

January 2026

# Liverpool Law

Liverpool  Law Society

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

***Our new President,  
Sarah Mansfield,  
welcomes  
you to 2026.***

**See page 5**





# Hello

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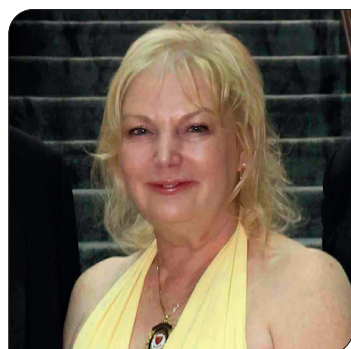
# January 2026

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 June 2026 edition: Friday, 22.05.26  
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 August 2026 edition: Friday, 24.07.26  
 September 2026 edition: Friday, 21.08.26  
 October 2026 edition: Tuesday, 22.09.26  
 November 2026 edition: Friday, 23.10.26  
 December 2026 edition: Friday, 20.11.26

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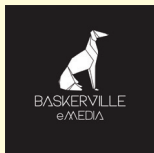
Liverpool Law Society Magazine is produced by and for Liverpool Law Society Members. This is our opportunity to share our news, events and celebrations with our friends in the legal community.

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](mailto:editor@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk)

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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 2026

Meetings start at 01.00 pm. except where noted.

*Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> January*  
*Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February - 12.00pm*  
*Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March*  
*Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April*  
*Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May*  
*Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June*  
*Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July*  
*No August Meeting*  
*Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September*  
*Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October*  
*Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November*

## Welcome to the January edition of Liverpool Law



Welcome to the January 2026 edition of Liverpool Law and happy new year to you all.

I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas and managed to get some well-earned rest.

With a new year comes a new column for us here at Liverpool Law magazine. For many years now we have included a spotlight on our Leaders in Law and we have seen some wonderful articles as a result. Our new column now focusses on the Future Leaders in Law and starting with the wonderful MJLD members, first up being **Sean Hale**, Press and Publicity Officer. Please take time to enjoy the article and if you know of anyone you would like to be included in our new column please get in touch.

As well as our first column from President **Sarah Mansfield** we also have details of this years' Directors of Liverpool Law Society. Please take the time to see when meetings are happening for your area of law and if you are interested in attending or even want something addressing please get in touch, we are always happy to listen.

Still more developments on Mazur, as at the time of writing The Law Society has been granted permission to be joined as a respondent in the appeal brought by CILEX. We will continue to keep you updated as best possible. Please keep an eye on our website and social media also.

Any ideas for our magazine are also welcome, we want to ensure this is a magazine our members enjoy reading and find of help and interest. Again please do get in touch with us.

Many thanks

Jennifer Powell, Editor  
**Weightmans**  
[editor@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk](mailto: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 December's General Committee meeting. There were 14 individuals from the following organisations:

- Cleary & Co Solicitors
- Clyde & Co
- Cobleys Solicitors
- Hill Dickinson LLP
- JMW Solicitors LLP
- Tracey Miller Family Law

Liverpool Law Society's membership now exceeds 2,375 individuals from 175 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, Sarah Mansfield

**I am delighted to be chosen as President of Liverpool Law Society and look forward to a challenging and exciting year ahead. Last year, James Mannouch made real progress with aiding access to justice, routes to a legal career and creating and enhancing links with other professional bodies. I want to expand on these aims in the year ahead and build strong links with our member firms to benefit our members.**

Caring for our employees and our own wellbeing remains central to the health of our profession. The pressures on solicitors—across Liverpool and beyond—continue to grow, and we must ensure that our workplaces support not just productivity, but people.

The demands placed on legal professionals are significant. Heavy caseloads, long hours, constant decision-making and the expectation to remain available can create a culture where stress is normalised. This contributes to burnout, anxiety, and declining job satisfaction. Although awareness is improving, wellbeing cannot be treated as a tick-box exercise; it must be embedded into the everyday life of our firms.

An area traditionally underrepresented is men's wellbeing and was the focus of our last Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Many male solicitors still face an unspoken pressure to appear resilient, self-reliant, and unaffected by stress. This can discourage men from seeking support when they need it most. By breaking down the stigma surrounding vulnerability, firms can encourage healthier, more open conversations. Visible male role models, confidential support pathways, and opportunities for men to speak candidly about their experiences can make a real impact on wellbeing and workplace culture.

