

March 2025

Liverpool Law

Liverpool  Law Society

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE LEGAL SECTOR IN
MERSEYSIDE AND THE NORTH WEST



***Celebration and connections:
ADLA honour award winners
and sponsors at Fazenda*** p.42

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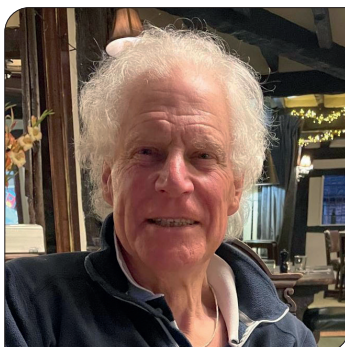
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March 2025

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 September 2025 edition: Fri, 22.08.25
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 December 2025 edition: Tue, 25.11.25

Word Count Guidelines: Notes for Contributors

We receive many enquiries about submitting articles for LLS News and one of the questions that comes up every time is 'how long should it be?' While we don't (in theory) restrict the number of pages you can write, there are a few guidelines that you need to follow, like how many words fit on a page, how photographs, affect the word count etc.

With this in mind, the following is a rough approximation of how we calculate word counts for articles:

A full page of text is around 750 words without images, and 400 for a half page. The amount of text space an image takes up depends entirely on how it relates to the text (e.g. a by-line photo will take up less room than something illustrating the main theme of the article). So, we would suggest the following:

Full page with one small* image: 690 words
 Full page with two small* images or one medium** image: 480 words
 Full page with one large*** image: 480 words
 Half page with one small image: 330 words

The word counts do not include the main heading or secondary headings, but do include sub-headings.

* Spanning a single column
 ** Spanning two columns
 *** Spanning three columns



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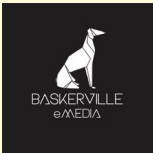
Liverpool Law Society Magazine is produced by and for Liverpool Law Society Members. This is our opportunity to share our news, events and celebrations with our friends in the legal community.

All members' contributions to Liverpool Law are warmly welcomed. Please send your article (and photo captions where possible) or request for further information, or assistance to the editor at editor@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

Photographs should be provided in the highest resolution possible to ensure a good reproduction. Photographs must not be subject to copyright.

The views and opinions expressed in Liverpool Law are those of the individual contributed and not those of the Liverpool Law Society.

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Editorial Committee Dates 2025

Meetings start at 01.00 pm.

- Tue, 18 Mar 25
- Mon, 14 Apr 25
- Tue, 20 May 25
- Tue, 17 Jun 25
- Tue, 15 Jul 25
- Tue, 19 Aug 25
- Tue, 16 Sep 25
- Wed, 15 Oct 25
- Tue, 18 Nov 25

Welcome to the March edition of Liverpool Law



I hope you are all doing well as things start to brighten up outside and spring is on the way.

Speaking of wellbeing we have a number of articles this month from LawCare and an encouragement from our Past President **Charlie Jones**, who now volunteers for LawCare, to complete their short survey. The survey is seeking views of individuals and organisations to identify why people may be experiencing poor mental health and practical steps to prevent it. I am fortunate that I have never had to use this service but I have referred a number of individuals to it who have found it extremely beneficial and it is reassuring to know such a service is readily available, if needed. It is wonderful that LawCare, despite having their busiest year in 2024, are still striving to seek ways to improve its service. Prevention is better than cure and so I would urge you if you have used the service, or you are experiencing poor mental health but perhaps not yet took that step, to complete the questionnaire to better improve the offering. The deadline is Friday 21 March and is said to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

There are also a number of articles on LLS and the Joint V response to the SRA's consultation on client money in legal services- the details and links to the response and other features are included in the magazine. I highlight this to show the extensive work that happens at LLS and in our committees, in this case our Regulatory committee, in responding to consultations on behalf of our members. Together with the Joint V this is a strong and well respected voice of 15,000 members and this collaboration assists to ensure our voices are heard. As always should you wish to contribute to the committees on a formal or informal basis please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Until next month.

Many thanks

Jennifer Powell, Editor
Weightmans
editor@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

Welcome to new members

We would like to give a warm welcome to our new members who were approved for membership at February's General Committee meeting. There were 22 individuals from the following organisations:

- Brabners
- Broudie Jackson Canter
- Environment Agency
- Guy Williams Layton
- Hill Dickinson
- JB Leitch
- JR Levins
- Liverpool John Moores University
- LRB Law
- Paul Crowley & Co
- Phoenix Legal Limited
- Rowlinsons
- Weightmans

Liverpool Law Society's membership now exceeds 2,435 individuals from 235 law firms, barristers' chambers, and other organisations with legal professionals in the Liverpool City Region and beyond.

From the President

The latest from the President, James Mannouch

On 30 January, I attended a meeting of the Joint V Officer representatives, hosted by Birmingham Law Society. As a reminder to readers, the Joint V comprise the five largest local law societies in the UK - Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester. Together, we form a strong voice representing some 15,000 legal professionals nationwide. The meetings serve several purposes. They facilitate ideas for best practice. They guide and inform member activities across regions. They are used to agree collective responses to proposed changes in policy or regulation.

One proposed change is the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) suggested reforms to client money management, regulatory oversight, and the Compensation Fund. In a collective response submitted on behalf of the Joint V, the Societies argue that the SRA's proposals are disproportionate, risk undermining public confidence in the profession, and fail to deliver meaningful consumer protection improvements. The Gazette's coverage of the response may be found here: <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/disruptive-sra-doesnt-understand-profession-say-joint-v-law-societies/5122368.article#commentsJump>

Under the supervision of the Chair of our Regulatory Committee, Mickaela Fox, LLS has submitted its own detailed response to each the three consultations. This is sizeable piece of work, and the Committee should be commended for the time and effort it invested into protecting our members' interests. Details of the respective responses are dealt with in this month's edition but if anyone would like a copy of the submissions, please contact me on the email, below. Without local law societies challenging draft laws, regulatory bodies would have greater scope to do as they please. Thanks therefore go to our members for supporting the Society and enabling it to influence our future regulatory framework. Liverpool is the next Society to host the Joint V in May this year, and I welcome members' suggestions for discussion points.

Speaking of Birmingham Law Society, I had the pleasure of attending its Awards Dinner on 13 February, having previously sat on the judging panel for two of the award categories. BLS adopts a slightly different approach to LLS by focussing on individual awards rather than awards for team performance. I was taken by the preparation of the nominees and by the scrutiny of my fellow judges. Judging is a difficult task because individuals tend to all be near the top of their game. This means success is often influenced by how well nominees have met the prescribed criteria. A lesson for us all.

At the awards ceremony itself, I spoke to several people who had previously provided training services to LLS. Naturally, they were keen to learn more about the work we are currently doing. I can honestly say that Liverpool is held in high esteem by people outside of the city and this makes it very easy to meet



new people. Our own Annual Dinner and Legal Awards will take place on Thursday 13 November and the award categories have now been announced, including a welcome return to an award for "Outstanding Team - Employment Law". I would encourage members to engage with their local awards and more details may be found on our website (<https://www.liverpoollawsociety.org.uk/events/2025-annual-dinner-featuring-legal-awards/>). Nominations will open in July and close early September.

Looking back, but staying on the topic of awards, during February we held an evening with the winners of LLS Legal awards from 2024, together with the sponsors. The event was generously hosted by Fazenda bar and grill, who provided the attendees with drinks and delicious canapes. I enjoyed getting a chance to speak to the winners and to thank the sponsors too.

Looking forward, I should perhaps take this opportunity to mention our LLS Charity Golf tournament on Wednesday 25th June, held at Heswall Golf Club. Spaces are filling up very quickly, so I would urge firms and individuals to book on now. It will be an enjoyable day into evening, and I expect to see some competitive team spirit. It is also an excellent opportunity to network within beautiful surroundings.

James Mannouch

President

president@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

LLS Meetings & events – March/April 2025

Start Time	Meeting/Event
11/03/2025 12:30	General Committee
13/03/2025 16:00	Family Business Sub-Committee
14/03/2025 13:00	LLS Directors' Meeting with local MPs
18/03/2025 13:00	Editorial Sub-Committee
19/03/2025 13:00	Civil Litigation Sub-Committee
20/03/2025 12:00	Access To Justice in Liverpool Project meeting
20/03/2025 13:00	Future Planning Sub-Committee
25/03/2025 12:30	Finance & Policy Sub-Committee
26/03/2025 12:00	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee
27/03/2025 13:00	LLS Bicentenary Working Party
27/03/2025 16:00	Criminal Practice Sub-Committee
27/03/2025 18:00	Merseyside JLD & LLS Quiz
01/04/2025 13:00	Employment Law Sub-Committee
02/04/2025 18:00	Leaders in Law Dinner – invite only
03/04/2025 13:00	Access to Justice Sub-Committee
08/04/2025 12:30	General Committee

Liverpool Law Society has a number of committees covering specialist areas of law which meet regularly throughout the year allowing members of Liverpool Law Society to discuss common issues, respond to consultation papers and contribute ideas towards the Society's comprehensive legal training programme.

Our committees are: Access to Justice; Civil Litigation; Criminal Practice; Employment Law; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; Family Business; In-House Lawyers; Non-Contentious Business and Regulatory committees, which are open to members of Liverpool Law Society. To enquire about your membership status and/or being co-opted onto one of the above committees, please email committees@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

Spotlight on: Nicola Harris



Nicola Harris, a Family Law Solicitor and Partner at MSB Solicitors, has been elected Joint Honorary Secretary of the Liverpool Law Society for 2025.

A lifelong Liverpool resident, raised by her single mother and grandparents, Nicola attended St Mary's College, Crosby, on an assisted place and Edmund Rice Scholarship. A highlight of her school years was a musical tour of Eastern Australia, from Cairns to Sydney, which sparked her love of travel.

Towards the end of her school days, one of Nicola's teachers told her, when discussing possible career options, to consider alternative careers than the Law. This became a defining moment for her and she became more determined than ever to pursue a career in law.

Nicola went on to attend the University of Liverpool, reading Law from 2001 until 2004. After gaining her Law Degree Nicola then went to the former College of Law in Christleton, Chester.

During her university years, Nicola gained valuable unpaid work experience with David Philips and partners.

She credits **David Philips** with supporting her tentative steps into law. She acknowledges the significant influence of the late **Wendy Eves**, who encouraged young lawyers to bring their personalities and energy to the law, and **Emma Carey**, with whom Nicola has worked for 20 years.

Nicola also worked briefly as a paralegal at Hillary Meredith solicitors in Wilmslow, working on armed forces catastrophic injury cases during the summer of 2005, before starting her training contract with MSB Solicitors.

Nicola spent her first few months at MSB in Personal Injury before transitioning to Family Law, working under the guidance and support of **Emma Carey**. Nicola has remained with the firm for the last 20 years, being promoted during her career, and becoming a Partner in 2017.

Nicola is one of only five Resolution accredited domestic abuse experts in the Liverpool city region. She is also a Resolution accredited expert in Private Children Law and has received Law Society accreditation in Children Law.

Nicola finds Family Law extremely rewarding, particularly helping people navigate complex situations. She is drawn to its human element, enjoying interacting with clients and knowing she can make a difference for them and their children. She is a strong advocate for public funding to assist vulnerable families and specialises in both legal aid and private client work.

Nicola is excited about the future of MSB. She is proud of her contributions to the firm's growth and hers and her partners commitment to the firm, its values and ethos, and hopes that future generations will turn to MSB for

their legal needs, whether it's buying a house, starting a business, or seeking employment advice. Nicola is also passionate about supporting future legal talent and mentors students from the University of Law and runs a pro bono clinic at Blackburne House each Thursday morning. Nicola received recognition from The Lady Chief Justice of England And Wales, **The Baroness Carr of Walton – on – the – Hill**, for her pro bono commitment in the inaugural pro bono recognition list in 2024. Additionally, she sits on the management board of the Law Clinic at the University of Liverpool, as a way of giving back to the University as an alumnus.

This is Nicola's second term as a director of the Liverpool Law Society, sharing the joint honorary Secretary role with Deputy Vice President **Alum Ullah**. She is keen to have input into the Society and represent legal aid and private family lawyers in the city, along with the family committee which is Chaired by **Haley Farrell**. Nicola is keen to bridge the gap between the society and the profession, making sure people know what LLS does, promoting the work, support for the legal community, and fantastic training opportunities it provides. She will be speaking at the upcoming Domestic Abuse Conference on 12th March on the DAPO pilot.

Outside of work Nicola likes to spend time with her family and friends and to travel. She has two children, aged 9 and 10 and spends much of her free time taking them to their various clubs and activities. She also has a (vocal) sausage dog, **CoCo**, who always accompanies her and her MSB colleagues on the annual legal walk.

We wish Nicola every success in her new role.

Consultation Papers

Papers referred to committees:

The following sub-committees of Liverpool Law Society are considering responding to these consultation papers. If any member would like to send in a comment for consideration by the relevant committee, please do so to:

committees@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

Committee	Consultation Paper title	Closing date
Access to Justice	Civil legal aid: Towards a sustainable future	21.03.25
Non-Contentious Business	Compulsory Purchase consultation	31.03.25

Consultation Papers Submitted:

Following lengthy discussions at **Regulatory Committee** meetings on 17th January and 5th February, the following SRA consultation paper responses were submitted on 14th February before the deadline of 21st February:

1. Consumer Protection Review consultation part 1_ the model of solicitors holding client money-Review
2. Consumer Protection Review consultation part 2_ Protecting the client money that solicitors hold-Review
3. Consumer Protection Review consultation part 3_ Delivering and paying for a sustainable compensation fund-Review

Joint V Consultation Response:

The five largest local law societies in the UK - **Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester**, known as 'the Joint V', joined forces to challenge the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) proposed reforms to client money management, regulatory oversight, and the Compensation Fund. Representing over 15,000 legal professionals nationwide, the Joint V argued in their high-level response that the SRA's proposals were disproportionate, risk undermining public confidence in the profession, and fail to deliver meaningful consumer protection improvements. Read the press release about this response later in this edition.

The Joint V consultation has been mentioned in the Law Society's [Gazette](#) and [Legal Futures](#).

Access to Justice Committee update



Ian Townley

The Society's Access to Justice Committee met in February. It was an energetic meeting with old and new

faces around the virtual table from a range of advice sector organisations and private practice lawyers. I was pleased to welcome all to the meeting and I began by holding a discussion on this committee's objectives for the next 12 months.

Much of the discussion centred around capacity monitoring in specific areas of legal aid, to be able to inform government about need and the unmet need with data. The few providers that still exist raised areas of grave concern for future provision

of, for example, housing advice, such as recruitment, retention and supervision.

We also discussed the Ministry of Justice's consultation relating to Housing and Asylum work, we were encouraged by the change in tone and the indicated rate increase for these important areas of work. There remain a couple of concerns regarding advocacy fees for Asylum and the rates of pay for complicated housing work. It was agreed that the committee will put in a response to the Ministry of Justice's Civil Legal Aid consultation 'Towards a sustainable future'.

In some good news, Immediate Past President **Gaynor Williams** was pleased to report that in conjunction with Vauxhall Law Centre and WEB, the Wirral Advice Centre has now opened in Birkenhead. There has been good uptake since the centre opened in mid-

January 2025. Currently it is focusing on benefits and welfare advice.

The committee were pleased to meet the new LATAN (Liverpool Access To Advice Network) Co-ordinator **Edward Hodgson** who has been in post since December 2024 and who is looking to increase member engagement. Edward also spoke about his wish to review aims and impact of LATAN, as well as the work around the legal identity of LATAN.

The next meeting of the Access to Justice Committee will take place in early April and I look forward to seeing committee members then. In the meantime, should you wish to contact me, you can reach me on itownley@broadiejeacksoncanter.co.uk.

Ian Townley
Access to Justice Committee Chair,
Liverpool Law Society

Leaders in Law: Tracy Morgan



1. Briefly describe your role as Managing Partner and the main duties of this position.

My role is to manage the firm on behalf of the other partners who are still legal practitioners. JR Levins is a new business following a merger of Levins and Jones Robertson Solicitors in November 2024.

