THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE MANCHESTER LAW SOCIETY

the Messenger

November 2026

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Jeff Lewis assumes Deputy Vice President role at The Law Society



Image courtesy of the Law Society

Jeff Lewis, commercial litigation Partner at Brabners, last month took over as Deputy Vice President at The Law Society of England and Wales — a role that guarantees his progression to President in 2028. Lewis, who was elected to the position by the Law Society Council, will be one of only four presidents in the organisation's history hailing from Manchester (and the first for 25 years).

He brings over 37 years of experience as a solicitor to the role, the past 21 of which have been spent at Brabners, where he heads up the commercial litigation department in Manchester and has acted for many household names during his career.

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Greater Manchester Law Centre

From the President

Ian McConkey, President

Last month I was lucky enough to attend the Opening of the Legal Year ceremonies in London.

On 30 October I was invited to a dinner at Lincolns Inn Hall, along with representatives of Law Societies and Bar Associations from across the world. I was on a table with representatives from Kazakhstan and Japan. I hadn't appreciated just how big an occasion it was. The following day I attended the ceremony at Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall. There were a lot of fabulous outfits on display. I remembered that one of my text books on English law had a picture of a procession of Judges on the front cover and I realised that it was from the Opening of the Legal Year. It was incredible to be part of a ceremony and tradition going back nearly 1000 years. I left Westminster Abbey with the representative of the Texan Bar Association who, not having seen anything of a similar nature in Dallas, was suitably impressed.

I was also delighted that Manchester hosted its own Opening of the Legal Year event in Manchester Cathedral, with the Judiciary, civic leaders, as well as representatives of the bar and MLS.

Aside from the pomp ceremony, the substance of the occasion is about recognising the rule of law and the importance of the independence of the judiciary. It is an occasion that reminds us of the fundamentals of our profession and immense pride at being part of being part of something so important to our society.

> "It is an occasion that reminds us of the fundamentals of our profession and immense pride at being part of being part of something so important to our society

Following on from having seen all the senior judges in their finest robes from a distance, I had a rather more up close and personal experience the following week. I had the nerve wracking experience of speaking at the Master of the Rolls' valedictory in Manchester. It was a real honour to represent MLS at the event, attended by the Vice-Chancellor and senior judges from Manchester. During his time as Master of the Rolls, Sir Geoffrey Vos has always been determined to strengthen the regional commercial courts and he has been a great supporter of Manchester and of MLS. This included being a keynote speaker at our AI Conference in 2024.

the Messenger

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Manchester Law Society

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

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Deadline for the Dec 2026 edition of The Messenger

The Messenger is published by

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

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

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Dear Manchester Law Society Members,

Your attendance is requested at the Annual General Meeting of the Members of the Manchester Law Society, to be held at the offices of Eversheds Sutherland, Two New Bailey, 6 Stanley St, Salford M3 5GX on Tuesday 1st December 2026 at 5.00pm PROMPT.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Minutes – Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 2nd December 2025

3. Auditors Report

4. To pass the Balance Sheet and Income & Expenditure Account for the past year ended 31 December 2025

5. To report that the following Officers have been chosen by the Council for the ensuing year

6. Attendance of Council Members

7. To elect Members of Council
   (Nomination Sheet has been posted in the Society's offices, 4th Floor, Arkwright House, Parsonage Gardens, Manchester, M3 2LF)

8. To elect Auditors

9. Any other Business

10. Vote of thanks.

A copy of the Society's draft accounts can be obtained in advance, via email from Carla Jones, Chief Executive, Manchester Law Society by emailing *CarlaJones@manchesterlawsociety.org.uk*

Yours faithfully

Ian McConkey
President
Manchester Law Society

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FREE WEBINAR

THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER
13:00 - 14:00

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MLS VIRTUAL EVENTS
Hosted by Manchester Law Society

The Festival of Fran draws to a close

Massive thanks to all those who joined us at Fran's retirement party.

For the last official event in the Festival of Fran, we booked out the John Rylands rooms on the top floor of Manchester Hall to suitably celebrate the massive contribution Fran has made to the Manchester legal community and beyond.

Fran had just returned from her tour of France and Spain with Peter and Max the dog. She was full of tales of her trip and suitably relaxed after the eight-week holiday. Sadly, she hadn't brought the weather with her and instead Manchester demonstrated a typical October evening of pouring rain. Thankfully, it didn't dampen anyone's spirit.

It was wonderful to see people from the full breadth of Fran's career in attendance. There were past Presidents from every decade of her 38 years of service to the Society as well as a couple of our first cohort of Future Stars – plus everyone in between!

As guests arrived, they were greeted with a welcome drink and quickly the room started to fill with the sound of people catching up and making connections. Everyone was then guided to the main room where the stage was set for a couple of speeches about Fran.

First up was Jeff Lewis who gave a speech celebrating Fran's achievements in her time at MLS. From working her way up to CEO in a time when the thought of a woman leading a group of lawyers was still radical, to her responses to the times of crisis in the city, the creation of events like the Manchester Legal Awards, and much much more. He also paid tribute to her "disarming honesty" and her talent for welcoming everyone in. A talent that has made her so well loved in the legal sector and around Manchester as a whole. She really is one of a kind.

Then came Mike Devlin's turn. He read his poem, *She's not the Retiring Type - Ode to Fran*, in the style of John Cooper Clarke. An updated version of the poem he read at her

L–R: Dr Sally Penni MBE, Mike Devlin, Tasnim Khalid, Sam Hall, Fran Eccles-Bech





L–R: Carla Jones, Matt Flanagan-Roberts, David Travis, Fran Eccles-Bech

30th anniversary party held back in 2018. We were treated to new verses wishing her well into her retirement.

Fran's right to reply came shortly after with an impromptu speech thanking her family for their unending support over the years and to the members, sponsors, partners and colleagues who make MLS what it is. "I couldn't have done any of this without you!" Fran declared.

The evening was also raising funds for Prevent Breast Cancer, a cause close to Fran's heart. Not only did they support her through her breast cancer journey but also spotted the cancer in the first place. Fran's consultant was in attendance and explained the importance of the work Prevent Breast Cancer does.

Following the speeches, it was then time for food and dancing as we were entertained by The Stolen Mojos for the rest of the evening. Lots of dancing, chatting, catching up and new bonds formed.

Fran was on the dance floor until the last song was finished then was sent to bed with a bottle of prosecco. A fitting end to an illustrious career!

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Prevent Breast Cancer is the only UK charity committed solely to predicting and preventing breast cancer.

- We Predict: By identifying who is at risk of breast cancer.
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- We Protect: Our goal is to shield future generations from breast cancer.

Unlike many cancer charities, rather than finding a cure, we're entirely dedicated to preventing future generations from ever being diagnosed.

Find out more about Prevent Breast Cancer *here* or donate *here*.

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End of year calendar of events

As we approach the end of the year, we still have an exciting programme of events ahead. These events are designed to offer valuable opportunities for learning, networking and professional development.

AI for your firm: practical uses, everyday tools and effective policy

Wednesday 4th November, 13:00 – 14:00

November kicks off with a webinar presented by Eric and Jake from Smokeball, they will be discussing how AI can support your firms' operations. The presentation will be designed for legal professionals looking to implement AI with confidence, guiding attendees on where to begin, how to write effective prompts and how to safely use AI within the tools you use every day.

International Surrogacy: the Dos and Don'ts

Thursday 5th November, 13:00 — 14:00

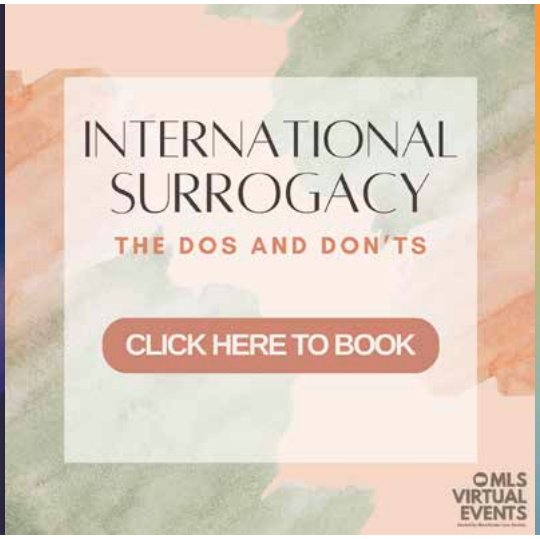
Our next webinar comes the next day with a presentation on the legal and practical considerations surrounding one of the fastest growing and most complex areas of family law. As the interest in surrogacy continues to rise, legal professionals are increasingly encountering cases that involve navigating various legal frameworks across international borders. This informative session will provide valuable insights into the key dos and don'ts of surrogacy in England and Wales, helping attendees better understand the challenges, opportunities and considerations involved in supporting clients through the process.

Compliance and Practice Management Conference 2026

Wednesday 18th November, 09:00 — 16:30 (morning/afternoon only tickets available)

Our Compliance & Practice Management Conference takes place on Wednesday 18th November at Manchester Hall, and is kindly sponsored by Smokeball. Designed for COLPs, COFAs, MLROs, Practice Managers and anyone involved in law firm regulation







and compliance, the conference brings together a programme covering both compliance and practice management. The morning will explore AI risk and governance, ethical dilemmas facing compliance officers and culture as a regulatory risk. The afternoon will focus on an employment law update, managing communication styles within a team and client care in practice.

MLS X Quiss: AI on Board: Steering Your Productivity to New Heights with Microsoft Copilot

Wednesday 25th November, 13:00 – 14:00

Discover how Microsoft Copilot can transform the way you work in our webinar, delivered by Quiss. This webinar is designed for users with a basic understanding of computer systems, and attendees will be taught how to efficiently implement Copilot and Copilot studio, exploring key differences between AI models and presenting live demonstrations on how to enhance productivity within Microsoft Office applications. Participants will leave knowing how to tackle prompt writing efficiently, important data security considerations and the confidence to apply AI in day-to-day work.

> These events are designed to offer valuable opportunities for learning, networking and professional development

MLS X Quiss: Microsoft Planner: Turn Plans into Progress

Tuesday 1st December, 13:00 – 14:00

As we head into December, we start off with a webinar helping take control of your workload and collaborate more effectively with Microsoft Planner. This session is ideal for anyone looking to manage personal or shared tasks more efficiently, demonstrating how Microsoft Planner can be used to achieve this. The session will also cover the use of advanced features and practices that can help boost productivity and keep projects moving forward.





Exploring Indefensible

On 24th September gunnercooke LLP hosted the launch of John Hyde's new book Indefensible: How Lawyers Failed to Stop the Post Office Scandal, published by Bristol University Press.

In the book John explores the role of the legal profession in the Post Office Horizon scandal and the stories of those impacted by it.

John Hyde is one of the foremost legal journalists in the UK, with more than 15 years' experience in reporting on the legal industry. He was a leading commentator on the Post Office scandal and live blogged daily from the inquiry. He started his journalism career in local news and is a regular speaker on radio, podcasts and at conferences. He also hosts the Manchester Legal Awards.

After an introduction by Darryl Cooke, Founder and Executive Chairman of gunnercooke LLP, John was interviewed by Jeff Lewis, Partner at Brabners LLP and Deputy Vice-President of The Law Society.

Jeff and John explored what had originally sparked John's interest in the topic. John explained that a call with Lee Castleton on a Friday afternoon in 2021 had been the catalyst. Lee had explained the deep impact being wrongfully accused had had on him, not only the very real financial impacts but the personal ones too.

Hearing Lee's story led John to attending the hearings and reporting on them for the Gazette.

When the ITV drama was released, it really created a wider interest in the topic. The hearings went from having three journalists



Darryl Cooke

(including John) attending each day to the media gallery being full.

John went on to speak about the role of ethics in this case. How sometimes the CEOs of businesses don't fully appreciate the role of General Council, who should first be committed to the ethics of the law before the needs of the business.

When asked about the highlights of writing the book John expressed that for him it was the privilege of being able to tell someone's story. He was particularly moved by one lady who was very shy and hadn't shared her story with anyone else.

Asked how he managed to fit writing a book in to his busy life he explained he did his day job, had tea with the kids then went to the pub (drinking cola) to write until 11pm and that was his routine.

When asked what a young lawyer should take away from the book, John suggested: the profession has your back. Keep ethics in mind when working on cases, there are real people involved in each one. John also expressed that he hoped everyone had a safe space to report misconduct.

On the screen for the session was a QR code that linked to a poll setting out the following scenario "Your client in a litigation insists that you fight a case until the opposition has run out of money. You are unhappy that this appears unfair." If you would like to vote anonymously for what you would do in this situation, please *click here*.

If you would like to buy John's book you can do so *here*.





John Hyde and Jeff Lewis

New cutting-edge legal tech platform connecting solicitors to barristers launches

A new UK legal technology platform, *Clerked*, has officially launched. It is designed to modernise the way solicitors find and instruct barristers, connecting them through real-time diary data, intelligent search, and offering a quick and easy alternative to the existing process.

The company was founded by Jack Trowsdale and Sean Gibson; Jack drew on his own experience and challenge of finding and instructing suitable counsel at short notice. Clerked aims to simplify the process by allowing users to search using filters for expertise, experience and location. It also integrates with a barrister's Outlook diary and leverages AI to interpret availability, so only available barristers are displayed in the search results. The platform reduces the time solicitors spend searching for suitable barristers, which is often not chargeable.

Solicitors can use Clerked at no cost to search for counsel. Barristers pay a small monthly fee to be featured on the platform and Clerked does not take a percentage of any brief fee allocated through it. Since launch, the platform has received and submitted a significant number of briefs for several barristers. Clerked does not allow solicitors to contact barristers directly; instead it connects them with the relevant clerk, which helps to preserve the traditional instruction route.

Clerked already has solicitors from over 20 different law firms and dozens of barristers operating on the platform, including a King's Counsel. Memberships start at £59 per month for individual barristers, and a



Jack Trowsdale

Chambers membership is also available from £49 per seat per month.

Jack Trowsdale, co-founder of Clerked, said, "Every solicitor I've spoken with has experienced the issue of trying to find a suitable barrister with little to no notice – all the while barristers have gaps in the diary that nobody outside their own chambers can see. Built by legal professionals for legal professionals, Clerked doesn't change how chambers operate or what clerks do, but it will improve connectivity from solicitor to clerk, and clerk to barrister."

"We already have several award-winning chambers and barristers registered with Clerked. The platform is particularly valuable for barristers looking to grow their professional networks, providing an easy way to market themselves, showcase their expertise and build a strong professional profile. It also provides established chambers with the ability to offer a first-class service to instructing solicitors, effortlessly streamlining the existing process and retaining more briefs for its members.

"We're also offering barristers and clerks free trials, giving them the opportunity to experience first-hand the benefits Clerked offers. We're confident that Clerked will become an essential everyday tool – the first place a solicitor turns when they need counsel, rather than the last."

Prior to Clerked, Jack worked as a senior associate at a global legal practice, bringing over 10 years' experience within the legal industry. Sean was previously vice president of operations at DragonPass and has brought a wealth of technical expertise to the development of Clerked.

Helen Pittard, founder and solicitor at 174 Family Law, said, "The nature of the work we do means that we often need counsel

> "Every solicitor I've spoken with has experienced the issue of trying to find a suitable barrister with little to no notice

at short notice. My team and I regularly spend far too long ringing chambers trying to find someone to cover a hearing, and it's genuinely a time-consuming and stressful experience.

"We've just registered with Clerked. In today's world, a platform that shows us real-time availability is long overdue. This will not only save the team a lot of time but equally make us more productive, especially when such time is usually non-chargeable."

Matei Clej, barrister at Outline Chambers, said, "I'd not worked with a solicitor at Freeman & Co before. But he found me on Clerked, my clerk confirmed the instructions and fees, and I was in court for him 3 days later.

"We got a great result for the client, and now have a new working relationship I wouldn't have otherwise had."

Emma Watson, head of clerking for Family and Civil at KCH Barristers, said, "We've always been a set that looks for smarter ways of working, and Clerked made immediate sense to us; we already have 15 barristers signed up. Solicitors see who's genuinely available, the enquiry comes straight to our clerking team, and nothing changes about how we work. It's the kind of practical innovation chambers should be embracing."

LegalEx Manchester returns on the 24th February 2027

Following a sold-out debut, LegalEx Manchester returns to the Deansgate Hotel on the 24th February 2027, once again in partnership with the Manchester Law Society.

AI is reshaping legal work, client expectations are shifting and legal teams are under pressure to adapt. But change rarely happens in isolation.

That was the thinking behind LegalEx Manchester, which brought more than 300 legal professionals together on the 5th February 2026 for a day of ideas, debate and shared experience.

Fran Eccles-Bech, Manchester Law Society's former Chief Executive, described it as a "brilliant event", praising its thought-provoking sessions and keynote from Darryl Cooke on innovation in law firms.

Cooke's keynote set the tone for a programme exploring AI governance, the evolving role of legal teams in business strategy, operational efficiency and the skills needed to navigate change.

Beyond the stage, attendees compared experiences, challenged assumptions and discovered fresh ideas to take back to their teams. For suppliers, it was an opportunity to hear directly from legal professionals



John Hyde addressing LegalEx Manchester 2026

about the challenges they need to solve.

The partnership continues in 2027. Carla Jones, Chief Executive of Manchester Law Society, said: "Manchester has a strong legal community, with people actively looking at how the profession can develop and respond to change. Our partnership with LegalEx brings those conversations together, giving members the chance to learn from others, explore new ideas and build connections beyond their usual networks.

"The first event showed a real appetite for this kind of discussion in Manchester. We're pleased to continue the partnership and look forward to bringing the community together again in 2027."

The conversation continues on the 24th February 2027 at the Deansgate Hotel. Join legal professionals from across the region to explore what's changing, what's working and what comes next.

