to enter a prized draw to win a [12-month membership to Reserve](#) at The Rex offering the winner





access to their private members club and reciprocal clubs across the country, 20% off accommodation rates, 15% discount on food and beverage, regular member-only events and 50% off room-hire for private events! What a fabulous prize!

Everyone was also invited to take a tour of the building to see the bedrooms and event spaces on offer.

We received some fantastic feedback from those there on the night.

Tom Wagstaffe said "The food was another level, the guided tour of the hotel was spectacular, and it just all made for a very nice evening"

While David Johnstone reflected "What a great collection of welcoming people from the Manchester legal community. No question, easily the least "awkward" networking event attended so far."

Chris Holcombe enthused "Amazing evening with great food and hospitality"

A huge thank you to all that joined us for the evening. It is just brilliant to see so many people out making new contacts and catching up with existing ones.

A great big thank you and well done to Jenny and her team at The Rex! You absolutely wowed everyone with your brilliant food, drinks, views and service. We can't wait to come back!

We are planning to hold more of these events over 2027 so if there are any venues you want to see on the list let us know by emailing events@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk with your suggestions. You can also email the same address if you want to be the first to know when the new events are announced.





Licensed Conveyancer Apprenticeship: The Funded Route

The [Level 6 Licensed Conveyancer Apprenticeship](#) is not a new qualification. What has been scarce is anyone delivering it. Only a few apprenticeship training providers are currently listed on the government's register for the Level 6 standard, and fewer still offer both levels. People who wanted to go further paid privately for the Level 6 diploma, or moved across to a solicitor or CILEx route that had very little to do with property.

Datalaw now delivers both, so the [conveyancing apprenticeship](#) route runs from Level 4 to Level 6 without changing providers halfway. Entry to the Level 6 involves completion of the Level 4 Conveyancing Technician units or recognised exemptions, so a technician you have already trained walks straight on.

The Level 4 Conveyancing Apprenticeship runs for 21 months: 18 months of training plus the end-point assessment. Entry is GCSE maths and English at grade C/4 or above, which opens it to paralegals, admin staff and career changers already in the building. Apprentices complete the Level 4 Diploma in Conveyancing Law and Practice.

The Level 6 Licensed Conveyancer Apprenticeship runs for 18 months of training plus up to four months to complete the final assessment. It covers residential, commercial and agricultural conveyancing, client account management and regulatory compliance, and delivers the Level 6 Diploma in Conveyancing Law and Practice. On completion the apprentice is eligible to apply for a professional Licence to Practice as a Licensed Conveyancer.

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These programmes are
100% conveyancing
focused, with no irrelevant
areas of law included

Practice rights, and why specialists get there faster

The Licence to Practice is the point of the exercise. A licensed conveyancer can advise, run files in their own name and handle transactions independently.

This is where the conveyancing route separates itself from the alternatives. A solicitor or chartered legal executive apprentice spends years covering areas of law your property department will never touch. These programmes are 100% conveyancing focused, with no irrelevant areas of law included. From the first workshop the learning is title, searches, contract and exchange, leases and mortgages, completion and post-completion, and the AML, KYC and risk obligations that sit around them.

Apprentices build a live caseload as they go, because the learning is applied to the files on their desk. There is also no extra portfolio or follow-up assessment to clear once the apprenticeship ends, so progression to the next level is not held up by paperwork.

Funding, and what the private route actually costs you

Firms often assume they are choosing between a funded apprenticeship and a proper qualification. The CLC diplomas are embedded in the apprenticeship standards, so an apprentice finishes with the same recognised qualification as someone who paid for it privately, and there is no cost to the learner.

What a firm actually pays

- Level 4: government funding of up to £10,000 is available. Co-funded employers pay no more than £500.
- Level 6: government funding of up to £9,000 is available. Co-funded employers pay no more than £450.
- Levy-paying firms draw the cost from their Apprenticeship Levy funds instead.

That is the whole progression route, technician through to licensed conveyancer, for £950 of co-investment. The comparison worth running is that figure against the diploma invoices already going through your training budget.

Fitting the training round a working department

The practical objection is always time. Fee earners don't have the time to be released for travel days, and a supervising partner has enough on without becoming a tutor as well.

Datalaw, an Ofsted Good Provider, delivers both conveyancing apprenticeships through group and one to one sessions on Zoom. There are no residential weeks, no travel and no campus attendance. Every apprentice is assigned a personal tutor who

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Every apprentice is assigned a personal tutor who works through the standard with them

works through the standard with them, checks that the knowledge is landing and keeps them moving. Supervision inside the firm stays where it belongs, on the files. Firms that also need to keep existing fee earners current can pair this with conveyancing training through the CPD library.

Conveyancing apprenticeship key takeaways

- With Datalaw delivering both levels, the funded route from Level 4 technician through to a Licence to Practice runs end to end with one provider.
- Entry to the Level 6 is completion of the Level 4 Conveyancing Technician units or recognised exemptions, so an existing technician progresses directly.
- Government funding covers up to £10,000 at Level 4 and up to £18,000 at Level 6. Co-funded employers pay no more than £500 and £450.
- The CLC diplomas are embedded, so apprentices qualify with the same credentials as the private route and at no cost to the learner.
- Both programmes are 100% conveyancing focused and delivered online, with a personal tutor throughout.



Introduction to JUSTICE North

It's a real pleasure to have been asked to contribute to The Messenger introducing the work of [JUSTICE North](#). As a proud Mancunian who emigrated from Prestwich to London I know all too well how much more work there is to do in ensuring equality of opportunity and access for communities across the North.

JUSTICE North was established in 2025 to ensure that justice policy is informed by the very specific challenges and opportunities of the North of England. Establishing a northern division was a vital step for JUSTICE to help redress the London-centric imbalance in national policy-making.

Jack McKenna



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Our goal is to bring justice closer to home in every community and ensure that justice outcomes are fairer, more effective and not determined by postcode

With the new Prime Minister's devolution agenda taking centre stage, this work is more important than ever if we are to ensure that justice is no longer left behind and left out of the devolution policy agenda. Our goal is to bring justice closer to home in every community and ensure that justice outcomes are fairer, more effective and not determined by postcode.

JUSTICE North's inaugural report, [Closer to Home: Principles for a Justice System Shaped by Communities](#), analysed the patchwork and piecemeal progress of justice devolution thus far and set out the key principles that should underpin more effective devolution in the future. This report also highlighted great successes in Greater Manchester, including GM Integrated Rehabilitative Services' locally tailored whole-system approach to rehabilitation and resettlement.

Now our work has moved from theory to delivery and JUSTICE North's second report will set out a plan to make the devolution of justice real. The big question facing policy-makers today is how justice can take its

rightful place as part of this agenda so that people can see and feel a community-led justice policy that meets local needs in their own communities. Our work aims to provide answers to this question.

We are thrilled to be engaging with Greater Manchester's Deputy Mayor for Safer and Stronger Communities Kate Green on this project, and Kate's new role as an adviser to the government on youth justice devolution demonstrates the importance and potential impact of work in this policy area.

There is broad scope to consider how local leadership can be empowered to best deliver better outcomes on crime prevention, violence reduction and tackling reoffending to name but a few areas of focus.

In carrying out our research and developing recommendations we are determined

to convene those with expertise and experience – practitioners, researchers, academics, policymakers and those working on the frontline of our justice system. If you would be interested in contributing to our work, sharing your perspective or connecting us to colleagues working in this space then please drop me a line: jmckenna@justice.org.uk.

JUSTICE's annual [Tom Sargant Memorial Lecture](#) will be given by Sir Tim Eicke, the UK judge on the European Court of Human Rights from 2016-2025. The lecture will be taking place at the University of Manchester on 24th November and we look forward to seeing friends and colleagues from Manchester Law Society there (please RVSP [here](#)).

Jack McKenna, Legal Fellow, JUSTICE

SRA announces first set of changes to SQE1 following candidate feedback

On 10th September the SRA announced the first in a series of improvements to SQE1, informed by candidate feedback, assessment data and engagement with employers, training providers and the wider profession.

From January 2027, SQE1 will be streamlined from 360 to 340 questions, with questions grouped by subject area within specific Functioning Legal Knowledge assessments. Within each session, questions will continue to be fully randomised between those subject areas.

These changes are designed to improve the candidate experience while maintaining the rigorous, reliable and consistent standards

These changes are designed to improve the candidate experience

that underpin qualification as a solicitor and support public confidence in the profession.

The SRA hope these changes reflect their commitment to listening to feedback and making evidence-based improvements where appropriate, while preserving the high standards expected of the profession.

You can find out more details about the [SQE1 changes on the SRA website](#).



Smokeball launches Community Hero Awards in the UK to celebrate legal professionals making a difference

New annual awards programme recognises solicitors and legal professionals across the UK for their outstanding contributions to their communities

[Smokeball](#), a leading provider of legal practice management software, today announced the launch of the Smokeball UK Community Hero Awards, a new annual initiative celebrating legal professionals who go above and beyond to make a positive impact in their communities.

The awards recognise individuals across the UK legal profession who dedicate their time, expertise and passion to causes beyond their day-to-day legal work whether through supporting charities, championing diversity and inclusion, mentoring the next

generation of lawyers, leading sustainability initiatives, or driving positive change within their local community.

Unlike traditional legal awards that focus on commercial performance, the Community Hero Awards celebrate generosity, leadership and compassion, reflecting Smokeball's belief that the legal profession has the power to strengthen and improve the communities it serves.

About the Award

Nominations are open to the entire UK legal profession, not just Smokeball customers, and individuals can nominate a colleague, another legal professional, or themselves.

Nominees will be considered across five categories:

- **Diversity & Inclusion** – Supporting underrepresented communities within the legal profession or wider society
- **Charity & Community** – Supporting charities, fundraising initiatives or community organisations
- **Education & Mentoring** – Helping students, junior lawyers, or providing legal education
- **Sustainability** – Leading environmental or sustainability initiatives
- **Community Leadership** – Creating measurable positive change within local communities





At Smokeball, we talk a lot about powering people law — because behind every great law firm are great people”

To be eligible, nominees must work within the UK legal profession, be aged 18 or over, and live and work in the United Kingdom.

The overall winner will receive a £500 travel voucher, a custom engraved crystal trophy, use of the Smokeball Community Hero Award 2026 logo, and a professionally produced hero video showcasing their story.

Key Dates

- **Nominations open:** Monday 7 September 2026
- **Nominations close:** Monday 26 October 2026
- **Finalists announced:** Monday 9 November 2026
- **Winner announced:** Monday 7 December 2026

Quote from Alex Jenner, UK Country Manager, Smokeball

“Every day, we see solicitors and legal professionals across the UK quietly making an extraordinary difference whether that’s mentoring junior lawyers, supporting local charities, or championing causes close to their hearts. These contributions often go unnoticed, and the Community Hero Awards exist to change that.

“At Smokeball, we talk a lot about powering people law — because behind every great law firm are great people. This award is our chance to celebrate those people, not just their professional achievements, but the difference they make in the lives of the clients and communities around them. We’re proud to bring the Community Hero Awards to the UK and can’t wait to hear the stories of the individuals making a real difference.”

Judging Panel

Nominations will be reviewed by a panel of respected industry figures, including:

- **Kirsty Pappin**, Founder, Aries Legal Practice Management
- **Alex Jenner**, UK Country Manager, Smokeball
- **Amy Stonton**, Head of UK Client Success Manager, Smokeball

A Call to Action for Regional Law Societies

Smokeball is inviting regional law societies across the UK to support the Community Hero Awards by encouraging members to submit nominations, sharing the campaign with their networks, and helping to spotlight the outstanding individuals within their local legal communities.

Law societies interested in supporting the campaign through newsletter promotion, social media, or highlighting finalists from their region are encouraged to get in touch with the Smokeball UK team.

How to Nominate

Nominations can be submitted at [here](#) and will remain open until Monday 26 October 2026.



The Corporate and Commercial Law Forum's latest meeting: ESG and the "Credibility Decade"

Members of Manchester Law Society's Corporate and Commercial Law Forum recently met at the offices of [3PB Barristers](#) for an insightful discussion on ESG led by Alan Stenson, CEO of [Neutral Carbon Zone](#).

Alan's central message was that we are entering what he describes as the "credibility decade", a period in which organisations will increasingly be judged not by the sustainability commitments they make, but by the evidence, action and accountability behind them.

A key theme was that a net zero target is not, in itself, a strategy. Effective sustainability programmes begin with understanding an organisation's emissions and identifying where efforts will have the greatest impact. Alan highlighted that, for many businesses, the majority of their carbon footprint lies within Scope 3 emissions and their wider supply chains rather than their direct operations.

He encouraged organisations to adopt a simple framework: Insight → Prioritisation → Action → Reduction

The discussion emphasised the growing importance of data-led decision making. Rather than pursuing sustainability initiatives because they are visible or attractive from a reputational perspective, organisations should focus on what the data tells them and where meaningful reductions can be achieved.

Alan also reflected on the increasing need for substantiation and transparency. Credibility does not require perfection. Instead, organisations should be open about their current position, understand their impact, make realistic commitments and demonstrate measurable progress over time.