Although, both merged firms were established for almost 40 years each, bringing together both firms is a new challenge. I am responsible for strategic leadership and financial management together with staff management.

2. What are the positive and negative aspects of the role?

The main positive is that I (together with the other partners) get to implement our strategy and vision for the firm we wish to run. This means we can shape the culture of the firm. It is very rewarding to steer the firm and to watch the firm grow.

The main negative is that the buck stops with me. This means that there is constant pressure to ensure financial stability and staff well-being. It can be an extremely stressful role.

3. What changes to the running of the firm did you implement during Covid?

Initially, the emphasis was on safety and implementing measures such as plastic screens between work spaces and social distancing. These measures are no longer in place. The longer term change related to the move towards digital working and paperless offices. Laptops were introduced which meant that people could work away from the office.

4. As a result of Covid, what are your new agile working policies and why?

We have retained hybrid working although this is not always easy in a law firm. As many of our staff attend court it doesn't always work. I also believe that trainees need to be mainly office based to gain knowledge and experience from more senior staff.

The technological advancements implemented during covid have continued. We have continued to use laptops and are mainly paperless.

5. What do you see as your biggest challenges?

My biggest challenge is running a business in uncertain times. We have a large conveyancing department. When changes occur such as stamp duty increase or interest rate increase it deters people from buying houses which has an effect on our fee income. We have to be able to pivot and do different types of work. Over reliance on a poorly funded legal aid system is not a good business model.

We also need to deal with political change. The changes to Employers National Insurance

Contributions add a further burden to the business. Businesses have no choice but to adapt.

6. What aspects of the firm are you most proud of?

The staff and the excellent service they provide. I know that the staff care about the people we represent and they often go over and above to ensure the best outcome.

I am proud of the new firm we are building post merger. We have strong roots in our local communities. We employ over 40 local people.

7. What are your immediate short-term goals?

Integration of the merged practice, financial stability, client retention and stability for the first year of trading.

There is a lot to think about and to do.

8. Where do you see the firm ten years from now?

The firm will have achieved growth following the financial stability post-merger. I would like to see some managed growth of non-legal aided departments. I would like to see the brand strengthen and there be more opportunities for staff to progress within the firm.

9. What legacy, as Managing Partner, would you like to leave the firm?

I'd like my legacy to be a well-established, respected firm. It's important to me that the firm is highly thought of in the local area and has strong ties to the local community. I'd like our staff culture to be remembered as a supportive environment where people can achieve things.

The Bell Lamb & Joynson Foundation



Leading Law Firm, Bell Lamb & Joynson Solicitors Launches Charitable Foundation

One of the oldest law firms in the North-West, Bell Lamb & Joynson Solicitors, has officially launched The Bell Lamb & Joynson Foundation, marking a new chapter in the firm's long-standing commitment to giving back to the communities it serves. The launch event, held at Malmaison Hotel in Liverpool, brought together colleagues, partners, and supporters for a morning of celebration, reflection, and inspiration.

A Memorable Launch Event

Guests were welcomed with a networking breakfast, setting the stage for an event that highlighted the core mission and vision of the Foundation. Managing Partner, **Mike Leeman** kicked things off with a speech outlining the firm's dedication to supporting organisations in need. He spoke about how Bell Lamb & Joynson, who have been around since 1821, have a deep-rooted connection to the community and explained how the Foundation will help the firm to extend its impact even further.

Following this, **Suzanne Daley**, Partner and Head of the Family Department, shared her perspective on the importance of the Foundation. Suzanne, who works very closely with The Owen McVeigh Foundation, has seen first-hand the incredible impact that local charities have on people within the community. She emphasised the Foundation's focus on providing practical, meaningful support to those dealing with issues such as illness, addiction, grief, financial hardship, disability, and social mobility. The launch event served as a key opportunity for guests to learn more about how the Bell Lamb & Joynson Foundation will operate, with conversations about its awards, grants, and volunteering initiatives. Attendees were encouraged to get involved, whether through donations, fundraising, or just spreading the word.

Making a Difference in the Community

The Bell Lamb & Joynson Foundation, is a registered charity as of 3rd of April 2024 and its charity number is 1207706. It has been established to create a lasting impact, ensuring that organisations within the community receive the support and resources that they need. Although, Bell Lamb & Joynson Solicitors are known for their donations to local charities, the Foundation will enable the firm to channel its commitment to corporate social responsibility into structured, tangible action.

How to Get Involved

The Foundation is inviting businesses, individuals, and community groups to support its mission. More information can be found [on the website](#), and donations can be made the same way. The launch of The Bell Lamb & Joynson Foundation is a significant milestone for the firm, reinforcing its commitment to supporting those in need and making a positive difference in the North West and beyond.

Brabners delivers third consecutive year of dealmaking growth



Ruth Hargreaves

The corporate team at purpose-led independent law firm Brabners has seen its dealmaking activity grow by almost a third in the past year, as it continues to support a broad range of national and international clients across the full business lifecycle.

Despite the UK M&A market experiencing a mixed year, Brabners delivered a 31% increase in annual dealmaking values, having advised on more than £800 million-worth of activity. The team, which counts Peel Ports, NWF Group and Suez among its clients, supports businesses across the full lifecycle. As well as providing complementary deal advisory services through its specialist team of corporate finance accountants, Brabners' corporate team works with the firm's full service offering to ensure those preparing for sale are able to achieve maximum value and those seeking to acquire receive transparent due diligence and full protections for the price being paid.

The 50-strong team, which is one of the largest in the North and has previously been recognised as among the UK's

most active by Experian, also saw deal volumes increase last year – advising on 188 transactions across its Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Lancashire offices (2023: 180).

This makes 2024 the third consecutive year of growth for the team, as it continues to support the journeys of its clients to growth, success and sometimes to exit. Activity was driven by consistently strong acquisitive demand amongst larger firms, with the team advising global clients including Atlas Copco, Suez Group and Terminal Investment Limited on a number of transactions at home and abroad.

Deal volumes were also buoyed by improving sentiment across a number of the North's strategic growth sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare and technology. In this arena, the firm advised on notable transactions including the sale of Compass CHC to Omni Partners as well as the sale of engineering services company BGEN to M Group Services for an undisclosed fee.

Brabners also advised on 22 deals

supporting the transition of firms to employee ownership, with clients including popular Liverpool-based restaurant chain Lunya and legal recruitment firm TRG.

The corporate team's leading role in the market contributed to Brabners' revenues surpassing the £50million mark for the first time last year as the purpose-led firm entered into a new three-year strategy cycle.

Ruth Hargreaves, partner and deputy head of the corporate team at Brabners, said: *“Despite challenging market conditions, M&A activity remained buoyant in 2024 – and we're pleased to see that reflected not only in the deal volumes we supported but also the increased value placed upon high quality businesses coming up for sale or strategic investment.*

“This was the case across the team's presence in Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire and Leeds where we supported businesses at all stages of their journey – from those looking to scale-up, capitalise in consolidatory sectors or transition to employee ownership to support succession planning. Critically, we're seeing more and more clients coming to us earlier on their journeys to take advantage of our broader offer, be that our IP or employment teams or strategy workshops from our deal advisors, to prepare their business for growth or for sale. With plenty of funds looking to deploy pent-up resources and interest rates starting to ease, it's key that these businesses have access to the services and support they need to develop and grow.

“We look forward to building our relationships with existing partners and fostering new ones in the year to come as the corporate team continues to be a key pillar in our plans for client-centred, scalable growth.”

For more information, visit: <https://www.brabners.com/>

Fletchers Group appoints four new Managing Directors

Fletchers Group has announced the promotion of four senior colleagues who will become Managing Directors (MD).

The promotions recognise the critical contribution that each of them has made to the Group and reflects Fletchers' need to expand their leadership capacity as it continues its rapid growth.

The new MDs are:



Caroline Morris will become MD of Serious Injury Law.

Caroline joined Fletchers in May 2017 and is recognised as one of the leading catastrophic injury lawyers in the country. She has overseen the expansion of the Serious Injury practice to a team of over 150 over the last two years, including the acquisition of Serious Injury Law in February 2024. She will now take responsibility for leading all the Personal Injury teams in the Group.

Peter Rigby will become MD of Clinical Negligence.

Peter began his legal career



with Fletchers 15 years ago as a well-respected Serious Injury lawyer before taking on the leadership of the Clinical Negligence practice. He has overseen the shift of the practice towards multi-track and catastrophic cases and built the largest Clinical Negligence team in the UK that will represent one in four of the cases that will start proceedings this year.



Georgia Briscoe will become MD of Medical Law Services (MLS).

Georgia joined Fletchers as a leading Clinical Negligence and Personal Injury lawyer and became a Director of our Clinical Negligence practice before taking on responsibility for transforming Fletchers operations in 2021. One of her recommendations was to launch Medical Law Services (MLS), Fletchers' specialist

medico-legal company, which she has led since its inception in May 2024. MLS has already become the largest pagination operator in the sector with around 180 colleagues and a rapidly expanding set of products.



Charlene Mann, Director of Transformation, will become MD of New Acquisitions and Scott Rees & Co.

Charlene joined Fletchers in 2022 as Director of Transformation, following a career leading change in multiple businesses, most recently the Co-Operative Group. During her time with Fletchers, she has overseen a dramatic transformation of the Group, including six acquisitions, four new offices, the introduction of Partners and Associates, and over £5m of investment in new technology. Following the announcement of Fletchers agreement to acquire Scott Rees & Co, Charlene will now step into the lead the new acquisition when the deal completes next month and carry forward that role to future acquisitions made by the Group.

The newly promoted Managing Directors will join **Peter Haden, Alex Lynch, Adrian Denson, Alex Kenny** and **Zoe Holland MBE** as part of the Executive Committee, the senior leadership team running the Group.



Explaining the promotions, Fletchers Group CEO, **Peter Haden**, said: *"The new roles will address some of the extra challenges brought about by our recent growth, helping lead a more complex and sophisticated business and meeting the high expectations of our colleagues, clients and partners."*

"I'm incredibly proud to recognise and celebrate the promotion of these exceptional leaders. All four have contributed significantly to the success of our firm, and I'm confident in their ability to step up to the added responsibility as we move ahead with our ambitious plans for 2025 and beyond."

"This announcement is also testament to the ongoing success of our leadership development programme that helps us build the leadership capacity we need to expand from within the business."

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Brabners surpasses £50m revenue milestone as it delivers on purpose-led growth plan

Purpose-led independent law firm Brabners has secured another year of significant organic growth having completed its latest three-year strategy.

Publishing its latest accounts (covering the year to April 30th 2024), the business delivered a seventh consecutive year of growth, with revenues up 15 per cent to £53.9million – surpassing the £50million milestone for the first time. Profits (before members remuneration and profit shares) at the firm, which is proudly anchored in the North and acts as a strategic partner to both UK-based and international clients, also increased by 16% to £18.2million. Revenues grew by 40% over the course of the three years, guided by its strategy of ‘purpose-led growth and value-driven efficiency’.

Representing clients ranging from multinational businesses and global brands to social enterprises and ambitious SMEs, as well as families, individuals, senior professionals, athletes and celebrities, Brabners secured a number of high-profile victories and new business wins during the period. Its corporate team – which advised on more than £800million-worth of M&A activity last year – remained one of the region’s most active advisers, while its litigation team securing a nine-figure settlement for the Commonwealth Games Federation relating to Australia’s withdrawal from hosting the 2026 Games. The period also saw Brabners’ 130-strong real estate practice also play a critical role in supporting regeneration across the North – most notably facilitating a 50-year agreement between Peel Ports Group and GPH, the world’s largest independent cruise port operator, which will deliver £25million of investment into the city of Liverpool.

The figures cover 12 months in which Brabners secured a number of accolades, being recognised as the UK’s Best Law

Firm to Work For by Best Companies – a position it has since retained in the annual table. It was also ranked as the 11th Best Large Company to Work For. It has since improved that ranking to sixth in the country. Guided by its purpose, ‘to bring about positive and lasting change for its clients, its people and the communities it serves’, the business was also awarded the Excellence in ESG Award at the British Legal Awards as well as Sustainability Initiative of the Year at The Lawyer Awards for its extensive support for Kingsdale Head – a major peatland restoration project in the Yorkshire Dales. Meanwhile, with its mission ‘to make the difference’ guiding client activity, its specialist client teams were recognised at a range of sector and regional awards.

As it continued to maintain its B Corp status, the firm’s approach to social impact saw it launch and grow its True North network, which was conceived to unite the region’s most influential and purpose-driven voices to shape and unlock the true economic potential of the North. The network has grown to more than 360 purpose-led organisations and business leaders since its inception in late 2023. Last year, the network established its advisory council with prominent figures from local organisations including Leeds Trinity University and the Turing Innovation Catalyst in Manchester. Brabners also partnered with Open Innovations — the not-for-profit open data ecosystem — to launch the True North Data Explorer. Through this new open data platform and the advisory council, the firm is identifying where national resource should be directed in terms of upskilling talent, cross-sector investment, reducing inequality and driving sustainability.

True North’s latest publication, *Scaling Northern Ambition*, published last month, provides a practical guide to help

northern organisations scale their impact.

The period also included Brabners growing to more than 550 colleagues and delivering a record round of promotions across the business, supported by continued investment in the career pathways that it offers – particularly for junior colleagues. This investment was recognised at the 2024 National Training Awards, with Brabners’ commitment to learning and development highly commended.

2024-2027: Client-centred, scalable growth

Brabners has since embarked on an updated three-year strategic plan, led by long-serving CEO Robert White and managing partner Nik White, with a focus on ‘client-centred, scalable growth’. That includes a commitment to further investment in building a brand-led firm, delivering superior client service as well as investing in technology, innovation and further leadership on social impact. Recent months have seen it launch a range of new services, including its personal law offer Brabners Personal and Health & Safety consultancy service Brabners Protect.

Led by Legal 500 ‘Hall of Famer’ Helen Marriott, Brabners Personal brings together a 100-strong team of legal experts from across the firm’s family, estate planning and medical negligence offerings, among others. Meanwhile, Brabners Protect is designed to help organisations to better manage risk and reduce the UK’s £7bn annual work-related injuries bill through a single integrated consultancy package.

Robert White, CEO of Brabners, said: *“Brabners continues to go from strength-to-strength, with our vision remaining to be the UK’s leading independent law firm. That vision is rooted in our commitment to*



Robert White



Nik White

being innovative, diverse and sustainable, while proactively promoting, supporting and developing diversity in all aspects of the business.

“We’re pleased to have already delivered a positive start to our current three-year plan which, looking ahead, provides us with the platform to further grow the business and continue to be a partner in action for our clients. Critically, it also provides the foundation for us to invest in our position

as the legal sector’s employer of choice – including the refurbishment of our Liverpool office to bring it into line with the quality of our spaces in Manchester, Lancashire and Leeds – and to continue to create inclusive opportunities not just for our colleagues but the communities around us.”

Nik White, managing partner at Brabners, said: “As a firm, our independence continues to be our greatest asset – and that is demonstrated not only

by the consistent organic growth we’ve delivered but also the diverse and talented group of lawyers and professionals we are able to attract and nurture. It’s a genuine pleasure to watch their development and I look forward to them continuing to drive Brabners forward in the next few years as we continue to scale through outstanding client service.”

For more information, visit: <https://www.brabners.com/>



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DWF announces 28 promotions in Liverpool



Hannah Fitzgerald

DWF, the global provider of integrated legal and business services, has announced 28 promotions in its Liverpool office.

In its founding office in Liverpool, DWF has promoted insurance lawyers **Hannah Fitzgerald** and **Joanne Baker** to partner. Also among those promoted in the insurance team are lawyers **Jane Basnett**, **Laura Ingram**, **Mark Hill**, **Sarah Louise Carragher**, alongside finance and restructuring lawyer **Thomas Murphy**, who have all been promoted to director.

The firm, which recently reported that revenue has increased by 8% in the first half of its financial year, made 238 promotions globally. This includes 13 new promotions to partner or partner-equivalent roles. In addition, 13 existing DWF partners have been promoted to a higher career level within the partnership structure.