Tickets

Tickets go on sale from the **4th November**.

- **Manchester Law Society members**: A limited number of free tickets will be available on a first-come, first-served basis via the *MLS App*.
- **Early-bird tickets**: £195 + VAT.

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Sam Cudley is our newest member of the team, joining MLS as Events and Marketing Executive. Here is Sam's take on his first event

Ready, Net, Go!

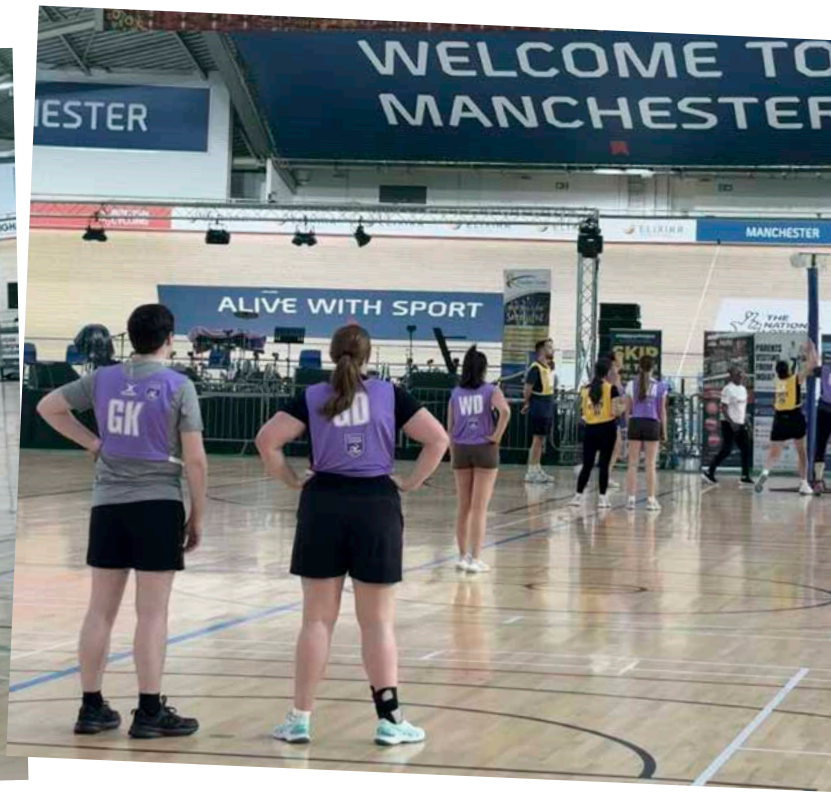
In October, we ran our first ever netball event, bringing our members together for an afternoon of competition, networking and fundraising in aid of *Greater Manchester Law Centre*. Participating firms included *Centrefield LLP*, *Clyde & Co*, *Fletchers Solicitors*, *Gateley Legal*, *JMW Solicitors*, *Olliers Solicitors* and *Weightmans LLP*, all eager to test their skills on the court.

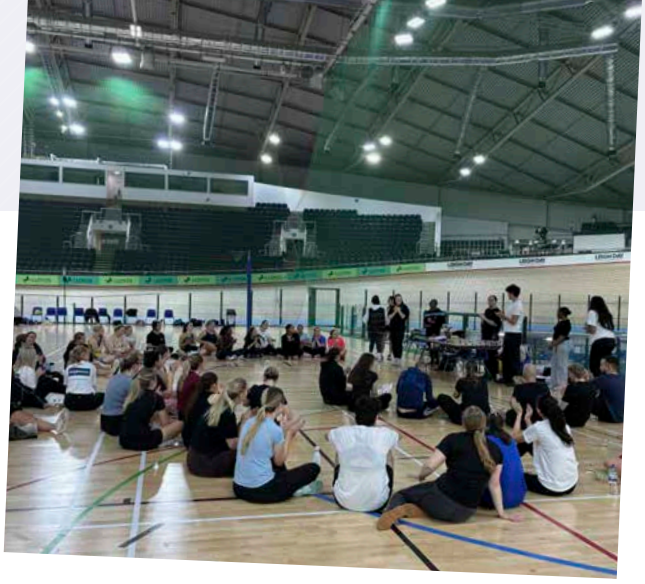
Our team of umpires helped keep track of the scores, while our brilliant tournament manager, Hannah Holland-Gray, helped keep the event running smoothly. Together, they made sure the afternoon flowed well.

With JMW having enjoyed success in previous football tournaments, could they add a netball trophy to their collection, or would another firm rise to the top? An afternoon of excitement with some fantastic netball on display, we saw a host of closely fought games going right down to the wire. Teams pushed each other all the way, making for an exciting competition and keeping the outcome far from certain. With silverware up for grabs, there was plenty to play for as the firms competed for the chance to be crowned winners of the tournament.

Ultimately, JMW Solicitors added to their trophy cabinet, carrying their success on the football pitch over to the netball court to take the tournament title. Centrefield LLP finished as runners-up after a closely contested afternoon, while Ellie Harris of Olliers Solicitors was named Player of the Tournament. Congratulations to JMW,







Centrefield and Ellie, and a big thank you to every team who helped make the competition such an enjoyable experience.

Once the final games had finished, we brought everyone together for a ceremony to present medals and trophies, rounding off the sporting action and recognising our winners. It was an opportunity to celebrate the tournament's achievements before swapping the court for a well-earned drinks reception.

This gave everyone a chance to catch up, recollect match highlights and continue networking in a more relaxed setting. With the competition behind them, players could reflect on the afternoon and enjoy some time together away from the court.

To close, I want to thank Layla Cakmak (the brains behind the event) for offering her netball expertise. With it being my first week as Events and Marketing Executive, I hadn't had much time to prepare for running a netball tournament. Layla, along with our MLS team of Carla, Chandre and Lauren, all made the day much easier for me and really helped ease me into this new role. Thank you to everyone who came along and here's to many more successful events!



Centrefield's trophy


Ellie Harris POTT trophy



JMW Winner's trophy

Developing leadership traits and skills in your team

David Marquet in his brilliant book 'Turn the Ship Around' says:

"The leader-leader structure is fundamentally different from the leader-follower structure. At its core is the belief that we can all be leaders and, in fact, it's best when we all are leaders. Leadership is not some mystical quality that some possess and others do not. As humans, we all have what it takes, and we all need to use our leadership."

Strong leadership is not limited to those with management titles. Organisations that actively develop leadership skills throughout their teams create a culture of accountability, collaboration and continuous improvement. By investing in leadership development at all levels, businesses can build a stronger workforce that is equipped to handle challenges, drive performance and support long-term success.

Developing leadership traits within a team starts with creating opportunities for individuals to take ownership and responsibility. Leaders are not simply born; they are developed through experience, coaching and feedback. Managers can encourage leadership growth by delegating meaningful responsibilities, involving team members in decision-making and giving them the confidence to lead projects or initiatives. These experiences help individuals build skills such as communication, problem-solving and decision-making.

Another key aspect of leadership development is fostering self-awareness. Effective leaders understand their strengths, recognise areas for improvement and appreciate the impact of their behaviour on others. Regular feedback, reflective exercises and coaching conversations can help team members gain valuable insights into how they lead and interact with colleagues. Encouraging emotional intelligence, empathy and active listening also supports the development of leadership capability.

The importance of developing leadership skills within a team cannot be overstated. Organisations face constant change, and having a pipeline of capable leaders ensures they can adapt quickly and maintain performance. Leadership development helps prepare employees for future roles, reducing the risk associated with key vacancies and succession planning. It also creates a sense of purpose and engagement, as individuals feel trusted and valued when given opportunities to grow.

The benefits of developing leadership skills extend to both individuals and organisations. Employees often experience increased confidence, improved communication skills and greater career satisfaction. Teams benefit from stronger collaboration, higher levels of trust and improved problem-solving capabilities. For organisations, leadership development can lead to higher employee engagement, increased productivity, improved retention and better customer outcomes.

Ultimately, leadership development is an investment in the future. By nurturing leadership traits such as accountability, resilience, emotional intelligence and strategic thinking, organisations create teams that are more adaptable, motivated and effective. The result is a stronger culture, more capable employees and a sustainable foundation for long-term success.

Do you need a hand developing the leaders within your team? Why not contact Mike direct at ***mike@potentialunearthed.co.uk*** for a chat?

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COMPLIANCE & PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

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The Solicitors' Charity launches new Wellbeing Alliance with leading legal wellbeing organisations

LawCare's Life in the Law 2025 research found that half of solicitors have experienced anxiety in the last 12 months, with three in five reporting poor mental wellbeing.

Numbers like that are exactly why four organisations decided that working together, solicitors will have a stronger, more joined-up network of support.

That's why *The Solicitors' Charity* is launching the Solicitor Wellbeing Alliance in partnership with the Law Society, *LawCare*, and the Mindful Business Charter – a new collaboration bringing together four organisations with a shared ambition: To improve wellbeing across the solicitors' profession.

The Solicitors' Charity is joining forces with the Law Society, LawCare, and the Mindful Business Charter to launch the Solicitor Wellbeing Alliance – four organisations who each already support the profession in their own way, now pulling in the same direction.



L–R: Anita McCallum, Mark Evans and Nick Gallagher

Four partners with shared ambitions

- Improve awareness and signposting between organisations, so support is easier to find
- Work on shared priorities – achieving together what none can alone
- Share insight on the trends and emerging issues affecting solicitor wellbeing
- Provide a unified voice, helping to shape healthier workplace cultures across the profession

A more joined-up route to support

The Solicitors' Charity has always taken a whole-person view – supporting emotional, physical, professional and financial wellbeing, tailored to individual need. What the Alliance adds is a better way in. Wherever a solicitor turns first – to us, to LawCare, to the Law Society or to their own firm – the aim is simple: they end up in the right place, faster. And they may need a combination of support from each organisation!

The Law Society President hopes for healthier workplace cultures with easier-to-find support

The Law Society of England and Wales president, Mark Evans, said: "Solicitors face significant wellbeing challenges and no single organisation can tackle them alone. By joining forces, we can raise awareness of the support already available, share expertise and help drive healthier workplace cultures across the profession.

"The Alliance brings together organisations with a shared goal: ensuring solicitors can access the support they need to thrive.

> "Solicitors are used to being the person others rely on. This Alliance is about making sure that when they need support themselves, it's easy to find – and that they're never having to look for it alone

"Over the coming year, Alliance members will work together to develop and deliver practical outputs that improve awareness of support, share learning and help solicitors and legal organisations take positive action on wellbeing."

Nick Gallagher, CEO of The Solicitors' Charity shared: "Solicitors are used to being the person others rely on. This Alliance is about making sure that when they need support themselves, it's easy to find – and that they're never having to look for it alone. We're proud to be part of a collaboration that's finally joining up to make that happen."

Solicitors give so much of themselves to other people. This Alliance means there's more, and easier, support ready for them in return. Find out more about The Law Society's *wellbeing hub* or read Lawcare's *Life in the Law* 2025 research.

When you wish you'd done things differently

Six tips for dealing with regret at work

We've probably all looked back on something and wondered whether we should have done things differently. Perhaps you regret leaving a job, wish you'd spoken up about something or keep thinking about a mistake you made. Sometimes even decisions that felt right at the time can leave you harbouring doubts later.

Regret can be particularly hard to deal with when you work in the legal sector, where there's a lot of pressure to get things right. You might find yourself going over what happened again and again, wondering whether you could have avoided it.

You're not the only one

Regret is something we often hear about when people contact *LawCare*. People talk to us about things like:

- Choosing between two jobs, sometimes in different parts of the legal sector, and wondering whether the other one would have been better.
- Regretting telling someone at work about a mental health condition because they're worried it might have affected their career.
- Returning to work after time away and wishing they'd given themselves longer to recover.
- Staying in a job they're unhappy in and wishing they'd left sooner.
- Training to become a lawyer and wondering whether they've made the wrong career choice.

These are just some of the ways regret can affect people working in law. Whatever you're looking back on, there are things you can try to help you deal with how you're feeling. We've put together six suggestions that might help.

1. Think about what you knew at the time

It's easy to look back and wonder why you made a particular decision, especially when things didn't turn out as you'd hoped. Maybe you took a job that wasn't right for you or stayed somewhere longer than you wanted to.

But think about what was going on in your life at the time. You might have had different priorities, fewer options or other things to consider. It's worth remembering that you didn't know then what you know now.

2. Notice when you're going round in circles

Have you ever found yourself going over a conversation in your head, wishing you'd said something different? Or wondering what might have happened if you'd made another choice?

There's nothing wrong with thinking things through, but if you keep going over the same thing without getting anywhere, it can leave you feeling worse.

If you find yourself doing this, ask whether it's actually helping. If not, it might be worth taking a break and doing something else for a while.

3. Remember that not everything was within your control

It's common to blame ourselves when things don't work out as we'd hoped. But perhaps you had too much work on, weren't getting the support you needed or were dealing with decisions made by other people.

Looking back, try to be realistic about what you could have done differently. You might have handled some things better, but that doesn't mean everything that happened was down to you.

4. Think about what you can learn

Perhaps you wish you'd spoken up sooner, asked for help or handled a difficult situation differently.

Think about what you'd do if you found yourself in a similar position again. Is there anything you'd change?

Making mistakes can be especially hard when you work in the legal sector, where there's often pressure to know the answers and get things right all the time. But everyone makes mistakes, however experienced they are. What matters is how you deal with them, whether that's putting something right, asking for advice or doing things differently next time.

5. Talk to someone

Sometimes it helps to talk about what's happened rather than keep going over it in your head. A friend, family member or someone you trust might help you see things differently or point out something you hadn't considered.

If it's something that happened at work, you might feel more comfortable talking to someone outside your workplace, especially if you're worried about what colleagues might think.

And if you don't feel ready to talk, you could try writing down what's bothering you. Sometimes just getting your thoughts out of your head and onto paper can help.

6. Give yourself the advice you'd give someone else

Think about what you'd say if a friend or colleague told you they regretted a decision or were struggling with a mistake. You'd probably listen, remind them of what they were dealing with at the time and help them see things a little differently.

But it's often much harder to be that understanding with ourselves. We can spend ages thinking about something we got wrong and forget about everything else we've done well.

Next time you find yourself being self-critical, try to show yourself the same understanding you'd give someone else.

Give yourself time

Some regrets are harder to get over than others, especially if you've made a big decision about your career or something has happened that's had a lasting impact on your life.

You might find that you feel differently about it as time goes on. Perhaps you'll understand more about why you made that decision, even if you still wish things had turned out differently.

It's OK if it takes a while to come to terms with what's happened.

Talk to LawCare

If you're struggling with regret, worrying about something that happened at work or finding it difficult to move on from a decision, you can talk to us.

LawCare is the mental health charity for the legal sector. We offer free, independent and confidential emotional support to anyone working in law, including support staff, across the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Our support team and volunteers have first-hand experience of working in law, so they understand some of the pressures you might be facing. You don't need to be in crisis to get in touch. We're here if you need someone to talk to. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Regulation Update & News

By **Andrea Cohen**, Compli, Weightmans



The past month has produced a familiar mixture of regulatory ambition, operational reality and disciplinary reminders, but with a bit of a twist: recent developments show that proportionate regulation still requires the SRA to listen when a proposal risks creating cost without a commensurate reduction in harm.

Reminder – bookings open

The MLS Compliance & Practice Management Conference is on 18 November, a must attend event for all COLPs, COFAs, MLROs, Practice Managers, or anyone concerned with the regulation and compliance of law firms. The morning of the event will focus on issues of compliance and the afternoon will explore practice management related issues. You can book for the full day or just the morning or afternoon.

Compliance officer reform

The SRA has stepped back from introducing its proposed restriction on individuals with unilateral decision-making power also acting as COLP or COFA. The measure, which would have affected firms above specified turnover or client-money thresholds, had been due to take effect in January 2027. Following sustained concern about its impact, particularly on smaller firms and sole practitioners, the SRA will instead reconsider the proposal and develop a more targeted, evidence-led approach.

This is sensible. Independence and effective challenge matter, but structure alone does not create a strong compliance culture. Firms should use the breathing space to test whether their compliance officers have genuine authority, access to information and a clear route for escalation. The proposal may have been paused, but scrutiny of governance and accountability has not.

SRA annual AML report: improvement, but no room for complacency

The SRA's 2025/26 AML report issued on 22 October 2026 records its largest programme of proactive supervision to date: 966 proactive engagements, including 358 inspections, 578 desk-based reviews, 26 independent audit reviews for the largest firms and thematic work. While financial sanctions increased to a total of £2.6 million, compliance has improved in several areas, but the recurring weaknesses remain familiar: client and matter risk assessments; source of funds enquiries; policies and controls, and firm-wide risk assessments.

The SRA's thematic review of AML policies, controls and procedures reinforces the link between governance on paper and performance on files. Firms with weaker or outdated frameworks were more likely to display wider file-level failings, while those that reviewed and refreshed their arrangements regularly generally achieved better outcomes. The message is that a policy is only effective if it is embedded, followed and tested.

Good practice also includes retaining review records, setting and tracking remedial deadlines, analysing trends through registers or reports, escalating findings to senior management or risk committees,

Manchester Law Society
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feeding lessons into training and applying greater scrutiny to higher-risk matters. By contrast, informal or undocumented reviews, procedures that are not followed, reliance on fee earners without structured oversight and lighter scrutiny of partners all undermine assurance.

The SRA identifies recorded internal file reviews, AML checklists, case-management alerts for outstanding customer due diligence and independent audits as useful controls. It asks firms for copies of independent audits and found that 63% of firms had commissioned one. However, 18% of those audits did not fully meet the requirements of Regulation 21. The SRA observed higher levels of compliance among firms that had undertaken a compliant independent audit.