The overall message was clear: organisations must be able to stand behind what they say, with meaningful action and evidence to support their sustainability ambitions.

The Forum would like to thank 3PB Barristers for hosting the meeting and Alan Stenson for sharing his expertise and insights with members.



We are always keen to welcome new members and hear from potential speakers. If you, a colleague, or a contact would be interested in joining the Corporate and Commercial Law Forum, speaking at a future event, or attending one of our sessions, please do get in touch.

Finally, keep your eyes peeled for details of our next event, which are currently being planned for early 2027 and will be aimed primarily at commercial lawyers. We look forward to bringing members together for further opportunities to share knowledge, discuss developments in practice and hear from leading voices across the profession.

Why I Joined the Manchester Law Society Property Committee

– Cody Brookes, [Irwin Mitchell LLP](#)

I recently joined the Manchester Law Society Property Committee as I wanted to become more involved in the wider property community across Manchester.

During my training contract, I served as Co-Chair of the Manchester Trainee Solicitors Group, the junior lawyers division of Manchester Law Society. I really enjoyed the sense of community that came from being involved with the Society and, having qualified and continued my career in Manchester, I was keen to find another way to stay connected and contribute.

Since joining the Property Committee, I have been struck by how welcoming and enthusiastic everyone has been. It is a genuinely collaborative group where members are encouraged to share ideas, get involved in discussions and help shape the Committee's activities. Whether it is suggesting topics, planning future initiatives or contributing to events, there are plenty of opportunities to make a meaningful contribution.

One of the highlights has been being involved in the Manchester Law Society Property Law Conference held earlier this

year. It was a fantastic event that brought together property practitioners from across the region to discuss key legal and market developments, and it demonstrated the important role the Committee plays in supporting the profession.

The Committee provides a great forum to discuss industry developments, share experiences with fellow practitioners and build relationships with colleagues across the profession. It is also an opportunity to help promote the property sector in Manchester and support those entering the profession.

We are always keen to welcome new members, whether you are newly qualified, an experienced practitioner or somewhere in between. Fresh perspectives and ideas are always valued, and involvement can be tailored around your existing commitments.

If you're interested in expanding your network, meeting other property professionals and becoming more involved with Manchester Law Society, I would encourage you to get involved and join the Committee. We'd love to hear from you.

Why Managers should collaborate with their team

Some managers think they must do things all by themselves. They think they have to problems solve, come up with all the ideas and make all of the decisions. In my opinion, it doesn't have to be like that.

Being a manager is not just about making decisions and telling people what to do. A good manager should also be someone who listens, communicates and works closely with their team. Collaborating with your own team is important because the people you work with every day will often have different ideas, experiences and opinions that can help improve the way things are done.

One of the biggest benefits of collaboration is that it gives everyone the opportunity to have their say. Employees are more likely to share their thoughts when they feel that their manager genuinely wants to hear them. You never know, they might come up with new ideas that you haven't thought of yourself. After all, managers cannot always see everything that happens within a team, whereas employees may have a much better understanding of certain day-to-day problems.

Listening to a team can also help managers make better decisions. Instead of making a decision based purely on their own thoughts, managers can gather different opinions and consider a range of viewpoints before deciding what to do. This can be particularly useful when dealing with problems or making changes within the workplace. Even if a manager does not agree with every suggestion, taking the time to listen can help them understand the situation from another perspective.

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One of the biggest benefits of collaboration is that it gives everyone the opportunity to have their say

Collaboration can also have a positive effect on the team itself. When employees feel that their opinions matter, they are more likely to feel valued and respected. This can improve motivation and encourage people to become more involved in their work. It can also help build stronger relationships between managers and employees because people are more likely to trust a manager who listens to them.

Another benefit is that collaboration can help create a stronger team environment. When people work together to solve problems or come up with ideas, they can learn from each other and develop better ways of working. It encourages teamwork rather than creating a situation where everyone simply works on their own.

Most importantly, managers do not have to have all the answers. Asking for help, opinions and ideas from the team is not a weakness; it can actually show that a manager is open-minded and willing to learn. Employees may have valuable knowledge that can help the whole team improve.

So, why not tap into what your team are thinking in your next team meeting and 1:1s.

Need a hand developing the management skills of your team?
Contact Mike direct for a chat at
mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk



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Building workplaces fit for law

Wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a key issue within the legal sector. This has led to evolving debates about how best to support workplace wellbeing. A new free online course from the mental health charity, [LawCare](#), addresses this issue by empowering practical change. This article considers who is responsible for workplace wellbeing and how best to address the challenges experienced across legal practice. In doing so, it highlights and dispels some common misconceptions around workplace wellbeing.

Who is responsible for workplace wellbeing?

Consider the following scenario:

Hiya is a junior solicitor at a large law firm. She is consistently praised by clients and colleagues for her hard work and dedication. She eats and sleeps well, exercises three times per week and sees family and friends regularly. However, she is beginning to feel overwhelmed at work and struggling to prioritise her workload.

What would your advice be to Hiya?

- Develop better resilience.
- Speak to her line manager.
- See a counsellor.

Pause for a moment and reflect on which option you chose and why. None of the options are necessarily 'wrong' but they each demonstrate differing commonly held perceptions on workplace wellbeing in the legal sector.

'She's well-paid, she needs to up her game'

Option (a) focuses solely upon Hiya as an

individual: It assumes the 'problem' lies with her and requires her to in some way 'fix' or 'improve' herself. In fact, the information the scenario gives us suggests that she already practises good self-care and generally handles her work appropriately.

'But that's what the Employee Assistance Plan is for'

Option (c) again requires Hiya to 'fix' herself in some way. This time, however, it suggests the possibility of her being helped to do this. Of course, the provision of counselling and other services through an EAP can be incredibly valuable, but they only go so far. However much counselling someone has, if they remain working in a difficult environment, this alone will not solve the issue.

'Legal workplaces need to step up and make changes'

Option (b) suggests a role for Hiya's workplace in supporting her, positioning wellbeing as more of a collective responsibility. It acknowledges that legal work can be demanding, fast-paced and challenging and that legal workplaces have an active role to play in supporting their staff.

In fact, there is now a large body of evidence supporting this approach, from the 'business case' of boosting productivity and reducing attrition rates amongst staff, to the growing professional and ethical requirements to promote a healthy workplace culture. While Hiya may benefit from counselling and developing her resilience, all this evidence suggests that in fact option (b) will be most beneficial both for her and for her workplace.

So, how can legal workplaces better support wellbeing?

Let's develop the earlier scenario a little further:

Hiya asks to speak with her line manager, David, a partner in the firm. He is busy on a large transaction but fits 30 minutes in his diary. Hiya explains the issues she is experiencing. What can David do?

- Refer Hiya to Human Resources because he is not a therapist.
- Do his best to be kind and encourage Hiya to keep going.
- Discuss Hiya's concerns and go through her workload with her to see what can be delegated and advise her on priorities.

Once again, none of the options are necessarily 'wrong' but they all reflect differing workplace approaches that can be found within the legal sector.

'I do my best to support my staff, but I have my own workload and no real training'

Options (a) and (b) reflect the pressures line managers and others engaged in wellbeing work can often experience in law firms, if the onus is on them to continually 'fix' others. With limited time, resources and training, trying to support staff effectively and appropriately can be extremely difficult, limiting relationship-building and personal connection. While referring Hiya to Human Resources could provide her with further support, they may also lack resources and training.

'My workplace has guidance and training in place to help me deal with this'.

Option (c) suggests that David has the

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LawCare's new course offers a simple but effective way to empower legal workplaces to make changes

support and resources from his firm available to tackle the root causes of Hiya's current challenges and put in place proactive solutions. Where workplaces commit to integrating wellbeing across policy, process, procedure and culture, evidence demonstrates that this can be beneficial to everyone involved.

This approach requires workplaces to develop clear goals and strategies, commit time and resources, build in opportunities for evaluation and reflection and demonstrate commitment to wellbeing at all levels (particularly leadership). However, the rewards can be significant.

Take the next step

LawCare's new course, which you can find [here](#), offers a simple but effective way to empower legal workplaces to make changes. It's aimed at managers, team leaders, wellbeing leads and champions, as well as people working in HR, learning and development and other support roles, and is free to complete online at your own pace.

Find out more about the new course and the other free Fit for Law courses [here](#).

Article by Dr Emma Jones, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield and LawCare Trustee

Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



As we move through the Autumn regulatory round of PII and PC renewals, conferences, and Christmas party 'Save the dates' landing in our inbox, the SRA, LSB and SDT continue to focus on governance, compliance oversight, competence and the practical effectiveness of firms' systems, with the FCA just 'round the corner' for firms within scope of MLR (the end of 2028 will come around very quickly!).

Compliance officers under the spotlight

A significant current development is the approval by the Legal Services Board of SRA rule changes affecting COLP and COFA arrangements, forcing many firms to separate management and compliance roles. The reforms have caused understandable concern, particularly for smaller firms and owner-managed practices. The SRA has since clarified that the restriction is not aimed at every owner, partner or senior manager. The issue is narrower: whether an individual can unilaterally determine or direct significant management decisions about how the firm is structured or run. However, that does not mean firms can ignore the issue. The real question is not what appears on the organisation chart, but who actually makes the decisions about client money, staffing, finances, supervision and risk. A firm may describe management as collective, but if one person in practice controls the key decisions, there is an obvious question about whether that person can also provide independent compliance oversight.

Implementation is expected to be phased from January 2027. The changes will apply to firms above the relevant financial thresholds, including firms with annual turnover of more than £600,000 or which have held more than £2 million in

client money. Firms should not wait until renewal season or a regulatory enquiry to consider the position. Boards, partners and compliance officers should be looking now at reporting lines, escalation procedures, governance frameworks and whether the COLP and COFA have enough authority and information to challenge decisions effectively. For some firms, this may represent the most significant governance review since the introduction of the COLP and COFA regime.

There is much ongoing discussion, meetings etc. around the rule changes, and it is anticipated there may be further 'clarification', so watch this space.

Why governance remains high on the agenda:

The focus on compliance officers sits within a wider regulatory context. The ongoing consequences of Axiom Ince, SSB Law and PM Law continue to influence regulatory policy and enforcement priorities. Those cases have raised difficult questions about client money, financial resilience, management information, risk escalation and the point at which concerns should be reported or acted upon.

The collapse of PM Law is now expected to result in around £30m being paid from the SRA Compensation Fund, contributing to a



steep proposed increase in compensation fund contributions for the next practising year. That cost falls across the profession, including firms that have no connection with the failed practice. The lesson for firms is that financial stability, client money controls and governance are no longer background regulatory issues, they are central indicators of public protection risk.

The LSB's decision to initiate further enforcement action against the SRA is also significant. It reflects concern not merely about individual firm failures, but about whether regulatory systems are identifying risk early enough and translating new processes into better outcomes for clients. The inevitable consequence is that firms should expect similar scrutiny of their own arrangements. Where warning signs exist, the question will be who saw them, who had authority to act and why action was or was not taken.

Continuing competence: more than an annual declaration

In its annual assessment of continuing competence 2026, the SRA reported that most solicitors are undertaking learning and development and that many firms have robust systems in place. However, it remained concerned about the evidence showing why particular learning needs were identified and how they were addressed. Competence-related reports increased from 2,720 in 2024 to 4,038 in 2025 but remained stable at 23% as a proportion of all reports received.

For firms, the practical point is that continuing competence should not be treated as an annual tick-box exercise. A list of webinars attended may show activity,

but it does not necessarily show reflection. Firms should be able to explain why particular training was needed, what risk it addressed and what changed as a result. Complaints, file reviews, claims, supervision concerns and client feedback should all feed into competence planning.

Ethics, client communication, costs information, timescales and explanation of options should also sit at the centre of competence arrangements. These are often the areas where client dissatisfaction and regulatory concern arise. Before practising certificate renewal, firms should check whether competence records evidence real reflection rather than simply attendance.

Legal Ombudsman signals move towards fuller publication of decisions

The Legal Ombudsman has given a clear indication that it intends to move towards publishing ombudsman final decisions in full, although implementation is unlikely before 2027/28 and would be phased. The stated aim is greater transparency as published decisions would give consumers more than statistics and would allow the profession to learn from common service failures. For firms, this would represent a real shift in reputational risk. Even where complainants are anonymised and legal professional privilege protected, firms may be named. Complaints handling, file notes, client communication and evidence of remedial action will therefore matter not only to the individual outcome, but potentially to how the firm is publicly perceived.

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New /updated Law Society practice notes

[Solicitors offering legal services to the public from unregulated entities | The Law Society](#)

[Outsourcing | The Law Society](#)

[What to do when the law firm you work for is closing down | The Law Society](#)

[Professional undertakings | The Law Society](#)

[What to do when a complaint goes to the Legal Ombudsman | The Law Society](#)

[Information on letterheads, emails and websites | The Law Society](#)

Recent disciplinary cases

Recent SDT and SRA decisions continue to show that many enforcement cases arise from familiar themes: dishonesty, poor record-keeping, failures in supervision, defective AML controls, misleading communications and attempts to conceal mistakes. The facts vary, but the message remains consistent - small problems become serious when they are hidden, repeated or allowed to drift.