Additionally, as part of DWF's global workplace strategy and commitment to building a better business for its colleagues, the business has opened its newly refurbished Liverpool office this week. The new workspace includes c. 180 traditional desk settings, a brand-new client suite, meeting rooms, and a social/breakout area for colleagues to facilitate modern and flexible working.

Commenting, **Julie Simms**, managing



Joanne Baker

partner of DWF in Liverpool, said: "I am delighted to see so many well-deserved promotions in Liverpool again this year and I would like to congratulate each of them on their success.

"This is an exciting new chapter for our Liverpool office as we also open our newly refurbished office space at the beginning of this month; which has been designed with both our people and our clients in mind, providing a professional and collaborative working environment. I look forward to seeing how this new space enhances the way we work together and engage more widely with clients and contacts in the Liverpool City Region and beyond."

The full list of promotions are:

Hannah Fitzgerald, Partner

Joanne Baker, Partner

Jane Basnett, Director

Laura Ingram, Director

Mark Hill, Director

Sarah Louise Carragher, Director

Thomas Murphy, Director

Samantha Gilboy, Partnerships Manager

Clemma Franklin, Senior Associate

Patrick Higham, Senior Associate

Rachelle Louise Tart, Senior Associate

Sean Batterton, Barrister (Senior Associate)

Alex Hindmarsh, Associate

Amy Kelly, Associate

Charlotte Bennett, Associate

James Barker, Associate

Jessica Geraghty-Whitehead, Associate

Nicola Jane Jeanrenaud, Associate

Victoria Warrilow, Associate

Danielle Maddison, Senior Paralegal

Taylor Watson, Senior Paralegal

Taylor Wright, Senior Paralegal

Dan Kelly, Lead Paralegal

Lauren Winnington, Lead Paralegal

Leah Reynolds, Lead Paralegal

Patricia Collum, Lead Paralegal

Samuel MacLennan, Lead Paralegal

Shaun Davies, Lead Paralegal

Honouring Dedication: Nicola Stevenson and Mark Hayes appointed as Associates at Paul Crowley & Co



Nicola Stevenson (Conveyancing Executive) and Mark Hayes (Head of Crown Court Department)

Liverpool law firm Paul Crowley & Co is delighted to announce two of its outstanding team, Nicola Stevenson and Mark Hayes, to the position of Associates. This recognition is a testament to their unwavering dedication and exceptional service in supporting the firm's directors and solicitors.

Mark Hayes, a highly skilled professional in the field of criminal law, has been with Paul Crowley & Co since the firm's inception in 1991. With over three decades of experience, Mark's profound knowledge of the law and his compassionate approach to client representation have been instrumental in the firm's success. His long-standing commitment to the firm and his clients, highlights his loyalty and professionalism.

Mark's extensive background in legal practice covers a wide range of cases, from minor offences to serious criminal matters. His ability to provide robust legal defence and ensure fair treatment

for all clients has earned him an excellent reputation. Mark is known for his thorough preparation and strategic thinking, which have been crucial in achieving favourable outcomes for his clients. Being made Associate is a well-deserved acknowledgement of his contributions to upholding the highest standards of the profession.

Nicola Stevenson, who specialises in conveyancing, joined Paul Crowley & Co in 2012. Over the past 13 years, Nicola's unparalleled attention to detail and deep understanding of property law have made her an invaluable asset to the firm. Nicola's ability to navigate complicated transactions have earned her this well-deserved recognition. Her tenure at Paul Crowley & Co has been distinguished by a long list of recommendations from satisfied clients.

Nicola's role in conveyancing involves handling property transactions, ensuring that all legal aspects are meticulously

managed. Her ability to simplify and explain complex legal terms in a concise and straightforward manner for her clients has been key to her success. Nicola's colleagues often commend her for her collaborative spirit and willingness to foster a supportive and knowledgeable team environment. Becoming an Associate, acknowledges not only Nicola's past achievements but also her potential to contribute even more significantly to the firm's future.

Nicola and Mark's contributions have not only strengthened the firm's reputation but have also set a high standard for excellence in legal practice. As Associates, they will continue to play pivotal roles in the firm's growth and success, mentoring junior staff and leading by example.

Paul Crowley & Co has a history of fostering a culture of excellence and professional development, recognising that its success is built on the dedication and expertise of its team, having Nicola and Mark as Associates, the firm is investing in its future and ensuring that its clients continue to receive the highest quality legal services.

Their journey is a prime example of dedication, hard work, and professional excellence. The firm is confident that Nicola and Mark will continue to excel in their new roles, bringing their wealth of experience and unwavering commitment to every case they handle.

Julie Jones, the law firm's owner concluded by saying "Both Nicola and Mark have an excellent attitude towards the firm and our clients, consistently demonstrating professionalism in their roles. Their achievements reflect the firm's commitment to investing in its talented team. Paul Crowley & Co is proud to have Nicola and Mark as part of its leadership team and looks forward to their continued success."

Liverpool Law firm capturing Transatlantic market



Jonathan Abrams

Liverpool law firm Gregory Abrams Davidson (GAD) is utilising the expertise and experience of one of its lawyers to grow its niche Transatlantic practice.

Jonathan Abrams' qualification as both a US attorney and a UK solicitor, have opened up new opportunities through which GAD is advising a growing number of UK businesses looking to expand to the US. And he is also working with American entrepreneurs looking at British investments.

After graduating with a law degree from Leeds University years ago Jonathan, who has dual UK/US citizenship, moved to the US to tour with a band but, instead of following a musical career, he ended up passing the New York bar exam and working as a US attorney for six years.

During his time there he worked as a New York 'suit', specialising in mergers and acquisitions, both in private practice, most recently for Norton Rose Fulbright in New York, and in-house at Goldman Sachs.

After returning to the UK in 2009 he joined GAD. Having also qualified as a solicitor in the UK he initially worked on domestic law. But as word of his US qualification grew Jonathan began advising British businesses looking to get a foothold in the US.

This gave GAD a powerful new string to its bow. Today that side of the business has

grown significantly, and continues to do so. The firm established a full-time US-UK unit in 2017.

Led by Jonathan's expertise, it now advises companies across a range of industries and of different sizes.

While most are British companies looking to establish operations in the US there is also a growing number of American firms who are utilising Jonathan's expertise to help guide their investments here in the UK.

This mainly business-to-business work covers areas such as mergers and acquisitions, investments, sales, finance and an array of commercial agreements including licences, joint ventures and advising on US corporate structures and disputes.

Jonathan told us: "We are quite sector agnostic. If there is one popular area it is probably IT-focused, software or e-commerce etc.

"We do sports work as well, particularly soccer, as well as service-based businesses where the UK operations can still act as a central HQ, whilst the US business is being nurtured.

"There is a range but it is most often more a need for a US-led service than a need for specific expertise in a particular area. Other professional firms may come to us and say 'we can't advise on this, we need a US-qualified lawyer'.

"In addition to the work we do, our service is often supplemented by a list of experts on our contact list in the US who cover areas such as tax, immigration, regulatory matters, HR, finance, insurance and litigation support. We complement our expertise with others' to offer a full US service from the UK.

"Post-Brexit we started seeing a lot more companies at least looking to the US and what a growing trend I have observed

more recently is US companies looking to acquire UK companies and use them as an outsourced partner."

Jonathan Abrams is qualified to practise in both the UK and US

Jonathan is based out of GAD's London office but will also operate from both Liverpool and New York when need be. He says around a quarter to a third of his clients are based in Liverpool city region. Key to successfully getting a foothold in the US is planning, capital and timing. He explained: "If you are well prepared and geared up financially then you have a greater chance to crack it.

"However, it may take longer than you think. It's a long-term commitment, which should be a part of the overall business strategy.

"Think of it as a market just like the UK but many many times bigger. If you have a product or service that appeals to people in the UK then there is a high chance it will appeal in the US to a similar demographic, but on a larger scale. Timing is also vital, so take advantage when the time is right."

GAD's Transatlantic business has grown to the point where it now accounts for one-third of all new business enquiries. However, with the re-election of **Donald Trump** as President, what will this mean for US-UK trade and business relations?

Trump has wasted little time in making his mark and is already using tariffs as a way of flexing the US's economic power on the world stage. Canada, Mexico and China are all in his sights, with possible EU tariffs also mooted.

Jonathan believes the Republican President has a more favourable view of the UK due to his Scottish roots. He hopes this will lead to the opening up of increased trade opportunities between the two countries.

"I am going to be bold and say that I

can't see tariffs being placed on UK-US dealings. Britain poses little or no threat to US security or commerce, in the same way as the tariff-threatened countries do and is viewed as more of a partner, but commercially and culturally.

"The tariffs are a way for Trump and the US to flex their muscles and force counterparties to reach a deal on, for example, border security, as far as Mexico and Canada are concerned, which has already paid off.

"Trump and his advisors realise that one of the USA's superpowers is its ability to "consume", with many countries relying on the US Dollar.

"China is seen as a threat not only in business terms but also to the US's status as the dominant global superpower and he is looking to drive a bargain to strengthen the USA's position generally.

"It is difficult to know what will happen but I think Britain now needs America more than ever, especially in the face of a low-growth economic outlook. The longer term fallout from Brexit, which we are just starting to see, is that we have weaker links with our immediate neighbours in the EU.

"So we really need the US as a key trading partner. Problem that we have is that the only thing Trump is focused on is 'making America great again. They have a very inward looking agenda.

"There is a lot going on in the UK. I am a member of British-American Business and I go to lots of events. There are lots of initiatives and a lot goes on behind the scenes. I think the US looks to Britain as an important strategic partner.

"Whether or not there will be a trade deal I don't know. But from the work that I see there is already so much cooperation anyway.

"There are lots of US companies, big and small, who are looking at the UK as a centre of skills and expertise and speaking the same language. The favourable exchange rate makes for cost-effective trading too.

"I think Americans they do look on us favourably, as an ally. Unless there is a huge disincentive then they are still going to trade closely with the UK.

"I know of one client, an SME, that is picking up big US clients and contracts because they want a cost-effective, specialist service provider and it is a win-win.

"There are many things that work in favour of UK businesses and I am here to help and advise them to navigate the US commercial and legal landscape."

Jonathan Abrams

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Lisa Edmunds Named Barrister of the Year at the Resolution Awards 2025



Lisa Edmunds

We are thrilled to announce that Lisa Edmunds, CEO and Head of Chambers at Unit Chambers, has been awarded Barrister of the Year at the Resolution Awards 2025. This prestigious accolade recognises Lisa's exceptional contribution to family law, her unwavering commitment to client care and her dedication to shaping the future of the profession.

The Resolution Awards celebrate excellence in family law, honouring professionals who go above and beyond to uphold Resolution's core values of constructive, collaborative and child-focused legal practice. Lisa's recognition as Barrister of the Year highlights her outstanding advocacy, leadership and innovative approach to resolving complex family disputes.

Lisa's legal career has been defined by her deep passion for family justice. As CEO and Head of Chambers at Unit Chambers, she has pioneered a modern, inclusive and forward-thinking approach to barristers' chambers, nurturing a team that prioritises both legal excellence and human-centred advocacy. Her expertise spans public and private children law, international family law, family finances and alternative dispute resolution.

Lisa herself said: "I am thrilled to have been awarded Barrister of the Year at the Resolution Awards 2025. Thank you to the sponsor of the awards, Broadway Insurance, and of course to the Resolution Committee for putting on such a fantastic event. Behind every good barrister is a great team and I very much dedicate this award to them."

Lisa's accolade follows an outstanding year for Unit Chambers, which was recently named Family Chambers of the Year at the LexisNexis Family Law Awards 2024 and Chambers of the Year at the LexisNexis Legal Awards 2024. These achievements solidify Unit's reputation as a leading force in family law advocacy and reflect Lisa's impact as both a barrister and a visionary leader.

We extend our warmest congratulations to Lisa on this well-deserved recognition.

In-House Legal Solutions partners with Legal grade AI technology

In-House Legal Solutions (IHLS) has announced a new partnership with Luminance, a leading AI-powered legal technology platform.

The firm, a leading provider of legal solutions to business and in-house legal teams, is utilising the system to provide support to their teams in the areas of contract drafting and review, reporting and diligence projects. A market leader in its field, Luminance has its own proprietary large language model (LLM) which has been specifically trained on over 150 million legal documents, making it one of the most advanced legal LLMs in the market today.

The system is being integrated across all work streams of the firm, allowing lawyers access to Luminance's chat bot function which can speed up reviews of large documents by providing instant answers to questions. Together with its ability to provide a first pass automated

mark up of certain documents based on parameters set by the firm, IHLS believes the system will increase the accuracy of its document reviews, and bring efficiencies across a number of work streams, allowing the firm to respond faster to deadlines and deliver cost savings in certain areas to clients.

With the firm's roster of clients seeking outsourced legal support alongside their exiting legal teams constantly growing, IHLS's use of the tool allows clients who may not have the budget or resources to onboard legal AI themselves access to the efficiencies that the system brings.

Rahel Goni, Head of operations who played a key role in implementing the partnership, commented: "Luminance not only allows our lawyers to provide a more efficient service to clients but also allows our lawyers to get comfortable with using legal AI technology in their daily tasks, which is key for development."

"The system is improving every day and our teams are constantly finding new ways of integrating the AI into their work allowing them to be more productive and to give our clients great service."

Brian Noon, co-founder of In-House Legal Solutions said "We are always on the look-out for ways to adopt technology which can further improve our offering to clients. Along with other technology tools we have developed in-house, AI is a great asset and allows us to do things for our clients that they would struggle to achieve without significant time and cost, for example compliance reviews encompassing large volumes of documents. It is a very important string to our bow which takes us further on our journey of being the most trusted, reliable and value for money provider of solutions for in-house legal teams."

For more details see www.inhouselegalsolutions.com

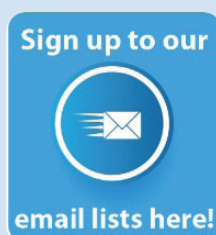
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Cyber security awareness for law firm leaders



Mark Hughes

Over the last decade the cyber security landscape has changed significantly as bad players move away from scatter gun tactics aimed at large corporations towards more targeted and sophisticated attacks on small and medium-sized enterprises.

Cyber criminals are now targeting businesses who may not have deep enough pockets to invest in the very latest cyber protection systems and cyber resilience programs and more law firms are now finding themselves in the firing line.

Why are law firms such attractive targets for cyber criminals?

Law firms are in possession of substantial amounts of sensitive client information and often money and bad players target law firms to harvest this data, target this money and use law firms as a gateway to their clients.

Given that our code of conduct centres on protecting clients and their confidentiality, cyber security needs to be at the forefront of our minds.

What are the potential implications of a cyber attack?

The main implications of a cyber attack on a law firm include:

- **An inability to trade:** Being locked out of your own systems can prevent your firm from operating, with the consequential loss of trade.
- **An inability to communicate:**

Having your email or network systems locked out means that you can lose the ability to alert or communicate with third parties.

- **Regulatory action:** Your firm, its partners, directors, and compliance officers can come under investigation and face potential penalties by regulators.
- **ICO implications:** The Information Commissioner's Office may bring action for breaches of data protection.
- **Legal action:** Firm can be sued by clients for losses they have sustained and for failing to meet the standards required of a competent law firm.
- **Reputational damage:** The loss of intangible assets and reputation can seriously damage a law firm. Reputations lost are not easily recovered.

What does a good cyber plan look like?

Implementing a cyber hygiene plan is becoming integral to the performance of law firms. This can involve:

- **Investment:** Investing in a bespoke cyber security infrastructure and developing layers of appropriate technical security measures.
- **Framework:** Working towards a recognised security standard, such as the government's Cyber Essentials framework. Even if you do not get the actual accreditation itself, using the standard as a baseline is a good start. Increasingly, clients, and particularly public sector clients, are now requiring some form of certification as a minimum.
- **Culture:** Embedding good practice and awareness into your firm's culture will ensure that it is part of service delivery, rather than an after-thought or the concern of a single person or team.
- **Contracting:** Having cyber security requirements embedded in your engagements with client and your supply chain will

engender an improved risk culture.