To support firms, the SRA has produced an AML policy checklist, a model file-review form and guidance for reviewers. These materials provide a useful benchmark, but the more important question is whether a firm can evidence that deficiencies are identified, corrected and used to strengthen its systems.

The FCA is expected to begin taking over AML supervision of legal services providers in late 2028, with a phased transition completed by 2030. For now, obligations and SRA supervision continue. Firms should avoid treating the future transfer as a reason to defer remediation; if anything, the prospect of more data led supervision makes reliable records and demonstrable control effectiveness more important.

If you have not had an independent AML audit, or your last one was some time ago, please get in touch with Compli.

Sanctions, tax advice and the wider economic crime picture

Firms holding frozen assets should check the November reporting deadline and ensure that responsibility is allocated rather than assumed. The SRA has also highlighted HMRC's ability to seek information and documents from tax advisers in prescribed circumstances. These developments sit alongside the Government's 2026–2029 anti-money laundering and asset recovery strategy, which emphasises intelligence sharing, emerging threats and closer collaboration between regulators, law enforcement and the private sector.

The practical lesson is to connect compliance disciplines. Sanctions screening, AML risk assessment, tax work, suspicious activity reporting and information requests should not operate in separate silos. Firms need clear ownership, escalation routes and an audit trail showing why decisions were made.

The SRA's next thematic review will focus on Economic Crime…you have been warned!

AI: disclosure is only one part of the answer

The Law Society's new practice note on *artificial intelligence* brings together the professional and practical issues that arise when AI is used in legal work. It addresses governance, supervision, confidentiality, privilege, data protection, insurance and cyber security, as well as the need to verify AI-generated material. It also indicates that clients should be told about AI use where that is material to the retainer, the way the service is delivered or the client's decision-making.

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A generic sentence in terms of business will not cure weak controls. Firms need an approved tools framework, clear restrictions on data entry, human review proportionate to the risk, and records showing how outputs were checked. Client communication should be transparent without implying that responsibility has shifted to the technology. The solicitor/firm remains accountable for the work and for explaining any material effect on cost, confidentiality or service.

Investigations and enforcement

On 23 October 2026 the SRA published its annual report 2024/25 into its investigations and enforcement work. The data points to increasing regulatory activity. In 2024/25 it received 15,914 reports about solicitors and firms, the highest level in seven years, while cases resulting in regulatory action rose to 1,202, up from 1,069 the previous year. Those actions included 437 warnings, 197 financial penalties and 41 rebukes. At the more serious end, 105 cases were concluded at the SDT, compared with 78 in 2023/24, resulting in 38 strike-offs, 27 suspensions and 29 fines.

While changes in reporting categories mean year-on-year comparisons require some caution, the overall direction is clear. With the SRA combining reports of concern with proactive compliance checks, firms should ensure they can not only identify and address regulatory issues promptly, but also evidence that their systems and controls are working effectively.

Competence framework

The SRA is consulting on changes to the Statement of Solicitor Competence and functioning legal knowledge, with responses invited by 3 December *here*. The review is intended to reflect modern practice and follows engagement with firms, practitioners, educators and representative bodies.

The exercise should not be treated as relevant only to qualification and the SQE. The competence statement underpins continuing competence throughout a solicitor's career. Firms should therefore consider whether appraisal, supervision and learning records are capable of showing not merely that training was completed, but that identified risks and capability gaps were addressed. That evidence becomes particularly important where new technology, new service models or rapid growth alter how work is delivered.

New/updated SRA guidance and Law Society practice notes:

SRA guidance

- *Anti-money laundering policies, controls and procedures*
- *How we gather evidence in our regulatory and disciplinary investigations*
- *How we gather evidence in our regulatory and disciplinary investigations*
- *Reporting and notification obligations*
- *Legal professional privilege when working in-house - Guidance*

Practice notes

- *Alternative business structures*
- *Residual client balances*
- *SRA Transparency Rules*
- *Compliance officers*
- *Using artificial intelligence in legal practice*

Disciplinary decisions

Fine for misleading client

A solicitor received an expert report in a clinical negligence matter but told the client on three occasions that it remained outstanding. The tribunal found a failure to act in the client's best interests but did not find dishonesty or lack of integrity. The solicitor was fined £15,000 and ordered to pay costs of over £14,000.

Struck off for failure to serve claim and attempted cover-up

A solicitor failed to serve a clinical negligence claim on the correct defendant within the required period, maintained that service had been effective and produced a letter which the tribunal found had been fabricated and backdated. Dishonesty was proved and the solicitor was struck off.

Struck off for practising without insurance

A sole practitioner continued to accept instructions and carry out legal work for about a year after the firm's qualifying insurance ended and the cessation period expired. The tribunal rejected attempts to characterise some relationships as personal rather than professional, found dishonesty and ordered strike-off and costs of over £45000.

Fined for using client account as a banking facility

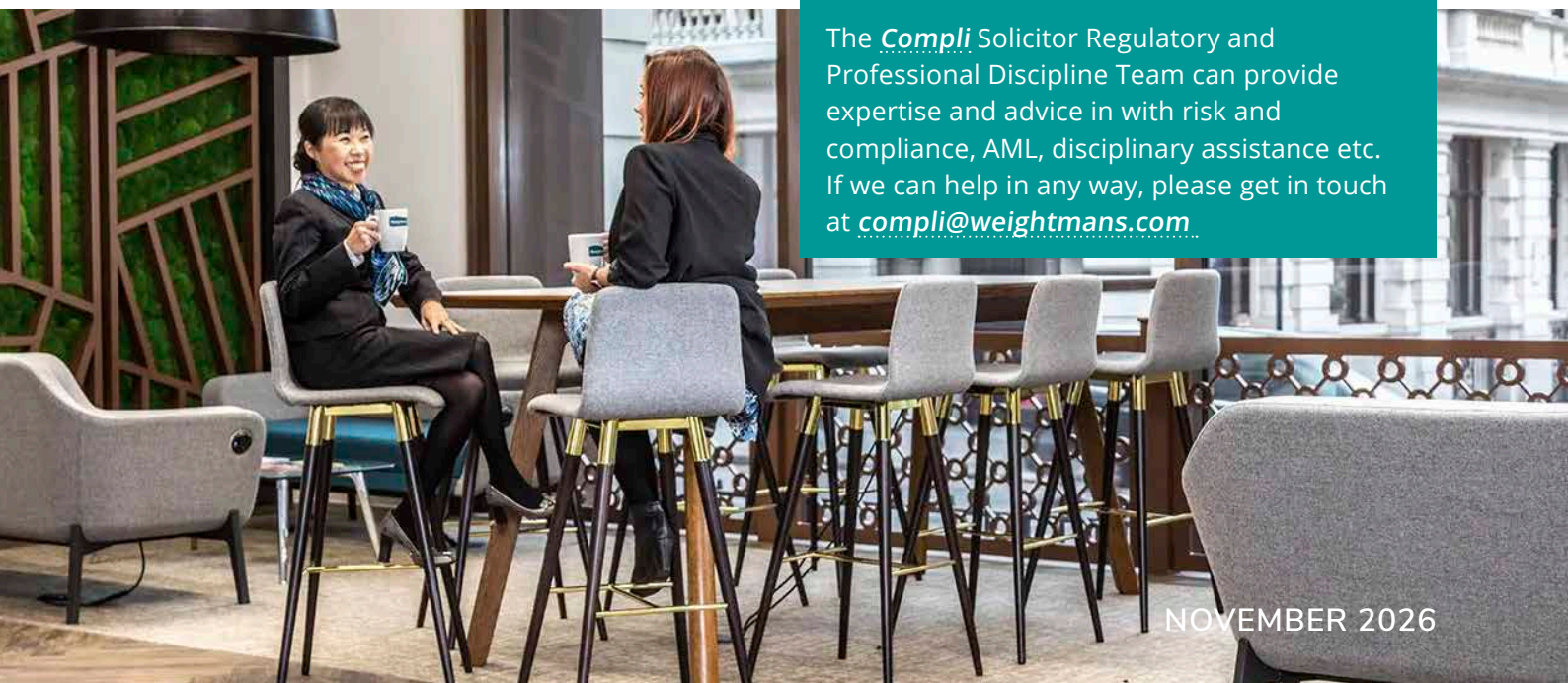
A solicitor allowed a firm's client account to be used as a banking facility in four matters and made payments involving companies controlled by the solicitor or family members, creating a significant own-interest conflict risk. There was no evidence of client loss. The solicitor was fined £4,950 and ordered to pay investigation costs of £1,350.

Section 43 order for failure to disclose arrest

A former apprentice solicitor gave an untrue explanation for an absence following arrest and failed to disclose the arrest when directly asked by a supervisor. The police investigation later concluded with no further action, but the dishonesty towards the employer led to a section 43 order preventing work in an SRA-regulated firm without permission.

How Compli can help...

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



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Jeff Lewis assumes new role at The Law Society



Previously listed as one of the 250 Most Influential People in Greater Manchester by Manchester Evening News, Jeff has also been named a 'Hall of Fame' lawyer by the Legal 500 in recognition not only of his private practice work, but also his longstanding public service. He's also recognised as a top-tier ranked individual by Chambers.

Among his other roles, he serves as a Deputy District Judge on the Northern Circuit a role he has held since 2001 and is chair of Manchester Law Society's Civil Litigation Committee and convenor of Manchester Circuit Commercial Court Users' Committee.

He was President of Manchester Law Society in 2011-12, having first joined its Council in 1999. He thus becomes the first person to 'do the double' of being President of both Manchester Law Society and The Law Society.

A key priority as an office-holder of The Law Society will include supporting the next generation of lawyers, encouraging firms to provide mentorship programmes and championing the recruitment of young people to future-proof the industry. Jeff also intends to promote charities that advocate for better mental wellbeing within law and help solicitors navigate the challenges posed by a changing legal landscape, such as how to effectively train upcoming legal professionals in the face of the advancement of technology like AI.

He will serve a one-year term in this role before moving on to become Vice President and then President, in line with the body's leadership structure. Through frequent visits to local law societies and practices across England and Wales, Jeff is keen to increase pride in the profession, drive diversity and encourage positive change in social mobility, and redefine justice as a vital public service.

Jeff Lewis, Brabners Partner and Deputy Vice President of the Law Society, said: "This recognition of my experience and commitment to the profession is a real honour. Being elected from such a competitive pool of candidates, by industry peers that I have worked alongside and learnt from, is a true privilege.

"I've been fortunate enough in my career to have been offered some incredible support and mentorship by fellow solicitors who have made time to share their experience and expertise with me. This is the spirit that I intend to bring to my role — to give back to my peers; listen to colleagues, understand the pressures they face, and ensure that their experiences inform the Law Society's work.

"I'm proud to take this next step. There is a wealth of experience across our profession,

and I want colleagues at every stage of their careers, wherever they practise, to feel they have a voice in its future."

Nik White, Managing Partner at Brabners, said: "Everyone at Brabners is delighted to see Jeff take on this important role. He has devoted decades to supporting the legal profession, not only through his outstanding work as a lawyer but also through his commitment to mentoring others, giving back to the profession and championing positive change.

"Jeff will bring integrity, experience and a genuine passion for supporting solicitors across England and Wales. We're incredibly proud to see him represent on the national stage, and we look forward to seeing the impact he makes over the coming years."

Carla Jones, CEO at Manchester Law Society, said "Jeff's appointment is richly deserved and reflects his years of dedication to supporting his colleagues in the profession. We are extremely proud to have our friend and Past President taking such an important role in the Law Society of England and Wales. On behalf of everyone at MLS, we offer Jeff many congratulations on this achievement – he has already made Manchester proud."

MLS sponsorship opportunities

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

Please look through our sponsorship packages below and let us help you raise your company's profile by gaining direct access to our unrivalled network of the legal community in Manchester and beyond.

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



Bexley Beaumont helps build tide of support for marine conservation charity

Bexley Beaumont has stepped up its support for one of the UK's most ambitious marine conservation efforts. The firm hopes by that renewing its commitment to the Ocean Conservation Trust other businesses might be encouraged to help preserve threatened underwater environments.

The Ocean Conservation Trust's 'Blue Meadows' project aims to protect the UK's remaining seagrass meadows and reverse their dramatic decline in recent decades. Seagrass meadows are regarded as being among the ocean's most valuable and diverse habitats, preventing erosion and acting as a nursery for species upon which the fishing industry is so reliant. Research has also shown seagrass to be even more effective than rainforests at carbon capture despite covering far less of the planet.

Bexley Beaumont co-founder and Chief Executive Karen Bexley said the Ocean Conservation Trust had been one of the first ventures backed by her own firm's charitable foundation, the BBFoundation, two years ago. However, she added that a visit to see the work of the 'Blue Meadows' team in action had convinced her of the importance for other businesses to contribute.

"When we opened our doors six years ago, we were intent on doing what we could to give back to the areas in which we operate.

The launch of the BBFoundation in 2024 allowed us to put that promise into practice and enabled us to support initiatives which aligned with our own brand values.

Like Bexley Beaumont, the Ocean Conservation Trust is a charity with the



L–R: Anna Beaumont and Karen Bexley

potential to deliver impact far beyond its size. As a global charity dedicated to protecting and restoring the Ocean, its work recognises the vital role seagrass plays in maintaining the integrity of the seabed and supporting the enormous diversity of species that depend on it. A robust, healthy marine environment is also critical for coastal communities and something which I believe other organisations should throw their weight behind."

The Ocean Conservation Trust, a charity founded in 1998 and dedicated to protecting marine habitats worldwide, launched the 'Blue Meadows' programme four years ago. Seagrass meadows are a haven for biodiversity with a single hectare able to support 80,000 fish and 100 million small invertebrates, including many rare or endangered species. The Ocean Conservation Trust claims that roughly 90 per cent of the seagrass beds around the UK have been lost since the 1930s. An international study also suggested that such habitats worldwide were being further eroded at the rate of seven per cent a year. The Ocean Conservation Trust is helping to advance large-scale marine habitat restoration through its scientific expertise and partnerships such as that with Bexley Beaumont, using the latest technologies to further its goal of protecting up 10 per cent of the UK's seagrass stocks - up to 700 hectares. In July, the Ocean Conservation Trust was among the organisations collaborating behind the launch of a £1.5 million venture to restore 10 hectares of seagrass meadow in Falmouth Bay. Protecting such ecosystems has also become a government priority, with the Environment Agency aiming to increasing the seagrass around the UK's coastline by as much as 15 per cent by 2043.

Bexley Beaumont co-founder Anna Beaumont explained that the BBFoundation had already sponsored the replenish of a 1,000 square metre expanse of seagrass as part of the broader project. She described how the fact-finding trip to the Ocean Conservation Trust's offices at the Plymouth National Marine Aquarium had provided a far greater and more detailed understanding of the work involved.

"We genuinely believe that this is a hugely important scheme on so many different levels: for the marine habitat, local communities and as a way of helping combat the effects of climate change.

Even more than our financial contributions, we would be delighted if our own profile led to other businesses becoming involved too. That was one of the objectives when we set up the BBFoundation, being able to lend support and visibility to organisations which are looking to punch above their weight and achieve important social, professional and environmental outcomes."

Emma Cowley, the Ocean Conservation Trust's Head of Fundraising, said the support of businesses like Bexley Beaumont was vital in raising awareness and cash to help the Ocean Conservation Trust's work.

"A healthy ocean is vitally important to all of us. We hope that partnerships like this will inspire more businesses to consider the role that they too can play in protecting marine environments across the world.

By working together, we can build momentum towards a future where the Ocean can thrive."

Ms Beaumont revealed that the BBFoundation is also backing LawCare, an organisation offering support to individuals working in the UK legal profession, and the Sutton Trust, which pursues social mobility initiatives nationwide.

Johnson Law Group secures successful County Court judgment in PCP finance commission claim

Case paves for the way for future successful outcomes for PCP claimants

Johnson Law Group has represented another successful claimant in a PCP finance claim against RCI Financial Services Limited following a trial at North Shields County Court.

The claim concerned a discretionary commission arrangement (DCA) under which the motor dealership was able to determine the rate of interest payable under the claimant's finance agreement and receive commission from RCI based on the interest charged.

The claimant argued that the commission arrangement had not been adequately disclosed and that the relationship between the parties was unfair for the purposes of Section 140A of the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

At trial, the Court found in favour of the claimant and concluded that the finance agreement was unfair within the meaning of Section 140A. The Court also found that there was an imbalance between the parties arising from the fact that the dealership's entitlement to receive commission from the lender had not been disclosed to the claimant.

The claimant was awarded damages together with compensatory interest. The commission paid in this case was just under £400. The claim comes amid wider scrutiny of historical motor finance commission arrangements and the Financial Conduct Authority's proposed redress scheme for consumers affected by undisclosed commission arrangements.


Jamie Patton

RCI defended this matter all the way to trial despite the uncontested evidence that the commission structure was the prohibited DCA and its relatively modest value. It instructed senior counsel to represent it at trial and flew in senior executives from its London headquarters to give evidence on the day. That evidence was ultimately criticised by the judge.

Jamie Patton, Managing Director of Johnson Law Group, said: "The outcome of this case is an example of how some banks are prepared to ignore the guidance of their regulator and spend thousands defending PCP claims when they should be settling them. Whilst the FCA continues to claim that people don't need lawyers to claim their compensation, the reality is they do – as this case demonstrates."

Venus Legal serves up wellbeing with first corporate Padel event.

The team at specialist litigation firm *Venus Legal* recently swapped the office for the Padel court, coming together for their first ever team Padel session at Wilmslow Leisure Centre.

The event was also a first for the leisure centre, marking its inaugural corporate Padel session, with the Venus Legal team taking to the court for some friendly competition, plenty of laughs and, most importantly, some time away from their desks to spend time together.

For Venus Legal, however, activities like this are about much more than simply having fun.