Women in the profession often experience different but equally challenging pressures. Balancing demanding roles with family responsibilities, navigating progression in environments that may still feel male-dominated, and managing life stages such as pregnancy, fertility treatment, and menopause all require understanding and supportive policies. Women may also encounter subtle but persistent pressures—such as being expected to handle emotional or administrative labour—that affect confidence and stress levels. Firms must ensure that structures and policies actively support gender equity at all stages of a woman's career.

Our Member Firms have substantial influence over workplace wellbeing. Firms can ensure staff have realistic



workloads and respect boundaries around personal time. Offering flexible and hybrid working arrangements and providing access to counselling, wellbeing champions, and mental health training assists everyone. Firms are more likely to create policies that acknowledge and support both men's and women's distinct wellbeing needs and to recognise signs of strain and model healthy working practices.

A healthy legal profession depends on the wellbeing of its people. As President, I am committed to keeping this discussion active within the Liverpool Law Society and encouraging firms of all sizes to reflect on how they support their teams. When our colleagues feel valued and supported, the entire profession benefits. Let's continue building a culture where wellbeing is not an afterthought, but a foundation for a thriving legal community.

**Sarah Mansfield**

President

[president@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk](mailto:president@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk)

# LLS Meetings & events – Jan/Feb 2026

Start Time	Meeting/Event
13/01/2026 12:30	General Committee
14/01/2026 13:00	Editorial Sub-Committee
15/01/2026 13:00	Directors' meeting with local councillors
15/01/2026 16:00	Family Business Sub-Committee
20/01/2026 13:00	Employment Law Sub-Committee
21/01/2026 13:00	Civil Litigation Sub-Committee
22/01/2026 13:00	Future Planning Sub-Committee
22/01/2026 16:00	Criminal Practice Sub-Committee
27/01/2026 12:30	Finance & Policy Sub-Committee
28/01/2026 16:00	EDI Sub-Committee
05/02/2026 13:00	Access to Justice Sub-Committee
10/02/2026 12:30	General Committee
11/02/2026 13:00	In-House Lawyers Sub-Committee
11/02/2026 16:00	Joint Law Fair with Fletchers
12/02/2026 13:00	Editorial Sub-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](mailto:committees@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk)

## Consultation Papers referred:

### Referred by the General Committee:

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](mailto:committees@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk)

Committee	Consultation Paper title	Closing date
Employment Law	<a href="#">Make Work Pay: leave for bereavement including pregnancy loss</a>	15/01/26
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	<a href="#">Consultation on policy statement on 'Encouraging a diverse legal profession'</a>	02/03/26



# Spotlight on: Sean Hale



Sean Hale

**For the 2026 issues of Liverpool Law, we are introducing a new spotlight series featuring members of the Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division (MJLD) Committee. Our inaugural interviewee is Sean Hale, one of the Committee's Press and Publicity Representatives.**

Sean is a local lad, having been raised in Huyton, where he attended St Margaret Mary's Primary School and Cardinal Heenan Secondary School in West Derby. Sean was academically focused at school, achieving three A-level in Applied Business, Spanish and Sociology. When choosing a university degree, he favoured Law over a general Business degree, anticipating it would be more engaging. He successfully applied to Liverpool John Moores University to study for an undergraduate degree in Law.

Always keen to pursue Commercial Law, Sean elected to study all relevant modules in his third year, including Commercial Law, Company Law, and Media Law, with a particular interest in Sports Law. After completing his undergraduate degree, Sean enrolled at BPP Law School to undertake the Post Graduate LLM Legal Practice Course (Barrister Training Course).

In both his undergraduate and postgraduate studies, Sean's dissertations centred on commercial topics. His undergraduate dissertation explored Insolvency Law relating to British football clubs, an area he was keen to research as a football enthusiast. He was also interested in the '*principle of the lifting of the corporate veil*', which provided a deeper, more legal perspective on business formation, building on his A-level Business studies.