Solicitor struck off for dishonesty

A solicitor was struck off after admitting that he had misled his employer about a paid second role with an online professional advice platform. The tribunal heard that payments from the second role totalled around £81,000 and that he had falsely claimed the payments related to work undertaken by a family member. The agreed outcome was approved, with costs ordered in the sum of almost £6,000.

Struck off for backdating correspondence and misleading employer.

A solicitor was struck off after backdating a letter to make it appear that an acknowledgement of service had been sent months earlier. He later accepted that he had backdated the document and misled his employer, explaining that he feared losing his job. The sanction was strike-off, with costs of £5,000.

Solicitor suspended for improper access to Home Office files

A now-qualified solicitor was suspended for 12 months after accessing Home Office records relating to clients, family members and another person known to him while also working as a trainee solicitor at an immigration firm. The SDT found a potential conflict of interest and foreseeable risk of harm, although there was no evidence the information was disclosed to a third party. He was suspended for 12 months and made subject to practice conditions for a further 12 months, with costs of over £41,000.

Reprimanded and barred from COFA role for multiple compliance failures

A senior solicitor and equity partner was reprimanded and prohibited from acting as COFA for one year after admitting a series of compliance failures, including inaccurate professional indemnity insurance proposal forms, residual balances and delayed qualified accountant's reports. The SDT also required completion of COFA training before any return to the role.

Firm fined for AML failures in relation to politically exposed person

A firm was fined after acting for a non-domestic PEP and associated companies on

multiple residential property transactions without adequate systems to identify the PEP or establish source of funds and wealth. The SRA's fining guidance, based on turnover, indicated a penalty of almost £18,000, but this was reduced to £16,000 to reflect the firm's cooperation and remedial action.

Sole practitioner suspended for failing to maintain accounts

A sole practitioner was suspended after failing to maintain proper accounts, client ledgers and reconciliations. Investigators identified a discrepancy of almost £600,000 between client liabilities and client account funds, and the SRA intervened into the practice. The SDT approved a nine-month suspension, with costs of almost £8000.

Registered foreign lawyer struck off

A registered foreign lawyer was struck off after being convicted of knowingly

employing someone who was disqualified from employment by immigration status, and after using misleading AI-generated quotations and citations in documents filed in SDT proceedings. The tribunal said strike-off would have been justified on either basis.

Sole practitioner fined for multiple regulatory and client account breaches.

A sole practitioner was fined over £20,000 after the SRA found failures including non-compliance with an undertaking, failure to act in clients' best interests, improper transfer from client account, failure to keep books of account and failures to cooperate with the SRA and Legal Ombudsman. The SRA described the conduct as showing reckless disregard for regulatory obligations.

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

A new winner crowned...

Group, Kings Chambers, Olliers Solicitors, and Russell & Russell.

Being the third time we've run this tournament we were ready for all the challenges: last minute changes, the traditional Manchester weather (rain of course), trying to make sure everyone was on the right pitch! And after JMW winning the first two tournaments would they take a hat-trick, or could a team knock them off the top spot?

The tournament kicked off with a group stage, with three teams in each group playing each other one by one in fifteen-minute games to decide the fixtures for the quarterfinals.

Due to a couple of last-minute dropouts, two groups got automatic entry to the quarterfinals, playing longer games to decide the fixtures. Coming out top of the group stages were Kings Chambers, G2 Legal, JMW Solicitors LLP, and Fieldfisher LLP.

The winners of each group would alternate in playing the runners-up of another, while the bottom places were able to get some well-deserved rest and an opportunity to dry off in the bar while waiting for the Sportsman's Round to begin.

The quarterfinals were battled out on all the pitches at once – everyone with an eye on the semis! But only four could make it though and Kings Chambers, G2 Legal, JMW Solicitors LLP and Fieldfisher LLP were all victorious.

Matches for the semifinals were Kings Chambers vs G2 Legal and JMW Solicitors LLP vs Fieldfisher LLP. Both matches were tightly fought with Kings Chambers just pipping G2 Legal to the post with a 5-4 win. Even more excitement in the JMW Solicitors LLP vs Fieldfisher LLP match as a 2-2 score led to a penalty finish with Fieldfisher LLP coming out on top and into the final!

While the semifinals were being battled out, we also had our Sportsman's round playoff





Stuart Cartwright, JMW and Lee Traylor, G2 Legal presenting to the winners

where, after a little break in the bar, Burton Copeland Ltd won against Russell & Russell.

And now the final: Kings Chambers vs Fieldfisher LLP. Both teams had dominated their matches but after playing in the constant rain for almost two hours who would come out on top?

The final was a hard-fought and heated match in the ever-present Manchester rain but in the end Kings Chambers won with 5

goals to 2. An impressive achievement but made more remarkable as Kings Chambers played without any subs so had been playing for almost two hours solidly!

Everyone then retired to the bar to dry off and enjoy a drink to toast the winners.

Lee Traylor, Director at G2 Legal, was given the honour of presenting the trophies to our winners with Burton Copeland chuffed

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Triumphant Kings Chambers

OCTOBER 2026



Sportsman's round winners Burton Copeland

with their Sportsman's Trophy and King Chambers proudly lifting the winners cup.

It was such a lovely afternoon and great to see so many people taking the time out of the office to support our charity of the year, Greater Manchester Law Centre.

A huge thank you to G2 Legal for their invaluable support with the event and well done for making it to the semifinals. Perhaps you'll present the trophy to yourselves next year?

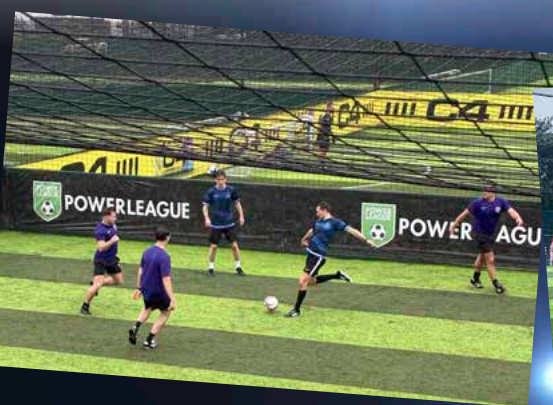
A massive thank you to Stuart Cartwright – the brains behind the event and the one who patiently answers all my football related questions – and our MLS Team Chandre, Lauren and of course Grace. The tournament was actually on Grace's last day and we made her work right up until the last moment!

Many thanks too to the Power League Manchester Central team who hosted us wonderfully. Do think of them if you're organising a 5-a-side event.

And finally thanks so much to all the players who took part! You were great sports and lots of fun to spend a Friday afternoon with. We hope you weren't too sore over the weekend!

We are already planning the tournament for next year – hopefully bigger and better than ever! If you have any suggestions or would like to be the first to know about the 2027 tournament please do email events@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk

Carla Jones, Chief Executive, Manchester Law Society





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Aldridge Foundation and Brabners launch a new pathway bringing schools and businesses closer together

[The Aldridge Foundation](#) and independent law firm [Brabners](#), today announce a major new partnership involving Brabners' True North network to tackle one of the most urgent challenges facing young people: the gap between education and employment.

This partnership will create a pathway connecting young people in schools and colleges with employers, giving them greater access to the skills, experiences, relationships, and opportunities they need to move successfully into further education, apprenticeships, or employment.

At its heart is a simple ambition: to demonstrate what can be achieved when education and business work together systematically — and ultimately create an approach capable of being replicated more widely.

This partnership comes at a critical time, with the recent work led by Alan Milburn highlighting the scale of the challenge facing young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and the economic and social consequences of allowing a generation to become disconnected from opportunity.

To address this, the Aldridge Foundation and Brabners believe the answer must begin much earlier. Rather than waiting until young people have left education to address the barriers they face in finding work, the new partnership will bring schools and businesses closer together while young people are still in education.

Sir Rod Aldridge, Founder and Chair of the Aldridge Foundation, said: "We must tackle the NEET challenge before a young person becomes NEET. Too many young people are leaving education without the experience, contacts or understanding of the workplace that can help turn their talent into opportunity. The first door is often the hardest to open. Some young people already know the person on the other side of that door; however, many of the young people we work with don't have the advantage of personal connections into the world of work. We are therefore asking businesses to open their doors – but just as importantly, to open their networks.

"Our ambition is that every young person should leave education with skills, meaningful experience of work and a professional network. Talent is everywhere. Opportunity is not. This partnership is about changing that."

Robert White, CEO of Brabners said: "Our True North network brings together over 650 purpose led businesses and is perfectly placed to create opportunities for talented young people across the region. Our mission is to Make the Difference. If we can connect schools, academies and FE colleges with our own firm and the businesses we work with, together we can shape the future workforce and make a lasting impact on the lives of young people.

"We are proud to work alongside the Aldridge Foundation whose work has transformed the lives of thousands of young people. By bringing together education and business, we have an opportunity to build



on this and we look forward to seeing what we can achieve together.”

The partnership will initially work with Aldridge MAT schools based in Blackburn with Darwen, along with the University Technical Colleges in Salford and Warrington, drawing on the reach and expertise of Brabners’ True North network.

It will create a pathway connecting young people to employers through mentoring and Industry Advocates, workplace experiences, careers and interview support, technical education and T Level placements, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. It will also enable the Aldridge Foundation to accelerate its highly successful Next Steps Bursary programme, which supports young people both financially and through mentoring at the critical transition point from education to the next stage of their journey towards work.

Crucially, businesses will be asked to become active participants rather than simply supporters — opening their organisations to young people, sharing expertise, providing mentoring and experience, and creating routes into apprenticeships and employment.

Brabners established True North to bring together like-minded organisations from

across the North to share knowledge, connect and collaborate, and to help unlock the economic potential of the region. From its outset, a central focus of the network has been harnessing talent and developing the skills needed for the future by connecting people with the opportunities Northern businesses can provide.

This new partnership will put that ambition into practice by connecting the True North business network directly with young people in schools and colleges, creating opportunities to develop skills, experience and relationships that can support their transition into work.

The launch of this partnership also comes as the Aldridge Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Sir Rod Aldridge added: “For 20 years, our belief has been that where you come from should not determine where you are going. The transition from education into work is now one of the biggest barriers to making that belief a reality. We cannot wait until young people become NEET and then try to reconnect them. We need to build the pathway before they leave education.”

To register your interest in working with the partnership, please click [here](#).



Farleys celebrates the next generation of legal talent

North West law firm [Farleys Solicitors](#) has welcomed its latest intake of trainee solicitors, while also celebrating the qualification of two trainees who have secured permanent roles with the firm.

Max Adern, Emma Kelly, Edward Lowther, and Charlotte Moore have joined Farleys' training programme and will begin their training contracts across the firm's wide range of practice areas, gaining hands-on experience and support from experienced colleagues as they take the next steps in their legal careers.

Meanwhile, Eve Abdel-Moneim and Armin Pishro have both completed their training contracts with Farleys and have been retained in permanent roles. Eve has qualified into the firm's specialist abuse claims team, while Armin has joined the insolvency department.

Their qualification reflects Farleys' continued commitment to developing and retaining talent from within, with the firm's trainee solicitor programme playing an important role in supporting the next generation of lawyers.

Nick Molyneux, Training Principal at Farleys Solicitors, said: "We congratulate Eve and Armin on qualifying as solicitors and are proud to see them continue their careers with Farleys in permanent roles. Both have shown real commitment, professionalism, and enthusiasm throughout their training contracts, and their progression is thoroughly deserved.

"We are also very pleased to welcome Max, Emma, Edward, and Charlotte as our newest trainee solicitors. Starting a training contract is an exciting milestone, and we look forward to supporting them as they



Back row L-R – Max Adern, Armin Pishro, Edward Lowther. Front row L-R – Charlotte Moore, Emma Kelly, Eve Abdel-Moneim - (taken by Liz Hall Photography)

build their skills, confidence, and experience across the firm.

“Farleys has a proud tradition of nurturing legal talent and creating opportunities for people to grow within the firm. Our training programme is designed to give trainees broad, practical experience in a supportive environment, with close supervision and guidance from colleagues who are invested in their development. Many of our lawyers began their careers here, and we remain committed to helping the legal talent of the future thrive.”

Farleys’ trainee solicitor programme offers trainees the opportunity to gain experience

across different departments, working alongside specialist teams and developing the practical skills needed for a successful career in law. The programme forms part of the firm’s wider commitment to professional development, progression, and creating a supportive culture where colleagues can build long-term careers.

The announcement comes during a period of continued growth for Farleys, which recently expanded its presence in Lancashire with the acquisition of Clitheroe-based Houldsworth Solicitors, a long-established firm with roots in the Ribble Valley dating back to 1817.

Centrefield advises on deals in excess of £2 billion in record-breaking summer transfer window

The 2026 summer transfer window saw continued significant investment across the global football market, with spending on transfer fees worldwide setting a new record. Premier League clubs were again among the most active participants, breaking the league’s own all-time summer transfer record with spending of approximately £3.49 billion, as well as substantial levels of transfer activity taking place across all levels of both the men’s and women’s game.