The firm works with clients who are often experiencing some of the most difficult and emotionally challenging periods of their lives, including those affected by serious injury, abuse, illness and trauma. Supporting people through these experiences can be demanding, which is why Venus Legal believes looking after the wellbeing of its own people is an important part of being able to provide the best possible support to clients.

"Wellbeing isn't a luxury or something we think about only when things get too much, it's part of how we work," said Lorna McGlone, CEO and Founder of Venus Legal.

"Our people support clients through some incredibly difficult experiences, so we have to make sure we're supporting our people too. The Padel session was a brilliant opportunity to step away from the office, clear our heads, spend time together and have some fun.



"It was also fantastic to be Wilmslow Leisure Centre's first corporate Padel guests, and we're very grateful to the team for hosting such a great session. There was certainly some friendly competition on court, and I suspect this won't be our last Padel event – we're hooked!"

Wellbeing is an established part of life at Venus Legal. The firm has Mental Health Ambassadors within its team, provides regular opportunities for colleagues to take part in team walks and activities during the working day, and has a life and wellbeing coach available to support employees.

The approach reflects the firm's wider ethos of Turning Lives Around, recognising that creating time to step away, talk and reset can benefit both individuals and the wider team.

For Venus Legal, the message is simple: if their people are supporting clients through some of the hardest moments of their lives, those people need to be supported too.

And judging by the enthusiasm on the Padel court, it seems the first Venus Legal corporate Padel session may well be the first of many.

Domestic Abuse Awareness Month: legal protections following early prisoner release scheme

As the UK marks Domestic Abuse Awareness Month, *Clarke Willmott LLP* is highlighting legal protections for people who fear contact from an abusive former partner following the latest prisoner early release announcement.


L–R: Paige Atherton and Rayner Grice

The firm's specialist family law solicitors say the campaign – supported by councils, police and charities – provides an opportunity to challenge misconceptions of the different forms domestic abuse can take and encourage people to seek help.

Under the Government's *early prisoner release scheme*, eligible prisoners can be released before completing their full custodial sentence, subject to licence conditions to alleviate severe overcrowding in the prison system.

"The prospect of an abusive former partner being released from prison can be frightening for those who fear further contact or harassment. It is important they know what legal protections are available to help safeguard them," said Clarke Willmott solicitor, *Paige Atherton*.

"Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It can include controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional and psychological abuse, threats and sexual abuse, and may involve a single incident or a pattern of behaviour.

"The effects can extend well beyond the relationship itself, particularly when separation involves children, finances or the family home. Understanding the family court's powers and the protective orders available can be an important part of keeping victims and children safe."

Two types of court order may be relevant to people experiencing domestic abuse: non-molestation orders and occupation orders; the appropriate remedy will depend on the circumstances of the individual case.

Rayner Grice, partner and national family team leader, said: "A non-molestation order can protect someone from abuse and harassment by prohibiting specific behaviour. Depending on the circumstances, this can include threats or violence, intimidation, unwanted contact or approaching someone's home.

"An occupation order relates to the family home. It can determine who is allowed to live in the property, require someone to leave or restrict access to particular areas."

In urgent situations, it may be possible to apply for a protective order without notifying the other person in advance.

"This can allow the court to consider an application where waiting for a hearing could expose a victim or child to further risk," added Rayner. "The court will consider the evidence and circumstances before

deciding whether to make an order.

"Domestic abuse can also affect children, even when they have not themselves been physically assaulted.

"Allegations of abuse may be relevant to decisions about where a child lives, contact with parents and whether supervision or other safeguards are needed. The child's welfare remains central to these decisions."

> Domestic abuse can also affect children, even when they have not themselves been physically assaulted

MSB enters into Access To Justice Foundation partnership to donate residual client balances

MSB Solicitors **has entered into an agreement with the Access To Justice Foundation (ATJF) to donate eligible residual client balances to the organisation, which is a grant-making charity that funds free legal advice, support and representation across the UK and which has awarded around £80 million to over 360 organisations.**


Emma Carey

ATJF indemnifies donated balances, removing the risk for firms if a former client later comes forward. Using their sector expertise, the Foundation directs funding where it can have the greatest impact, supporting communities where access to legal advice can be transformative. This gives firms a practical way to turn dormant funds into meaningful support for people who would otherwise struggle to access justice.

The funds are then pooled into grants for free legal advice, including organisations in Manchester such as LGBT Foundation, Greater Manchester Law Centre, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit and Manchester Mind.

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As well as receiving donations from residual client balances, the ATJF receives funding from the National Lottery and the Ministry of Justice and also via two other different routes in completed cases.

Funds via Pro Bono Costs Orders

One of these is from Pro Bono Costs Orders (PBCOs), which allows costs to be awarded after a successful civil case where legal representation has been provided free of charge. If a solicitor or barrister represents a client on a pro bono case and wins, an order for costs cannot normally be made because the client has not incurred a loss. However, the legal representative can seek a PBCO, with the money being paid directly to the ATJF, rather than to the lawyers or barristers involved.

Although these orders will not apply to every pro bono case, they can be sought where appropriate in successful civil litigation. MSB encourages all legal colleagues, from trainees to barristers, to consider PBCOs wherever they apply, both as a useful litigation tool and as a way to extend the impact of pro bono work.

Funds via collective actions

The Foundation also receives money from collective actions where orders are made for damages to be paid but the claimant either has not made a claim or is non-traceable. This is a significant route of funding as there are currently around 70 live cases to which it could apply, with one case in particular potentially generating an eight-figure sum for the Foundation.

> “The values of MSB and the ATJF align perfectly, as we are both passionate about providing justice for everyone in society who needs it

Commenting on the partnership, Clare Carter, CEO of the Access To Justice Foundation, said: “We are delighted to welcome MSB Solicitors as a supporter of the Foundation. By donating residual client balances and helping to raise awareness of Pro Bono Cost Orders, MSB is turning legal-sector resources into vital support for people who might otherwise struggle to access legal advice.

“This partnership will help strengthen the frontline organisations providing free legal help across the UK, including in Manchester,” she continued.

Emma Carey, Managing Partner at MSB Solicitors, commented: “The values of MSB and the ATJF align perfectly, as we are both passionate about providing justice for everyone in society who needs it. We are proud to be in partnership with an organisation that can help vulnerable people and communities.

“Funding methods such as PBCOs are not as well-known as they might be and we hope that by shining a light on them we can encourage more of our colleagues in the sector to make use of them and help provide justice for all,” she added.

From the law fair to the courtroom: MSB and The University of Law Manchester

By Dominique Owens, Client Relationship Executive, MSB Solicitors

What began with a conversation at a university law fair has grown into a valued relationship between *MSB* Solicitors' Social Housing and Regeneration team and The University of Law (ULaw) in Manchester. Most recently, that relationship gave MSB the opportunity to put students in the shoes of housing lawyers through a disrepair mock trial.

Bridging the gap

There can be a real gap between learning the law and understanding what it means to practise it day to day. For students considering a legal career, meeting practising solicitors, asking honest questions about life in practice and seeing how legal work unfolds can make a genuine difference. It is something to which MSB is committed.

The firm's relationship with ULaw in Manchester began at its law fairs, as colleagues from MSB's Social Housing and Regeneration team attended careers and recruitment events to speak with students about life at the practice, the different routes into the profession and the often-overlooked but hugely rewarding world of social housing law. Since those first conversations, the relationship has gone from strength to strength.

Bringing social housing law to life

In February, members of MSB's Social Housing and Regeneration team returned to ULaw's New York Street campus to run a disrepair mock trial.

For the firm, it was a chance to introduce students to an area they may not explore in depth during their studies. For the students, it brought classroom principles to life through a realistic dispute.

The mock trial enabled students to work through different elements and view the case from a practical perspective. It also showed the breadth of skills a housing lawyer needs. Knowing the law matters, but so does listening carefully, identifying the key issues, assessing the evidence, building a case and communicating an argument clearly and persuasively.

More than a recruitment conversation

MSB's involvement with ULaw has continued well beyond the mock trial, as representatives later attended the Step into Law event in Manchester and have remained involved through law fairs and other opportunities to engage with students.

These events are about much more than recruitment, as there is just as much value in being open and available to people who are still working out what they want from their careers.

That experience is something to which MSB's colleagues can relate. Alicia Manchester, Trainee Solicitor at MSB Solicitors, attended the University's Careers Fair on behalf of the firm while she was studying for her LPC at ULaw in Manchester.

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"It was a valuable experience as I was able to speak with fellow students who were considering their future careers in law and share my own experiences of balancing legal studies with working in practice," said Alicia.

"The event provided a great opportunity to support and network with other aspiring legal professionals and demonstrates MSB's commitment to engaging with future talent," she added.

Alicia's experience highlights the value of having conversations with students from a position of recent experience. Having made the transition from studying the LPC to working in practice herself, she is able to offer an insight into the realities of that journey and the different routes available to aspiring lawyers.



Louise Murphy

Students can ask the questions that are not always answered in a lecture theatre: What does a typical day really look like? What is it like to work with clients? How does a case move from the first instruction to a hearing? And what happens when things do not go to plan?

Straightforward conversations like these can make the profession feel much more accessible.

Why social housing?

MSB's team also has a particular reason for encouraging students to consider a career in social housing and regeneration, as housing law sits where legal practice meets people's everyday lives.

A dispute about repairs, possession, tenancy rights or the condition of a home can have a profound impact on an individual or family. At the same time, social housing and regeneration work touches on some of the wider challenges facing communities across Greater Manchester and beyond.

It is a specialism allowing lawyers to combine technical expertise with meaningful client work and a wider social impact. Introducing students to this work early can help them see just how broad the opportunities within the profession really are.

Learning from each other

Speaking with ULaw students also gives MSB the opportunity to listen and learn from therm.

The profession is changing, and so are the expectations of those entering it. Law fairs and events give the chance to hear directly from students about what they want from a

future employer, which areas interest them and what matters when they are choosing a career.

That dialogue matters if firms are to attract, support and retain the next generation of lawyers.

Continuing the conversation

From those first steps, MSB's relationship with ULaw (Manchester) has continued to grow.

The firm is looking forward to building on it and creating more opportunities for students to gain a practical insight into social housing law and life in legal practice.

For MSB, supporting the next generation is not simply about encouraging students to enter the profession. It is about helping them understand the choices available, sharing an honest view of practice and making the route into law feel more open and achievable.

Slater and Gordon launch campaign to showcase the reality of rebuilding life after serious injury and the crucial role of early support

Slater and Gordon **has launched 'Life Continues, Differently', a new integrated campaign showcasing the experiences of people who have adapted to life following serious injury and raising awareness of the vital role early legal and rehabilitation support can play in improving long-term recovery and quality of life.**

For more than 30 years, Slater and Gordon has supported people whose lives have been changed in an instant by serious injury. During that time, the law firm has helped more than 90,000 injured people and gained first-hand insight into the difference early intervention and access to rehabilitation, treatment and practical support can have in transforming someone's recovery, independence and long-term quality of life.

Launching on 6 October, 'Life Continues, Differently' campaign is built around a simple but powerful message and the firm's belief that while serious injury can change a person's life forever, it does not have to define their future.

The campaign also aims to address a common misconception about serious injury claims, the potential value of early legal intervention. Beyond securing compensation, which is often the most visible aspect of a personal injury claim and viewed as the end goal, through its specialist Serious Injury team and in-house Rehabilitation Coordinators, Slater and Gordon works closely with rehabilitation providers, medical experts, charities and support organisations to arrange access to vital services for clients. They can frequently help arrange rehabilitation, specialist treatment, case management, care packages, equipment and home adaptations, long before a claim concludes and when they matter most. They

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successfully collaborate with insurers and obtain interim payments and rehabilitation funding with a common goal of securing the best outcome for seriously injured people.

Through a series of real client story videos, the campaign features people who have adapted to life after catastrophic injuries and have since gone on to achieve things they once feared might no longer be possible. Through their experiences, the campaign explores not only the challenges and difficulties that follow serious injury, but also on the resilience, determination and support that can help people move forward and shape what comes next.

Tracey Benson, Head of Serious Injury - South at Slater and Gordon, said: "One of the biggest misconceptions about serious injury claims is that they're only about compensation. In reality, some of the most important support happens in the days, weeks and months after an injury, when early intervention can help people access rehabilitation, specialist treatment and practical assistance that can significantly influence their recovery and future independence.

"I've seen families thrown into crisis overnight after brain injuries, spinal injuries and amputations. I've also seen the extraordinary resilience of people who go on to achieve things they once thought were impossible.

The stories at the heart of this campaign show what's possible when people are given the right support at the right time. Serious injury may change a person's life forever, but it should never define what they can go on to achieve."


Tracey Benson

The campaign will be delivered through video content, public relations, social media, expert commentary and a dedicated online hub featuring real client experiences. It aims to help people and their families better understand the support that may be available following serious injury, including the potential benefits of seeking legal advice and accessing rehabilitation and other specialist support at an early stage.

Through real client experiences. 'Life Continues, Differently' aims to give hope to those adjusting to life after serious injury, while raising awareness of the practical, medical and legal support available to help people rebuild their lives.

Access the campaign hub *here*.

Brabners' Charity Foundation reaches milestone amount of £250,000 in donations

The Brabners Foundation **has reached a major fundraising milestone, pledging donations totalling £251,329 to charities that support local communities in the locations in which Brabners' colleagues live and work.**

Launched in 2019, the Foundation is an independent charity established by Brabners law firm as part of its mission to make the difference. Since then, the Foundation has awarded 97 grants to more than 80 charities across the communities served by each of the firm's five offices.

Recent donations have supported organisations such as Go Beyond in Leeds, The Manchester Frame Running Club, The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity in Liverpool, and Paws for Kids in Lancashire. The most recent round of donations also included a grant to The Sick Children's Trust - the Foundation's first ever grant to a London charity following the opening of Brabners' London office earlier this year.

Funds are raised across the year through various means including flagship events such as the Foundation's annual ball. The 2026 ball was held last night at the iconic Manchester Monastery in Gorton in what was the charity's most successful event to date.

Hayley Morgan, Legal Director at Brabners and Trustee of the Brabners Foundation said: "Brabners is a certified B Corp and we are committed to improving the world around us wherever possible. Previously the firm donated to one chosen charity a year. Now that we have established the Brabners Foundation, we can support a range of charities including smaller organisations delivering extraordinary work in our local communities. As well as the brilliant work of the Foundation, all Brabners colleagues receive two full days of paid volunteering leave each year. With over 600 people across the firm, that's a huge amount of people power.

"The Foundation could not operate without every individual and every business that has engaged with us in any way, however small. Every single penny raised goes towards supporting charities that are working tirelessly to improve lives, strengthen communities and provide help where it is most needed. I'd like to thank everyone for their generosity and time and for helping us continue to make the difference."

Nik White, Managing Partner at Brabners said: "Since its inception in 2019, The Brabners Foundation has embodied the very best of our firm and our people. Last night encapsulated that perfectly. It brought together friends of the firm, community members and our people to do something extraordinary: reach over £250,000 in donations. The milestone is the culmination of thousands of acts of generosity, hours of volunteering and planning fundraising events both big and small.

"Beyond the Foundation Ball being a fundraising event, it's an opportunity for us to shine a light on the smaller charities that our Foundation supports, that are typically grassroots, community-based and often don't get public funding.

"I want to personally thank everyone on the committee, everyone who came along to support the ball last night and the clients, businesses and supporters of the Foundation whose generosity made this possible."

Mills & Reeve leads campaign to combat deepfakes with support of footballers and sports bodies

Experts at *Mills & Reeve* are behind a push for new legislation to help people protect themselves against the threat of AI-generated deepfakes, in a campaign that has secured the backing of football stars Cole Palmer and Lucy Bronze among others.

The firm, which has seven offices across the UK including in Manchester, has launched *My Name, My Face*, which is calling for greater legal protections amid a huge increase in the volume of deepfakes and other AI-generated content circulating online.

Chelsea and England footballers Cole Palmer and Lucy Bronze, former Made in Chelsea star Louise Thompson and actress fashion designer and entrepreneur Tan France, as well as professional bodies including the Professional Footballers' Association and FIFPRO, are among those backing My Name, My Face.

Lawyers at Mills & Reeve previously advised Palmer on protecting personal brand assets including his portrait mark, famous celebration and 'Cold Palmer' nickname.

My Name, My Face calls for the creation of personality rights legislation to give individuals ownership and protection of their own personality against impersonation. Currently, those seeking to challenge the misuse of their image must rely on a patchwork of legal protections, including copyright, trademark, data protection and passing off – provisions unfit in the current AI era.



Carol Couse

Eight million deepfakes were shared online last year, up from 500,000 in 2023, according to government figures.

Manchester-based partner Carol Couse, head of Mills & Reeve's sports, entertainment and media sector team, said: "All too often we hear of deeply distressing [EW1] stories from high-profile clients, particularly female sportspeople, whose identities have been compromised by deepfakes. It's these experiences, and the proliferation of unauthorised AI-generated content, that have inspired us to create My Name, My Face.

"We're drawing attention to a significant gap in the law, but this isn't just about celebrities – everyone deserves better legal protection and recourse if their identity is reproduced and shared without consent.

"The backing we've already secured for the campaign shows the strength of feeling for acting now. The current patchwork of legal protections is simply not fit for purpose. It's crucial that the pace of change in the law reflects the speed at which technology is advancing and prioritises providing the right

for people to take full ownership of their face, likeness and voice."

Lucy Bronze, Chelsea FC Women footballer, added: "The rise of deepfakes is unsettling because they can take away a person's control over their own image and identity. When technology is used to create fake content that appears real, it can be damaging not only to the person involved but also to everyone who sees and shares it.

"No one should have to worry that their face, likeness or reputation can be manipulated without their consent. We need greater awareness, stronger protections, and real accountability to make sure people, especially women and girls, are protected from this kind of abuse."