- **Testing:** Frequent penetration testing and controlled exercises can ensure that your measures are kept up to date and regularly maintained.
- **Staff training:** Having regular training will increase and maintain awareness across all levels of staff.
- **Insurance:** Having suitable cyber liability insurance will provide back-up, including risk mitigation, data and system restoration and potential cover for business interruption losses.
- **Monitoring:** We are seeing a move towards constant 24/7 surveillance covered by outsourced monitoring security operations centres (SOCs).

What does the future look like?

There is no doubt that data storage and data protection is key. It is anticipated that over the next 5 years over \$1 trillion is due to be spent globally on building new data centres to house the sheer computational power required for the digital assets of the world. As cyber criminals become more sophisticated, protecting this data will require more effort and diligence.

Data protection, in the legal sense, is currently moving forward too. Here in the UK, the Data Use and Access Bill is currently being scrutinised through the legislative process and will see our first deviation from the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The issue of cyber security is so important that the draft bill has been updated to require businesses to publish their compliance with cyber resilience standards - without revealing your weaknesses of course!

During the Data Use and Access Bill's discussion at the committee stage, the House of Lords noted the need for standalone legislation on this topic and the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill is likely to be published later this year.

Educating your team

The largest risk for a law firm is usually the people within it.

Whilst a lot can be invested in cyber protection software and tools, it is important to have high cyber security awareness within the business. A recent survey from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) revealed that 75% of the senior managers polled believed that cyber risk was not being appropriately managed in their business.

With malicious phishing emails becoming increasingly common,

potentially putting your firm's whole network at risk, internal awareness through training is now an essential part of a firm's risk management.

Cyber liability insurance

The appetite for cyber liability insurance has increased within the legal sector. Such policies have become more sophisticated and intricate. It is important to ensure that adequate time is spent completing the proposal forms and sourcing the right market for your firm. Engaging a specialist insurance lawyer and insurance broker will maximise your chances of getting the right cover for business interruption

losses as well as the technical and forensic support needed to perform a root cause analysis and assist with restoring and recovering data - things that some off-the-shelf insurance products may not include.

What price do you put on a good night's sleep?

For further information, please email [Mark Hughes](mailto:Mark.Hughes@liverpool-lawsociety.org.uk), [Philip Bowers](mailto:Philip.Bowers@liverpool-lawsociety.org.uk), [Natasha Lackner](mailto:Natasha.Lackner@liverpool-lawsociety.org.uk) or [Joshua Bates](mailto:Joshua.Bates@liverpool-lawsociety.org.uk) or call **0151 906 1000**.

Mark Hughes, Associate, O'Connors



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Combined Authority Race Equality Hub and Legal Sector

1. What is the Race Equality Hub?

The Race Equality Hub was created following the Metro Mayor Rotherham’s Declaration of Intent, in 2021 and an investment of £2.3m for the Hub’s development. The aim of the Hub is to encourage and support organisations to prioritise race equality with the ambition of addressing the inequalities faced by the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities in the city region.

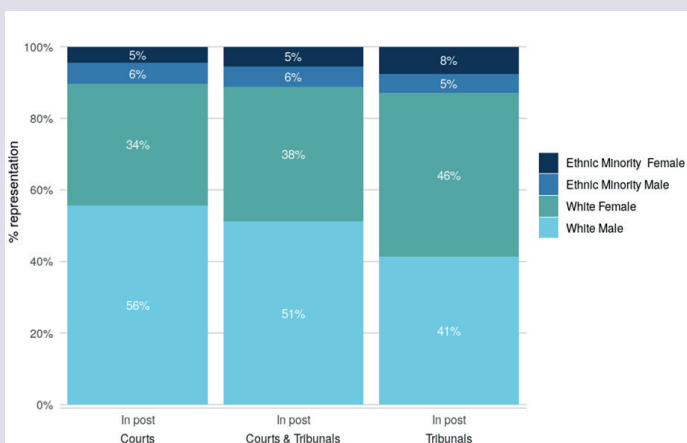
The Race Equality Hub will contribute to the economic advancement of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities within a Racial Justice context, becoming a One Stop Shop for co-ordinating Business Support Services, Employability Programmes, Leadership Development, and associated opportunities across the city region.

At the Race Equality Hub our aim is to educate and support employers, partners and stakeholders to become more inclusive and understand the reputational, business and economic benefits of greater racial equality. Our aim in driving this change forward, is to create inclusive organisations with a commitment to treat all employees fairly and offer equal opportunities for growth, development and advancement.

2. Data

There is an ageing population within the law professions, and the 2021 census data identified that 26.7% of the next working generation will be from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities throughout the UK. Whilst representation among solicitors is fairly good at 19%, Barristers, however, are predominantly white male professionals and Ethnic Minority females have lower representation in senior positions. In LCR there is very little representation at partner or executive level.

White male barristers dominate the top positions in the judiciary (courts and tribunals). This needs to change for the UK justice system to be representative of the population it serves. (See table below)



3. Partnership Working

The Race Equality Hub is keen to support efforts to diversify the legal professions. In October 2024, a Journey to Law Event was hosted in the Combined Authority Chamber and aimed at young people interested in careers in Law. The panel was made up of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Magistrates, Solicitors and Barristers who talked about their journey into the profession and took questions from an enthusiastic audience of 16–18-year-old Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people from across the city region.

Building upon our initial work with some key Law firms within the city region, we would like to work in partnership with the legal sector to increase Black, Asian Minority Ethnic representation through shadowing opportunities, work placements and apprenticeships. We have developed the Race Equality Hub, Operational Network with the aim of supporting employers across the city region to increase equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisations whilst learning from best practice. The Network provides a safe space for open, honest conversations to challenge and reduce barriers to employment. EDI leads within the Law Society are welcome to join the Network or alternatively if there is enough interest from the Law Society, we can establish a Legal Sector Network. If you are interested in this opportunity, please feel free to contact our Strategic Employability Partnership Manager Justine Jenkins: Justine.Jenkins@liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk





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ADILA

Liverpool Law Society's 2025
Annual Dinner and Legal Awards
will take place on Thursday, 13 November
at the Rum Warehouse, Liverpool

The Liverpool Region's legal community are invited to
come together to celebrate being part of
a proud and vibrant legal profession.

Members and non-members can attend the Dinner.

Nominations for the 2025 Legal Awards will open in
early July and close early September. Details on the
categories appear opposite.

[Dinner bookings now being taken - click here](#)

S P O N S O R E D B Y

ADILA

The Legal Awards are back for 2025!

Open to members of Liverpool Law Society

CATEGORIES

- RISING STAR AWARD
- OUTSTANDING TEAM AWARD - NON-CONTENTIOUS
- OUTSTANDING TEAM AWARD - DISPUTE RESOLUTION & LITIGATION
- OUTSTANDING TEAM AWARD - EMPLOYMENT LAW
- OUTSTANDING TEAM AWARD - FAMILY LAW
- EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARD
- OUTSTANDING LAWYER AWARD
- LAW FIRM AWARD (1-49 EMPLOYEES)
- LAW FIRM AWARD (50+ EMPLOYEES)

With nine categories to choose from, we are confident there is something for everyone. Nominations will open in early July and close in early September.

The winners of the 2025 Legal Awards will be revealed at a glittering black-tie ceremony during the Annual Dinner on Thursday, 13th November 2025.

For further information and to book tickets for the Annual Dinner and Legal Awards, [click here](#).

SPONSORED BY

Joint V meeting of Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Bristol law societies



Members of the Joint V Birmingham group



Nicola Harris

On 30th of January 2025 officers, and senior staff members of the above five law Societies met in person at Saint Philip's Chambers In Birmingham for one of our quarterly meetings. The Joint V meetings provide an excellent opportunity to discuss matters relating to the running of the regional membership societies and important topical issues facing our profession.

The meeting began with a talk from the CEO of LawCare **Elizabeth Rimmer**, discussing the post covid change in working practises, increasing demands on firms via regulatory pressures, and the demand for more flexibility and a better work life balance. LawCare is a charity formed in 1997 providing support for all members of the sector including legal and non legal law. LawCare's message is that people should not wait for a crisis, help can be afforded to them before they get to that stage. There was specific discussion around supporting mental health issues, which should not be seen as a tick box exercise, and concerns raised by LawCare about the level of fines being put forward by the SRA and the mental health issues which arise as a result of that. Read more about LawCare services here: (www.lawcare.org.uk)

Birmingham Law Society were our hosts and had their legal awards dinner in February, with two further main events in their calendar, Alternative Dinner and the President's Dinner. Their focus is on "voices" and allowing their members to have a voice in the legal community and in their wider region. Birmingham Law Society are currently supporting 2 charities from the domestic violence sector, She,Beast and Mankind.

Bristol Law Society are relaunching their committees alongside going out to their members to secure greater involvement, alongside their council, as the key component of the organisation. The new President and CEO have also spent a lot of time meeting local managing partners from Bristol to better understand how their Society can better meet the needs of businesses within Bristol Law Society. Leeds Law Society have recently launched

their private Client committee. There is a strong focus for the society on equality, inclusion and diversity. They are looking forward to undertaking an LGBTIQ+ tour in February as part of LGBTIQ+ History Month, alongside exploring other historical issues. They've received positive feedback from their dinner last year and are exploring ideas to engage their members in alcohol free events. They are focusing on engagement with the Justice Board.

Liverpool Law Society updated the Joint V on recent matters impacting our society. There had been a busy end to 2024 with **James Mannouch** taking over from our outgoing **President Gaynor Williams**. We have 14 committees as part of the Liverpool Law Society, all undertaking valuable work in their respective areas of law. Tabled agenda items for discussion included cost delays in the courts, access to justice and the Regulatory Committee looking at client money consultation and other key issues. We were also able to provide updates on the new Law Centre which has launched on the Wirral providing free access to legal advice with the support of the Access to Justice Committee with external funding for disadvantaged

families. Looking ahead, the Society also welcomed the sharing of any ideas to commemorate the Liverpool Law Societies by centenary in 2027. The National Law Society will have its Bicentenary event in Liverpool on the 20th of June 2025 to recall our rich history, celebrate our diverse community and look towards the future of our profession (www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-us/Bicentenary-year).

Manchester Law Society's key theme for this year is equality, diversity and inclusion. The Society remains busy with conferences and committees and are looking forward to their first pro bono awards. The Justice Minister and the Transport Minister recently attended a meeting in Manchester and the Joint V committees are exploring holding a meeting with the Services Minister to discuss matters affecting the legal community.

There were useful round table discussions and idea sharing around important and fast moving progression of AI and the impact of such tech on the law and how we can adapt our practice to safely incorporate AI. Discussion

was held around what the implications of AI may be, for example in terms of alterations to charging structures, and use of AI in job applications/promotions. Discussion moved from AI to crypto assets and concerns about holding cryptocurrency were raised by a member of Liverpool Law Society who has raised a query with the SRA about whether cryptocurrency or assets are classed as client money. Recovered crypto assets are being stored in a crypto wallet and the member asked for any experience from any Joint V members in relation to the point of crypto assets being classed as client money. The SRA has been approached for guidance which is awaited.

Liverpool Law Society led the discussion around cost delays in court, and responses to questions from all Joint V law societies are awaited.

Liverpool Law Society looks forward to hosting the next in person meeting of the Joint V on 20th of May 2025.

Nicola Harris
Joint Honorary Secretary
Liverpool Law Society



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FINDING YOUR VOICE
IN TODAY'S **DIGITAL** LANDSCAPE

Leading law societies warn against SRA's overreaching reforms



The five largest local law societies in the UK - Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester - known as “the Joint V” - have joined forces to challenge the Solicitors Regulation Authority’s (SRA) proposed reforms to client money management, regulatory oversight, and the Compensation Fund. Representing over 15,000 legal professionals nationwide, the Joint V argue in their high-level response submitted to the SRA this week that the SRA’s proposals are disproportionate, risk undermining public confidence in the profession, and fail to deliver meaningful consumer protection improvements. Each Society will also deliver its own individual detailed response to the SRA.

Unnecessary disruption to client money handling

The SRA’s long-term ambition to prevent solicitors from holding client money is both disproportionate and ill-conceived – “a sledgehammer to crack a nut”. The legal profession overwhelmingly acts with integrity, and the existing safeguards are robust. A move to Third-Party Managed Accounts (TPMAs) would not improve consumer protection and would introduce new risks, including cybersecurity threats and reduced client choice. There is no clear evidence that TPMAs offer any greater security than the current system.

Flawed approach to interest on client accounts

The SRA’s claim that firms are improperly retaining interest on client funds is fundamentally mistaken. The legal profession has long absorbed the costs of managing client accounts, and there is no evidence of improper conduct. Interest retention was never raised as a concern when rates were low, highlighting the inconsistency in the SRA’s approach.

Unrealistic residual balance proposals

A rigid 12-week deadline for returning residual balances is impractical, particularly in complex matters involving international clients, deceased estates, or property transactions. The current “prompt” obligation already ensures that balances are cleared appropriately. Arbitrary deadlines could lead to unnecessary breaches and administrative burdens without achieving meaningful reform.

The SRA must improve its own regulatory processes

The focus should be on strengthening the SRA’s own internal oversight rather than imposing further regulatory burdens on firms. The Joint V supports:

- Enhancing pre-authorisation checks to prevent misconduct before it arises.
- Better training for SRA staff and improvements in regulatory enforcement.
- Reintroducing accountants’ reports to strengthen compliance monitoring.

Compensation Fund lacks transparency

The Compensation Fund is being used not just to compensate clients but also to cover SRA intervention costs—without sufficient oversight or transparency. A significant portion of the Fund’s budget is allocated to interventions, yet the profession receives little accountability on how these funds are used. The SRA must provide greater clarity on the Fund’s future and ensure solicitors are not unfairly burdened with rising costs.

Call for proportionate and evidence-based regulation

The Joint V strongly urges the SRA to rethink its approach.

“The proposed reforms risk undermining trust in the profession without delivering tangible benefits to consumers. The SRA should focus on improving its own regulatory effectiveness before imposing new burdens on firms,” said **Richard Port** MBE, President of Birmingham Law Society.

The Joint V stands ready to engage with the SRA to develop fair, practical, and evidence-based solutions that protect consumers while maintaining the integrity and efficiency of legal services.

For media inquiries, contact Jayne Willetts jayne@jaynewilletts.co.uk or Matt O’Brien matthew.obrien@jrblegal.co.uk



Awardees and alumni of the Diversity Access Scheme at the 20th anniversary celebration in 2024

The Diversity Access Scheme

Opening doors, changing lives: scholarships for the solicitors of tomorrow

The Law Society's Diversity Access Scheme (DAS) is a scholarship with a difference. It provides awardees with

Finance

Up to the full cost of funding the final stage of their legal education (either LPC fees or SQE preparation course and exam fees).

Mentoring

A professional mentor to help them with questions about starting a career in the law.

Work experience

High quality placements brokered through the Law Society.

Applications will be open from Wednesday 5 February to Sunday 23 March 2025. The application form, guidance, and eligibility criteria will be available on our website:

www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/diversity-access-scheme

We welcome applications from students from all non-traditional backgrounds, including disabled students, those from Black or other ethnic minority backgrounds, LGBT+ students, and anyone who has faced significant financial or social barriers in pursuing their legal education and career.

To find out how you can support the Diversity Access Scheme through sponsorship, mentoring or work placements, or if you have a query about applying for a DAS award, please contact diversityaccessscheme@lawsociety.org.uk

“Growing up in a low-income household in a deprived area of Liverpool, and managing the challenges of a physical disability, I have faced various barriers throughout my academic journey. Following four years of academic legal study, I was thrilled to receive support from the Law Society to undertake the Solicitors Qualifying Exam and work experience.”

Rebekah Brown, 2024 DAS awardee

Principal sponsors



Record-breaking year for LawCare's support channels

LawCare

LawCare, the mental health charity for the legal sector in the UK, has published its 2024 impact report, revealing its busiest year ever with record numbers reaching out for support.