The [Centrefield](#) team continue to be the leading legal advisor on football regulatory and transactional matters, having advised clubs, agents and players in the UK and internationally on more than 200 transactions across several continents, involving transfer / loan fees worth in excess of £2 billion (not taking into account the associated high value player/agent contracts) during the summer window alone.

This is in addition to numerous manager, head coach and ‘backroom’ team appointments and dismissals, as well as complex financing arrangements relating to the acceleration or deferral of transfer fees. It also follows a productive January transfer window, where Centrefield advised on more than 75 transactions with a combined transfer fee value of just under £250 million.

Among the notable transactions on which the team advised this summer were:

- 7 of the 10 highest-value transactions;
- 3 player transactions worth over £100m each in fixed transfer fees;
- Savio to Tottenham Hotspur FC;
- Gabriel Martinelli to Al-Hilal;
- Ronald Araujo to Liverpool FC; and
- Jordan Henderson and Danny Welbeck to Chelsea FC.

Continued on page 36



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This transfer window once again demonstrated the increasing sophistication and complexity of the modern football industry, with transactions routinely involving complex financial, regulatory, commercial and cross-border considerations requiring careful navigation by clubs, players and agents.

As the pre-eminent advisor in the football industry, Centrefield remains at the forefront of developments in both domestic and international football markets, advising on a range of player transfers and loans, employment arrangements, agency/representation matters, immigration requirements, regulatory issues and dispute resolution.

Clarke Willmott appointed to government commercial agency's RM6374 legal panel for public sector framework

National law firm [Clarke Willmott](#) has been named as a supplier on four key elements of a national public sector purchasing and procurement framework.

Government Commercial Agency's (GCA) RM6374 Legal Panel for Public Sector

Framework provides public sector organisations across England and Wales with a compliant and efficient route to procure legal services, enabling buyers to access specialist expertise while delivering value for money and reducing procurement complexity.

Clarke Willmott has been awarded places on four key framework lots:

- Lot 1a - Full Legal Service Provision for all Public Sector
- Lot 1b - Full Legal Service Provision for Local Government and Local Communities (including Housing and Charity sectors)
- Lot 2 - Focused Legal Support
- Lot 3 - Litigation and Disputes

As a named supplier, Clarke Willmott can provide a broad range of legal services to government departments, local authorities, housing providers, charities, education bodies, healthcare organisations and other public sector entities.



Laurence Lacey

The firm's appointment reflects its long-standing commitment to supporting public sector clients through a multidisciplinary team of lawyers with expertise across governance, commercial projects, real estate, employment, construction, procurement, litigation, housing and regulatory matters.

The appointment builds on Clarke Willmott's extensive experience advising public sector organisations and their partners. It has also been appointed to the Welsh Government Framework, London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC) and all lots on the CHIC Framework, as well as many other local authorities.

Clarke Willmott partners Laurence Lacey and Michelle Spark, who will lead the firm's relationship with the framework, have more than 40 years of combined experience advising public sector clients and are recognised by independent legal directories for their expertise.

"We are delighted to have been appointed to GCA's RM6374 Legal Panel for Public Sector Framework across four lots," says Laurence Lacey, who is framework relationship partner at Clarke Willmott.

"This appointment reflects the breadth and depth of expertise we offer and our strong track record of supporting public sector organisations.

"We look forward to building new relationships through the framework and continuing to deliver practical, commercially focused legal advice that supports clients' strategic objectives and delivers value for the public sector."

Public sector organisations can access Clarke Willmott's services directly through [GCA's digital marketplace and procurement tool](#).





Moore Barlow specialist teams to join Fletchers Solicitors and EMG in South East expansion

Fletchers Group has agreed to acquire specialist legal teams from Moore Barlow, together with its interest in spinal cord injury firm Aspire Law.

Moore Barlow's Clinical Negligence, Personal Injury and Major Trauma teams will join Fletchers Solicitors, while its Court of Protection team will become part of EMG Solicitors, the Group's specialist Court of Protection and Private Client business.

The acquisition will bring approximately 100 colleagues, including 12 partners, into Fletchers Solicitors and EMG. It will strengthen the businesses' expertise across Clinical Negligence, Serious Injury and Court of Protection, while expanding their UK

presence through new locations planned in central London, Richmond, Guildford and Southampton.

Fletchers Solicitors will also acquire Moore Barlow's interest in Aspire Law, its joint venture with spinal cord injury charity Aspire. Aspire Law will continue to operate under its established brand, with the charity retaining its stake in the business.

Peter Haden, CEO of Fletchers Group, said: "We're delighted that such a talented group of colleagues will be joining the business. They have built an outstanding reputation, and we share a strong commitment to supporting people through some of the most difficult moments in their lives.



Emma Gaudern



Peter Haden

“Their expertise will be a fantastic addition to Fletchers Solicitors and EMG, while strengthening our presence across London and the South East. We’re looking forward to bringing our teams together, learning from one another and building on our combined strengths.

“We’re equally pleased that Aspire Law will become part of Fletchers Solicitors, and we look forward to supporting its specialist work with the spinal cord injury community and its longstanding relationship with the Aspire charity.”

Emma Gaudern, CEO of EMG Solicitors, said: “I’m incredibly excited that the Moore Barlow Court of Protection team will be joining EMG. Over recent months, EMG has welcomed specialist practice JE Bennett Law and the Court of Protection teams from Freeths and Fletchers Solicitors. Each has brought valuable perspectives and ideas while contributing to the supportive and collaborative culture we are building across EMG.

“We know that joining a new business is a significant change. Our priority will be to help our new colleagues settle in, build relationships and feel valued and supported from the outset.”

Dr Trevor Sterling (Hon. causa), Senior Partner and Chair of the Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence Division at Moore Barlow, said: “Our Clinical Negligence and Personal Injury teams have earned a first-class reputation for handling complex and life-changing cases on behalf of individuals and families across the South East.

“The legal market for claimant injury work has become increasingly focused on consolidating specialisms. Against that backdrop, we believe Fletchers Group

“

“We know that joining a new business is a significant change. Our priority will be to help our new colleagues settle in, build relationships and feel valued and supported from the outset.”

represents the right long-term home for our clients and our colleagues.

“The breadth of the Group’s national platform, along with its strong track record in Serious Injury, Clinical Negligence and Court of Protection work, will help ensure that clients continue to receive the highest levels of support and expertise in the future.”

The deal marks Fletchers Group’s fourth acquisition in five months, following its acquisitions of EMG Solicitors and JE Bennett Law, and the addition of Freeths’ Clinical Negligence and Court of Protection teams.

It forms part of a wider transaction through which Knights will acquire Moore Barlow’s commercial and private client legal services operations.

Completion is expected in early November 2026, subject to the necessary legal and regulatory approvals. Until then, the businesses will continue to operate separately.



MSB Solicitors go one better than last year and scoop national legal sector prize at Employer Excellence Awards

[MSB Solicitors](#) are celebrating after being named Legal Employer of the Year at the 2026 Employer's Excellence Awards, held in conjunction with the nationwide daily Metro newspaper.

The award is presented annually to honour the legal employers who support wellbeing and building positive, progressive workplaces across the legal sector.

This win follows on from MSB's Highly Commended status in the same category of the same awards last year and backs up the practice's Outstanding Commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion win at the Employer's Excellence Awards in 2024.

The firm was shortlisted alongside other leading law firms Brabners, Forbes Solicitors, Hill Dickinson, JMW Solicitors, Menzies, Pearson Solicitors,



MSB Solicitors Employer's Excellence Award winners 2026



The Employer's Excellence Awards celebrate organisations and individuals demonstrating excellence across areas including employee support, diversity, training, workplace culture and leadership.

RPC and Weightmans. It fought off strong competition from Forbes who were this year's Highly Commended entrant to take home the trophy which was presented by television and radio personality Vernon Kay.

On the same night the firm's Partner and Head of Disrepair, Thomas Stockton-Hughes, achieved Highly Commended status in the Outstanding Employee category of the Employer's Excellence Awards.

The Employer's Excellence Awards celebrate organisations and individuals demonstrating excellence across areas including employee support, diversity, training, workplace culture and leadership.

The award adds further to a series of recent recognitions for MSB, which describes itself as a progressive, inclusive and responsible firm with a strong commitment to community impact and access to justice.

"We are delighted to have won this award and for Thomas to have achieved his recognition, both of which embody our spirit and ethos of being a values-led, inclusive and supportive place to work," said Emma Carey, MSB Solicitors' Managing Partner.

"For us, being a good employer is about much more than policies and processes. It is about creating a workplace where people feel valued, supported and able to develop, while giving them the opportunity to make a positive difference both within MSB and in the wider community.

"To take the step up from last year's Highly Commended status to winning the Legal Employer of the Year is testament to our team who make MSB what it is. Their tireless work on our ESG committee and its many and varied sub-committees makes our practice a firm that is inspired to provide justice for all and help those who need justice the most feel confident that they can access it.

"Our growth has never been about losing sight of who we are. We want MSB to be a place where talented people can build their careers, where different perspectives are welcomed and where our success has a positive impact beyond the work we do for our clients," Carey concluded.



Myerson Solicitors reports record financial year with revenue reaching £19.1m

[Myerson Solicitors](#) has reported record revenue of £19.1m for the financial year ending 31 August 2026, up 9% on the previous period. The performance was achieved entirely organically, without mergers or acquisitions, despite economic uncertainty and challenging market conditions.

Myerson remains independent, [100% employee-owned](#) and based in Altrincham, Greater Manchester. The firm now employs over 165 people and has 30 Partners following its latest promotion round in September. Further Partner appointments are planned in the coming months as Myerson pursues ambitious plans for further expansion.

Strong performance across business and private client services

The results were supported by strong performances across Myerson's business and private client teams.

The Dispute Resolution department had an exceptional year, with revenue increasing

by 25%; both the Real Estate Litigation and Contentious Trusts & Probate departments also performed particularly well, delivering strong results.

The Private Client department also had a very successful year, driven by increased demand from private wealth clients for sophisticated estate and succession planning, including family investment companies, family offices and trust structures, alongside complex probate work. The team continues to strengthen its reputation regionally and nationally for advising high-net-worth individuals, families and business owners on wealth preservation and succession matters.

The Employment team achieved a record year. The team advises both employers and employees, with demand driven in part by businesses preparing for significant employment law reforms, as well as its recognised expertise in complex TUPE matters and reorganisations. It has also developed a niche in advising senior executives.



The Corporate team advised on a number of significant transactions across a range of sectors.

Developing sectors and specialist networks

Alongside its departmental performance, Myerson continued to invest in its sector-led approach, bringing together specialists from across the firm and launching a dedicated Charities and Not-for-Profits sector. It also developed its work across key markets including Technology, Financial Services, Private Wealth, Professional Services and Agriculture.

Myerson's In-House Counsel network also expanded across the North West, bringing in-house lawyers together to share best practice, discuss key issues and build connections.

Myerson Connections, the firm's legal referral network, has grown to hundreds of members, supported by an extensive programme of training, technical updates and events.

A distinctive employer brand

September 2026 marks two years since Myerson became 100% employee-owned. The firm welcomed 28 new starters during the financial year, while its employee retention rate increased to 90%.

Myerson's employee-owned model is an important part of its proposition as an employer, giving everyone across the firm a stake in its success and helping Myerson stand out in the competitive North West legal market.

Investment in future talent also remains a priority. This September, Myerson

welcomed its fifth cohort of Legal Apprentices, providing another route for young people to build a career in law alongside the firm's established trainee programme.

The firm's culture received significant external recognition during the year, including being named 'Corporate Culture & Wellbeing Champions of the Year' at the Manchester Legal Awards 2026. Myerson and its individual teams also received numerous awards, reflecting the strength of its people, culture and expertise across the business.

Making an impact

Myerson also launched Myerson IMPACT, its [ESG programme](#) bringing together the firm's existing commitments to its people, communities, the environment and responsible business. Its first ESG Report was published during the year, setting out priorities, activity and progress and providing a framework for measuring future impact.

Community involvement remained an important part of the programme. Myerson supported charities and organisations through fundraising, sponsorship and paid employee volunteering.

[Richard Lloyd, Chief Executive](#) at Myerson Solicitors, said: "This has been another record year for Myerson and, importantly, our performance has been achieved entirely organically. To increase revenue by 9% to £19.1m against a challenging economic backdrop demonstrates the strength and breadth of the firm.

"We have seen record performances from several of our teams, advised on significant and complex work and developed our sector

Continued on page 44



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offering, while investing in our people and future talent. Two years into employee ownership, we are seeing how our model supports both our commercial ambitions and our ability to attract and retain talented people.

"We have significant ambitions for Myerson and see a real opportunity to strengthen

our position as a leading regional law firm and a strong independent contender in the North West legal market.

"We enter the new financial year in a strong position, with further senior appointments planned and considerable opportunities ahead."

Mental Wellbeing

New free course to support wellbeing in legal workplaces

LawCare

LawCare has launched a new free online course, Supporting legal workplace wellbeing, for anyone with a role in creating healthier, more supportive working environments across the legal sector.