Mills & Reeve's warning comes ahead of a long-anticipated government consultation on digital replicas, which is expected to examine the unauthorised creation and use of AI-generated representations of individuals.

Mills & Reeve launches podcast exploring leadership at the extremes

Mills & Reeve has launched *Achieving More Together*, a new podcast series exploring what high performance really looks like inside today's organisations and what business leaders can learn from those who have delivered it in the most demanding environments imaginable.



Hosted by business broadcaster and journalist Juliet Mann, the series brings together guests from the worlds of elite sport, military command, exploration, leadership consultancy and technology, each drawing on first-hand experience of building, leading and sustaining high-performing teams under pressure.

Across the series, Juliet and her guests will unpack the habits, decisions and cultures that separate genuinely high-performing organisations from the rest - from marginal gains in the Formula 1 pit lane, command decision-making at the highest levels of the RAF, surviving alone in the Arctic, to making sense of AI in the workplace.

Guests for the series include:

- Marc Priestley: former McLaren Formula 1 mechanic and pit crew member, who discusses precision, marginal gains and coordinating elite teams under acute time pressure (Episode 1)

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- Justine Lutterodt: founder of the Centre for Synchronous Leadership, who talks about what high performance really requires at C-suite level, and inclusion and governance as performance levers (Episode 2)

- Gary Waterfall: former RAF Air Vice-Marshal and Red Arrow, who explores command decision-making and leadership under pressure (Episode 3)

- Heather Murray: founder of AI for Non-Techies, who discusses demystifying AI for business leaders and where companies go wrong in early adoption (Episode 4)

- Preet Chandi MBE: former British Army officer and record-breaking polar explorer, who talks about resilience, endurance and performing alone in the world's harshest environments (Episode 5)

- Will Sambrook: chief executive of Akenham, a consultancy specialising in organisational development and high-performance cultures (Episode 6).

The first three episodes are available now on *Spotify*, *Apple Podcasts* and *YouTube*, with subsequent episodes released every two weeks. Further guests will be announced as the series progresses.

Owen Butler, Chief People Officer, at Mills & Reeve, said: "High performance is something every leadership team talks about, but very few can define, let alone build deliberately. This podcast is about learning from people who have actually done it, in settings where the margin for error is close to zero.

"As a firm, we work alongside and advise boards and senior leaders as they deal with the complex demands of growth, change



"High performance is something every leadership team talks about, but very few can define, let alone build deliberately

and pressure. The *Achieving More Together* podcast is an extension of that, providing a platform for sharing inspiring and innovative thinking on leadership, culture and performance with the people wrestling with those challenges every day."

Host Juliet Mann added: "I've interviewed leaders all over the world, and the most interesting conversations are always with people who've been tested somewhere real. This series is full of them, from the pit lane to the Arctic, and every guest left me with something I hadn't thought about before. I'm sure listeners will come away from each episode entertained, inspired, and with some genuinely useful ideas they can action immediately."

Mills & Reeve Charitable Trust supports more than 130 charities in the UK and beyond

The *Mills & Reeve* Charitable Trust distributed £316,250 during the 2025/26 financial year, supporting more than 130 local, national and international charities.

In the North West, this included domestic abuse charity, Fortalice, which received £8,450 in total, with the Manchester office supporting seven other regional organisations and eight national/ international charities throughout the course of the last financial year. The total amount donated from the region through the Charitable Trust was £20,000.

For over 40 years, the Mills & Reeve Charitable Trust has been central to Mills & Reeve's commitment to making a positive impact beyond its legal work. Funded by contributions from the firm's partners, the Trust supports charitable causes that align with Mills & Reeve's values and key responsible business goals and strengthens the communities where its people live and work.

The largest proportion of funding supported organisations operating within the Trust's core theme for 2025/26 of health and wellbeing. This work extended beyond traditional healthcare, with significant investment in organisations tackling the wider determinants of health, including poverty, housing insecurity, disability, mental wellbeing, community resilience and social connection.

Among the donations made during the year were:

- Almost £60,000 to charities tackling food poverty
- £16,400 to Cancer Research UK
- £10,000 each to CALM, The Felix Project, Dementia UK and the British Red Cross
- £7,700 to IntoUniversity
- £5,500 to the Royal Society for Blind Children

The charities supported by the Trust are making a real difference to people's lives. Feedback received from funded organisations this year highlighted the impact of donations, from supporting breast cancer patients through Little Lifts, to helping veterans through Combat Stress and empowering blind and partially sighted children through the Royal Society for Blind Children.

Justin Ripman, chair of the Mills & Reeve Charitable Trust, said: "At Mills & Reeve, we believe we have a responsibility to contribute positively to the communities in which we live and work. Through the Mills & Reeve Charitable Trust, we're proud to support organisations that are changing lives, tackling inequality and improving wellbeing in the UK and beyond.

"The breadth of causes supported this year reflects both the scale of need and the incredible work charities are doing every day. We're delighted that the Trust has been able to make a meaningful contribution to so many worthwhile causes."

JMW celebrates 10 years of Lawshare conferences

As Andy Burnham establishes No.10 Manchester, Stuart Cartwright, head of business development at *JMW*, explains why it isn't the only number 10 with cause for celebration

Last month we celebrated the tenth annual *Lawshare* conference, part of the hugely successful referral scheme and support network for lawyers which today has more than 900 member firms.

Back in 2011, Lawshare was the brainchild of our former senior partner Joy Kingsley. Joy explained her idea to me, a partner in our Business Crime and Regulation team, and Dan Clark, our marketing director. We were together in her kitchen as it happens, which just shows you can do business in any environment! There was no way of knowing just how big Lawshare would become or that in 2026 we'd be celebrating 10 years of its management conference.


Stuart Cartwright

I should add that when Joy asked me to head Lawshare, the thought of giving up my legal career didn't sit well with me. The words of one of my partners echoed around my head: "You'll just be salesperson!" Joy was a difficult person to say no to though, and I am very glad I didn't. She knew that I was part of the furniture at JMW and hopefully this meant I had built up good relationships with colleagues and partners. It was always going to be essential that to get Lawshare off the ground I would have to secure their buy-in.

Lawshare is based on a simple enough premise: member firms can refer work to JMW in any area of law when they are unable to deal with an enquiry from a client, whether this is due to a conflict of interest or the matter falling outside their area of expertise or even if there is a capacity issue.

Whatever the reason, we had to reassure those member firms that if they handed over a valuable client to us, we would not only provide a swift, efficient response but also promise never to act for the client again without the express permission of that referring firm. Our approach would need to be entirely ethical and require authenticity right across the firm.

There followed an intense 18 months of new business meetings, triaging referrals, bringing together clients and teams, building the framework of the business and creating a practicable template for the referral process that would satisfy everyone involved. In the summer of 2012, it suddenly became clear that we had created something that was going to be successful. I had taken a week's holiday and handed over my work in progress to Dan who kindly

agreed to babysit, so to speak, Lawshare while I was away. Upon my return, Dan was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, fielding a deluge of referrals, emails and phone calls. I'm not sure he's ever forgiven me for that week. But when it happens, it happens!

Income doubled every year for the first few years and there were also significant increases in the numbers of member firms, so we decided to hold a round table for about 20 managing partners to share ideas and experiences. The discussions were followed by a visit to Pizza Express. That was the embryo of the Lawshare conference.

By 2015 however we thought we should dream a little bigger and our first Lawshare conference was born. Now we've just celebrated our tenth conference, despite a forced two-year break during the pandemic.

The conference is hardly a legal conference in the purest sense. We don't really discuss 'the law' but focus on the management and business side of running a law firm. The conference has covered subjects like recruitment, business development, compliance, growth, recruitment, succession and everything in between. It's done in a collaborative environment where decision makers within their firms share honest experiences, both good and bad.

Over the years we've had some extraordinary speakers, including Nick Freeman, aka 'Mr Loophole', owner of legal practice Freeman & Co (and road traffic lawyer to the stars) and Shaun Wallace, probably best known for his work as The Dark Destroyer, one of the chasers on the ITV quiz show The Chase. Shaun is also a senior criminal defence barrister and much to my surprise, had to rush to Southampton Crown Court after the conference in 2025 to do a sentencing hearing the next day.

> "Organising and running the conference is such a major undertaking that the team have banned any discussion about it until we get into the New Year

One year we welcomed Fran Miller, Head of Winning Behaviours, Team Sky, who spoke about "marginal gains", a topic that gained national notoriety a few weeks later, although perhaps not because it was our keynote speech.

This year we welcomed Major General Paul Nanson who talked about leadership through the prism of his work in the Armed Forces. He demonstrated, via some fascinating military anecdotes, the importance of empowering individuals in your team so that they can contribute creatively with ideas and make decisions when independence of thought is sometimes needed. Paul's examples though were not based in air-conditioned offices but in life-or-death scenarios. Regardless, the moral of his stories still applied to us all and you could hear a pin drop as the audience listened enthralled by Paul's tales.

What's on the table for the next Lawshare conference? Honestly, I can't tell you. Organising and running the conference is such a major undertaking that the team have banned any discussion about it until we get into the New Year. Who knows, perhaps as we approach our eleventh conference, the Chancellor will also set up in Manchester – we may have started something.

TheBusinessDesk.com column

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



Why Manchester City would rather spend millions on legal fees than ever admit they did anything wrong

One of the most telling comments in the leaked emails that led to Manchester City's 115 Financial Fair Play charges laid by the Premier League was that chairman Khaldoon al-Mubarak would rather spend £30 million on the world's best 50 lawyers to sue for 10 years than accept a financial penalty for breaching financial rules.

As news of the guilty verdict emerged, and the hilarious memes were circulated over the weekend that followed, dozens of clubs who felt cheated by their financial breaches, hinted they could trigger a series of lawsuits and claims against the Abu Dhabi-backed club.

The former manager of defeated 2011 cup finalists Stoke City has expressed his anger. Leicester City, who missed out on the Champions League are working out what that cost the club, now struggling in League One.

Equally, Everton and Nottingham Forest will be interested onlookers, having felt the wrath of the league's PSR (Profit and Sustainability Rules) code through costly points deductions that put their top-flight status in serious jeopardy.

Lawyers representing Liverpool, Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal will be calculating the losses suffered by missed prize money, relegations and non-qualification for the lucrative Champions League.

Research by SportsBoom has found that if City had been removed from the table in each of the nine seasons, Everton would have gained five European campaigns, Tottenham four Champions League places, and six other clubs at least one qualification each.

As a measure of the litigious mood around the sport, Burnley are already underway with legal action against Everton over what they claim were losses suffered as a result of breaches.

City could face sanctions ranging from a financial fine, to a points deduction or even expulsion from the Premier League and all eyes are on the club for their likely next move.

After an initial 24 hours of silence, al-Mubarak insisted on the Saturday after the guilty charges were confirmed that City would fight on. "While some people have been quick to reach their own conclusions, and there is so much noise swirling around us, nothing has changed," he said. "We have faced challenges together before and have prevailed. There remain many who want to undermine the momentum of our club. We will not give them that opportunity."

The alleged breaches stretch over 14 seasons and include subverting regulations by failing to provide accurate financial information on matters such as transfers and wages, and inflated sponsorship income from Abu Dhabi airline Etihad, which it is argued put the club at an advantage to its rivals.

The club escaped serious punishment after

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> The club has portrayed itself as the oppressed party, referring to the Premier League's rules, that require any changes to be approved by 14 of the league's 20 member teams

UEFA ruled, in 2020, that it had committed "serious breaches" of FFP regulations between 2012 and 2016.

They have shown they have the will to keep fighting the charges. They successfully batted off a two-year ban from European competitions, which was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

The club also counter sued the Premier League in an attempt to end its Associated Party Transaction (APT) rules which are linked to commercial and sponsorship deals with companies owned or associated with the same club's owners, while rules require such transactions to be independently assessed to be of fair market value.

City believes the rules are 'unlawful' and wants damages for revenue lost by preventions made by those rules.

The club has portrayed itself as the oppressed party, referring to the Premier League's rules, that require any changes to be approved by 14 of the league's 20 member teams, which it dubbed the "tyranny of the majority".

City have filed an appeal, which their most truculent fans believe is evidence that the system is crooked, while the club has doubled down on declaring its innocence of charges of financial cheating, and launched an appeal at what it dismisses as the Premier League independent commission's "opinion".

In that statement, City said: "Manchester City Football Club can confirm that at 7pm on Thursday 1st October 2026 the Club lodged its comprehensive Appeal against the opinion of the Premier League Commission, in relation to the Premier League disciplinary matter.

"The Club's firm position is that, on multiple grounds, the opinion contains clear material errors, of law, principle and fact and is unsafe.

"The Club is innocent of the accusations made by the Premier League and a comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence exists in support of all of its positions, relating to this case."

The Premier League has noted that City has appealed the decision and that the club lodged the appeal to the Chair of the Judicial Panel, Sir Gary Hickinbottom.

Other developments since include Prime Minister Andy Burnham expressing his "concern" that the owners would sell up, given their extensive contribution to Manchester, in his time as Mayor, and before.

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> The reaction from fans of City and other clubs was as brutal and as cruel as we have come to expect on social media

However, a No 10 spokesperson has since attempted to provide context to his remarks and said: "He also stressed that it is an ongoing independent process. It is essential that it is allowed to run its course and the outcome respected.

"Wherever wrongdoing is established, those responsible should face the appropriate consequences."

Etihad Airways says it is considering legal action after the club's principal sponsor was effectively named as being a party to sham contracts, subsidised by the owners.

The state-owned national airline of the United Arab Emirates first sponsored the stadium and the kit in 2011, in a 10-year naming rights deal worth £400m, since extended in 2021.

"Etihad categorically rejects any finding, conclusion or implication that suggests the airline has ever been involved in improper commercial arrangements."

But debates have raged around the city ever since. In the immediate aftermath of the Premier League's confirmation that City were guilty of the charges against them, businessman Chris Bird appeared on TalkSport arguing that the full legal process is not yet complete, and that the club possesses undisclosed, irrefutable evidence which will prove its innocence.

The former City director asserted that the club holds a comprehensive body of evidence that has not yet been made public, that the proceedings are one-sided until a "full process" and complete review are finished, comparing it to a legal VAR check. He suggested a story will eventually emerge regarding bias and conspiratorial activity against the club.

His remarks drew immediate pushback during the broadcast from former City financial advisor Stefan Borson and host Simon Jordan, who noted that raising new evidence on appeal without strict permission is restricted and that giving fans false hope after a guilty verdict is misleading.

The reaction from fans of City and other clubs was as brutal and as cruel as we have come to expect on social media. Some however, were supportive and believe the Premier League's actions were motivated by the powerful elite of Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United (the so-called red cartel) angry that their hegemony was brought to an end by Chelsea, and then City. That thesis questions the very basis of the enquiry in the first place.

I canvassed a wide range of City supporters in the business community. Many preferred not to comment at all, but expressed a mixture of sadness and anger. Opinion varies, one likened the current situation to a family member who has been found guilty of murder, but is looking you in the eye and claiming their innocence. Others have pored over the redacted document from the Premier League and believe the legal process is far from over. "This will end up in the High Court, not a kangaroo court," said one.

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"Joining MLS has been a goal throughout the development and refinement of our WBT service. We felt it was important to road test our processes thoroughly and we have achieved this thanks to the support of our fantastic clients. We are now delighted to join the MLS community" Steve Edge, Founder and Director

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.

Our clients want to meet their duty to their clients but although they are willing, they often lack the means to sort through the complexity a long established Willbank presents. We see our role as to help them through each step of the process, deploying our tools, processes and expertise to unlock value for the firm and its clients.

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Disability History Month: Celebrating Differences, Making History! 🌟

Disability History Month runs from 19th November to 19th December 2026, and as Jonathan Fogerty, Senior Associate at *CFG* explains, it is time to celebrate the amazing people, achievements and stories that have helped shape our world.

As a wheelchair user for nearly 40 years after my spinal cord injury, as a teenager left me paralysed from the chest down, I have tried to face the challenges that come with a disability head on and most of the time with a smile. If you don't, it's a prescription for lifelong misery, and none of us want that. Accessing shops with a step, accessing leisure facilities of all kinds, and using public transport all come with difficulties which those who do not have a mobility impairment rarely understand.


Jonathan Fogerty

Running from November to December in the UK, Disability History Month is all about recognising the contributions of disabled people, challenging stereotypes and celebrating how far we have come in making society more inclusive. It's a chance to reflect on the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the future.

Throughout history, disabled people have been breaking barriers, challenging expectations and making their mark on the world. From talented artists and groundbreaking scientists to inspiring athletes, campaigners and everyday heroes, there's certainly no shortage of incredible stories to discover!

Take physicist Stephen Hawking, for example, whose work helped transform our understanding of the universe, or Paralympic athlete, Tanni Grey-Thompson who continue to challenge perceptions of what's possible. And let's not forget the countless disability rights campaigners whose determination has helped create positive changes in education, employment, accessibility and everyday life.

But Disability History Month is not just about famous faces or extraordinary achievements. It's also about recognising the experiences, contributions and voices of disabled people in our communities, workplaces, schools and families. Everyone has a story worth hearing, and sometimes the most meaningful changes begin with an ordinary conversation.

> Inclusion is fundamental for all organisations and leaders must take proactive steps to nurture inclusion, diversity, and equality within their workplaces

Of course, while there's plenty to celebrate, there's still work to do! From making buildings and public spaces more accessible to challenging outdated attitudes and ensuring equal opportunities, creating an inclusive society is something we can all play a part in.

And the good news? **Making a difference doesn't always require a grand gesture!** Sometimes it's as simple as listening, learning, asking thoughtful questions or considering how we can make everyday activities more accessible to everyone.

Disability History Month is also a great excuse to get curious!