Following his time at BPP Law School, Sean secured a full-time, year-long position as a case handler at Slater and Gordon. He subsequently moved to Carruthers Law, where he spent three and a half years. During this time, he gained valuable hands-on experience in complex High Court litigation across various legal areas, including Media Law (defamation, misuse of private information), professional negligence, and general commercial work.

In early December, Sean left Carruthers Law to take up a role as an Advocate with LPC Law. He intends to seek a pupillage in the new year and hopes to use his position with LPC Law to gain excellent advocacy experience, putting him in good stead for the future.

In his role as Press and Publicity Officer for the MJLD, Sean is keen to increase the committee's visibility among students and newly qualified practitioners. He finds the MJLD to be a valuable and supportive community, offering opportunities to attend events and share ideas with people in similar circumstances. Sean wishes he had known about the Division during his student years, believing he would have benefitted from joining, particularly in learning about career options and different routes into the profession.

Outside of work, Sean is an avid football enthusiast and a Liverpool FC season ticket holder. He maintains his fitness by running and going to the gym. He also regularly plays football with Manwell, a Liverpool-based charity that uses football to improve men's physical and mental health. He captained one of the teams until work commitments became too demanding, though he still assists with setting up the pitches before games.

*We wish Sean all the best in his future career.*



## Directors of Liverpool Law Society for 2025-2026

The Society's main committee is currently made up of 25 directors, who are practising solicitors, cost lawyers or lecturers in law. We have a representative group of people from a range of small, medium and large firms, in-house lawyers, and educational establishments.

Outside of the monthly meetings of the 'General Committee', the directors also meet twice a year with local MPs where there is exchange of information. News about bills going through parliament and constituent issues are also raised and discussed. Separately, the directors also meet twice a year with the nominated councillors from the Liverpool City Region local authorities. This again is a useful way of ensuring our members' concerns and issues, including those of their clients, can be raised at one of these meetings. The councillors also come to the Society with matters their constituents are facing and we work together on joint initiatives where there is a common aim.

The Society also has good communication channels with The Law Society and the SRA where members' issues can be raised and matters affecting the legal profession discussed.

On a regional level, Liverpool Law Society is a member of the Joint V, a grouping of autonomous local law societies that meet and discuss common issues affecting membership organisations for legal professionals, sharing best practice. The members of the Joint V are Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester Law Societies. United the Joint V have a

strong voice nationally, representing over 16,000 legal professionals.

*The current directors of Liverpool Law Society who form the General Committee from December 2025 – December 2026 are:*

### Officers

#### President

Ms Sarah Mansfield,  
*Excello Law*

#### Vice President

Mr Alum Ullah,  
*Bond Turner*

#### Deputy Vice President & Joint Hon. Secretary

Ms Nina Sahu,  
*Hill Dickinson*

#### Honorary Treasurer

Mr John-Paul Dennis,  
*Jackson Lees Group*

#### Joint Honorary Secretary

Ms Nicola Harris,  
*MSB*

#### Immediate Past President

Mr James Mannouch,  
*University of Law*

### Sub-Committee Chairs

#### Access to Justice Sub-Committee

Mr Ian Townley,  
*Broudie Jackson Canter*

#### Civil Litigation Sub-Committee

Mr Peter Parsonage,  
*Carpenters Group*

#### Criminal Practice Sub-Committee

Mr Paul Kilty,  
*DPP*

#### Editorial Sub-Committee

Mrs Jennifer Powell,  
*Weightmans*

#### Education & Charities Sub-Committee

Mr Jeremy Myers,  
*Husband Forwood Morgan*

#### Employment Law Sub-Committee

Mrs Lindsey Knowles,  
*Brabners*

#### Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee

Ms Jewels Chamberlain,  
*DWF*

#### Family Business Sub-Committee

Ms Sally Stanway,  
*JMW Solicitors*

#### In-House Lawyers' Sub-Committee

Ms Lauren Cannon,  
*In-House Legal Solutions*

#### Non-Contentious Business Sub-Committee

Ms Pamela Chesterman,  
*Irwin Mitchell*

#### Regulatory Sub-Committee

Mr Josh Bates,  
*Freeths*

### Other post holders

#### Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Ms Laura Spence



**Public Relations Officer**

Mr Anthony Neild,  
JMW Solicitors

**Other Members of the Committee**

Mr Kevin Donoghue,  
Donoghue Solicitors

Ms Haley Farrell  
MAPD Group

Ms Nichola Lennon,  
Weightmans

Ms Kathy McQuillan,  
Morecrofts

Mr Andrew Ormrod,  
Slater & Gordon

Ms Nicola Walker,  
The University of Law

*The General Committee looks forward to a busy 12 months under the helm of the President, Sarah Mansfield.*