- In 2024, people reached out for support 1,037 times - the highest number ever in a single year and a 24% increase since 2021.
- Stress and anxiety (39%) were the most common reasons people contacted LawCare, followed by career concerns (15%) and workplace bullying and harassment (10%).
- LawCare's live online webchat saw a 35% increase in 2024, providing a convenient way for people to get support, especially if they didn't want to talk on the phone.

Mental health remains a major challenge in the legal sector, with long hours, heavy workloads, and high-pressure environments still embedded in its

culture. As the legal landscape evolves, these pressures aren't easing.

To better understand the mental health of people in the legal sector, LawCare is running its Life in the Law 2025 research. It will help identify why people may be experiencing poor mental health and what practical steps individuals and organisations can take to prevent it. There are two separate surveys: one for individuals working in the legal sector and another for organisations, such as law firms, chambers, and in-house legal teams. Take part here:

- [Life in the Law 2025 survey for individuals](#)
- [Life in the Law 2025 survey for organisations](#)

Elizabeth Rimmer, Chief Executive of LawCare, said:

"At LawCare, we believe real, positive change happens when we come together

as a community. 2024 was our busiest year ever, with people reaching out to us for support more than 1,000 times. This shows both the growing pressures in the legal sector and the increasing courage to ask for help.

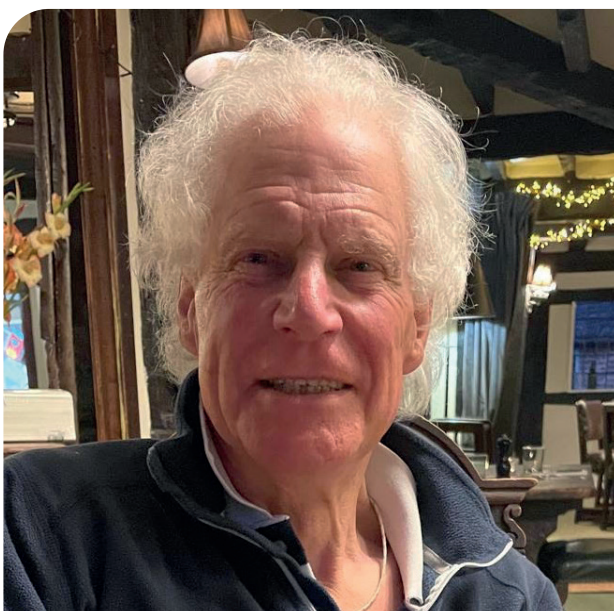
Behind every number is a person - a junior lawyer battling imposter syndrome, a lawyer facing burnout, a business support professional struggling with anxiety. These stories are why our work matters. Our goal is simple but vital: to create a legal sector where mental health is a priority and everyone can thrive."

LawCare's 2024 Impact report

The impact report provides an insight into the work led by LawCare's board, staff, volunteers and champions to provide mental health support to the legal sector.

[LawCare's 2024 Impact Report](#)

Have you ever felt that the law and practising it gets you down?



LawCare exists to offer emotional support to all connected with the law: Support Staff, Paralegals, Trainees, Assistant Solicitors, Associates, Junior Partners, and Senior Partners too as well as Members of The Bar, in House Counsel and more.

In the past it was seen as a weakness that lawyers might have wobbly moments and show emotional concerns. Thankfully times have changed and lawyers, like others, are regarded as human. Indeed, I suggest to show emotion is not now seen as a weakness, but as a strength.

LawCare offers a totally confidential service and can help you when needed. But right now LawCare needs YOUR views about life in the law. Please share your thoughts in the attached surveys, as an individual and speaking for your organisation if you have that authority.

Charlie Jones,
Former President, LLS

The Work of Knowsley Chamber: Promoting and Driving Business Growth since 1987



Knowsley Chamber plays a pivotal role in supporting local businesses and fostering economic growth within Knowsley and beyond. We are a private sector led business and a voice of businesses of all sizes.

Based in the Liverpool City Region, Knowsley has seen remarkable transformations in its economy, thanks in part to the efforts of the Chamber, which has consistently worked to create opportunities for businesses to thrive.

At the core of the Knowsley Chamber's mission is the commitment to provide a high level of quality support and guidance. By representing a broad spectrum of industries, from manufacturing to technology and creative sectors, the Chamber serves as a critical connector between local companies, regional authorities, and the wider business community.

Networks are a central part of Knowsley Chamber. Knowsley Chamber regularly hosts events for a variety of forums including; *B2B Networking, Construction Forum, Manufacturing Forum, The Peoples Forum, Environment Network and Women in Business Forum*. By facilitating a variety of forums, the Chamber provides an invaluable platform for businesses to meet new partners, suppliers, and customers. These interactions often lead to new collaborations, joint ventures, and business opportunities that might not have otherwise been possible. Networking events are designed not just for large companies, but also for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), providing a level playing field for businesses of all sizes to showcase their products and services. This inclusive

approach helps ensure that every business in the Knowsley area can thrive, regardless of its size or industry sector.

Chamber members have exclusive access to a 'Quest' portal which provides 24/7 support on tax, legal, HR and health and safety queries.

With a reach of over 3000 contacts, the Chamber provides for advertising and communications via social media, a monthly newsletter and bi-monthly insight magazine.

Knowsley Chamber has been the delivery partner for Working Well since 2011. The scheme is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Knowsley's workforce. Working Well is an initiative that is supported and funded by Knowsley Public Health. There are numerous examples of how the programme has provided valuable support to employees and signposted support between members.

The Chamber has grown successfully in recent years and appointed a new Chief Executive, **Rachel Peak**, in July 2024 to continue to build on this success. Rachel holds a joint post as Chief Executive of Knowsley Chamber and as Head of Business Growth at Knowsley Council. This joint role provides for a strong

private and public sector partnership approach for the benefit of Chamber members and local businesses. The Chamber is co-located with the Council's Business Growth and Major Development Team to provide a One Front Door approach.

When discussing her new post, Rachel said *"I am very pleased to have commenced in post last year. Members are absolutely at the heart of Knowsley Chamber. I meet more amazing people and businesses by the day. This unique role places me in a fortunate position to work collectively with other organisations and in a number of forums to support our businesses and the Knowsley community."*

Knowsley Chamber remains a vital asset to the local business community. By offering a broad range of services, from networking opportunities and business support to skills development, the Chamber fosters a thriving business ecosystem. Its work is critical to continuing to drive the economic prosperity of Knowsley and to support businesses to grow, adapt, and succeed in an ever-evolving marketplace.

Knowsley Chamber is a fantastic organisation to be involved in, for further information email info@knowsleychamber.org.uk



Liverpool Law Society Housing Conditions Conference 2025



Oliver Roberts

The Liverpool Law Society Housing Conditions Conference 2025 was held at Taylor Wessing's office in the picturesque Albert Dock and was chaired by District Judge *Michelle Campbell*. The event generated significant anticipation as it explored the most substantial statutory reforms affecting the housing sector, focusing on the introduction of Awaab's Law and the potential impact of the Renter's Rights Bill on landlords and the housing market.

The conference commenced with **Louise Murphy** and **Thomas Stockton** from MSB Solicitors, who provided an update on Awaab's Law. They examined its proposals and implementation, highlighting the transformative changes introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023—the most significant regulatory reform in the sector to date. This legislation mandates that social landlords meet the needs of residents and be held accountable for their performance, with a strengthened Housing Ombudsman overseeing compliance.

Awaab's Law establishes mandatory timescales for social landlords to address damp and mould issues. MSB Solicitors stated that the law should be extended to cover all 29 Health and Safety Hazards, emphasising the importance of social landlords exercising common sense in risk assessment to ensure tenants' properties remain free from hazards. Their key recommendations included:

- A 14-day timeframe for investigating hazards, reduced to 7 days if medical evidence indicates a tenant is at risk.
- Decanting tenants if a property cannot be made safe.
- Social Landlords were advised to:
- Assess the capacity of repairs teams to meet the new timescales.
- Review and enhance record-keeping systems.
- Ensure staff receive adequate training on repairs and decant procedures.
- Evaluate the availability of emergency accommodation for

urgent decants.

- Update access protocols to comply with the new legal requirements.
- Provide training on the 29 HHSRS Hazards and repair obligations.
- Review out-of-hours repair services to meet calendar-day deadlines.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of social landlords providing written reports within short timeframes, maintaining accurate records, and addressing the practicalities of carrying out repairs.

The next speaker, **Sarah Mansfield** from Excello Law, addressed property litigation, focusing on possession claims and disrepair defences. She explained how damp and mould counterclaims could significantly weaken a landlord's case for possession, even in instances of rent arrears. A consensus emerged that landlords should no longer attribute damp and mould issues solely to tenant lifestyle. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of legal representation for tenants facing possession claims, potentially limiting access to justice.

Mansfield further discussed the anticipated changes under the Renter's Rights Bill 2024-25, which include:

- Abolition of 'No-Fault' Evictions (Section 21).
- New grounds for possession, including selling the property, moving in a family member, rent arrears, or antisocial behaviour.
- A prohibition on evictions within the first year of tenancy.
- Regulation of rent increases, limiting them to once per year with two months' notice.
- A ban on rental bidding.
- Introduction of a Landlord Redress Scheme and a Private Rented Sector Database.

Alana Davies from the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) led an interactive session addressing landlords' concerns regarding the legal changes, particularly fears of rising rents and landlords exiting the market.

Hayley Webster from Medical Legal Appointments (MLA) highlighted the value of expert surveyor reports in disrepair claims. She underscored that well-prepared reports could strengthen a party's case or even prevent litigation. She emphasised the need for:

- Detailed causation analysis.
- Comprehensive photographic evidence.
- Precise cost breakdowns for repairs.

Ben Reeve-Lewis from Safer Renting, speaking remotely, discussed the future of local authority enforcement under

Section 107 of the Bill. He emphasised the shift from powers to duties for local authorities, raising concerns about funding and staffing challenges. However, he noted the potential benefits of expanding Civil Penalty Notices (CPNs) for harassment and illegal eviction, which could generate additional enforcement funding. Reeve-Lewis also proposed that extending Rent Repayment Orders to superior landlords could help eliminate rogue landlords from the market.

Surveyor **Mike Franks** provided insights into common issues with retrofitted wall insulation, including black mould, bathroom tile problems, and extractor fan disputes under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act. He also cautioned against misinterpreting Electrical Resistance Meter readings in surveyor reports.

The conference concluded with **Jonathan Davidson** from Capsticks, who delivered a case law update on four significant cases:

1. *Sovereign Housing Association v Hall* – Confirmed forced access under CPR 70.2A.
2. *Godagama & Edirisinghe v Hanson* – Provided guidance on quantum in Section 9A claims.
3. *Jillians v Red Kite Community Housing* – Established that the notional rent reduction approach is preferable for uninhabitable properties.
4. *Mann v Martin* – Clarified that Section 4(4) of the Defective Premises Act 1972 does not require landlords to make safe latent defects without actual knowledge.

The Liverpool Law Society Housing Conditions Conference 2025 provided valuable insights into the evolving legal landscape of housing law, equipping delegates with practical guidance on compliance and strategic approaches to upcoming challenges.

Oliver Roberts & Richard Speechley

Landlord & Tenant Team,
Phoenix Legal Solicitors

www.phoenixlegalsolicitors.co.uk



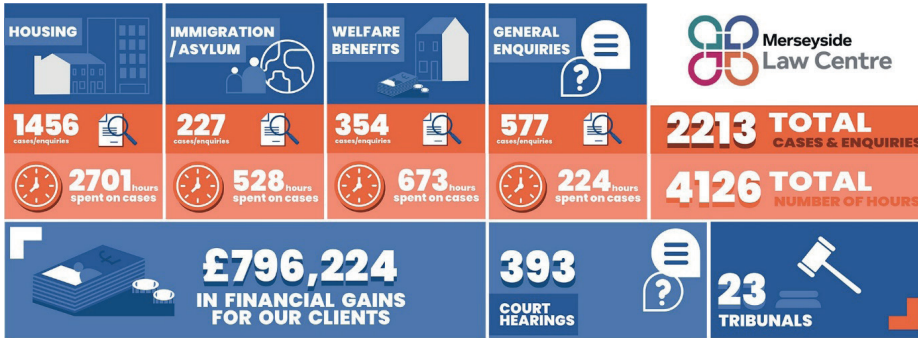
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The latest news from Merseyside Law Centre, providers of free specialist legal advice and assistance for the Liverpool City Region. Access to Justice for all.



Impact Highlights '24

The beginning of a new year is always a good time to reflect on the past year and all that has been achieved. 2024 was a year where levels of demand for our services were at an all-time high. Pressures on local authorities inevitably meant that clients were looking to us more for answers to complex issues and we delivered, thanks to our fantastic, dedicated team. Being the court duty solicitors at both Liverpool and Birkenhead court meant we were able to help hundreds of people who had been unable to access legal help before pivotal hearings regarding their housing and in many cases, ensure they were not going to be facing homelessness. Working in partnership with Raise advice, we also recognised the need for debt advice for many of our clients with complex issues. The levels of demand for our services continue to rise and we hope that this is recognised in the government's future plans in regard to legal aid provisions, housing and benefits reform and general issues regarding access to justice. We are so proud of the crucial services we provide to our communities and look forward to the next 12 months of delivering transformative results for our clients.

65s and Over Service Up and Running

Our dedicated benefits service for people aged 65 and over has been running for several months and we have already achieved a number of life changing

Free Welfare Advice for Over 65s

Are you over 65 and unsure about your welfare benefits? We are here to help. Our dedicated team offers free, friendly advice on a range of benefits, including:

- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction
- Attendance Allowance

Our aim is to ensure that people aged 65 and over are claiming the support they are entitled to.

Appointments are available at our offices, or if preferred, we can arrange a home visit for your convenience

For more information contact us on :
0151 452 2495
Or email:
gabriele.ciuzelyte@merseysidelawcentre.co.uk

www.merseysidelawcentre.co.uk/benefitsandwelfare

results for clients. The case study below is an example of the impact this service has already had.

Our client got in touch with us very concerned over a housing benefits overpayment letter she had received. She had been informed that she owed a large amount of money stemmed from her failure to report the end of her receipt of Carer's Allowance in 2010. The amount was such that there would have been no possibility of paying it back and understandably, this was very distressing for her and her husband.

During our initial meeting, the client

informed us that she has been receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA), with her husband serving as her primary caregiver throughout this period. The husband has been receiving a Carer's Allowance to support his caregiving role. However, in 2010, they received a notification indicating that his Carer's Allowance had been terminated, and the client's DLA was downgraded to the low rate for mobility. The client stated that they had not knowingly received any documentation or clarification regarding the reduction in benefits and how it may affect other benefits they were receiving.

In addition to DLA and Carer's Allowance, the couple had been beneficiaries of Housing Benefits and Council Tax reductions for several years, which contributed to their financial stability. In 2017, the client's husband reached pension age and began receiving the state pension along with pension credits. The client herself reached pension age in August 2024, further altering their eligibility for certain benefits and financial support.

Following these changes, they began receiving numerous letters indicating that they owed substantial amounts for overpayments related to Housing Benefits and Council Tax, stemming from their failure to report the cessation of Carer's Allowance in 2010.

The couple expressed their belief that they were not required to report this change, assuming that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would have communicated such important information across relevant departments, not allowing such a large amount of owed money to accrue.

We decided that the client should obtain a medical summary for herself and her husband so we may be able

to use that as grounds for an appeal against the Council. There were several factors we asked the council to consider in appealing the amount including the fact that our client had been paying her rent through a housing association, who did not raise any alert of underpayment. Also, alongside several other serious ongoing health issues, the client had significant sight issues and had not been able to read any letters that she had received properly. We wanted to highlight the vulnerabilities of the client and her husband which resulted in them not being aware of the overpayment they were accruing.

We were informed that the council decided to revise the decision and reduce the recoverable overpayment to a relatively very small amount. The client was delighted and able to move forwards without the worry of such an enormous debt weighing on the family.

Please do share information on this service with anyone you feel may benefit. Details on how to arrange an appointment are on the flyer.