Aimed at managers, team leaders, wellbeing leads and champions, as well as people working in human resources, learning and development and other support roles, the course offers practical guidance on creating better ways of working. It looks at how individuals and organisations can help create workplaces where people feel supported and able to speak openly.

The course is free and can be completed online at your own pace.

Supporting legal workplace wellbeing is the third free online course in the Fit for Law series, which helps legal professionals develop psychologically and emotionally healthier ways of working. Fit for Law is a collaboration between LawCare and academics at the University of Sheffield and The Open University.

Trish McLellan, Interim CEO of LawCare,

said: "We know from our support service and Life in the Law 2025 research that workplace culture and the way people are managed can have a big impact on wellbeing. Many people want to support colleagues, have better conversations and create healthier ways of working, but aren't always sure where to start. This course is designed to help them do that."

Dr Emma Jones, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield and a LawCare Trustee, said: "Many individuals within the legal sector are involved in supporting workplace wellbeing. This may be as part of their job description, through a volunteer role, or as part of their wider responsibilities as a line manager or leader. Despite this, research demonstrates that legal workplaces do not always prioritise resourcing this work and providing adequate training. The new Fit for Law course aims to provide evidence-informed practical support for anyone who wishes to upskill themselves in this area and drive positive change in their workplace."

For more information and to access the course, [click here](#).



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Solicitors raise £3,199 for Greater Manchester youth charity with Peak District abseil

[Olliers Solicitors](#) has raised £3,199 for Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) after its team took on a 100ft charity abseil in the Peak District.

The Manchester-headquartered criminal defence specialists were joined by supporters and partners from GMYN for the challenge at Millers Dale Viaduct, where everyone taking part successfully completed the descent.

The event was held in support of the Seen, Heard, Diverted campaign, a three-year

partnership between Olliers and GMYN aimed at keeping neurodivergent young people out of the criminal justice system.

With donations still open, Olliers is continuing to raise money towards its three-year partnership fundraising target of £30,000.

Olliers Managing Director Matthew Cloughton was among those taking part in the abseil, which saw the team free-hang 100ft above the gorge at the Peak District landmark.



The event was held in warm and pleasant weather, with a strong turnout from colleagues, supporters and GMYN representatives who came along to support the team.

Matthew Cloughton said: "It was a fantastic day and I'm incredibly proud of everyone who took part.

"Standing at the top of the viaduct is one thing – stepping over the edge is another. But seeing everyone complete their abseil and knowing we were doing it to support GMYN made it worthwhile.

"We've raised £3,199 so far, which is a brilliant result, but the fundraising doesn't

“

We've raised £3,199 so far,
which is a brilliant result”

stop here. Every donation will help support the Seen, Heard, Diverted campaign and its work to improve outcomes for neurodivergent young people.”

The Seen, Heard, Diverted campaign aims to build a prevention pathway for neurodivergent children who come into contact with the youth justice system.

Research cited by GMYN and Olliers shows that around 80% of children cautioned or sentenced in UK courts are neurodivergent, despite neurodivergent people making up around 15% of the general population.

The campaign will fund a three-strand delivery model across all 10 Greater Manchester local authorities, providing rights-awareness training and safe activity spaces for young people, support toolkits and coaching for parents and carers, and training for police officers, solicitors and magistrates to help prevent behaviour being misread and de-escalate crisis points before they lead to criminalisation.

The abseil follows Olliers' completion of the Tatton Park 10k in July and forms part of a wider programme of fundraising activity the firm has committed to over the life of the partnership, alongside financial support and time spent mentoring young people directly.

Donations to the Seen, Heard, Diverted campaign remain open through the Olliers fundraising page.

To support the campaign, visit the [Olliers JustGiving page](#).



Clarke Willmott celebrates inclusion award success

Peter Swinburn, CEO of national law firm [Clarke Willmott](#), has been recognised at the inaugural [National Inclusion Week Awards](#) after being named joint winner of the event's Inclusive Leader Award.

Clarke Willmott was the only legal organisation represented at the awards, which recognise people and organisations making a meaningful difference through inclusion.

"We are really pleased to be recognised on a national stage for our team efforts. For me, inclusion is about creating an environment that enables people to contribute, develop and succeed, regardless of their background," says Peter Swinburn, who was joint winner with Troy Francis from Southern Housing.

"Leadership has a big part to play in creating that environment, but it is something that must be lived every day, not just talked about. It was particularly rewarding to see that work recognised alongside so many organisations committed to creating more inclusive workplaces.

Clarke Willmott colleague Emma Davies-Perks was also highly commended in the Navigating Change, Building Trust Award for her work with [Catalyst](#), the firm's flagship programme designed to improve social mobility through greater access to careers in the legal sector.

"Catalyst is about breaking down some of the barriers that can make a career in law feel out of reach," said Emma, the firm's early careers advisor.



"We want to create accessible pathways into the profession and give people from all backgrounds the opportunity to develop, succeed and bring their perspectives to the legal sector. It's fantastic to have that work recognised, and it reinforces why creating those opportunities matters."

Peter and Emma were nominated by Karen Higgins, head of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) at Clarke Willmott.

"For me, inclusion is about turning ambition into action – embedding it in the way we operate, the opportunities we create and the positive impact we have on our people and our wider community," says Karen Higgins.

"Peter and Emma have both been instrumental in bringing that ambition to life, through their leadership, the opportunities they've created and the difference they've made. It's wonderful to see their contribution recognised on a national stage."

Organised by [Inclusive Employers](#), the National Inclusion Week Awards recognise people and organisations making a meaningful difference through workplace inclusion. Other organisations recognised at the awards included Currys PLC, Mite, Southern Housing and Domestic & General.



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Top tips for Legal 500 and Chambers and Partners submissions

Non-practising solicitor, legal directories specialist and founder of legal PR consultancy, [LexRex Communications](#), Victoria Moffatt gives her advice to lawyers trying to get ranked or improve their rankings in the Legal 500 and Chambers and Partners directories.

Now is the time that marketing people in law firms start to really get ahead and plan for this year's legal directories season. With some Chambers deadlines falling before Christmas, it makes sense to start thinking now about how to approach your directories submissions.

If you are submitting for the first time, have submitted but not been ranked, or if you're 'stuck' mid-table, read on for actionable advice that will help you to create your best submissions yet.

Be strategic

My advice for anybody managing or involved in a legal directories project is to approach things strategically. If you run a firm, take the time to consider where your strengths lie in your services, and avoid the trap of believing that you should submit to all practice areas. If you run a team, be realistic about what you are good at. It is far better to draft a few really excellent submissions than to apply a bulk approach.

Once you've created a shortlist of practice areas, take a look at the current rankings for these specialisms. You are looking to see which ranked teams you often come across in practice. These are the firms that are your competition within the rankings, and if you never come across them in your work, it may be that you aren't quite operating yet at the level you need to in order to get ranked.

If, however, you are comfortably swimming in the same pond as those ranked and you are regularly exchanging correspondence with them, this can be a good sign of the quality of your own work.

Next, have a look at the sort of clients that these firms are working with, the types of transactions or deals they are managing, and try to identify whether there are any similarities or cross-over with the work that you are regularly undertaking. Again, if you have confidence that you belong in the group as a result of what you see reflected back to you, this is a positive sign.

Victoria Moffatt



Look at the practice area definitions

TLDR: always read the practice area definitions.

This is arguably the most important thing you can do before settling down to draft anything. The practice area definitions tell you exactly what sort of matters the researchers are interested in. They don't care how you structure your teams internally, or if your work falls into two or more categories but you can't quite muster the energy to write more than one submission. If this is your reality, then you need to identify which practice areas your work aligns to in accordance with these guidelines. Firms often get this wrong because they fail to look at the definitions or choose to ignore them. The problem with either is that you potentially waste good case studies that are irrelevant to the practice area you are submitting to, or you fail to include enough case studies to ensure you stand out (because you are including irrelevant information).

Both Chambers and Legal 500 have really helpful practice area definitions on their websites and do take a look at them when the time comes around to start working on this year's submissions.

Also, note that the practice area definitions are subject to change each year, so matters that may have been relevant last year may now not fit into your usual or chosen practice area, or vice versa.

Think about how you present your case studies

Each directory submission provides space for up to 20 case studies, in either confidential or publishable format. Please note that you don't have to identify any of your case studies, they can all be

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My advice for anybody managing or involved in a legal directories project is to approach things strategically

confidential if necessary. For some areas – family, some High Net Worth practice areas, corporate, sanctions and commercial property, confidentiality is sometimes an absolute must.

Where you can name clients, do. Even if they are in the confidential sections (again with consent). Where you can't name the client, it is helpful to give an indicative title, if possible to do so without identifying the client.

In terms of how you order the case studies, it makes sense to have a think about some sort of system. One way to do this is by seniority of fee earner and then by importance / value / technicality / novelty of matter. This way, you are probably front-loading your submission with your most noteworthy cases.

Remember that all of the research carried out by the directories is undertaken by people – they are typically university educated individuals, who are probably not lawyers. It's your job to secure and hold their interest, so be thoughtful about what you write. You almost certainly don't need the level of detail that you think, but you do need to outline what you did and why it was important. Keep each matter to one page or less (the whole section, not just the narrative).

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Finally, where the matters have been a team effort, include a line for each of the key players, outlining their roles. This gives your more junior team members an opportunity to be mentioned, and can be particularly insightful for the researchers, especially if there isn't space for the fee earners' own matters, or they aren't quite senior enough to justify their own case studies just yet.

Don't skip on the narrative

The narrative sections are where you can tell your team's story and they provide the perfect opportunity to talk about what you've achieved over the past 12 months, your plans for the future, any innovations or changes you are making that benefit clients, and to identify the particular strengths and niches within the team's practice areas.

Referee pointers

The editorial teams at both Chambers and Legal 500 consistently state that the referee sections are where they get the real research value. And although there's nothing you can do about the layout or information you are required to provide, there are things you can do to generate the best possible referee feedback.

First of all, remember that Legal 500 allows you to include as many referees as you want. Chambers UK Solicitors' Guide recently increased the referee allowance to 30 from 20. The High Net Worth Guide now also allows 30. Check the website for confirmation for other guides.

An ideal referee may not be a client. In fact, other professionals may have a level of commercial awareness and understanding of your market that far exceeds that of your clients. That's not to say you shouldn't include clients as referees but remember

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The editorial teams at both Chambers and Legal 500 consistently state that the referee sections are where they get the real research value

that if they are not sophisticated buyers of legal services, to offset them with referees who know about you, your work and your market.

Other great referees are counsel if you use them. Try to limit your KCs though, as they are often flooded with requests, and Chambers for example, will limit how many times it contacts referees that are included on multiple submissions. [See here.](#)

It also makes sense to 'warm up' your referees by messaging them in advance of the research periods and then checking in during the research. If you'd like a template email for referees you can request one [here](#). It goes without saying that you need referee consent before including them.

More guidance

If you've found this advice helpful, please do register your interest for our upcoming webinar: [Preparing for Legal Directories Season](#) which is kindly supported by Manchester Law Society. The webinar is taking place on Wednesday 7th October, so do add the date to your diary.

MYL have had another very busy month with lots more in the pipeline

September started with a bang on the health and wellbeing events, with our health and wellbeing director Beka Fender re-starting the run club initially trialling evening runs ending with a drink at caravan but now moving to mornings following members requesting this. It turns out people love getting their day underway with a 5k and a coffee from Bold Street.

Our other health and wellbeing director has also begun his Friday 5-a-side sessions. This has proven to be a hugely popular event with every Friday now more or less oversubscribed! This should be a really fun way to spend a Friday evening, with drinks after at Tap House.

We also launched our "female speed networking" event on Thursday, 24th September. Organised by our social director Emily McLoughlin at Kennedys, this was a wonderful evening with like minded women connecting across the Manchester legal committee.

That's not all, our professional directors have been incredibly busy too. The start of the new academic year means the launch of the MYL x Manchester Metropolitan University mentoring scheme. If you're interested in mentoring a University student, please register interest via Kennedy Kay and Carla Hazlewood.

And for all those food lovers out there, after our last event at food Sorcery sold out within days, we've managed to arrange another cooking masterclass with the kind sponsorship of 18 St John Street and Think Legal Recruitment. Taking place on 1st October, we're expecting this to be a hugely popular event and can't wait to see as many of you down there as possible!

If anyone is interested in joining MYL or sponsoring any of our events, please check out our [website](https://www.manchesteryounglawyers.co.uk) or contact our Chair on hello@manchesteryounglawyers.co.uk.



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The reasons we set up WBT are captured in this [article](#) on our website. We are passionate about helping firms to help their clients. We want to transform the loose / loose situation we see so often into a win / win.

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Black History Month 2026: honouring our communities

Each October, Black History Month provides an opportunity to recognise the contributions Black people have made to Britain's past, present and future. It is a time to learn, reflect and engage with the stories, experiences and achievements that have helped shape our society and continue to influence it today.

This year's theme, "Honouring Our Communities", invites us to recognise the individuals whose everyday contributions shape, support and sustain Black life across the United Kingdom.

As we consider the theme, many of us will recognise people within our own communities whose contributions often go unnoticed. Whether they are friends, family members, colleagues or volunteers, they embody the spirit of "Honouring Our Communities" through their commitment to others and the positive impact they have on those around them.