Why not discover a fascinating historical figure, read a book by a disabled author, explore disability-related art or start a conversation about inclusion? You might be surprised by what you learn along the way.

Most importantly, it's a reminder that disability is a natural part of human diversity. Our differences make our communities richer, our perspectives broader and our world a much more interesting place.

The UK alone has 16.1 million people that are considered to have a disability. With such a large portion of the population who experience challenges in work associated with their disability, UK employers must build an inclusive organisation that welcome diversity, inclusion, and equality for all.

Inclusion is fundamental for all organisations and leaders must take proactive steps to nurture inclusion, diversity, and equality within their workplaces. Being an inclusive employer allows you to build trust with your employees, including increasing employee mental wellbeing, satisfaction, engagement, and boosting productivity.

So, this Disability History Month, let's celebrate achievements, recognise the people who paved the way and continue working towards a world where everyone feels valued, respected and included.

Because, after all, **history belongs to everyone, and the future should too!**

Here's to celebrating differences, breaking down barriers and making sure everyone has a place in the story.

Jonathan is a senior associate solicitor at CFG. He qualified as a personal injury solicitor in 2000 and has supported many clients affected by spinal cord injury over a quarter of a century. He believes passionately in equality for all. He talks, a lot, mostly to anybody, who will listen, and grumbles, even more!

Trailblazing partnership launched to guide Greater Manchester's response to neurodivergent young people in the justice system

A new strategic partnership has been launched to guide Seen, Heard, Diverted, a three-year programme working with neurodivergent young people to help shape how the justice system responds to them.

The GMCA, Greater Manchester Police, Olliers Solicitors, Greater Manchester Youth Network and organisations across youth justice and the charity sector have joined forces to guide Seen, Heard, Diverted, a three-year programme aimed at reducing the number of neurodivergent children entering the criminal justice system in Greater Manchester.

The programme will work with neurodivergent young people to identify where systems and professional responses need to change, using their experiences to shape resources for young people and parents and carers and practical tools for professionals across the justice system.

Families will be able to access co-produced resources, including videos, downloadable information and practical tools, designed to help them understand and navigate the justice system.

The need for greater understanding is reflected in the frontline experience of Manchester-based criminal defence firm Olliers Solicitors, where lawyers regularly see neurodivergent behaviours misunderstood as defiance, aggression or a lack of remorse.

Matthew Claughton, Managing Director, Olliers Solicitors said: "In criminal defence work, we see the consequences of misunderstanding every week. A young person who avoids eye contact, struggles to sit still in an interview or finds it difficult to explain themselves under pressure can be seen as evasive or unremorseful, when what's actually happening is that their neurodivergence hasn't been recognised.

"By the time we're involved, the damage can already be done. This programme gives us an opportunity to intervene much earlier."

Damian Dallimore, Assistant Director, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Director of the GM Violence Reduction Unit, said: "The overrepresentation of neurodivergent people in prison and the criminal justice system is something that has long been known and yet improvements have often been slow or in pockets of good practice rather than systemic.

"The challenge of changing this is a big one but is one we are very much keen to address. The coming together of a range of partners from across public, private and voluntary sectors is particularly exciting and I can't wait for us to see the impact of our work."

Lynsay Armbruster, Detective Superintendent, Greater Manchester Police, said: "Police officers make complex decisions in real time, often in highly dynamic circumstances. As our understanding of neurodiversity continues to develop, it is important that officers are equipped with the knowledge and support they need to recognise how neurodivergent young people may present and to respond in the most effective way.

"What stood out from the first meeting was the wealth of experience, expertise and commitment in the room, alongside a shared recognition across policing and partner organisations of the challenges we face."

Alex Fairweather, CEO of Greater Manchester Youth Network, said: "Too often, the youth sector is asked to respond once a young person is already in the system. We want to be there before that point. This programme gives organisations across Greater Manchester the opportunity to challenge how things currently work and, most importantly, involve young people themselves in shaping what needs to change.

"That's what will make this meaningful."

The programme's first year will focus on listening, design and testing. A cohort of neurodivergent young people with lived experience will work directly alongside the partnership. They will help to shape the resources, tools and training that will be developed and rolled out in the following stages, drawing on their own experiences of the justice system to inform how professionals and organisations respond.

The strategic partnership will provide oversight throughout the programme, ensuring its development is led by the experiences of young people and the organisations working with them across Greater Manchester. Partners will reconvene later this year to review progress and agree on next steps.



Pictured from back L-R: Sarah Musique-Hargreaves, Trustee at GMYN; Damian Dallimore, Assistant Director at GMCA Safer and Stronger Communities Team; Matthew Claughton, Managing Director at Olliers Solicitors; Louis Cane, Programme Coordinator at GMYN; Sam Palmer, CEO at Respect for All, Front: Janice Allen, Education Specialist; Lynsay Armbruster, Detective Superintendent, Greater Manchester Police; Alex Fairweather, CEO at GMYN

The Importance of Remembrance Sunday

Every year in November, people across the United Kingdom and many Commonwealth countries observe Remembrance Sunday, a day dedicated to remembering the service and sacrifice of members of the armed forces who lost their lives in wars and conflicts. Held on the Sunday closest to 11th November, it provides an opportunity for communities to come together in reflection, gratitude, and respect.


Shane Smith

Remembrance Sunday is important because it honours those who gave their lives in service to their country. Originally established to remember those who died during the First World War, it now commemorates all military personnel and civilians who have been affected by conflict. Through ceremonies, wreath-laying events, and the two-minute silence, people pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Remembrance Sunday is important because it honours those who gave their lives in service to their country

The day also serves as a reminder of the human cost of war. By reflecting on the experiences of past generations, individuals can gain a greater appreciation of the freedoms and opportunities they enjoy today. Remembrance Sunday encourages people to learn about history and understand the impact that conflict has on individuals, families, and communities.

A key symbol of Remembrance Sunday is the red poppy, inspired by the flowers that grew on the battlefields of Belgium and northern France after the First World War. Wearing a poppy demonstrates support for the Armed Forces community and keeps the memory of those who served alive.

Remembrance Sunday is also an occasion that brings people together regardless of age, background, or belief. National and local ceremonies create a shared moment of reflection, helping communities recognise the values of courage, duty, and service. It promotes unity by encouraging people to remember a common history and to honour those who helped shape the world we live in today.

Importantly, the day is not only about looking back at the past but also about promoting a more peaceful future. By remembering the consequences of war, people are encouraged to value peace, understanding, and cooperation between nations.

Ultimately, Remembrance Sunday remains an important national occasion because it honours sacrifice, preserves historical memory, and reminds us of the importance of peace. Through remembrance, we show gratitude to those who served and ensure that their contributions are never forgotten.

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MSB Solicitors celebrates strong performance in Chambers and Partners 2027 rankings

MSB Solicitors is celebrating a strong performance in the 2027 Chambers and Partners rankings, with recognition for both its teams and individual lawyers across several practice areas, reflecting the firm's continued commitment to excellence and its mission of delivering access to justice for all.

The latest rankings see MSB recognised across Family, Crime, Social Housing and Employment, with several lawyers achieving Chambers rankings for the first time alongside teams and individuals who have continued to maintain their positions among the country's leading legal professionals.

The Chambers and Partners rankings recognise lawyers and law firms for their legal expertise, client service and professional reputation, based on extensive independent research and client feedback.

Family

MSB's Family team has once again received significant recognition. In the North West, the team has retained its Band 2 ranking, while its UK-wide Family Public Law practice has maintained its Band 3 position. The firm's work in international child abduction has also secured national recognition, with the team entering the newly expanded UK-wide rankings in Band 3 following the opening of the category beyond London-based firms.

Individual recognition within the department also remains strong. Dr Emma Palmer, Head of Family, retains her Band 1 ranking, while Pippa Tudor continues to be recognised in Band 4.

Social Housing

MSB's Social Housing team has maintained its Band 3 ranking in the North West, with further success coming through individual

L–R: Amy Tagoe, Andy Moore and Emma Palmer



recognition. Louise Murphy retains her Band 2 ranking, while colleagues Amy Tagoe and Andy Moore have achieved Chambers recognition for the first time, being ranked Band 3 and Up and Coming respectively.

Employment

The firm's Employment team also celebrated a significant milestone, with Steven Davies securing his first Chambers ranking, entering the guide in Band 5.

Crime

MSB's Crime team has continued its consistent performance, retaining its Band 2 ranking in the North West and reinforcing the firm's reputation for excellence across its core practice areas.

Managing Partner's view

Commenting on the results, Emma Carey, Managing Partner of MSB Solicitors, said: "We are immensely proud of this year's Chambers and Partners results. To see so many of our teams and individuals recognised, whilst also welcoming several colleagues into the rankings for the first time, is a tremendous achievement.

"These rankings reflect the expertise, dedication and commitment of our people across Liverpool, Manchester, Cheshire and the West Midlands. They demonstrate the strength and depth of talent we have throughout the firm and the exceptional service we provide to our clients every day.

"What makes me particularly proud is that this recognition spans so many different practice areas. Whether supporting vulnerable individuals and families, protecting tenants' rights, defending clients facing criminal proceedings or advising employers and employees, our teams remain committed to delivering outstanding legal services and access to justice for all.

"These results are a reflection of the hard work of every colleague across MSB and provide a platform for us to continue building on our success," she added.

L–R: Louise Murphy, Pippa Tudor and Steven Davies



Clarke Willmott In Manchester celebrates impressive Legal 500 results

The Manchester office of national law firm *Clarke Willmott* has been ranked highly in this year's Legal 500 guide, with numerous practice areas and individual lawyers being recognised.

Social housing partner Lindsey Felstead was named as a 'Leading Partner' in the 2027 edition, while the property litigation and planning and environment practices in Manchester were both listed in the 'Firms to Watch' category.

Nationally, Clarke Willmott received the top ranking possible for eight of its specialist practice areas and in total was ranked in 51 practice areas across all seven of its regional offices.

Individually, Clarke Willmott's lawyers received a total of 131 recommendations, of which seven were improvements from last year, and 59 were new recommendations for the 2027 edition.

Ed Foulkes, partner and head of the Manchester office, said: "This year's Legal 500 shows that we're continuing to build on the success of recent years and that the depth of expertise within the firm has been recognised, with rankings across numerous practice areas.

"Our clients continue to place their trust and confidence in the breadth and consistency of the services we deliver in our Manchester office."

Clarke Willmott CEO, Peter Swinburn, said: "The Legal 500 is an important independent benchmark of quality and service in our profession and this year's outcome is a clear reflection of the outstanding talent,



Ed Foulkes

"Our clients continue to place their trust and confidence in the breadth and consistency of the services we deliver in our Manchester office."

commitment and professionalism of our lawyers across every department.

"All of this is against a healthy financial backdrop which saw our revenues increase to over £68 million for 2026. Compared to many of our mid-sized competitors, we have an enviable financial position that increases our strategic flexibility to support both investment and growth."

The Legal 500 series is widely acknowledged as the world's largest legal guide. It is an independent guide and firms and individuals are recommended purely on merit.

Bansa Singh Hayer Triumphs in the Goddard Cup at Wilmslow Golf Club

Congratulations to Bansa Singh Hayer, who was crowned champion of the Goddard Cup 2026, Deans Court Chambers' annual golf day, held at the prestigious Wilmslow Golf Club on Sunday 4th October.

Widely regarded as Chambers' unofficial "5th Major", the Goddard Cup once again brought together members, staff, pupils, and guests for a fantastic day of competitive golf, camaraderie, and hospitality. True to tradition, the event welcomed participants of all golfing abilities, with players competing in excellent spirits throughout the day on one of Cheshire's finest courses.

After a closely contested competition, Bansa emerged as the deserving winner, producing an impressive performance to lift the coveted trophy and etch his name into Goddard Cup history.

The day concluded with a gathering over lunch, providing attendees with the opportunity to relax, share stories from the course, and celebrate another successful Chambers event. The Goddard Cup continues to be a highlight of the Deans Court Chambers calendar, strengthening relationships across Chambers and reminding everyone that, for one day each year, golf takes precedence over the law.

Congratulations once again to Bansa Singh Hayer, the 2026 Goddard Cup Champion. We look forward to seeing who can challenge for the title when the 5th Major returns next year.



Bansa Singh Hayer (right) pictured with Michael Hayton KC

Myerson Solicitors strengthens Chambers UK rankings with six new recognitions in 2027 Guide

Myerson Solicitors has secured six new rankings in the Chambers and Partners UK Guide 2027, further strengthening its reputation for legal excellence and reflecting a sustained period of growth and success for the firm. The Altrincham-based, employee-owned law firm has achieved two new departmental rankings for its Family and Real Estate Litigation teams, alongside four new individual rankings, bringing its total number of Chambers UK recognitions to 15.

The newly ranked departments are:

- Family
- Real Estate Litigation


M. Akeel Latif

Four Myerson lawyers have also received new individual recognition:

- Jo Evans, Partner and Head of Employment
- Jane Tenquist, Partner and Head of Family
- Richard Meehan, Partner in Corporate Commercial
- Joe Ferguson, Associate in Family

These achievements are complemented by the firm's continued recognition across its established practice areas, with Corporate/Mergers and Acquisitions: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises/Owner-managed Businesses retaining its Band 2 ranking, alongside Employment and Information Technology, both ranked in Band 3.

The firm is particularly proud to see M. Akeel Latif, Partner and Head of Corporate Commercial, achieve a prestigious Band 1 ranking for Corporate/Mergers and Acquisitions. In this highly competitive area of law, Band 1 recognition places Akeel among the leading legal specialists in his category. Akeel leads one of the largest corporate teams in the Northwest outside Manchester city center, who regularly advise on complex, high-value transactions. This achievement reflects both his expertise and the collective strength and success of the wider team.

Five further Myerson lawyers have once again been recognised in the guide:

- Richard Wolff, Partner and Head of Insolvency and Restructuring



- Laura Pile, Partner and Head of Real Estate Litigation
- Joanne Henderson, Partner in Employment
- Victoria Davis, Legal Director in Employment
- Karen Taylor, Legal Director in Property Litigation

The Chambers UK Guide is one of the legal sector's most respected independent rankings, recognising outstanding law firms and lawyers based on extensive research, client feedback, and assessments of legal expertise. With just 2% of firms securing a ranking, recognition in the guide is a significant and highly prestigious achievement.

The latest rankings follow a particularly successful period for Myerson, which recently announced record revenue of £19.1 million for the 2025/26 financial year, representing 9% organic growth. The firm has also celebrated another strong performance in The Legal 500 UK 2027 Guide, securing 32 rankings overall, including 12 ranked departments, and five Tier 1 teams.

Richard Lloyd, Chief Executive at Myerson Solicitors, commented: "We are delighted to have secured new rankings in this year's Chambers UK Guide, while retaining all our existing departmental and individual recognitions. Building on our excellent results in The Legal 500, these achievements reflect our continued growth and the depth of talent, collaboration and shared commitment across the firm. This recognition is a testament to the collective efforts of everyone at Myerson, and I am incredibly proud of what we continue to achieve together."

Myerson Solicitors celebrates double win at British Wills and Probate Awards 2026

Myerson Solicitors has secured two national accolades at the British Wills and Probate Awards 2026, recognising the strength and expertise of its Private Client team. The Altrincham-based law firm scooped two prestigious awards at the national ceremony held on Thursday, 8th October:

- Probate Provider of the Year – North & Midlands
- Tax & Trusts Team of the Year

The double victory follows a record year for *Myerson's Wills, Trusts and Probate department* in the financial year.

The team has continued to strengthen its reputation for advising *high net worth (HNW) and ultra high net worth (UHNW)* individuals, families and business owners on complex estate and succession planning, inheritance tax, trusts and wealth preservation. Its expertise extends to family investment companies, family wealth structures, intergenerational wealth transfers and the administration of complex estates.


Bik-Ki Wong

Led by Partner Bik-Ki Wong, a recognised specialist in high-net-worth private client matters, the team combines technical expertise with a highly personalised, partner-led service. Working alongside an established network of accountants, financial advisers and wealth managers, and drawing on expertise from across Myerson's wider legal departments, the team provides joined-up advice covering clients' personal, family and business affairs.

Bik-Ki Wong, Partner and Head of Wills, Trusts and Probate at Myerson Solicitors, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have won two awards, particularly following such a successful year for our department. I am incredibly proud of our team and everything we have achieved together.

"Our work is built on trust and long-standing relationships. We advise individuals and families on matters that are often deeply personal and complex, combining specialist legal expertise with genuine care and personal attention.

"What makes our team special is our commitment to understanding the bigger picture, working closely with our clients' trusted advisers and colleagues across the firm to deliver joined-up, practical advice. These awards are wonderful recognition of that approach and the dedication of our entire team."

Myerson Named Business of the Year at Altrincham & Sale Chamber of Commerce Awards

Altrincham, 19th October 2026 – *Myerson Solicitors* is delighted to announce that it has been named Business of the Year at the 2026 Altrincham & Sale Chamber of Commerce Awards, while also being recognised as Runner-Up in the Professional Services category.

The awards celebrate the businesses, organisations and individuals making a positive difference across Altrincham, Sale and the surrounding area. For Myerson, the recognition reflects both the firm's continued commercial success and its longstanding commitment to the local community.

Richard Lloyd, Chief Executive at Myerson Solicitors, said: "We are incredibly proud to have been named Business of the Year and to have received recognition in the Professional Services category. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of our people and the trust our clients place in us.

"Having been based in Altrincham since 1982, these awards are particularly meaningful to us. We are proud of the positive contribution we make to the local community, from creating employment opportunities and supporting the local economy to giving back through our support for charities, community organisations and initiatives that matter to local people."



L–R: Chamber President Helen Sweeney, Emma Marsh, Eva Karalius and Councillor Tom Ross

Bexley Beaumont employment team expands with partner appointment

Bexley Beaumont has increased the ranks of its employment law team with the appointment of another partner.