## Interested in getting involved with Liverpool Law Society but unsure where to start?

The specialist committees are a place where members of the Society can come together to discuss current issues in your area of practice, exchange information and best practice, respond to government consultation papers and contribute towards the Society's legal training programme. If you would like to find out more about the work of the specialist committees and/or request to join one or more of them, please click [here](#).

# CEL Solicitors reaches £150m fraud recovery milestone

**A legal firm has now recovered £150 million for victims of scams as it continues to fight back against fraud.**

Latest statistics from UK Finance reveal £621 million was lost to scams in the first half of this year, showing that fraud is still one of the biggest threats to the country's economy.

CEL Solicitors, a national firm headquartered in Liverpool, is fighting back, helping thousands of victims recover their losses.

The firm reached the landmark figure of £150 million recovered last month, just 12 months after celebrating the £100 million milestone.

**Jessica Hampson**, CEO of CEL Solicitors, said: "Fraud is still the most prevalent crime in the UK, people are losing thousands every few seconds. The rise in fraud shows we need stronger consumer protections.

"We try our best to raise awareness about trends we've seen but unfortunately, scammers keep reinventing the wheel and create new, sophisticated tricks to catch people out.

*"We're here when people have found themselves deceived by a scam. Speaking to our team is sometimes the first time victims have shared what's happened, shame preventing them from confiding in those closest to them."*

The firm has helped more than 9,000 clients recover their money. A sister organisation, The Crypto Tracing Experts (CTE), has been launched to focus solely on tracking down stolen cryptocurrency funds - an area Mrs Hampson identified as critically in need of dedicated, specialist expertise.

**Mrs Hampson** said: "Cryptocurrency is notoriously hard to track due to its decentralised nature and how quickly assets can be moved across borders.

"Acting on our behalf, CTE leverages advanced tools - including Chainalysis Reactor software - to compile the evidence needed to collaborate with police and financial institutions.

"This is just one way we're helping level the playing field for consumers. We invest heavily in tracking the latest fraud tactics so we can stay ahead of the curve and mitigate the risks from emerging scams."

In a major shift to protect consumers, since October 2024, UK banks are required to automatically refund victims of Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud.

Under the new rules, introduced by the Payment System Regulator, banks must refund fraud victims within five working days, up to a cap of £85,000.

*"Despite the new rules, we're still seeing thousands of people who have lost money to APP fraud and their bank has not refunded the money," Mrs Hampson added.*

*"Some might reject the claim on a carelessness clause, others might have lost way more than the £85,000 cap.*

*"Whether it's £5,000 or £250,000, the impact of losing money to fraud can be life-changing and severely damage someone's trust in others. We've helped thousands of victims reclaim not just their money, but their confidence too.*

*"With our support, thousands of people have re-written their story and gained back what scammers have taken from them."*



Donoghue Solicitors FC Under-13s football team seek help for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

## Liverpool Lawyers Seek Help for Youth Football Team Trip

Donoghue Solicitors, the award-winning Liverpool-based law firm, is seeking help to take a youth football team on tour to Holland.

The law firm is run by directors **Kevin Donoghue** and **Daniel Fitzsimmons**. They founded the independent football team, known as “Donoghue Solicitors FC”, over 10 years ago to give back to their local community.

“Daniel and I are Bootle lads born and bred,” explained **Kevin**.

“We played local football growing up and were regulars at the Brunswick Youth and Community Centre (known as ‘The Brunny’) on Marsh Lane. We saw that children and parents were struggling to pay for football or had ‘less than ideal parenting’. These challenges prevented

*the kids from a hugely important developmental and enjoyable part of life.”*

Having previously sponsored other youth and school football teams, **Kevin** and **Daniel** decided to take a more hands-on approach. They set up Donoghue Solicitors FC and obtained the necessary qualifications to run it.