It also provides an opportunity to consider how we recognise and celebrate those contributions. Black History Month UK is inviting nominations for individuals whose

B:M 2026

HONOURING BLACK BRITAIN 2026
HONOURING OUR COMMUNITIES

CELEBRATING THOSE WHO SHAPE OUR COMMUNITIES EVERY DAY

Recognising excellence | Leadership | Service | Contribution across the UK

NOMINATE SOMEONE TODAY

Anyone can make a nomination
Nominate an individual making a real difference

Nominations open now
Help us celebrate Black excellence across the UK

“

From the earliest Black presence in Britain to the Windrush generation and beyond, communities have played a central role in shaping lives, opportunities and experiences



Himpal Bains

service, leadership and dedication have made a meaningful difference within their communities. More broadly, it encourages us to reflect on whose stories we tell, whose achievements we celebrate and whose contributions may too often pass without recognition. Whether through a formal nomination, a workplace discussion, a community event or simply a conversation with friends and family, Black History Month offers an opportunity to share experiences, learn from one another and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Black history is woven throughout Britain's story. From the earliest Black presence in Britain to the Windrush generation and beyond, communities have played a central role in shaping lives, opportunities and experiences. While October provides a valuable focal point for learning and reflection, the stories, contributions and conversations highlighted during Black History Month should not be confined to a single month. Education, engagement and recognition are ongoing responsibilities that continue throughout the year.

At Mills & Reeve, the firm's race equality network, REACH, is organising a range of activities to mark Black History Month 2026 and encourage learning, discussion and participation. These include weekly features, themed lunches, educational resources, storytelling initiatives, office displays, a book corner and a firmwide quiz. The firm's commitment extends beyond Black History Month, including through participation in the 10,000 Black Interns programme, which helps create opportunities for talented individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.

Himpal Bains, Mills & Reeve LLP



World Mental Health Day 2026: from lived experience to real change in the legal profession

"Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change."

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2026, taking place on 10 October, is a powerful reminder that listening to people with lived experience of mental health conditions is only the beginning. The real objective is to ensure that those experiences have a meaningful influence on the policies, services and decisions that affect people's lives.

For the legal profession, this message has particular resonance.

Mental health is not simply a wellbeing issue. It is also an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issue, a workplace issue and, in appropriate circumstances, a legal issue.

It is relatively easy for an organisation to run a Mental Health Awareness campaign, circulate information about employee assistance programmes or encourage people to talk about their wellbeing. These initiatives can be valuable. Inclusion requires something more.

It requires people with lived experience to have a meaningful role in shaping the environments in which they work.

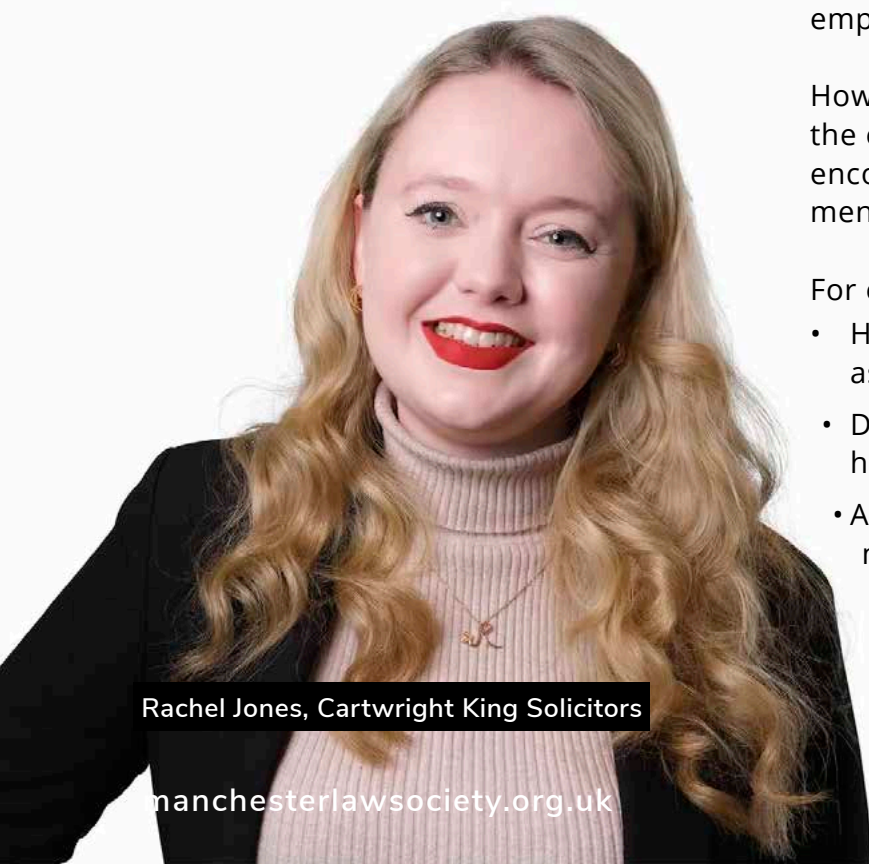
WHO 2026 campaign calls for people with lived experience to be involved in decision-making from the outset rather than simply being invited

Legal organisations routinely make decisions about working practices, recruitment, progression, performance management, office environments and employee benefits.

How often are those decisions informed by the experiences of people who have actually encountered barriers because of their mental health?

For example:

- How accessible are our recruitment and assessment processes?
- Do people feel safe disclosing a mental health condition?
- Are managers confident discussing mental health and disability?
- Are reasonable adjustments understood as an ordinary part of an inclusive workplace rather than an exception?



Rachel Jones, Cartwright King Solicitors

- Are junior lawyers and trainees able to raise concerns without fearing that doing so will affect their reputation or career?
- When we ask people about their experiences, do we actually use what we learn to change our practices?

Law is intellectually demanding and often involves significant responsibility, tight deadlines and high levels of client expectation. In some areas of practice, long hours and periods of intense pressure have historically been regarded as simply part of the job.

A culture in which people feel that they must always appear resilient can make it harder for people to disclose mental health difficulties or ask for support.

If someone believes that disclosing a mental health condition will affect their career prospects, work allocation or reputation, they may choose not to disclose at all. The result can be a workplace where policies appear inclusive on paper, while individuals continue to experience barriers in practice.

This year's theme challenges organisations to think differently about lived experience. Organisations can recognise them as contributors to organisational learning.

That might mean involving colleagues with lived experience in the development of wellbeing and EDI initiatives, asking whether proposed policies create unintended barriers, or creating safe and voluntary opportunities for staff to contribute their perspectives.

No individual should be expected to disclose personal information, share trauma or become the spokesperson for an entire community simply because they have lived experience.

Meaningful participation means creating choice, safety and influence.

It also means recognising that there is no single "mental health experience". People's experiences differ significantly, and mental health can intersect with other aspects of identity, including race, sex, disability, socioeconomic background, age and caring responsibilities.

That is why listening needs to be ongoing and representative.

Real change requires accountability.

The 2026 theme gives the legal profession an opportunity to move the conversation about mental health beyond awareness.

It asks us to consider whether we are genuinely creating environments in which people can speak openly about their experiences, whether we understand the barriers they face, and whether we are prepared to change our practices as a result.

For a profession that exists to interpret rights, resolve disputes and advocate for others, there is a particular value in understanding the importance of lived experience.

An inclusive legal profession should not simply make space for different voices.

It should listen to them. Learn from them. And, where change is needed, act on them.

That is the difference between being heard and being included.

And perhaps that is the most important message of World Mental Health Day 2026: real inclusion begins with listening, but it is demonstrated through change.



A message from Fiona Ledden, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer at Manchester City Council

Are you interested in local government ethical standards?

Part of my role as City Solicitor for Manchester City Council includes being its Monitoring Officer. This role involves, amongst other things, supporting the Council's Standards Committee to handle complaints about elected members (councillors) and promoting and maintaining high standards of member conduct.

Manchester City Council is a metropolitan district council with 96 members. As a local authority, the Council provides a number of essential services for citizens and businesses and also has responsibility for the wider economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City of Manchester. Members play an integral role in the decision making and vision for Manchester and act as an important link between council services and the communities they serve. Members are required to comply with a Members' Code of Conduct which draws on the Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles). These principles are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. It is paramount that the Members' Code of Conduct gives assurance to the public that members of Manchester City Council act in accordance with high ethical standards.

The role of the Monitoring Officer in relation to member complaints

The Monitoring Officer is vitally important



Fiona Ledden

in shaping the behaviour and culture within a local authority through the standards system, including advising on standards issues, code of conduct matters and dealing with complaints made against members. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for dealing with complaints that parish councillors within their area have breached their parish council Code of Conduct.

Manchester City Council has a procedure in place for dealing with any allegations that the Members' Code of Conduct has been breached by its elected members or (voting) co-opted members. Where a complaint is received the Monitoring Officer has responsibility for filtering and investigating complaints in a fair and impartial manner in line with the Council's procedures. The Monitoring Officer must have the confidence not just of the member that is the subject of the complaint, the complainant and any

witnesses involved, but also the confidence of all members representing the Council as well as the public.

The Monitoring Officer's role requires objective analysis, tact and diplomacy, strong leadership and interpersonal skills in dealing with a wide range of people as well as having political skills and awareness. The role is complex, high profile and subject to scrutiny. Although it can often be challenging, particularly in dealing with conflicts of interest or making difficult decisions, it can also be very rewarding.

The role of the Council's Standards Committee

The Council's Standards Committee comprises six city councillors, one parish councillor from Ringway Parish and two Independent Members. It is chaired by one of the Independent Members. The Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and ethical standards by Councillors and co-opted Members. It assists them in observing the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. A sub-committee of the Committee also determines, where a complaint reaches the final Hearing Stage of the complaints process, whether a Council Member has failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and, if so, determines what action (if any) to take.

The role of the Independent Members

The Independent Members provide an external perspective in delivering the work of the Standards Committee. They assist the Council in promoting high standards of conduct by its elected and co-opted members and supplement the Council's skills, knowledge and effectiveness in relation to its ethical framework. One of the Independent Members chairs meetings of the Council's Standards Committee.

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The Monitoring Officer's role requires objective analysis, tact and diplomacy, strong leadership and interpersonal skills

The role of Independent Persons

The role of the Independent Person was created by the Localism Act 2011. Under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011, local authorities must appoint at least one Independent Person to advise the Monitoring Officer before a decision is made about an allegation about a breach of the members code of conduct.

The Independent Person provides an external perspective in supporting the work of the Monitoring Officer deal with upholding standards and deal with member complaints.

The Monitoring Officer and the Council's Standards Committee (should there be a hearing related to a complaint) must take the Independent Person's views into account before reaching their decision whether there has been a breach of the members code of conduct as well as their views about sanctions that may apply. The member that is the subject of the complaint may also ask the Independent Person for their views about potential actions that could resolve the complaint.

The role is however broader than assisting the Monitoring Officer deal with complaints made against members and being involved

Continued on page 68



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in the work of Standards Committee where invited. The Independent Person must also be consulted if the Council is considering disciplining or dismissing one of its statutory officers, such as its Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer.

Both Roles

The work of both roles can be challenging and complex and would suit those looking to make a positive difference to cultures and behaviours in public life and a commitment to promoting high standards through shaping ethical standards and conduct.

There are no specific qualifications or experience required to fulfil either role but they must have:

- good judgement;
- an ability to be objective and fair minded;
- an ability to demonstrate good analytical skills based on the facts and evidence presented which can be complex and detailed;

- good communication, partnership and teamworking skills;
- experience of working to deadlines; and
- political awareness whilst remaining politically neutral.

The Independent Members must have the confidence of the Monitoring Officer, members of the Council and the public. An enthusiasm for local government and a sound understanding of the ethical, legal and regulatory framework or principles relating to member standards would be an asset.

There are, however, restrictions on who can be appointed to either role. They cannot be a councillor or officer of the Council or of Ringway Parish Council or be a relative (as defined in the Localism Act) or close friend of one. Additionally, they cannot have been a councillor or officer of the Council or of Ringway Parish Council in the last five years. Finally, they must not have any unspent criminal convictions or be politically active.

Do you have an interest in local government governance standards and feel that you could make a positive contribution as an Independent Member or Independent Person? Manchester City Council is currently recruiting to both roles. Each role will be appointed for a term of four years. For more information about the role and how to apply, please see [here](#) or email demserv@manchester.gov.uk

For an informal discussion about the role, please contact Fiona Ledden on 0161 2273974

The closing date for receipt of applications is 4pm on 23 October 2026.



Manchester Business and Property Courts Forum

Interpreting complex construction and other commercial contracts: a practical guide for litigators

Under the chairmanship of Andrew Singer KC, the Manchester BPC Forum is delighted to announce that His Honour **Judge Stephen Davies**, the senior judge of the Technology and Construction Court in Manchester, will speak on the topic of giving practical guidance on interpreting complex construction and other commercial contracts in business and property litigation, which will be of great interest to all construction lawyers and to business and property lawyers more widely.