Katy Parkinson has joined after more than a decade with some of the best known legal practices in Lancashire. Co-founder and Chief Executive, Karen Bexley, described how Ms Parkinson's arrival followed the busiest year for Bexley Beaumont's employment specialists since the firm opened its doors.

She added that demand for its services was being driven by an "intense period of change and challenge" facing employers nationwide.

"Katy brings more of the commercial insight and experience which has already proven to be of such benefit to businesses in all sectors and of all sizes.

"Companies currently find themselves confronting not just economic pressures but rapidly evolving legal responsibilities too.

"The continued roll-out of changes heralded by the Employment Rights Act, for instance, means that bosses need the kind of legal support which meets their wider commercial objectives.

"What is more, the advice that Katy and her colleagues are able to offer goes far beyond business restructuring, redundancy or other workplace and HR disputes.

"Due to the way in which Bexley Beaumont functions and how closely our lawyers collaborate, business owners can easily access a much broader and very authoritative set of skills relating to the formation, dissolution or expansion of companies than traditional law firm models can offer."

Prior to joining Bexley Beaumont, Ms Parkinson worked with a succession of law firms in Blackburn, Preston and Chorley. In addition to advising many major national and international brands in the manufacturing, logistics, care and hospitality industries, she has also been responsible for delivering training to keep employers up to date with developments in employment law since qualifying in 2015.

This month sees a number of further significant provisions of last year's Employment Rights Act take effect. They include extra requirements for companies to tackle harassment in the workplace and protections for trades union representatives.

Ms Parkinson's arrival brings the number of lawyers in Bexley Beaumont's employment team to 12. The firm, now has a total of 120 people in the business. Earlier this year, it retained its place as the fastest-growing legal business for the fourth consecutive year in an influential industry growth study compiled by Codex Edge.

Bexley Beaumont's growth has been accompanied by greater external recognition, including being shortlisted in two categories at the forthcoming British Legal Awards. Earlier this year, the firm became one of a relatively small number of legal businesses in the UK to achieve B Corp certification, underlining its commitment to meeting high standards of social and environmental performance.

In July, Bexley Beaumont was also the only legal practice named in the Founder 250, a list celebrating 250 of the UK's leading founder-led companies. The list recognises

businesses in which the influence and vision of their founders remain central to the organisation, with Bexley Beaumont also one of just 42 companies on the list that were founded by women.


Katy Parkinson

Burton Copeland welcomes solicitor Hinesh Chauhan to its criminal defence team

Manchester criminal defence firm *Burton Copeland* has strengthened its team with the appointment of solicitor Hinesh Chauhan, who joined the firm in October 2026.

Hinesh joins Burton Copeland following his time with the Crown Prosecution Service, where he worked as a Magistrates' Court Advocate in Manchester and Preston.

Managing Partner Dan Weed said, "Having worked for the CPS Hinesh brings another perspective to the team. He's seen how cases are prepared and presented from the other side, and that experience is extremely valuable in defence work. We were very impressed by his enthusiasm for criminal law and his determination to develop his career in defence work. We're really pleased he's chosen us to do that with us and wish him a long and successful career at BC"

Having qualified as a solicitor in 2021, Hinesh has gained experience across a range of legal disciplines, including personal injury, residential conveyancing and real estate finance, before moving into criminal law.

His experience with the Crown Prosecution Service has given him valuable insight into the preparation and prosecution of criminal cases, together with practical advocacy experience in the Magistrates' Court.



Hinesh Chauhan (left) pictured with Daniel Weed

Hinesh is now looking to build his career in criminal defence at Burton Copeland, with a particular focus on developing his advocacy experience and working towards qualification as a duty solicitor.

"Burton Copeland has an excellent reputation in criminal defence, and I see joining a firm with so much experience is a superb opportunity for me. I'm looking forward to working with and learning from the experienced lawyers I have around me while developing my own practice" said Hinesh.

His appointment adds further strength to Burton Copeland's established criminal defence team and reflects the firm's continued expansion and commitment to developing legal talent in Manchester.

Brabners appoints social impact manager after gaining B Corp Recertification

Law firm *Brabners* has appointed Freya Grummitt to the newly created position of Social Impact Manager in a move that follows the firm's recent B Corp re-certification. Freya joins the firm, bringing 15 years of experience in delivering responsible business and social impact initiatives across consultancy, public sector and corporate environments.

The appointment supports Brabners' long-standing social impact strategy, with Freya leading the development and delivery of the firm's community and sustainability initiatives, embedding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) priorities across the business, strengthening impact measurement and reporting and increasing the visibility of the firm's long-term social impact work.

The role will also create greater opportunities for clients to collaborate on shared social impact goals, creating the opportunity for even stronger, more meaningful partnerships that extend way beyond the traditional legal services. With many organisations placing an increased focus on sustainability and community impact.

Recertification & net zero plans

Following its recent recertification as a B Corp, the firm has now set another ambitious goal and has committed to becoming a net zero business by 2040 – ten years before the UN's target.

Achieving this goal by reducing emissions even further, supporting community regeneration and embedding sustainability


Freya Grummitt

into its operations, policies and planning, will form a key part of Freya's role.

Making the difference

Both Freya and Brabners see delivering meaningful social impact as integral to achieving a broader ambition to 'Make The Difference' – with a real focus on translating this mission into action.

The firm has reduced waste by 47 tonnes and paper usage by 3.1m sheets annually since 2019; has reduced its gender pay gap; offers two paid days of volunteering for each colleague every year; and achieved its ambition of offering 365 days of pro bono work last year.

In addition, The Brabners Foundation has raised and donated over £250,000 to local and national charities and good causes.

Freya Grummitt, Social Impact Manager at Brabners said: "Throughout my career, I've been passionate about helping organisations create meaningful, lasting change. For Brabners, social impact isn't treated as a separate initiative or a box-ticking exercise. It's embedded within the firm's culture, values and mission to make the difference.

"There is already a huge amount of positive work taking place across the business, from community partnerships and volunteering to pro bono support and colleague-led initiatives. I'm excited to help build on those strong foundations, bringing greater visibility and strategic focus to our social impact efforts.

"One of my main aims for Brabners is to combine robust impact measurement with the stories and experiences behind the numbers, because both are essential to understanding real-world impact. By working closely with clients, colleagues and community partners, we're going to deliver even more meaningful outcomes and the ability to demonstrate the difference we can make together."

"One of my main aims for Brabners is to combine robust impact measurement with the stories and experiences behind the numbers, because both are essential to understanding real-world impact

Robert White, Chief Executive Officer at Brabners said: "Freya's appointment marks an exciting step forward in our commitment to creating lasting positive impact. As a purpose-led business, we have long been committed to using our influence, expertise and resources to demonstrate that business can bring about positive and lasting change.

"Her appointment reflects our ambition to go even further. From advancing social mobility and creating opportunities for underrepresented groups, to supporting our journey towards net zero and building partnerships with clients to maximise our combined positive impact, we will ensure that social impact remains embedded in every aspect of our business. Freya's expertise, passion and collaborative approach make her ideally placed to help us build even greater momentum."

Marjha Golding-Evans joins IMD as Partner, bringing almost 20 years of family law and leadership experience

IMD Solicitors has strengthened its Family Law team with the appointment of Marjha Golding-Evans as Partner, bringing almost two decades of specialist family law experience together with an extensive background in law firm leadership.

Marjha Golding-Evans joins *IMD* with particular expertise in complex and high-net-worth financial matters, including cases involving businesses, trusts, inherited wealth, substantial property portfolios, pensions, farming families, agricultural assets and landed estates.



Marjha Golding-Evans

Her practice also includes wealth protection through pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements, as well as advice concerning financial arrangements between unmarried couples.

Having begun her family law career in London in 2005, Ms Golding-Evans subsequently developed her practice across Wales and the South West. Over almost 20 years, she has advised clients in technically demanding financial remedy proceedings where family wealth may be connected to owner-managed businesses, trusts, inherited assets and complex ownership structures.

She has particular experience acting for farming families and landowners, where relationship breakdown can raise issues extending well beyond the value of individual assets.

A farm may represent a family home, an operating business, inherited wealth and a source of income, while also forming an important part of succession planning for the next generation. Ownership may involve partnerships, companies, trusts, tenancies or interests held across several generations.

In such cases, Marjha regularly works alongside accountants, business valuation specialists, financial advisers, land agents and other professionals to understand both the financial position and the practical operation of the underlying business or estate.

Her rural expertise extends beyond client work. She serves on the Country

Land and Business Association's South Wales Committee and its national Legal, Parliamentary and Property Rights Committee, contributing a family law perspective to issues affecting farming families, landowners and rural businesses.

She also has experience of complex jurisdictional disputes and acted in the reported case of A v B [2025] EWFC 377 (B), which concerned a contested jurisdiction issue.

Her work has been recognised by The Legal 500, where she has been ranked as a Next Generation Partner and described as "a thoughtful, caring and highly skilled advocate". The directory has also recognised her experience in complex matrimonial finance involving significant farming assets and landed estates.

Alongside her legal practice, Marjha brings substantial management experience to IMD.

Before joining the firm, she was Managing Partner for the South West and Wales at Stowe Family Law, where she combined a complex personal caseload with responsibility for a significant regional team across multiple offices.

Her role included strategy, budgeting, recruitment, colleague development and performance management.

Previously, she established and led the Family Law department at RDP Law, with the team later nominated for Family Team of the Year at the Wales Legal Awards 2022.

Mrs Golding-Evans has also contributed extensively to the wider family law profession. She has written specialist legal material for LexisNexis and Jordan Publishing, delivered professional training and webinars, and guest lectured on family law at the University of the West of England.

> "Marjha Golding-Evans has particular experience acting for farming families and landowners, where relationship breakdown can raise issues extending well beyond the value of individual asset

Her involvement with Resolution has included support for family law reform and the introduction of no-fault divorce, while she has also participated in discussions at the House of Lords concerning reform of financial provision law.

She has additionally written for *Farmers Weekly* on the particular challenges facing farming families during divorce, including inherited land, agricultural businesses, succession and the preservation of multi-generational farming enterprises.

At IMD, Marjha Golding-Evans will advise clients on complex family and financial matters while also contributing her leadership experience to the continued development of the firm's Family Law team.

Her appointment further strengthens IMD's work for individuals and families whose personal and financial circumstances involve businesses, substantial assets, rural wealth and increasingly complex domestic and international considerations.

Leigh Day builds for the future with new Executive Board

Leigh Day is building for the future with a wider leadership team structure that reflects the law firm's national profile.

Following a summer of internal elections among the partnership's Equity Partners, an Executive Board is now in place. The five-strong team of lawyers is tasked with taking the firm forward, building on the foundation laid by Senior Partner Martyn Day, 70, who is looking to step back from the day to day running of the firm next year.

Martyn, who founded Leigh Day in 1987 with now retired Sarah Leigh, is working closely with the next generation of litigators who share his 'David and Goliath' vision for access to justice in the UK and around the world to ensure a smooth handover. He will remain in the firm, continuing to drive forward claims as he has throughout his legal career.

The new team will be:

Senior Partner Elect Nigel Mackay
Managing Partner Jamie Beagent
Deputy Managing Partner Clare Campbell

The three will be the core of a new Executive Board, supported by fellow Equity Partners Andrew Bradley, who heads up the Manchester arm of Leigh Day, and Elizabeth George, an in-house barrister who leads the firm's landmark equal pay claim against Next. The Executive Board lawyers have a four-year term of office which began on 1 October, 2026.

Jamie Beagent, 51, is best known for his role as head of Leigh Day's Human Rights Department with a personal portfolio specialising in judicial review. Jamie's new role will take him away from his casework as he drives development, planning and operations at Leigh Day. Jamie has worked at Leigh Day


Nigel Mackay


Jamie Beagent


Clare Campbell

since 2003 with Chambers & Partners saying Jamie Beagent is “absolutely amazing”.

Jamie Beagent said: “It is a huge privilege to take up the position of Managing Partner at Leigh Day. This is a unique firm, packed with talented lawyers and staff. I have grown up here as a lawyer and seen first-hand the positive impact of our high quality and ground-breaking work for our clients, on wider society and the environment. I am excited by the prospect of working alongside Nigel and Clare to take the firm forward into its next chapter. Most of all, I am looking forward to working closely with Martyn, the firm’s founder, whose original vision for a different kind of law firm, nearly 40 years ago, remains absolutely central to who Leigh Day are today and what we will be in the years to come.”

Clare Campbell, 49, heads the Travel litigation group in Leigh Day’s Personal Injury department, and champions the firm’s regional heft from its Manchester base which she joined in 2014. In 2025 Clare was named Personal Injury Lawyer of the Year by the Pan-European Organisation of Personal Injury Lawyers (PEOPIL), for her work to secure justice for Liverpool FC fans affected by the 2022 Champions League Final at the Stade de France in Paris.

> “Following a summer of internal elections among the partnership’s Equity Partners, an Executive Board is now in place

Legal 500 says: “Clare Campbell is an excellent all-round travel lawyer who has huge respect in the industry and secures excellent results for her clients.”

Clare Campbell said: “I am delighted to take on the role of Deputy Managing Partner at Leigh Day. As the first person to hold

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Andrew Bradley


Elizabeth George


Martyn Day

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this position, I see it as an opportunity to work closely with Jamie and the rest of the Executive Board to help shape the future of the firm while remaining committed to the values, culture and client service that have underpinned our success for the last 40 years. I am proud to be entrusted with this responsibility and look forward to helping to drive the firm's strategic objectives, invest in our amazing staff and support the success of the firm in the future."

Nigel Mackay, 48, moves from the role of Leigh Day joint head of Employment which brought Uber, Bolt and Just Eat to book over their record on gig economy workers. Nigel will continue his casework maintaining his emphasis on employment group claims. He has been at Leigh Day since 2012. Chambers and Partners say: "Nigel is a brilliant lawyer, he has his eye on the ball and is very committed to his clients."

Nigel Mackay said: "It is a true honour to succeed Martyn Day in the role of Senior Partner of Leigh Day. I am hugely proud of our firm, and the transformative work we do for our clients, helping them achieve justice and hold powerful interests to account.

"It is also an immense privilege to work alongside such talented and committed colleagues, who share a common passion for using the law to improve the lives of our clients and bring about positive change.

"I am excited to work with Martyn and the new Executive Board to ensure that our unique firm goes from strength to strength over the coming years."

Martyn Day remains in the Senior Partner post until late 2027. His focus on the cases he is running, not least being the Dieselgate emissions claims, is unchanged.

> "When I set up Leigh Day with Sarah all those years ago I wanted a firm where I could have felt happy to work here as a lawyer at any level" – Martyn Day

Martyn Day said: "The approaching 40-year milestone made me reflect on my ongoing position within the firm.

"When I set up Leigh Day with Sarah all those years ago I wanted a firm where I could have felt happy to work here as a lawyer at any level. I wanted a firm where members could stand tall when talking about the firm's work to family and friends. I wanted a firm where quality lawyers and support staff would come to work here, feeling that this is their natural home within the legal world we operate in. I am proud to have achieved that goal.

"Nigel Mackay will take over the reins as Senior Partner when I stand down next year. It gives us a decent period to ensure there is a smooth handover. I have no doubt Nigel Mackay and the new board will do a cracking job.

"I will be standing down with a happy heart - knowing that the firm is going to be in very good hands for the years ahead."

Hugh Jones Solicitors Announces New Appointments as Firm Expansion Continues

Hugh Jones Solicitors has continued its growth with the appointment of new additions across the business and the launch of a recruitment campaign in several departments.

Georgia Roberts and Lauren McHugh joined the firm in September 2026 following the completion of their training contracts at JMW Solicitors LLP, bringing with them valuable experience in both Private Client and Court of Protection work.

Tyler Helsdon has joined Hugh Jones Solicitors as a paralegal after completing his degree, while Asma Osman has also joined the firm as a paralegal, bringing experience she gained at Irwin Mitchell. The business support team has expanded with the appointment of Elise Smith, further strengthening the firm's operational capabilities.

Alongside these appointments, the firm is pleased to announce that Maddy Hemstedt and Annabel Morgan-Platt have both commenced their training contracts. Maddy and Annabel joined as paralegals in 2024 and beginning this stage of their legal careers marks an exciting milestone, as the firm looks forward to supporting them throughout their professional development.

The firm would also like to congratulate Kate Barnett on qualifying as a solicitor, having trained and previously worked as a paralegal with the firm. Her achievement is the culmination of years of hard work, and the entire team is delighted to see her reach this significant point in her career. Hugh Jones Solicitors looks forward to her continued success as part of the firm.

> "We are proud to support talented individuals at every stage of their careers, from those taking their first steps in the profession through to trainees and newly qualified solicitors

These appointments and career progression announcements come during a period of sustained growth for the firm, which is actively recruiting across multiple departments. Current vacancies include roles within the Court of Protection department, Residential Conveyancing team and business support functions, reflecting increasing demand across several specialist practice areas.

Elizabeth Hughes, Managing Director of Hugh Jones Solicitors, said: "We are proud to support talented individuals at every stage of their careers, from those taking their first steps in the profession through to trainees and newly qualified solicitors. We look forward to seeing Maddy, Annabel and Kate continue to thrive as their careers develop."

Leonard Curtis expands at New Bailey with 10,000 sq ft move to Eden

Leonard Curtis, the PE-backed professional services group specialising in corporate restructuring, turnaround, funding and legal advice, is expanding its Manchester presence with a move to a new 10,000 sq ft office at Eden in New Bailey.

The move will see Leonard Curtis relocate from Riverside House on Irwell Street to the seventh floor of the 12-storey office building.

The relocation has been driven by Leonard Curtis outgrowing its existing Manchester base and reflects the firm's continued investment in its people and future growth.