**Kevin Donoghue** is Club Chairman, FA-accredited Welfare Officer, and Coach. **Daniel Fitzsimmons** is the Club Secretary and Treasurer.

Donoghue Solicitors FC runs on a unique model: it operates on the basis that no child should miss out on playing football through lack of money.

This means that the law firm uses its advertising budget to fund equipment,

training facilities, kits, pitch fees, league/ tournament fees, trophies, events, and days out. Monthly subs are low (£20) and have not increased in the 10+ years that the Club has been operating, despite significantly rising costs. Some children do not pay subs at all and additional funding for boots and clothing is provided.

“We would rather spend our firm’s money on helping the community instead of buying some ads on Google!” said **Kevin**.

### Club Welfare Role

**Kevin** takes his role as Welfare Officer seriously.

“The reality of modern life is all too clear in our Club, as it is in many grassroots teams in the area,” he noted.



*"Players face challenges with absent parenting, money worries, family illness, bullying at school, behavioural struggles, and difficult family dynamics.*

*As a Club, we are there for the boys. We help them where we can. That can be anything from meeting with parents and teachers to help them with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis through to making sure a player is going to eat a decent meal. We push every player on the pitch and at training to be competitive and fulfil their potential. We aren't soft on them, but we care. We don't judge; we help. That is what we set up the Club to do.*

*We are proud of what we have achieved off-the-pitch over the years, just as much as what we have done on the pitch."*

#### Football Tour

Before now, the pressure of fundraising has been met by the law firm, and not by players or parents. But **Kevin** and **Daniel** have ambitious plans for a tour for their Under-13s team.

*"As part of our pastoral role, we wanted to give this group something which took them out of their comfort zones. We have boys*

*who have never left the City or country, let alone travelled abroad," Kevin explained.*

Thinking about this led to the opportunity for a Football Tour to PSV Eindhoven in Holland in April 2026. The Tour will take place over 4 days (including travel) and is operated by specialist sports tour provider, Inspiresport. It will consist of:

- x3 training sessions from the PSV Eindhoven full-time coaching staff
- use of the PSV Eindhoven's 'De Herdgang' First team training facility for training sessions
- x2 matches against local opposition
- behind the scenes tour of PSV's Philips Stadium and visit to the PSV museum and club shop.

The team will travel by ferry and stay at a sports-themed hotel close to the first team training facility.

*"This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," explained Kevin. "Visiting the Eredivisie 2024/25 champions to train the way they do, with their coaches, on their facilities will be unreal!"*

#### Funding

*"Football tours are expensive and*

*can't happen without support from the community," explained Kevin.*

So, Kevin and Daniel have created a Crowdfunder page to seek donations to make the tour happen.

*"Every penny donated will go towards the players. Coaches, volunteers, and anyone else attending are paying for themselves," said Kevin.*

Donoghue Solicitors is doing as much as it can to fund the tour by paying logistic and associated costs, and a portion of each players' expenses.

Donations are invited from individuals and businesses. If they so wish, the team will thank them in writing personally and via social media.

As **Kevin Donoghue** said, *"This terrific group of lads has been together since playing in the Under-7s. We hope that, with the community's help, they can go on this amazing adventure and make us all proud."*

Donations to the tour can be made here: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/donoghue-solicitors-fc-holland>



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# FINDING YOUR VOICE IN TODAY'S DIGITAL LANDSCAPE



# CELEBRATION FOR NEW ENTRANTS TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Liverpool Law Society would like to invite all those who  
qualified into the law during 2025  
from the Liverpool City Region and surrounding area  
to a celebration that marks the launch of their professional career

<b>THUR 29 JAN 2026</b>	<b>LITTLE LEAF (ONE FINE DAY) OLD HALL STREET, LIVERPOOL</b>
	<b>5.30PM FOR 6PM</b>

This event is aimed at:

Newly Qualified Solicitors | Barristers who completed pupillage  
Chartered Patent Attorneys | Fellows from CILEx | licensed conveyancers  
notary public | trade mark attorney | other branches of the law

What's included?