This event is being hosted by Kings Chambers at 36 Young Street, Manchester M3 3FT and is an in person event.

This event will take place on **Thursday 22 October 2026, starting at 5.30 pm, with registration from 5 pm**, and will be followed by drinks.

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

Thursday, 22nd October 5pm for a 5:30pm start

In person at Kings Chambers,

36 Young Street,

Manchester M3 3FT





Senior Hire Further Strengthens Pensions Practice at Squire Patton Boggs

[Squire Patton Boggs](#) has continued the expansion of its Manchester Pensions Practice with the appointment of Helen May as a director. Helen joins from Eversheds Sutherland, following the recent arrivals of Amanda Small and Alison White in July, also from Eversheds Sutherland.

The move marks a return to Squire Patton Boggs for Helen, who trained, qualified and spent more than 12 years at the firm. Helen advises trustees and employers on all types of pension arrangements, helping clients navigate the legal and regulatory framework governing occupational pension schemes. She advises on complex pension issues, with particular expertise in the consumer, financial services, manufacturing and public sectors.

"We are delighted to welcome Helen back to the firm," said Matthew Giles, head of

the Pensions Practice Group. "Demand for pensions advice continues to grow, and Helen's appointment further strengthens our impressive team in Manchester. Her technical capability, sector knowledge and longstanding relationships with colleagues across the firm will be invaluable as we continue to support clients on their most complex pensions matters."

Amanda Small, who leads the firm's Pensions team in Manchester, added: "I've known and worked with Helen for many years and have always been impressed by her expertise, ability to build strong client relationships and practical approach to helping clients navigate complex pensions issues. It's great to have the opportunity to work alongside her again. Her experience further strengthens our Manchester team and enhances the support we provide to clients across the region and nationally."



(left to right): Helen May, Amanda Small and Alison White

Helen added: "The firm has an outstanding reputation for its pensions expertise, and I am excited to rejoin so many former colleagues and to contribute to the continued growth of the practice across the North West and beyond."

Squire Patton Boggs won two "Pensions Law Firm of the Year" awards in 2025 and advises on more than 300 pension plans with over £400 billion of assets.

This year, the firm has added three senior pensions lawyers to its ranks: [Amanda Small and Alison White](#) in Manchester and [Gemma Hanley](#) in Leeds.

Anthony Collins announces strategic hire to deepen skills base in the social business sector

Joining the firm's social business team in the Manchester office, Laura will be supporting the firm's expansive social business and charities client base, with a particular focus on advising social sector clients on all aspects of governance.

A highly regarded advisor to mutuals, co-operatives and community benefit societies, Laura has particular experience in supporting community-led housing groups, further expanding the firm's offering to social enterprise.

Her appointment follows the firm's promotion of Edwina Turner, a highly experienced charities sector specialist, to partner earlier this year, highlighting the firm's ongoing investment in this area.

Outside of her role as legal director, Laura is a trustee of the Francis Scott Trust: a large, grant-making charity that supports young people in Cumbria and the Lancaster district; a founder-director of the Kendal Parent Network; and a resident of an eco-housing community in Cumbria. She is also an avid cyclist, having founded the Cycle Touring Festival in 2015, after cycling around the world.

Laura Moss, legal director, [Anthony Collins](#), said: "Anthony Collins drive to use legal services for social good is something that I have long admired from the outside, so it is a real joy to be joining the firm and to help build the successes of even more social sector organisations."

David Alcock, partner and head of social business, [Anthony Collins](#), said: "Laura's addition to the social business team is both strategic and well timed. We aim to make

sure practical solutions lead to genuine improvements in people's lives and lasting, positive change for communities. Laura's experience and passion for the sector will help us continue to support social purpose enterprises, community-run organisations, co-ops and other enterprises run for social good."

Matthew Wort, senior partner, [Anthony Collins](#), said: "Laura is a brilliantly experienced and passionate solicitor, making her the perfect addition to our growing team."

"This year we've made great strides with investment in our people, and it all stems from wanting to offer the best possible service to our clients. With Laura on the team, and her passion for supporting clients, we head into the last quarter of 2026 confident in the knowledge that the depth of expertise in our sector specialist teams is stronger than ever."

Laura Moss





Myerson announces six partner promotions as firm continues organic growth into the new financial year

[Myerson Solicitors](#) is pleased to announce six promotions to Partner as part of a record year of career progression, with 13 promotions across the business in 2026.

These appointments follow the recent announcement that Richard Lloyd has succeeded Carl Newton as Chief Executive, marking a new chapter for the firm as it continues its ambitious growth strategy.

The six new Partners reflect the strength and depth of talent across the firm, with promotions spanning Corporate, Commercial Litigation, Residential Property, Marketing and Business Development.

Within Commercial Litigation, [David Jones](#) and [Robert Brothers](#) have been promoted to Partner. Both advise on complex, high-value commercial matters, with David specialising in professional negligence and construction disputes, while Robert has expertise in commercial agency and intellectual property litigation. Their appointments further strengthen one of the largest specialist Dispute Resolution teams in the North West.

[Ryan Fletcher](#) has been promoted to Corporate Partner. Ryan specialises in mergers and acquisitions, including international and cross-border transactions,

Photo ©Chris Currie Photography



as well as corporate restructurings and demergers. He also has expertise in private wealth arrangements, including family investment companies and growth share schemes, and advises on banking transactions, particularly funding arrangements supporting acquisitions and reorganisations.

In Residential Property, [Carly Traverse](#) has been promoted to Partner following a busy year for the department. Carly advises first-time buyers, high-net-worth individuals and property investors on acquisitions, refinancing, portfolio transactions, property incorporations and title restructures. The team is one of only a small number of UK law firms able to act on high value residential property purchases up to £30 million.

Outside of legal roles, the importance of Myerson's Business Services teams is also recognised through the promotions of [Ashley Reynolds](#), Head of Marketing, and [Chris Wilson](#), Corporate lawyer and Head of Business Development, to Partner. Ashley leads a team of seven marketing specialists supporting departments and sectors across the firm and has played a key role in strengthening the Myerson brand and driving demand for its legal services. Chris leads Myerson Connections, a legal referral and knowledge-sharing network trusted by hundreds of lawyers nationwide, and also heads Legal+, Myerson's growing network for accountants.

At entry level, Myerson is also welcoming new trainees and its fifth cohort of Legal Apprentices this month, continuing its investment in developing the next generation of lawyers.

“

The Monitoring Officer's role requires objective analysis, tact and diplomacy, strong leadership and interpersonal skills

As Manchester's first 100% employee-owned law firm, Myerson now employs more than 165 people. These promotions reflect the firm's commitment to developing talent and creating opportunities from within, while strengthening its teams to support its ambitious growth plans serving businesses and individuals across the North West and beyond.

Richard Lloyd, Chief Executive of Myerson, commented: "I would like to congratulate Ashley, Carly, Chris, David, Robert and Ryan on their well-deserved promotions to Partner. Their individual achievements, expertise and dedication reflect the strength of our culture and our commitment to developing talent from within.

"It is particularly pleasing to have seen 13 colleagues progress across the firm this year, demonstrating the opportunities available to our people at every level. As we look ahead, we remain focused on our continued organic growth, investing in our unique culture and delivering exceptional outcomes for our clients."



Olliers Solicitors strengthens regulatory team with appointment of new partner

Criminal and regulatory defence specialist [Olliers Solicitors](#) has strengthened its Regulatory Team with the appointment of experienced specialist Paul Loughlin as partner.

Paul joins Olliers from Stephenson Solicitors, where he was a partner and led its road transport regulation team, advising HGV and PSV operators, on matters such as licensing, public inquiries, financial standing and maintenance compliance.

Paul's appointment further strengthens Manchester-based Olliers' regulatory offering as the firm continues to build its specialist legal teams and expand the expertise available to clients.

Throughout his career, Paul has developed extensive experience in regulatory law and brings a strong understanding of the challenges faced by individuals and organisations operating in highly regulated environments.

Gareth Martin, Head of the Regulatory Team at Olliers, said: "Paul's appointment is a strong signal of our commitment to regulatory defence work.

"His experience not only complements our existing expertise across professional discipline, health and safety, inquests and public inquiries but also enhances our offering through his experience in licensing and transport matters."

Ruth Peters, Business Development Director at Olliers, said: "Paul joining our Regulatory Team is a further indication that Olliers really are able to offer a truly holistic approach to defence work.

"We have dedicated expertise across criminal and regulatory matters and have demonstrated that our expertise in all of these areas is of the very highest standard."

Paul brings more than 16 years' experience as a solicitor to Olliers, including representing individuals and businesses facing investigations and prosecutions by a wide range of enforcement bodies,



Paul Loughlin and Gareth Martin

including the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, HMRC, Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency, Financial Conduct Authority, Trading Standards, the Traffic Commissioner and the DVSA

He is well known in the sector for regulatory and enforcement work, including environmental offences, health and safety prosecutions, investigations under caution, criminal proceedings and civil regulatory sanctions.

The appointment follows a period of continued growth for Olliers, which has established a strong reputation for specialist criminal defence work and has expanded its expertise across related areas of law.

Paul's arrival adds further senior experience to the firm's regulatory team and reflects Olliers' commitment to providing specialist advice and representation to clients facing complex regulatory issues.

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.

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



Management Matters

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



This Month

- The world has changed
- Law firms have to make real business decisions
- Support for this come from the right approach, recognition of challenges and suppliers stepping up to the mark
- Support and guidance for
 - Legal – essential services
 - Documents – instant availability of right standard
 - Accounting - 2 samples “outsource and essential service availability”
 - Client Communication

Law Firms have a significant priority for their lawyers, management team and support staff which is the provision of exceptional legal and advice and support for their clients. It needs skills, commitment and dedication to achieve this.

However the world has changed and there is so much more needed than legal skills and commitment to do this.

Supportive and happy clients remaining with the firm and introducing others. As well as the ability to retain, there is a great need and opportunity to win other clients. Wills alone are missing from 50% of the adult population and most firms are not 100% updating the Wills of their client base. Big loss of potential revenue as well as asset value.

Some firms - but not all – have a strategy that covers the legal side but also what is essential these days is so much more. All firms need an annually adjusted 3 year strategy, year 1 being the budget but then also reviewing monthly to look at performance, a need of recovery or indeed the ability to enhance opportunities. The partners, the managers and all staff need to

be aware and committed to their role in this.

- Clarity on strategy – marketplace, service, revenue, GP, Profit and working capital
- Clarity on current achievement – regular reviews and action plans for recovery and exploitation
- Meeting all the new requirements of regulation and compliance – too many firms are being fined, running out of economic insurance and damaging their image
- Financial performance is a key area – revenue and profit is one thing but we also have to seriously consider the availability of working capital – let alone the asset value of the firm in case it wants to download maybe the [Will Bank](#) or be involved in a M&A.
- Too many firms are struggling with communication – phones or other methods – this affects client relationships but can also be very damaging for potential new clients. Same applies to web enquiries. Last month we referred to a 70% plus hit rate for the right system as opposed to 20% for standard. [Lexidesk](#). Lots of existing clients also complain about communication.
- For the majority of legal cases there are not only the skills involved but also time limits to meet a requirement but also close a solution. Document production needs to be fast and efficient with the appropriate skills that are not always available 24 hours a day 7 days a week in house.
- Many firms do not fully recognise their on board legal experience. Sometimes



clients need a broader approach than the skills in the firm and it is now time to be proactive in this. The firm needs to be aware on how to do this.

- There are big problems within accounting – ranging from the strategy, the right MI at the right time, availability of staff with the skill levels – missing now with so many firms. Working Capital management is one issue but we can add in a big way things like compliance with rules and regulations – one simple example – client account management. The roles of COLP and COFA are under a great deal of pressure too plus many firms have not got the workflows on their systems to check compliance with data.

Resourcing all of this internally cannot be ignored but there are significant alternative ways to achieve the necessary

Outsourcing or maybe something else

Is one very significant service being used by many firms. What has been interesting is that with my multiplier dialogues with suppliers and their owners it has been declared that it's such a strange word to be used in the world of legal sector supplier choice.

[Martyn Best](#), the founder of [Document Direct](#) – document production for many firms (more later) and [Andy Poole](#), COO and legal head at [Armstrong Watson](#) accountants and financial advisers – both believe that rather than boring Outsourcing, much more is proactively available for firms across the whole current requirement list with a more positive approach.

As Martyn said “outsourcing has a curious resonance, and I believe that a small

“

Why not use a word like “insourcing” and recognise that the providers of services are experts in those fields

change in the language can help give us gain greater comfort and confidence when we look at alternative arrangements for a service that has traditionally been delivered by the often demanding process of the employment of people, and the cost and inefficiency that this has now caused.”

Why not use a word like “insourcing” and recognise that the providers of services such as cashiering, phone answering and document production and transcription are experts in those fields and have over many years and much investment have perfected a better way of delivering those services.

After all, you don't use outsourcing as a description of employing someone, and that's exactly the same sort of approach to using the services of expert suppliers, who arguably have much deeper resources, have attained externally verified accreditations of their expertise and competencies, and who can offer much longer-term certainty of being a trusted partner?