Our longest serving member of the team, Jack



This year marks the 11th year our Admin Assistant Jack has been with us which makes him the longest serving member of our team. Jack is an integral part of the MLC tapestry, involved with archiving, enquiries and general admin assistance. He began his journey with us as an apprentice from Greenbank College and

has grown in his confidence and skills steadily over the years. Jack has always impressed us with his work ethic and dedication to MLC and we want to thank him for all his years of service.

Volunteer & Donation Opportunities

Volunteers are the backbone of Merseyside Law Centre. We are looking for like-minded individuals and organisations to get involved with the valuable work we do in the Merseyside City Region.

We would also love to hear from you if you are an organisation that would like to get involved or contribute to our work. We would really like to hear from fellow legal professionals who may be able to contribute their expertise or legal firms who may want to financially support the work we do.

Whatever your skills or experience, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you want to make a difference to the lives of people in your community and have a passion for social justice.

To download our Volunteer Application Pack, please visit [Get Involved | merseysidelawcentre](#) and e-mail the completed form to enquiries@merseysidelawcentre.co.uk

With the current cost-of-living crisis, our services are now needed more than ever. If you could consider donating to Merseyside Law Centre, it could make a massive difference to many people's lives in Merseyside. Our donation details are up on our website www.merseysidelawcentre.co.uk/donate

As always, our current contact details and drop in session details are below so please do pass these onto anyone you think may benefit from or require our services. If you are unable to attend a drop-in session, there is an online enquiry form on our website. www.merseysidelawcentre.co.uk/online-enquiry-form

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LET US BE YOUR HELPING HAND

WHAT DO WE DO?
 We provide free legal advice, assistance and representation for housing matters, mainly early legal advice to avoid court action and legal aid matters, across the Liverpool City Region. Also, welfare benefits, debt, immigration and asylum advice for residents of Liverpool.

OUR SERVICES

Free Advice Drop In Sessions
 Every Monday & Thursday
 10am-12pm
 No appointment required.
 Dovecot Multi Activity Centre,
 Back Dovecot Place,
 Liverpool L14 9BA

Free Housing Possession Advice Drop In Sessions
 Every Wednesday & Friday
 11am-1pm
 No appointment required.
 Liverpool Civil and Family Court
 35 Vernon Street, L2 2BX

Debt Advice
 in partnership with Raise Advice
Appointment Only.
 Check website for info on how to book.
 Every 2 weeks on a Thursday.
 1pm-4pm
Appointment only.
 Dovecot Multi Activity Centre,
 Back Dovecot Place,
 Liverpool L14 9BA

If you are unable to attend a drop in, please fill in the enquiry form on our website. Links below.
www.merseysidelawcentre.co.uk/enquiryform

QR code

Merseyside Law Centre Limited is a company registered in England & Wales under company number 09882302 and a registered charity, number 1199464. Registered office: Merseyside Law Centre, The Kaumbia Imani Millennium Centre, 4 Princes Road, Liverpool, L8 1TH.
 The solicitors of Merseyside Law Centre are regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Merseyside Law Centre
 Ministry of Justice
 LEGAL AID
 THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION

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- ✔ We offer free legal advice and representation if you have received a notice seeking possession of your home from your landlord or mortgage lender.
- ✔ We can provide early advice and assistance and representation if your home might be at risk.
- ✔ We can represent you on the day of your hearing or help you in advance if you contact us before the date of your hearing.
- ✔ We may be able to help you defend the claim against you.

Our services are free even if you do not qualify for Legal Aid

HOW TO ACCESS OUR SERVICES

DROP INS- NO APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

Liverpool Civil and Family Court
 35 Vernon Street, L2 2BX
Wed & Fri 11am-1pm

Dovecot Multi Activity Centre,
 L14 9BA
Mon & Thurs 10am-12pm

ONLINE
 Online enquiry form available
www.merseysidelawcentre.co.uk/enquiryform

TELEPHONE
 Call us on:
0151 709 0504
 (9.30 - 5pm, Mon - Fri)

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Opening of the new Wirral Advice Centre



Gaynor Williams



Elly Smith



Alan Kelly

On 17 January 2025 the Wirral Advice Centre opened its doors to Wirral residents. Benefits and welfare advice is currently being provided by Vauxhall Community Law Centre, who are working from the premises of the charity WEB, based in Bentnick Street, Birkenhead.



The Wirral Advice Centre was a project born from Liverpool Law Society's Access to Justice Committee, and it was prompted by MPs from the Wirral voicing concerns that their constituents had limited access to advice in Wirral. After approximately 2 years of research and development, and thanks to the hard work of **Elly Smith** and **Alan Kelly** from Vauxhall Community Law Centre, funding was secured from the National



Bernie King

Lottery fund to allow the project to be launched. I was President of Liverpool Law Society at the time and a Trustee at WEB, and I asked **Bernie King**, CEO of WEB if they could assist by providing access to rooms at WEB's premises.

Bernie was keen for WEB to assist, and they offered to organise appointments for service users and to convert some private rooms in their centre into welcoming spaces for advice to be provided.

The advice centre is very much in its infancy; however feedback has already been very positive, with a high demand from residents of Wirral. There are exciting plans ahead for the advice centre and I

am hoping that it will continue to grow and receive funding for the future. This will allow services to be expanded and people in Wirral to receive valuable advice and assistance, and in turn, access to justice.

Further updates will be provided in the near future!

Gaynor Williams
Immediate Past President



Halebank Business Improvement District (BID) in Widnes Delivers



Halton BID Team - Rachael Owen (Director), Sam Marsh (Admin) and Helen Hessey (BID Engagement)



BID training course

It's over 20 years since the first Business Improvement Districts were piloted in the UK. Initially 20 BIDs were formed with the original pilot in October 2003 and then brought into law with the UK regulations act the following year. Four years later, Halebank BID in Widnes was formed, an industrial BID which is now in its 4th Term. Halebank BID is one of 340 BIDs operating across the UK: a defined area of a town or city where a levy is charged on all eligible business rate payers. BID levies are voted for via a ballot which takes place every five years.

Halebank BID in Widnes delivers a range of day-to-day BID services include street cleaning, removing graffiti, security, connecting businesses and networking. Halebank BID currently serves approximately 70 businesses spanning a range of sectors, all located on Halebank Industrial Estate and Widnes Business Park. Since successfully winning a business rate payers ballot in March 2023 and securing a 4th term (2023 to 2028), additional focus has been given to improving links with the wider local community, estate safety and additional CCTV coverage and helping to deliver an educated and well skilled workforce.

The BID in Widnes is run by 'Halton Chamber Enterprises Limited' t/a 'Halton BID', a not for profit organisation which currently runs two industrial BIDs, one in Widnes and one in Astmoor, Runcorn, serving approximately 200 organisations across both estates. 'Halton BID' also ensures that everyone across the estate is better connected with monthly newsletters, an annual AGM and regular networking meetings.

Rachael Owen, Director of 'Halton BID' and CEO of 'Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Ltd', explained: "Halton BID works with a number of local contractors to deliver quality services. This model allows us

to remain agile and respond quickly to sometimes changing business needs, as and when required. This industrial BID is a great example of organisations voting to have a say over their business environment and working together to deliver additional estate wide services and facilities for the betterment of all. It's a true partnership with organisations from across the estate volunteering to serve on the Operating Group which guides investment decisions and identifies areas for further action/improvement."

For more information about Halebank BID please visit our website www.haltonbid.co.uk



BID volunteer Litterpick

Halton BID
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

MJLD: Games Night Social 2025

On 30th January 2025, Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division hosted the first social event of 2025. The event took place at PINS Social Club on Duke Street and was kindly sponsored by MJN Legal.

With over fifty junior lawyers across Merseyside attending the event it was a success, with an evening full of networking, pizza, darts and bowling.

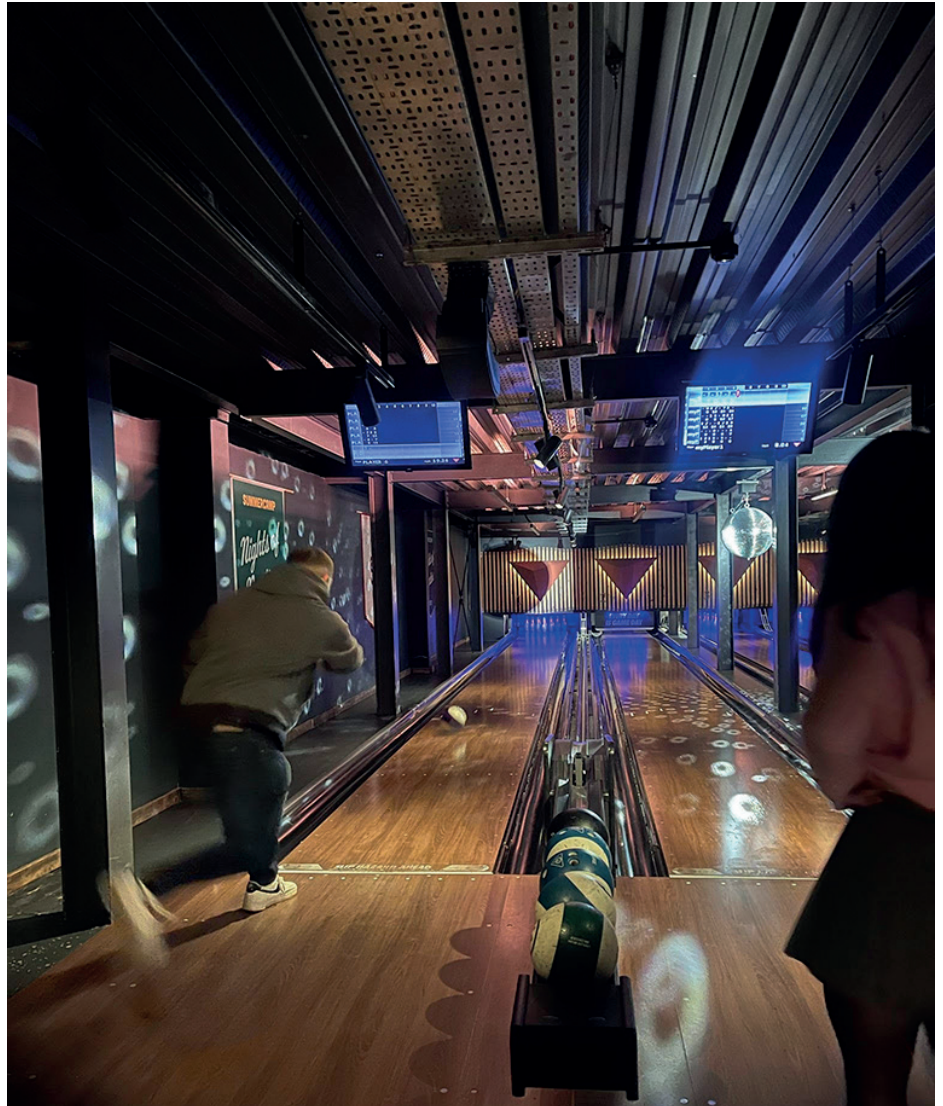
It was a great opportunity to network, with members practicing in varying areas of law from family law to criminal and personal injury to commercial property.

Further, the event was attended by MJN Legal representative, **Michael Niven**, who was available to discuss many exciting opportunities with our members.

Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division remains grateful to all our members who consistently attend our social events and welcome the opportunity for new junior lawyers to come along and enjoy our future events.

We look forward to our next event being the anticipated *Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division v Liverpool Law Society Quiz* on 27th March.

Eve Stott, MJLD Social Representative,
Astrea Linskills



Insurance to Protect Legal Firms Working in Estate Administration



Kevin Bonner

Q1) What was the driver to introduce a range of insurance services for legal firms working in estate administration?

KB: We were keen to protect our legal clients. Over the years, the modern family unit has changed and become more complex. Divorce is far more common these days and this means families have become extended and dispersed giving rise to more challenges when it comes to estate administration and distribution. Property values have also risen giving people more reason to pursue a potentially lucrative claim.

Awareness of the term ‘where there’s blame there’s a claim’ and the rise in firms offering no-win-no-fee arrangements also means people are far more aware of and are more likely to pursue litigation than ever before. We aimed to develop a range of affordable insurance policies to protect businesses and minimise the need for them to call upon use of their own professional covers.

Q2) Why should firms consider insurance in estate administration cases?

KB: There are several reasons why firms should consider cost-effective insurance for specific elements related to estate administration. Insurance offers business resilience and brand protection. It also offers a cost-effective risk transfer from making small claims against already costly professional covers. The last thing any legal firm wants is to put their professional indemnity insurer on notification of a claim. Solicitors can be held personally liable for errors or omissions made during the administration of the estate and so insuring against this mitigates any risk, promoting good business practice.

Insurance also covers financial loss in the event of a claim. Solicitors without insurance coverage may be forced to cover legal costs and compensation fees out of pocket.

Q3) What are the hazards if a claim is made?

KB: Any claim means potential exposure to complex litigation. This takes up considerable administrative time and expense to the organisation. A successful claim will risk existing professional covers or may result in higher premiums. Loss of reputation and clients following a successful claim where insurance has been omitted also needs to be considered.

Q4) What Does Estatesure Offer?

KB: “We offer a range of cost-effective insurance policies including:

- Unoccupied Property Insurance
- Early Distribution
- Missing Beneficiary

- Missing or Lost Share Certificates
- Missing Will
- No Section 27

Our unoccupied property insurance is particularly popular. Any property held within an estate usually represents the singular biggest asset and needs to be protected appropriately when no-one is living in it anymore.

This product is a value-driven solution and can be set up within hours. Unlike other policies, we only need to confirm when the property was built and the type of boiler/heating system that’s installed, to insure the property. Weekly inspections are not required either, which otherwise can be onerous and introduce costs to the estate if agents need to be hired to visit the property on a regular basis.

Q5: Why do you feel insurance in estate administration is so important these days?

KB: The legal landscape is changing. With the increased risk of litigation, firms must look at protecting their professional indemnity insurance for bigger claims. Our range of situation specific policies are an economical way to ensure due diligence and mitigate risk.

Kevin Bonner,
Estatesure Insurance Lead

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For further information about Estatesure’s range of services please see: <https://www.estatesure.co.uk/> or email helpdesk@estatesure.co.uk

An Evening of celebration and connections: honouring award winners, sponsors and supporters

On Tuesday 11th February, Liverpool Law Society joined with the winners and sponsors of the Society's 2024 Annual Dinner and Legal Awards at Fazenda, Liverpool to celebrate their success and to thank those who support the Society's activities in other ways.

President of Liverpool Law Society, **James Mannouch** and some of his fellow officers, **Alum Ullah**, **Sarah Mansfield**, **John-Paul Dennis** and **Gaynor Williams** were joined by the category sponsors and award winners themselves to hear from the society, with the President giving a short speech and welcoming those who were successful last November.

Fazenda provided a wonderful space to host our award recipients, along with drinks and delicious canapes, where everyone got to mingle and network in a relaxed setting.

Plans are afoot for this year's coming celebration of all things legal, and the Society looks forward to receiving more nominations from those firms and individuals who continue to excel and work hard for their clients.

Tables can now be booked on the Society's website as we expect it to be a very popular event again this year!



Jackson Lees



Nina Ferris, Mark Evans





Rising Star & University of Law



University of Law & Maria Fogg Family Law



James Mannouch addresses the room

LLS Golf Day



Enjoy a day of golfing, networking and camaraderie with fellow professionals.

Date: Wednesday, 25th June 2025

Time: Tee Times start from 11am

Location: Heswall Golf Club

Address: Cottage Lane, Gayton, Wirral, CH60 8PB

Event Highlights:

- 1. Tournament:** The day will feature an exciting golf tournament at Heswall Golf Club, a championship course with breathtaking views across the Dee Estuary. The course provides the perfect challenge for golfers of all abilities.
- 2. Prizes:** Prizes will be awarded for various categories, including Longest Drive, Closest to the Pin, Team Winner and the overall Tournament Winner. Who might wrestle the trophy from the existing holders The Keith Jones Partnership?
- 3. Networking:** It's not just about golf! This event will provide a wonderful opportunity to network and socialise with fellow members. Forge new friendships, catch up with old ones, and enjoy the company of like-minded individuals.
- 4. Dinner & Awards Ceremony:** After the tournament, we will gather for a delicious dinner and an awards ceremony to recognise the tournament winners and share memorable moments from the day.