Leonard Curtis has expanded significantly in recent years through organic growth, acquisitions and the development of its service offering. Following the majority investment from Pollen Street Capital in 2025, the business is now pursuing an ambitious growth strategy, with plans to double group revenues over the next four years.

Plans for the fit-out of the new space are now underway, with the Leonard Curtis team expected to move into their new workspace later this year.

Dan Booth, CEO of Leonard Curtis, said: "This move marks an important step for us. While additional space is important, this is really about creating an environment that reflects the business we are building. Our people are at the heart of everything we do, and we want to create an environment where they can do their best work and continue to develop. Eden gives us the space and facilities we need for the next stage of growth."

Hilary Pascoe, Director and Head of Manchester at Leonard Curtis, said: "Manchester is a key market for us and we work closely with business owners, management teams and professional advisers across the region – Eden gives us a larger, more flexible base to do that, while keeping us at the heart of the professional community in New Bailey."

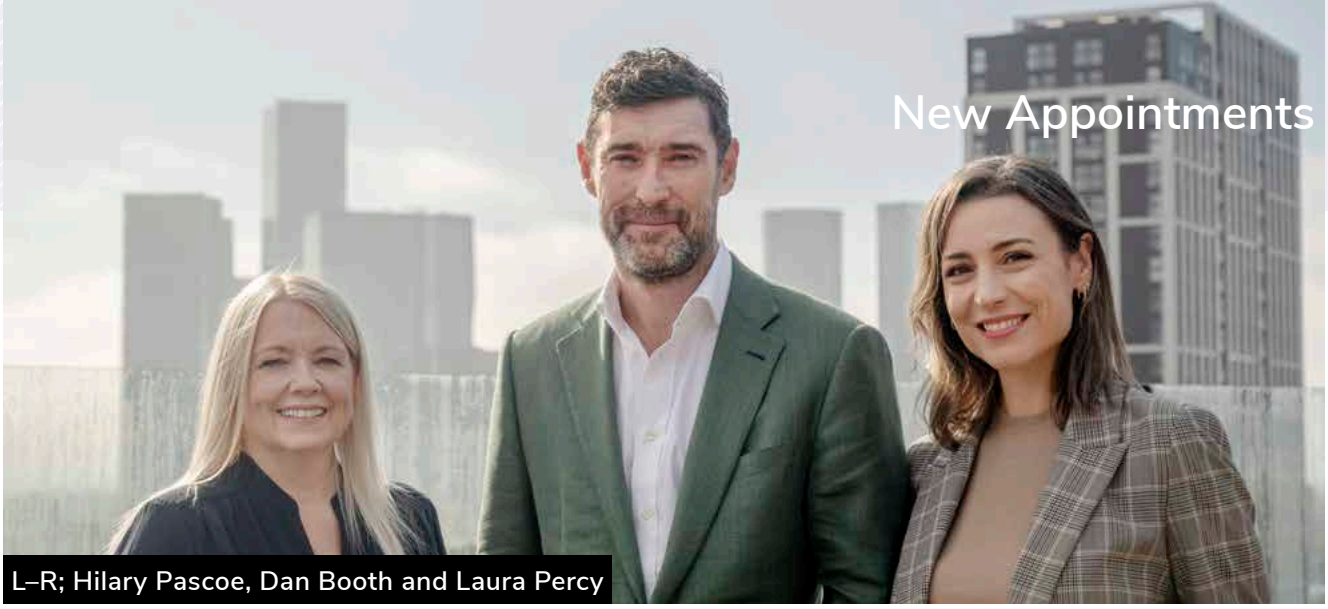
Laura Percy, Development Director at Muse, said: "This latest deal marks another positive step forward in Eden's journey and shows that businesses are still prioritising work environments that place people and their wellbeing at the heart of the office experience."

"It's also brilliant to see an organisation which has grown and expanded in New Bailey staying here, reflecting the cultural and business district's credentials as a destination – a vision that was at the heart of our £1bn Salford Central masterplan."

The award-winning £36 million, 115,000 sq. ft office building also boasts a 5.5 NABERS UK Design Reviewed Target rating, making it one of the UK's most sustainable office buildings.

The Leonard Curtis team heading to Eden will benefit from a range of features and amenities which have been designed to drive productivity, collaboration and connectivity, alongside prioritising wellbeing.

Enhanced fresh air rates boost cognitive function; the roof terrace makes the ideal setting for hosting informal meetings and client events; and the cycle storage for 156 bikes – alongside showers, drying and changing rooms – provides the ideal conditions for active travel.



L–R; Hilary Pascoe, Dan Booth and Laura Percy

Elsewhere Eden boasts facilities which enable employees to seamlessly fit leisure and exercise into their busy schedules. The on-site café, Spice & Grind, serves breakfasts, lunches, snacks and artisan drinks, while the building is also home to its very own yoga studio and contemplation space on the ground floor, both of which provide an opportunity to take a break from the working day.

MSB Solicitors appoints Scott Turner-Percy as Head of Business Crime

MSB Solicitors **has appointed Scott Turner-Percy as Head of Business Crime, strengthening the firm's capability in complex fraud, financial crime, corporate investigations and regulatory enforcement matters.**

Turner-Percy brings more than a decade of experience advising corporations, financial institutions, senior executives and high-net-worth individuals on serious financial crime, regulatory investigations, corporate criminal liability and fraud-related risk. His practice spans complex business crime defence, corporate investigations, asset recovery, regulatory enforcement and cross-border investigations.

Throughout his career, Scott has acted on some of the UK's most significant instances of fraud and financial crime, including prosecutions and investigations involving allegations worth hundreds of millions of pounds. He has advised clients facing scrutiny from a wide range of regulators and enforcement bodies, including the Serious Fraud Office, Financial Conduct Authority, National Crime Agency, HM Revenue & Customs, Environment Agency and Health and Safety Executive.

Recognised as a Grade A Fraud Supervisor, Scott has developed a practice that combines specialist criminal defence experience with City-based international investigations work and operational in-house regulatory experience. This breadth of experience enables him to advise clients facing simultaneous criminal, regulatory, civil and reputational risks.

In his new role, Scott will lead the continued expansion of MSB's Business Crime and Investigations practice as it supports businesses, directors, professionals and individuals facing fraud allegations, regulatory investigations, financial crime issues and complex enforcement action.

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The practice advises on matters involving the Serious Fraud Office, Financial Conduct Authority, HM Revenue & Customs, Account Freezing Orders, money laundering investigations, corporate investigations and emerging financial crime risks.

Commenting on his appointment, Scott Turner-Percy said: "I am delighted to be joining MSB at an exciting stage in the firm's growth and development.

"Businesses and senior decision-makers are operating in an increasingly complex regulatory and enforcement environment. Investigations can now involve criminal, regulatory, civil and reputational considerations simultaneously, requiring strategic advice that balances legal risk with commercial realities.

"My focus is on helping organisations and individuals respond confidently to allegations of fraud, financial crime and regulatory misconduct, while supporting them through investigations, enforcement action and periods of significant scrutiny.

"MSB has an excellent reputation for delivering practical, client-focused advice, and I look forward to building a first-class business crime and investigations practice that supports clients both regionally and nationally."

Emma Carey, MSB Solicitors' Managing Partner, added: "Scott's recruitment marks a strategic milestone for us as we look to develop our Business Crime service offering.

"His experience and the passion he has for his work really stood out to us and we are excited by the opportunities that will be presented by having him on our team," she continued.


Scott Turner

Olliers Solicitors strengthens serious crime and pre-charge expertise with three appointments

Criminal defence firm *Olliers Solicitors* has appointed three solicitors as it continues to scale its specialist team in response to a period of rapid growth.

Anna Ford has been appointed as senior associate, Justyna Blazewicz as associate and Olivia Saul as associate. The appointments strengthen the firm's expertise across serious and complex crime and pre-charge representation, bringing additional capacity and experience to support its growing client base.

Anna joins from Shearman Bowen & Co in London, where she acted on high-profile and sensitive matters, including the first prosecution for breach of the Russia (Sanctions) Regulations. With 14 years' experience in serious and complex crime, including 10 years PQE, Anna also speaks fluent Russian. At Olliers she will take on a mix of pre-charge and post-charge work. She was named a Rising Star in 2024 and is ranked as an Associate to Watch in Chambers and Partners 2027, which describes her as "a strategist who can immediately dissect a case to its core".

Justyna joins from a leading Manchester firm, where she spent almost seven years as an assistant solicitor. Having qualified in 2017 and previously worked across criminal, family and immigration law at IMD Solicitors. At Olliers, she will undertake the firm's internal pre-charge accreditation programme, further developing her expertise in an area central to its approach to criminal defence.

Olivia joins from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), where she trained and qualified, most recently as a Senior Crown Prosecutor in its Magistrates Review Team. She completed a secondment with Olliers during her training contract and will handle a mix of criminal work, including police station, pre-charge, magistrates' court and Crown Court matters.

Ruth Peters, Business Development Director, said: "Each of these appointments adds something different, from a former prosecutor's view of how cases are built to Anna's experience of the most complex serious crime. Early, strategic advice is central to how we work and these appointments give us more people to deliver it for clients at every stage."

The appointments follow a period of continued growth for Olliers, which has established a strong reputation for specialist criminal defence work.



L–R: Anna Ford, Olivia Saul, Paul McLoughlin and Justyna Blazewicz

Venus Legal invests in next generation of legal talent as specialist litigation practice grows

Manchester-based litigation firm, *Venus Legal*, has strengthened its growing team with the appointment of first-class law graduate Esther Abena Dansoa Amoako.

The appointment forms part of Venus Legal's continued investment in its people as the firm builds its presence nationally, strengthening their ability to support clients involved in complex and sensitive litigation.

The firm have doubled the size of their team over the past year while retaining 100 per cent of their employees, and continue to develop expertise across large-scale group litigation, industrial disease, personal injury and, more recently, military claims.

Central to this growth is the firm's commitment to attracting and developing talented individuals who share its ambition to make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

The firm's latest appointment, Esther Amoako, brings an impressive combination of academic achievement, professional experience and community involvement, alongside a longstanding ambition to pursue a career in law. She joins Venus Legal as a Paralegal, having achieved a First-Class LL.B. from the University of Buckingham, followed by an LL.M. with Distinction in Manchester, and is now working towards her ambition of qualifying as a solicitor.

Esther Abena Dansoa Amoako



Lorna McGlone, Founder and CEO of Venus Legal commented: “Esther is a fantastic addition to our team and brings exactly the qualities we value at Venus Legal - ambition, determination, compassion and a genuine desire to make a difference.

“As we continue to grow, our focus is on developing our specialist expertise and ensuring we have the right people in place to support our clients. That means investing not only in experienced legal professionals but also in the next generation of talent who will help shape the future of our business.

“Esther’s journey is particularly impressive. She has demonstrated enormous commitment to achieving her ambition, alongside a genuine passion for supporting and empowering others. Her values align closely with our own, and we’re delighted to be supporting her as she takes the next step towards qualifying as a solicitor.”

Esther’s journey into the legal profession has been anything but conventional. Inspired at just eight years old after watching a film depicting women experiencing abuse without access to legal representation, Esther developed an early determination to pursue a career advocating for and empowering others.

Outside her legal career, Esther is equally committed to supporting others through sport, fitness and community initiatives. She is Head Coach for girls’ football at Coachhene Sports Club and a youth dance instructor at Mustard Seed Chapel. After winning ‘Miss Fitness Africa’ in 2017, amongst other pageants, she also founded a personal fitness brand focused on inspiring consistency, discipline and personal growth.

Her commitment to empowering others, both professionally and personally, reflects the people-focused approach at the heart of Venus Legal.

“Joining Venus Legal is an exciting next step. What particularly attracted me was the firm’s commitment to people, both in the work it does for clients and the opportunities it creates for its team.”

Commenting on her appointment, Esther said: “Becoming a lawyer has been an ambition of mine since childhood. My journey has taken me through several different industries, but I’ve always been driven by a desire to advocate for others and make a positive difference to people’s lives.

“Joining Venus Legal is an exciting next step. What particularly attracted me was the firm’s commitment to people, both in the work it does for clients and the opportunities it creates for its team.

“I’m passionate about continuing to develop my legal career, and I want to be part of a business where I can learn, contribute and make a meaningful impact. Venus Legal’s ethos of ‘Turning Lives Around’ really resonates with me.”

Venus Legal’s approach to recruitment and professional development reflects its wider people-first philosophy, with the firm investing in structured training, mentoring, professional qualifications and career progression.

Legal Costs Update

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



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

We begin this month with yet another important decision of the Court of Appeal. *McGivern v MBR Acres Ltd* [2026] EWCA Civ 1202 confirmed that there is no dis-appliance of the indemnity principle where a legally aided party is successful in criminal proceedings and has been awarded costs. In contrast to the position that pertains where the proceedings are civil (dis-appliance is permitted under s.107B (3)(a) Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1989 (as amended)), the recoverable criminal costs cannot exceed the standard basis costs for which the Legal Aid Authority is liable to pay the assisted party. Thus, in **McGivern**, against a bill for £120,292.21, the Costs Judge and Sweeting J on appeal had allowed £20,673.34 for the costs at legal aid rates, leaving the successful party's solicitors with an enormous shortfall between the recovery and the amount it had cost to run the case. However, in the Court of Appeal, the appellant had another string to her bow. The £120,292.21 bill had been based on an hourly rate of £400 as set out in a Conditional Fee Agreement "lite". The Court of Appeal held that no question of having to disapply the indemnity principle arose. The CFA Lite arrangement was not unlawful under s.28(2) Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), nor was the retention by a solicitor of that part of a costs order which exceeded the amount payable to the LAA prohibited by that section. LASPO S.23 did not avail the opponent either because Ms McGivern had not been "required to make a payment" within s.23(1) and it was fundamental to the CFA lite that any payment to A's solicitors would only be a payment of costs from the opponent. It followed that the payment at private client rates as provided for in the CFA lite represented a genuine liability against which the appellant was entitled to be indemnified by the paying party. Thus, the appeal was allowed on that ground, Lord Justice Bean commenting that "The decisions below were in my view unjust to Ms McGivern's solicitors and counsel and contrary to public policy……it is important that lawyers working for legally aided clients should be able to recover at inter partes rates." The Court's good sense is to be commended.

Next in in judicial review proceedings involving a decision taken by the Secretary of State (SS) to remove the right to request reconsideration of negative trafficking decisions, five claimants had achieved different levels of success. In *R. (on the application of AYA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Costs)* [2026] EWHC 2411 (Admin) the SS accepted that she should pay costs but contended for a global costs order of 50% to each Claimant, subject to some carving out for particular issues with two of the claimants. Sheldon J held that a global costs order would be too blunt a tool for reflecting the individual circumstances of the various Claimants' cases and that there would be unfairness on the SS to apply a 'winner (on one ground or in respect of one decision) takes all' approach. An issue-based approach reflected the reality of the way in which the cases were pleaded and argued. Save for one claimant (AYA), the judge treated the two parts of the cases (challenge to the Guidance amendment

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***

and the individual claims) equally for the purposes of costs (50% to each). The claimants did not succeed fully and the claim review could have been brought by one claimant. Accordingly, the SS would pay 40% rather than 50% of the challenge to the Guidance costs. The remaining 50% for each of the Claimants would be individuated to the particular circumstances of each Claimant, save for AYA who would have costs of the interim application only, having taken no part in the substantive challenge to the amended Guidance.

R. (on the application of Worsley) v Tameside Magistrates' Court (Costs) [2026] EWHC 2518 (Admin) concerned a technical issue: could the Divisional Court make an order for payment out of central funds in respect of costs incurred in the Magistrates' Court, in favour of a party who had succeeded before a Single Judge on judicial review. Where that was the case, s.16 and 16A Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 provided that the matter would be adjourned to be considered on the papers by a Divisional Court, constituted by the single judge who heard the case and another judge. However, proceedings were not necessarily concluded until all outstanding matters had been resolved, including consequential costs applications. It followed that it was permissible to transfer the case to the Divisional Court under CPR r. 3.1(2)(c) which could then determine the outstanding costs application for the purposes of section 16(5)(a). S. 16(6) the 1985 Act. The appropriate amount for a procedural failing that had taken place in the Magistrates' Court was £750. Edis LJ and Hill J made an order in that sum in favour of the successful party.

Next, Part 36 and a novel question. After the court has determined a preliminary issue, is the successful party, who wishes to be awarded the costs of deciding that issue, permitted to disclose the date of the opponent's first Part 36 offer to the judge? In ***Essendi UK Hotels 2 Ltd v London Property Company Ltd*** [2026] EWHC 2501 (TCC), HHJ Stephen Davies held that the answer to that was "Yes". There was a distinction to be drawn between the terms of the offer and the date of the offer. The latter was part of the fact that an offer had been made and was not a term of it, disclosing the date did not reveal anything about the terms and knowing when an offer had been made enabled the court to consider whether it was appropriate to determine costs for an earlier stage of the proceedings, thereby giving effect to the approach that where costs were concerned, it was "pay-as-you-go". Thus, the successful claimant was able to disclose the date of the offer and to seek its costs of the preliminary issue up to the latest date that that offer could be accepted.

Finally, another Part 36 case, or more accurately, the consequences of a lack of Part 36 offer. In J**BX v Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust** [2026] EWHC 2525 (KB), at trial, the claimant had secured interim payments of £950,000, and allowing for CRU payments, damages of £4,341,302.86 as well as substantial periodical payments. However, he had lost on the issue of his proposed domiciliary care arrangements which had taken up the greater part of the eight-day trial. For that reason, he was awarded 85% of his costs, but in exercising his broad-brush approach, the judge held that it mattered that the defendant had not made a Part 36 offer to protect itself and its various offers had been made less than a fortnight before trial by which time the bulk of the costs had been incurred.

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