Andy Poole has also made it clear that his business is now doing so much more for law firms alongside of normal support, some outsourcing – general accountancy advice. Know so many firms are getting broader and specific advice across the financial

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topic – M&A, disposals, financial training, strategic planning, cash flows.

A few years ago many accountancy firms would just stick at the audit rather than risk PII – it has changed.

Law Firms really need to seek and receive excellent advice and resource from qualified third parties.

Outsource and Third Party Advice

- **Legal**

[Lawshare](#) – All law firms to protect themselves from skill and experience shortage and the consequences of dissatisfied clients and maybe being sued need to ensure that their legal team has the right experience in detail

JMW solicitors have been running their free referrals and support network since 2011 and assist their 900 + members in exactly those scenarios. Client satisfaction and retention is a key but if firms can safely utilise the expertise of third party solicitors there is a great case.

Partner, [Peter Finkill-Coombs](#), from the [Lawshare](#) team explained how they've seen a recent trend in assisting member firms even in the property space. "Typically, our members will refer matters when the enquiry simply falls outside their areas of practice but it can be more nuanced than that. Member firms who ordinarily would undertake residential conveyancing for example, might contact us when they have a client and the transaction is caught by the Building Safety Act 2022. For insurance reasons they may shy away from acting and that's where we can help. Other examples often include a member firm not being on a particular lending panel or the transaction

“

Document production in many forms is key for law firms and it needs to be accurate and on time

value exceeding their PII cover. Because we ringfence each enquiry, even if referring a longstanding client, there is no fear of losing the client for future work opportunities." He went on to say, "Not only has this helped streamline dealing with enquiries for our member firms, it has also produced a new revenue stream for them by way of profit sharing".

[Lawshare](#) – client satisfaction is high

PII cover is a perennial expense to law firms and being able to demonstrate your firm is acting only inside the confines of your areas of expertise will be looked on favourably by your broker and ultimately your insurer.

- **Document Production**

An area where many firms for many years have utilised the skilled and available resources. Document production in many forms is key for law firms and it needs to be accurate and on time. A global 24 x 7 service with people with technical expertise is absolutely key. Yes firms have their own resource but is it with the right volume and time and the right experience.

[Document Direct](#) can make a massive difference in client satisfaction, timely performance, costs and cash flow.

So many [clients](#) are open with their support.

- **Billing and Accounting – Financial Management Challenges**

- Outsourced
- Full accounting services and advice

It is absolutely critical that all the appropriate rules and activity are followed by all firms. The rules and regulations around basic accounting have changed significantly over the last few years. Firms have to get their billing and fundamental accounting done but also follow the rules and regulations that are being enhanced all of the time. Fundamental client accounting has been a challenge for many recently.

- Once upon a time small firms would look to get their accounting done by third parties. Now even bigger firms are having to consider this – client account management as one example but the right MI and cash flow management also key.

[Cashroom](#) have recently seen bigger firms needing to get involved. Not necessarily for everything – could be just for shortage of skill and solution areas. [Alex Holt](#) is the very experienced lead here.

For some firms, that means providing additional support alongside an existing in-house team, while for others it forms part of a wider redesign of their finance function. That can include a full TUPE transfer of resource for longer term efficiency and resilience improvements. Increasingly, firms are looking for specialist support without the need to recruit, train and retain additional in-house resource. This is not necessarily about replacing an entire finance team. Outsourcing can

work alongside an existing team, taking responsibility for specialist or time-consuming elements of the function and allowing internal staff to focus on other priorities.

We are seeing a similar trend with credit control. Our new credit control service is proving popular with firms looking for specialist support to improve debt collection, strengthen cash flow and take some of the pressure away from their internal teams.

There are also practical benefits to outsourcing. Firms no longer have to manage the same level of recruitment and training, while holidays, sickness and staff absences are less of a concern. They can access a team with specialist legal finance knowledge and benefit from continuity of service.

[Testimonials](#) from a large number of clients but as a minimum look at Laurus Law “relieves us of the burden of posting to ledgers and manually setting up bank payments, giving us more time to focus on other tasks.”

and MBM Commercial “*both a cost effective fully outsourced service*” and “*a wraparound service to support an internal finance team*”.

- Full accounting and business services advice

Carrying on the topic of specific financial support and advice. Already referred to in the introduction is [Armstrong Watson](#) already large in the legal sector and that sector is lead by [Andy Poole](#). This reflects a wider shift in how law firms are approaching their finance functions. Outsourcing AND PROPER BUSINESS ADVICE is increasingly

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being considered not just a solution for smaller firms, but as a strategic option for firms of all sizes looking to access specialist expertise and build a finance function that works effectively for their business.

The accountancy firm [Armstrong Watson](#) where they are very strong. Lots of law firm clients who are trying to manage all stages of strategy, development, survival. Along with other accountancy firms like [Menzies](#) and [Mitchell Charlesworth](#).

Until a few years ago there was evidence that accountancy firms would do the law firm audit but would be worried about giving further advice because of PII risks. That has changed – the dialogue between accountant firms and law firm clients would be interesting to know

- **Client Contact**

A major problem for law firms – client and prospect satisfaction (remember [Lexidesk](#) from last month) 70%+ conversion achievement rate compared to 20%.

People need to be able to communicate with their law firms quickly, variable times – even 24x7 and be able to speak to a welcoming individual with enough experience to satisfy, give confidence and refer to the next action.

We are aware of Money Penny but there are also other suppliers developing in this sector – handling calls and answering web enquiries.

MLS Advantage member [Mark Houghton](#), Director at [orca](#) has advised The conversation in legal outsourcing is still too often focused on cost reduction. The firms we work with are increasingly thinking about it differently, as a way to protect

“

The Legal Ombudsman received a record 14,259 complaints about legal services in 2025/26

their reputation and improve the client experience. When the Legal Ombudsman reports that poor communication is the single most common complaint in the sector, that is not an IT problem or an HR problem. It is a call handling problem, and it is one that can be addressed.

Mark explains “The Legal Ombudsman received a record 14,259 complaints about legal services in 2025/26, a 37% increase on the previous year. Poor communication accounted for almost a quarter of all complaints. Combined with delays, those two issues alone represented forming a first impression, an existing client chasing an update, a professional calling on behalf of a mutual client. How that call is handled reflects directly on the firm. Outsourcing your call handling to a specialist isn’t about taking something off your plate. It’s about making sure it’s done properly, every time, by people who genuinely understand your sector.”

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](#)



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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.

The most high-profile case of the month, and possibly of the year after *Mazur*, is Nicklin J's decision on the costs payable by Prince Harry and his six co-claimants following their unsuccessful privacy action against Associated Newspapers Ltd ("ANL") after a 41-day trial: **Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon v Associated Newspapers Ltd [2026] Costs LR 1323**. It was common ground that the claimants would pay ANL's costs and a payment on account of £9.5m was ordered. The real issue was whether those costs should be assessed on the standard or indemnity basis and, if indemnity, whether that should apply throughout. Alternatively, the claimants argued that ANL's recoverable costs should be capped. In a lengthy costs judgment, Nicklin J went the whole hog. ANL was awarded its costs on the indemnity basis throughout. Importantly, that means ANL is no longer constrained by its last approved costs budget of £13.46m and can seek to recover the £34.5m it says it actually spent defending the proceedings without having to establish a "good reason" under CPR 3.18 for departing from that budget. That creates a potentially eye-watering problem for the claimants. Their ATE insurance provides cover of £16.2m, leaving a potential shortfall of around £18.3m between the cover and ANL's claimed costs, subject of course to what is ultimately allowed on detailed assessment. There is also an interesting costs management point lurking beneath the headline figures. ANL did not seek to revise its budget upwards under CPR 3.15A. Had it done so, the claimants would have

known that their potential exposure had increased substantially and could potentially have increased their ATE cover accordingly. Should an indemnity costs order effectively provide a route around the consequences of failing to revise a budget? That may provide plenty more for the Costs Judge to consider. This case is certainly not over yet.

Arguably the second most high-profile case of the year (or rather it should be because it's yet it's yet another Kain Knight success in the Court of Appeal !) is **Turner v Coupland Cavendish Ltd [2026] EWCA Civ 1204**. Kain Knight acted for the successful Appellant in this important second appeal concerning solicitor-client assessments under s.70 of the Solicitors Act 1974, the function of the cash account and the use of CPR Part 18 Requests for Further Information. The dispute concerned whether a former client could use Part 18 within a solicitor-client assessment to require solicitors to provide information about possible commission received in connection with a £245 ATE premium. The Senior Costs Judge refused to order the Request to be answered, but that decision was reversed by Sweeting J on appeal. The Court of Appeal has now allowed the solicitors' second appeal. Andrews LJ held that the court had **no power** within the s.70 assessment to make the order sought. The cash account is separate from the bill and its function is essentially to enable the Costs Judge, following assessment, to calculate what remains due to or by the solicitor. It does not permit a wider investigation into every

transaction appearing – or allegedly missing – from it. Importantly, Part 18 can only be used in relation to a genuine “matter in dispute in the proceedings”. A client cannot simply assert that the cash account is disputed and use that as a vehicle for enquiries into possible secret commissions or other potential claims. As Andrews LJ put it, raising the hypothetical possibility of a failure to account for a secret commission is “not good enough”. The Court also held that *Edwards/Raubenheimer*, previously relied upon to support such enquiries, was wrongly decided and *per incuriam*. The result is an important decision defining the boundaries of Solicitors Act assessments and, in particular, where legitimate requests for information end and Part 18 fishing expeditions begin.

Next, a lesson in making unfounded allegations against your opponent and expecting to recover 100% of your costs. In **Quidpay Finance Ltd v Settlego Solutions Ltd T/A OpenPayd [2026] EWHC 2199 (Ch)**, QuidPay succeeded in obtaining the release of monies held in a reserve account, but its original case had included unsustainable allegations about beneficial ownership, together with threats to report OpenPayd to the FCA and publicise its conduct. Lance Ashworth KC regarded those steps as entirely illegitimate and reduced QuidPay’s recoverable costs by 35%. Separately, OpenPayd’s £15,503 costs of a Preliminary Issue Application were considered excessive, particularly with hourly rates 255% above the Guideline Hourly Rates, and £7,000 was ordered on account.

Next, an unusual case involving the costs of Alternative Dispute Resolution. In **Bidco Ltd v Roberts [2026] EWHC 2312 (Comm)**, a court-ordered Early Neutral Evaluation

failed after the Defendants advanced an argument which had not been pleaded and could not properly be pursued without amending their Defence. The Claimants sought their ENE costs on the indemnity basis. HHJ Pearce declined to make that order, holding that the starting point should be that ENE costs are costs in the case unless compelling factors justify another approach. Penalising inadequate preparation too readily could discourage parties from participating in ADR. As the Claimants’ own late amendment may also have contributed, the ENE costs remained costs in the case.

Finally, **R (Barclays Bank UK Plc) v Financial Ombudsman Service Ltd [2026] EWHC 2298 (Admin)** concerned successful judicial review proceedings brought by four banks challenging the FOS’s interpretation of its jurisdiction over complaints about allegedly unaffordable credit. Having quashed the relevant decisions for error of law, Dexter Dias J turned to costs. FOS argued against the usual costs order on the basis that imposing costs on a public dispute-resolution body might have a “chilling effect” on its decision-making. The judge was unpersuaded. He considered that an adverse costs order would instead promote good administration and discourage bad or obviously flawed points. The successful banks therefore recovered their costs, together with payments on account.

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

Three peaks. Three weeks. One cause

Ricardo Premchard is Scaling Three Mountains. Support him and support solicitors facing tough times.

Director of Data and Operations at [The Solicitors' Charity](#) Ricardo Premchard is taking on the biggest challenge of his life over a three-week period.

He is climbing Ben Nevis in Scotland, followed by Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) in Wales, and then Scafell Pike in England – one each week during the end of September and beginning of October.

It will be an impressive ascent of around 3,400 metres in total, which is more than a third of the height of Mount Everest!

As well as forming a significant personal physical challenge, he is also raising vital funds for The Solicitors' Charity, which provides a range of essential wellbeing support to solicitors, their families and those who are retired in England and Wales.

This support covers many areas, from career coaching to access to therapy, and from practical help when ill to lending a hand financially. This is the only charity with solicitors as its sole focus.

In a tireless training schedule involving running and gym work, Ricardo completed the Richmond half-marathon in August after taking up running at the ripe old age of 53! He was told by his doctor that his plantar fasciitis injury was so bad that he probably should forget about running for fitness or recreation.

So, it makes his return to fitness and completing testing physical challenges like half-marathons and mountain climbing even more remarkable! He advises that on this training schedule he can eat what he likes – including lobster and steak.

Throughout September, and kicking off with International Charity Day, The Solicitors' Charity is celebrating the people, partnerships and contributions that make its work possible. The campaign recognises that solicitors are often the people others rely on during periods of pressure, uncertainty and significant personal change. Behind that professional role, however, they may be managing difficulties involving their own health, family, finances, careers or emotional wellbeing.



Please support Ricardo if you can, with any amount – small or large – every pound makes a difference to an individual facing a crisis. Thank you.

Visit Ricardo's [JustGiving page here.](#)

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