Entry Fee after 12noon, 14 February
£500 + vat per Team of 4.

The entry fee includes light refreshments on arrival, green fees and evening dinner.

Registration Details

To book a team, go online to <https://www.liverpoollawsociety.org.uk/events/2025-golf-tournament/>

We look forward to welcoming you to the Liverpool Law Society Golf Day and making it a memorable experience for everyone.

Following the success of the inaugural golf tournament in 2024, we can't wait to see you on the green this year!

We are delighted to welcome as our headline sponsor:



Hole sponsors:

Landmark
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Sponsorship Opportunities

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact Sarah Poblete at sarah@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk for more information.

Influence the future of mental health in the legal sector



Life in the Law 2025
Take part in the survey now

lawcare.org.uk/survey

LawCare

Take part in LawCare's Life in the Law 2025 research

LawCare, the mental health charity for the legal sector, has launched its new "Life in the Law 2025" surveys and invites you to take part.

There are two separate surveys: one for individuals in the legal sector, and another for organisations, such as law firms, chambers, and in-house legal departments.

The surveys are anonymous and take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to fill out.

- [Life in the Law 2025 survey for individuals](#)
- [Life in the Law 2025 survey for organisations](#)

The surveys are open until Friday 21 March.

Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO of LawCare, says: *"Life in the Law 2025 is a real opportunity to improve mental health in the legal sector. These surveys are open to everyone working in law, and they'll help us understand why people in our sector may be experiencing poor mental health and what practical steps organisations and individuals can take to prevent this. By sharing your experiences, you're contributing to building a more supportive*

and healthier working environment for the future. Together, we can make a real difference."

Your voice adds strength to the findings. The research isn't just about data. It's about people in the legal sector: their experiences, challenges, and successes. Your insights - whether as an individual navigating the challenges of legal work or as part of an organisation striving to support colleagues - are vital.

The surveys are confidential, which means your answers will remain anonymous. Your participation is crucial to the development of practical, evidence-based recommendations that will lead to improvements in working practices to better support mental health.

The survey findings, along with evidence-based recommendations, will be shared in October 2025.

Who can take part?

The surveys are open to individuals and organisations in the legal sector in the UK, Jersey, Guernsey, and Isle of Man, and ask about:

- Working hours and job pressure
- Burnout
- Mental health and wellbeing at work
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination
- Your future in the legal sector
- Current workplace measures to support mental health and wellbeing

If you have more questions about Life in the Law 2025 see the [FAQs on the LawCare website](#).

Be part of the change

The Life in the Law 2025 survey is your chance to share your experiences and insights about what it's really like working in law - the challenges, the wins, and everything in between.

lawcare.org.uk/survey

LawCare



Emerging Drug Trends in the UK: Testing for new substances in the family courts



According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) there were “5,448 deaths related to drug poisoning registered in England and Wales in 2023 - the highest number since records began in 1993 and 11.0% higher than in 2022 (4,907 registered deaths).”

This rise places the UK among the countries with the highest rates of drug-related deaths in Europe, according to the National Crime Agency (NCA). NCA Director-General Graeme Biggar warns, ‘There has never been a more dangerous time to take drugs.’

What drugs are now commonly being used?

The spike in deaths is partly caused by novel psychoactive substances (NPS), a catch-all term for a diverse range of synthetic drugs which are on the rise across the UK. These include opioids, cannabinoids, benzodiazepines, stimulants and hallucinogens that are designed to mimic the effects of traditional illicit drugs and are often significantly more potent.

Nitazenes are just one of these. They are often mixed with party drugs or street drugs such as cocaine, synthetic cannabis or heroin, which has become both much

more scarce and more expensive in the UK due to a crackdown in opium production in Afghanistan.

Their high potency (up to 300 times stronger than heroin), low manufacture cost and ability to evade detection using standard analytical methods have contributed to a marked increase in the use of NPS as consumers either knowingly switch over or unknowingly purchase drugs that have been adulterated or substituted for NPS.

In October 2024, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities reported that nitazenes were responsible for 179 deaths in the UK between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024. However, the true figure is likely to be significantly higher, as these substances continue to evolve, and individuals are often unaware of the exact drugs they are consuming.

The recent detection of synthetic cannabinoids in vapes marketed as containing THC (the psychoactive component of cannabis) meanwhile highlights a worrying trend in the adulteration or substitution of THC products for synthetic cannabinoids, leading to consumers unwittingly taking novel drugs.

Many toxicology labs cannot test for novel drugs

Due to the rapid emergence of new psychoactive substances in the market, there is often a delay in identifying them and developing reliable testing methods. As a result, many labs may still be testing for outdated compounds while drug use patterns have already shifted. The ONS has highlighted this issue, noting that the proportion of drug-related deaths where no specific substances are identified has been increasing over time.

In family court proceedings where drug testing is required, this lag presents a significant challenge. Some substances used by a parent may go undetected and unreported. This also creates difficulties for local authorities and the courts, as they may be unaware of which substances to request testing for, further complicating case assessments.

How can FTS help with testing for novel or illicit drugs?

FTS has one of the most comprehensive accredited drug panels in the UK market, able to test for:

- 43+ compounds initial testing
- 32 different synthetic cannabinoids

- 15 stimulants/hallucinogens
- 2000+ additional compounds, as required
- FTS leads the way on testing synthetic cannabinoids like spice and is the only company in the UK currently testing for the synthetic cannabinoid ADB Butinaca, currently one of the most used in the UK
- FTS is also one of the only providers testing for MDPHP, the active ingredient in the drug more commonly known as Monkey Dust, which has been responsible for several deaths in the Midlands
- FTS does all its testing in-house at its own laboratory in Yorkshire, which is accredited by UKAS to ISO17025 and Lab51 standards
- FTS has a programme of continual development to address the UK's changing drug usage patterns and is the only laboratory working in this sector that can offer reliable detection

of these compounds as they change and re-appear on the street

How to instruct FTS to test for novel drugs:

Using FTS' synthetics panel, you can be assured that relevant and current compounds will be detected, ensuring novel drug misuse is not missed and children are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

Importantly, this eliminates wasted public funding currently spent on testing for outdated synthetics that won't be detected.

FTS offer a service called "Notify and Report", whereby clients can request FTS search for a wider panel of drugs (43+). This service is free of charge - clients only need to instruct FTS for one or two drugs of suspicion.

Clients can choose to be notified if

any other drugs are detected beyond what they requested. Any additional reporting on this would incur a nominal fee.

By providing accurate, comprehensive forensic toxicology and expert interpretation, FTS helps ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of children and their families.

These services are Legal Aid Authority (LAA) compliant, and we offer a LAA Indemnity Guarantee should there be any shortfall in reimbursement.

FTS experts provide reports within 8 days from the sample arriving at our lab.

For information on how FTS can support your testing for novel drugs including nitazenes or monkey dust, contact us on 01924 480272 or email expert@forensic-testing.co.uk



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Generative AI solutions laid bare, by Jayva Global

Generative AI, or GenAI for short, presents real challenges and opportunities in your sector. We're here to help you figure out the practical elements of GenAI – to overcome challenges while grasping opportunities.

What exactly is GenAI?

While 'AI' encompasses a wide range of technologies including machine learning, natural language processing, robotics and computer vision, 'GenAI' is a content-creation tool with output based on the patterns and data it has learned from.

GenAI uses and benefits in a legal setting

As one of the systems in practices, GenAI is revolutionary with functionality enabling legal service providers to:

- **Increase efficiency:** Automating routine tasks such as document review, research and contract analysis thus saving time, reducing costs and allowing you to focus on complex and strategic work.
- **Enhance accuracy:** Minimising human error in areas like due diligence and compliance checks, and analysing large volumes of data with pinpoint accuracy, thus improving work quality.
- **Improve client service:** Introducing chatbots and virtual assistants to client interactions for instant responses to common queries and overall client satisfaction.
- **Empower data-driven decision making:** Analysing past case outcomes and trends for predictive insights to make informed choices and devise better strategies.
- **Reduce costs:** Automating repetitive work impacts efficiency and costs, which is particularly useful for managing overheads and driving up revenue.
- **Introduce better training and development:** Assisting in training new employees by giving access to knowledge and resources so they learn, familiarise and grow rapidly.
- **Strengthen competitive advantage:** Adopt and position your practice as innovative and forward-thinking,

thereby outshining your competition, attracting tech-savvy clients and retaining top talent.

Identifying and mitigating AI risks

To balance the 'hype' with the 'potential' of GenAI, considerations to be borne in mind include:

- **Intellectual property:** Potential infringements of copyright, trademarks, patents and related rights, and misuse or disclosure of confidential information.
- **Data protection and privacy:** Unauthorised access, sharing or misuses of personal and sensitive data.
- **Cybersecurity breaches:** Vulnerabilities to hacking, data breaches, corruption of data sources and other malicious cyber activities.
- **Training concerns:** The misuse of data to train GenAI models, which could result in biases or inappropriate outputs.
- **Output integrity:** GenAI can produce misleading, inaccurate or false outputs that are easily misconstrued or misapplied.
- **Ethics and bias:** The reflection or amplification of societal biases present in training data, leading to unfair or discriminatory results.
- **Human resources and reputation:** If GenAI causes negative consequences for clients, there may be brand damage.

Have you heard about the [Mata v Avianca](#) case in America? In sum, a law office submitted court documents that included non-existent, unverified case references and precedents generated by ChatGPT. As a result, the case was dismissed and a fine was imposed. This story highlights the dangers of relying on content that's generated by AI alone and the absolute need for human oversight in any GenAI process.

A new way of working

Without GenAI, if you're spending 80% of your time creating the administrative elements surrounding a case and only 20% of your time giving legal advice, you risk losing rapport with clients.

With GenAI's automation and content-creation features, your time is redirected into building and maintaining long-standing mutual client relationships. Simultaneously, non-billable time is reduced to increase productivity and financial performance.

Thanks to GenAI, then, lawyers can positively impact operational efficiency, delight clients and improve their bottom line.

At Jayva, the main area we've seen GenAI being used successfully is reporting. In legacy practice management systems, reporting functionality can be restricted, both in a core reports and data warehouse capacity. A simple visual analysis of data drawn from different systems is easily possible with GenAI, whether it's benchmarking information, fee earner performance, profitability from your nominal ledger, trends analysis from the last five years, whatever. Doing so manually is a weeks-long activity and is out of date by the time reports are complete. In this way, GenAI speeds up and supplements reporting.

So, GenAI augments and enhances day-to-day operations – with human oversight always.

What's Jayva's role in GenAI?

Our strapline is 'inspiring the people in law firms to harness the power of technology and thrive'. Technology is brilliant but if it isn't implemented and used properly, you don't have the necessary processes and procedures to back it up.



Our consultancy and training help practices to embrace technology, invest in their people, realign their data and fine tune their processes – for amazing outcomes.

This article is an abridged version of our www.jayvaglobal.com/news/generative-ai-solutions-laid-bare-blog. To get in touch with our friendly team, please email info@jayvaglobal.com or visit www.jayvaglobal.com/contact-us.





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-  **Project management**
-  **Power BI consultancy**
-  **Client trust accounting consultancy**
-  **Legal accounting consultancy**
-  **Training**



About Jayva

- + Legal sector experts
- + Launched in 2014
- + Offices in 6 countries
- + Client success centric
- + Global support 24/6
- + Gold Xero & Elite QuickBooks advisors
- + LEAP consultancy

Regulation Update

March 2025

The latest Regulation news from Andrea Cohen of Weightmans LLP



Andrea Cohen

How can it be March already? It still feels as though the Christmas break was only a couple of weeks ago! Compli is back with our monthly update on regulatory matters, risk and compliance, and recent disciplinary decisions.

SRA requires firms to provide information on complaints handling procedure

On 30 January, the SRA wrote to 750 firms for information regarding how the firm identifies and handles any first-tier complaints. The questionnaire asks about the complaints procedure, how staff and clients are made aware of the process, ways in which the firm responds to complaints, outcomes etc. Responding to the questionnaire is a regulatory requirement, with the SRA taking disciplinary action for failure to respond.

Responses to SRA consultation on client money in legal services

We understand that a large number of responses were submitted to the SRA's consultation, which closed on 21 February, by various groups, including the Law Society, the Joint V (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester Law Societies), firms and individuals, mainly expressing

disapproval of the proposals, particularly the replacement of client accounts with third party management accounts (TMPAs) and removing the ability for firms to earn interest on client accounts, and suggesting that rather than introducing swingeing changes, the SRA focuses on improving its own internal processes, including strengthening the authorisation process, reintroducing the requirement for firms to submit annual accountant's reports and greater scrutiny on non-legal personnel, referencing the conclusions and criticisms of the SRA in the report into the Axiom Ince failure. To date, the only published response we have noted in favour of some of the proposals was from a TPMA provider. While the consultation may have closed, and we wait for the SRA's response and any possible changes to be introduced, the debate is likely to continue, particularly as the report into the SSB debacle is still awaited.

SRA study on vulnerable clients

A recent study commissioned by the SRA, as part of its 'ongoing commitment to improving access to legal services', found that the term 'vulnerability' can be thought too harmful or stigmatising, so there was a reluctance to disclose vulnerabilities, and proposed there should be a fundamental change, moving from an opt-in to opt-out approach, so all legal communication would change to using language that all could understand, rather than requiring individual adjustments. The report recommended policy changes by the SRA and guidance on 'universal practice' and the SRA are now considering the feasibility of introducing this. **Paul Philip**, Chief Executive, said: *'It is clear that, in order to improve accessibility, build trust and reduce complaints, the legal sector could look at designing services that are accessible and inclusive for everyone. We will now consider how we and others*

might take this forward by bringing together experts in this field.'

SRA update on investigation on the Post Office scandal

The SRA updated its June 2024 statement on 20 February 2025, the only change, so far as we can see, being the addition of a paragraph stating: 'Now that the inquiry has finished hearing evidence, we are liaising closely with it to collect all relevant evidence, and with the police to understand what, if any action they might take. We will, of course, take action as soon as we can, and while we can't confirm the exact timeline, we are hopeful that we can launch prosecution action in some cases in the summer of this year.' In its earlier statement it indicated that there are more than 20 live investigations, and that number appears unchanged. It is looking at a range of issues including solicitors' management and supervision of cases; the strategy and conduct of prosecutions and of litigation, duties relating to expert witnesses, disclosure obligations and improper application of privilege to protect communications from disclosure. The Bar Standards Board also indicated that it was preparing to take action against barristers for potential breaches of professional obligations and was liaising with the SRA.

Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

Fines for AML breaches

The raft of fines we have seen imposed on firms and fee earners for AML breaches continues:

Four firms were fined between over £3000 to £25000 for breaches including failing to adequately conduct client risk assessments and not maintaining records of risk assessments,

COFA and firm fined for compliance failures

A law firm and its COFA have each been fined £25,000 as a result of multiple

compliance failures, including AML and accounts rule breaches and jointly ordered to pay £38000 costs.

An SRA investigation found that failure to monitor the client account accurately resulted in a client account shortfall of over £40,600 and residual balances totalling almost £288,000.

Firm and solicitor fined for AML breaches

A firm was fined £25000 and ordered to pay £18000 in an agreed outcome for using client account as a banking facility and failure to apply CDD, ongoing monitoring and carry out risk assessments in relation to a client, and the partner with responsibility for the client was fined £3500 and £6500 costs.

Trainee barred for touching colleague at social event

A trainee solicitor received a section 43 banning order and is barred from being

involved in legal practice without the SRA's prior approval, following inappropriate behaviour towards a female colleague at a firm social event. The conduct was said to be 'inappropriate and/or unwanted and/or sexually motivated'.

Solicitor fined for 'cavalier' approach to regulations

A sole practitioner was fined £45,000 for breaching AML regulations, allowing the client account to be used as a banking facility and making false declarations to the SRA and insurers. The SDT found his false declarations to be reckless and lacking in integrity, as opposed to dishonest.

The SDT found his remorse to be 'sincere and genuine' but still felt he had fallen "*far short of the standards of integrity and probity expected of a solicitor and in the circumstances the level of seriousness of the misconduct was high*". In addition to the fine and an order to pay costs of £60,000, conditions were placed on his practising certificate preventing

him from being a partner, sole practitioner, holding client money, taking a compliance management role or being a signatory on any client account.

Partner struck off for misleading clients about state of claim

A partner who misled clients for two years regarding the progress of the claim was struck off and ordered to pay almost £20,000 costs. The client had been led to believe that the claim had been issued when in reality, this was not the case.

How Compli can help...

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

Andrea Cohen
Compli,
Weightmans LLP



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Charity Spotlight: People First

Speaking out in Merseyside



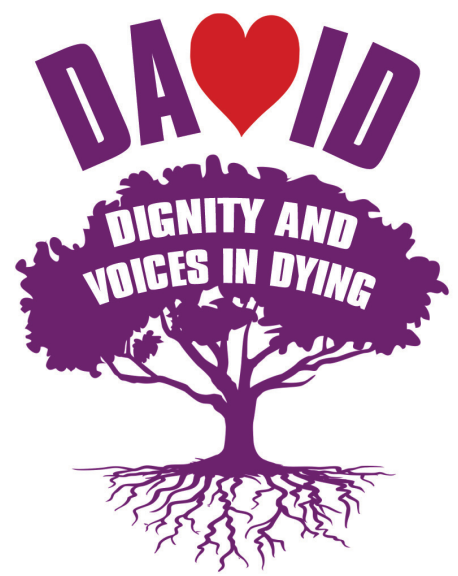
People First Merseyside is a self-advocacy organisation that has been running for 37 years. We are a member-led organisation, this means we are run by adults with learning disabilities for adults with learning disabilities.

We are always busy with a variety of work and projects within our organisation, recent projects have included work around DNACPR, bloods pathway and cancer red flag symptoms. The easy read resources for these and other projects can be found on our website peoplefirstmerseyside.co.uk.

We are currently coming to the end of a much-loved project within the organisation and the wider community, called the DAVID Project (Dignity and Voices in Dying). The DAVID Project came about after a close friend and long-time member of People First Merseyside,

David Morley, sadly passed away. As David had no family and had not left any information about his wishes, the group quickly realised there were lots of practical issues with nobody to deal with them.

After David's death, our members did work around planning for their own end of life choices. This led to the development of the DAVID Project, named in David's memory. After receiving funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, we were able to begin the work to make sure that adults with learning disabilities have the information and support to make end-of-life choices. As well as ensuring that adults with learning disabilities receive support following a death. We aim to bring people together to raise awareness of a subject that is sensitive to many people with learning disabilities



and their families, encouraging them to have conversations about death and be empowered to make informed end of life choices.

The DAVID Project does this through our films on will writing, funeral planning, organ donation, bereavement and emergency cards. To go alongside our films, we also made easy read booklets which feature information, resources and activities that can support adults with learning disabilities to learn about these topics in an accessible way.

The DAVID Project has been running for over five years and within this time we have been collaborating with many people within Merseyside and across the country on many brilliant pieces of work. We worked with Photosymbols, a photo library for easy read images featuring people with learning disabilities. Two of our DAVID Project members travelled to Bristol to model for images on death and dying which featured in our own booklets and are now available for use by others on the Photosymbols website.

We have worked with the University of Liverpool, Hope University and John Moores University on research such as digital health and work with nursing students on health passports. We are especially proud of our work with LJMU Law Students on creating an accessible

will pack, this will be an accessible way of writing a will that can be used by people with learning disabilities as well as others who may benefit. We are hoping this is something that will be taken up by solicitors all over the country, once completed.

We have also worked with the Royal Liverpool University Hospital to set up the Buddy Group. This is a cancer support group for people with learning disabilities. A member of the DAVID Project came up with this idea after their own experience of cancer, inspiring others to join and work together to support other people with learning disabilities; this is something that is looking to grow in the future through the DAVID Project members undergoing training to become volunteers in this area.

We have also created our own version of a Death Cafe, which we have done across day centres, universities and conferences. At our Death Cafes you can play games such as Kick the Bucket, Dead Celebrity Bingo and many more! This allows people to speak about death and dying in a fun and safe environment.

We held a Death Cafe workshop at our own DAVID Project Conference which took place in June 2024 and was a huge success. The day was completely member-led and comprised of presentations about the DAVID Project, many guest speakers such as People First groups in Bradford and Keighley, individuals from health services, funeral directors and the universities. We held creative activity workshops that reflected on memories and remembering loved ones that have died. The day was loved by all those that attended and has inspired NHS England to put on their own North West Advanced Care Planning Conference, which we have been asked to be a part of in May 2025.

The DAVID Project is coming to an end in April, but many parts of the project will continue, giving the DAVID Project an impactful legacy.

You can donate to People First Merseyside by visiting tinyurl.com/pfm-donate

You can check out what else People First Merseyside are doing on Facebook by visiting tinyurl.com/pfm-social



Forthcoming Courses

DATE	EVENT	SPEAKER
10/03/2025	Inquests and Coronial Law	Nicola Halpin & Gareth Thompson
11/03/2025	SRA Accounts Rules Update	Linda Lambert
12/03/2025	Domestic Abuse Conference	Various
14/03/2025	Civil evidence and witness statements	Mike Winston
18/03/2025	Conveyancing Law Update	Richard Snape
19/03/2025	Costs Conference	Various
20/03/2025	Directors Duties - the fundamentals (including the new voluntary code of conduct)	Jackie Sheldon
25/03/2025	Practical Probate: The Works	Rebecca Roscoe
02/04/2025	Private Child Law Update	Safda Mahmood
02/04/2025	Renters Rights Bill	Richard Snape
29/04/2025	Developments in Boilerplate	Ed Davies
30/04/2025	Public Child Law Conference	Various
09/05/2025	Trial advocacy for solicitors	Mike Winston
13/05/2025	Civil Litigation Update	Andrew McLoughlin
13/05/2025	Personal Injury Update	Andrew McLoughlin
14/05/2025	Private Client Conference in conjunction with STEP Liverpool & Professional Liverpool	Various
16/05/2025	Ogden tables and future losses	Mike Winston
21/05/2025	Management Conference	Various
10/06/2025	Adverse Possession and other Boundary Issues	Richard Snape
17/06/2025	The Complete Legal aid Supervisor	Vicky Ling
25/06/2025	Restrictive and Positive Covenants in Freehold Land	Richard Snape

To comply with the SRA's [Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs](#), all solicitors must keep their professional knowledge and skills up to date. these courses will help you maintain an up-to-date understanding of relevant law, policy & practice.


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For full details or to book any of the above courses (& more!) please visit:

<https://www.liverpoollawsociety.org.uk/training/>


THE DOMESTIC ABUSE CONFERENCE 2025
 WEDNESDAY 12TH MARCH, 12.30PM TILL 4.30PM
 HYBRID - ATTEND IN-PERSON OR ONLINE

Drafting Orders: getting it right the first time
Kirsty Leedam, Weightmans


Domestic Abuse: Police Response
DC Rachael Barcas, Merseyside Police

The risks of online communication how best to safeguard against this
James Evans, OurFamilyWizard


The New DAPO Pilot
Nichola Harris, MSB Solicitors

Tech Abuse
Laura Ellis, South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service

Domestic abuse and children act proceedings
Lauren Maires, St John's Buildings

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Civil evidence and witness statements
 with Mike Winston
 'Live' online, Friday 14th March, 9.30am - 12.30pm

Understanding how to use evidence to prove things in the civil courts is an essential skill for all litigators. Being able to gather, collate and structure all types of evidence for use in a civil case in a CPR-compliant manner is often the difference between winning and losing when the matter proceeds to trial.

This highly-practical online course will cover in detail:

- case and issue analysis
- understanding different types of evidence
- using/avoiding hearsay
- using objects or documents
- the civil evidence act checklist
- proofing witnesses
- questioning techniques
- listening techniques
- using the witness's own words
- proving things using witness statements
- what to include/what not to include in a witness statement
- the requirements of CPR 32
- witness evidence in the Business and Property Courts
- relief from sanctions when things go wrong



Who should attend? - Solicitors, barristers, CILEx lawyers and all civil litigators from both claimant and defendant perspectives.

[Click here for more information](#)


Conveyancing Law Update
 with Richard Snape
 'Live' online Tuesday 18th March, 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Residential Conveyancing is currently undergoing fundamental changes. This online course aims to look at these changes and how to react to them.

Topics covered include:

- The new TA6 enquiries and potential issues
- Announcements in the King's Speech
- The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024;
 - Banning new leasehold houses
 - Lease extensions
 - Changes to administration charges
 - Changes to estate management charges
 - Changes to rentcharges
- Latest on the Building Safety Act 2022 including announcements by the Welsh Government
- Changes to planning permission in England and in Wales
- Recent case law
- Proposed Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill
- Renters Rights Bill



[Click here for more information](#)


2025 COSTS CONFERENCE
 Wednesday 19th March | 9.30am - 3pm

HYBRID
Attend in-person or online

Fixed Recoverable Costs Update
Steven Turner, Kings Chambers

Costs in Group Litigation and Collective Proceedings
Matt Waszak, 4 New Square Chambers

Part 36 Update
Kerry Underwood, Underwoods

Oakwood V Menzies and what the outcome of that judgment looks like in practical terms
Iain Thomas, Liverpool Civil Law


Costs Budgeting in 2025
Jon-Paul Burnett, Carter Burnett

Legal Round Up
Benjamin Williams KC, 4 New Square Chambers

Accredited by APIL Training / Level: Litigator & Snr Litigator / Hrs: 4.75



Register **HERE**



Directors Duties: the fundamentals
 including the new voluntary code of conduct
 with Jackie Sheldon
'Live' online, Thursday 20th March, 2025

The Institute of Directors launched a voluntary Code of Conduct ("Directors Code") on 23 October 2024. Directors appointed to the board of a private company in the UK now have even more complex considerations while navigating their role.


This online course will cover the key company law implications when accepting an appointment as a UK director, including a full refresher on the statutory duties of directors under the Companies Act 2006 as well as discussing how best to brief a new director for their role and considering the implications of the new Directors Code.

It is appropriate for trainee solicitors, apprentices, paralegals, newly qualified solicitors or anyone involved in the appointment of a new director of a private UK company.

This online course will cover the following:

- Directors – who is a director, who cannot act as a director and how directors are appointed?
- A refresher of each of the statutory duties together with practical guidance and recent case law considerations
- Key implications for board minutes and other action points to aid compliance
- Consequences of breach including lessons to learn from recent judgement/current failures
- Directors Code
- Q&A

[Click here for more information](#)



Practical Probate: The Works
 with Rebecca Roscoe
 'Live' online, Tuesday 25th March, 9.30am – 4.30pm
 Level – Intermediate Advanced

This online course will take the practitioner to the next level of estate administration and will, through practical case studies, look at some of the more complex aspects of estate administration including a detailed consideration of inheritance tax.

This course will focus on complex estate administration and will look at:

- Understanding complex assets and obtaining valuations
- Preparing the IHT400 including claiming residence nil rate band, downsizing and the reduced rate for charitable giving
- Complex probate applications (eg. de bonis non, ad collingenda bona, s.116 senior courts act)
- Dealing with post-Grant issues
- Tax during the estate administration
- Accounts and distributions
- Claims against the estate
- Complex Post-death variations

[Click here for more information or to book](#)



Renters' Rights Bill with Richard Snape
 'Live' online, Wednesday 2nd April, 2pm - 3pm

It's expected to receive the Royal Assent in the Spring of 2025 and start to become law in the early Summer. It has a major bearing on the ability to obtain vacant possession on a sale.

This primarily applies in England only.

Topics covered include:

- Abolition of assured shorthold tenancies
- Tenants notice periods
- Changes to the grounds for possession
- Student accommodation and HMO's
- Rental bidding wars
- Transitional provision
- Maximum duration of assured tenancies
- Comparison with the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016



[Click here for more information or to book](#)



Private Child Law Update
 with Safda Mahmood
'Live' online, Wednesday 2nd April, 10am – 12.30pm

This online course will equip you with a rounded up update on key issues surrounding private children law, with a particular focus on changes and updates in the area. It's set at a level to benefit those who are practicing in this field, and want to get an update on issues in this field.

Level: Intermediate

The areas to be covered are:

- Parental Responsibility – When may it be removed?
- Section 8 orders – Update
- Specific Issue Applications
- Pathfinder Programme – Developments
- Contact (Child Arrangements) and Enforcement – Update
- Domestic Abuse and Child Arrangements
- Leave to Remove Applications
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Key Case law Update

[Click here for more information](#)



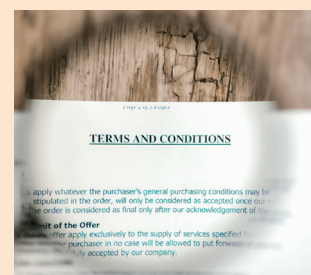
Developments in Boilerplate with Ed Davies

'Live' online, Tuesday 29th April, 11.30am - 1pm

This online course seeks to engender a practical approach to a vital part of all commercial contracts that many negotiators overlook. With his extensive experience in legal know-how and training, Ed will provide invaluable insights in this area.

Final content will depend on any recent developments and trends. Likely to consider many different boilerplate clauses, including:

- entire agreement clauses force majeure
- assignment and novation clauses relating to severance term and termination confidentiality
- notice provisions
- governing law and jurisdiction, and
- execution (including virtual execution and guidance relating to e-signatures, pre-signing, and witnesses)



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Social Media Highlights

Each month we will be bringing you a selection of the latest social media posts by Liverpool Law Society and its members.

Fletchers Group
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👉 Last Thursday saw us host the second Fletchers Birth Injury Conference, in association with **Byrom Street Chambers**, which brought together over 100 guests, and brought together experts, advocates, practitioners and peers. ...more

100 3 comments · 9 reposts

Like Comment Repost Send

Unit Chambers
2,077 followers
3d · 🌐

Thank you to the team at Berkeon Family Law Solicitors who joined us in chambers last night for an education session focused on the Head Injury Pilot and the Transparency Project. We hope you found the seminar insightful and useful!

Big thanks to Isabel Clarke and Anjel Kadhim for leading on these key topics!

1 comment · 2 reposts

1 Like 1 Comment 2 Reposts 1 Share

Berkeon Family Law Solicitors
200 followers
3d · 🌐

Thank you for having us! We all thoroughly enjoyed it! 🙌

1 Like 1 Share

Freeths
30,562 followers
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We have announced the first two students who have been accepted onto our newly launched bursary programme. They are **Umamah Fakhirbhai** from **De Montfort University** and **Maymunah V.** from the **University of Leicester** 🎉

The bursary was established in memory of Mukesh Patel, former Managing Partner of Freeths' Leicester, who passed away in February 2023. The scheme was launched to honour his legacy and highlight his commitment to diversity and equality within the legal sphere and the local business community.

Read the full press release below! 📄
<https://lnkd.in/eUBxn6Cd>

#BursaryProgramme #Leicester

Irwin Mitchell
73,309 followers
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Congratulations to **Rosalyn Bever**, Managing Partner of the Private Client Group at Irwin Mitchell, who was recognised by **privateclient** in their 50 most influential guide last night. ...more

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Law firm Leigh Day's public law team has won an award for its work representing individuals and campaign groups in a range of domestic and international public law cases. ...more

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Carpenters Group glowed brightly for **Clatterbridge Cancer Charity** 🌟

A huge well done to **#TeamCarpenters** who raised over £1,000 for **Clatter** ...more

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Well done to team **Dutton Gregory Solicitors** who took on **The Rose Road Association** corporate triathlon. ...more

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Prosperity Law LLP
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Our new Prosperity Law umbrellas have landed across our offices in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds! 🌂 ...more

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