★Arrival drink ★ Canapes ★Professional photography ★Training voucher

All those qualifying will be presented with a certificate of congratulations from

**Andre Rebello OBE**

**Senior Coroner, Liverpool and Wirral Area**

Members of the Merseyside JLD are also invited to book a place to network  
with senior members of Liverpool Law Society.

This event is free to attend but you must book your place.

Sponsored by



**[Book Here](#)**



# DWF Foundation celebrates 10th anniversary after reaching £1.5m in donations

The DWF Foundation has surpassed £1.5m in donations as it marks a decade of supporting communities around the world.

Launched in 2015 by DWF, the Foundation continues to be a central pillar of the business' commitment to responsible business.

Over the past decade, the Foundation has remained dedicated to its core aim: providing funds, resources and mentoring to help individuals, groups and communities achieve their full potential. It supports charities in locations where DWF operates and focuses on delivering meaningful, long-term impact.

The DWF Foundation supports registered charities working in one or more of its five priority areas: Homelessness and Poverty; Health and Wellbeing; Employability; Education; and Environment and Sustainability.

In reaching the £1.5m milestone, the Foundation has supported more than 700 charities and food banks worldwide, creating opportunities for people to believe, inspire and change. This includes charities in Liverpool, Manchester and the wider region.

Colleagues across DWF play a central role in the Foundation's success, taking part in fundraising, volunteering, team challenges, mentoring and a wide range of initiatives to support local communities.

A significant milestone in its journey came in 2019 when DWF partners gifted 1.8 million shares as part of the Group's listing on the London Stock Exchange, which significantly strengthened the Foundation's long-term ability to support charities around the world.

**Jewels Chamberlain**, partner in Liverpool and trustee of the DWF Foundation, said: *"Reaching the DWF Foundation's 10th anniversary and surpassing £1.5 million in donations is a moment to celebrate for everyone at DWF. In Liverpool, our colleagues and clients have helped local charities deliver vital services and create real, lasting change in people's lives. We're proud of what has been achieved and excited to continue supporting our communities, building an even stronger impact in the years ahead."*

**Emily Carpenter**, trusts and foundations fundraiser at the North West Air Ambulance Charity, which has received funding from the DWF Foundation, said: *"Your support has*

*helped us deliver lifesaving blood transfusions at the scene of incidents, improving outcomes for patients across the North West. In 2024 we were called to over 3,100 missions, this wouldn't have been possible without your support. Thank you for helping us save lives."*

**Jim Davies OBE**, founder patron of the DWF Foundation, said: *"When we established the DWF Foundation in 2015, our aim was to create a lasting, positive impact for the communities connected to DWF. A decade later, having donated more than £1.5 million and supported over 700 charities worldwide, I could not be prouder. Thank you to all DWF colleagues for their generosity and continued support. Here's to the next decade of helping our global communities!"*



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# What does Divorce Day mean to family lawyers?



**Andrew Ormrod**

**Andrew Ormrod**, Senior associate and family lawyer from **Slater and Gordon** provides guidance on what to remember as a family lawyer, during Divorce Day.

The first working Monday of January marks the significant date of Divorce Day, also known as 'D-Day', which is said

to highlight the annual spike in divorce proceedings at the start of the new year. The surge, attributed to stress and strain during the festive season, causing parties to consideration where they are at in their relationships and consequently separation and divorce.

For many family solicitors, Divorce Day is a familiar time, bringing more enquiries than the usual as well as presenting more emotional challenges for clients. Christmas can be a cause for disputes, stress and financial pressure, leaving many feeling uncertain and overwhelmed.

During this week, family lawyers are reminded of their important role amongst all of this – it is a period of heightened responsibility. In their most difficult moments, clients turn to our services to help them find clarity, understand legal process and discover

how they can move forward with confidence. We often become not only legal advisors, but sounding boards, counsellors, even just a listening ear.

Divorce has many obstacles, and we have a key role in balancing legal expertise with empathy. Lawyers must navigate not only complex legal frameworks but also heightened emotions, ensuring clients feel supported while making informed decisions.

As Divorce Day evolves, we must stay ahead of changes from the rise of online divorce platforms to growth in divorce planning. By anticipating trends and finding new ways to provide better services, family lawyers can continue to provide impactful services during Divorce Day and across the year and continue to offer far more than plain legal advice.

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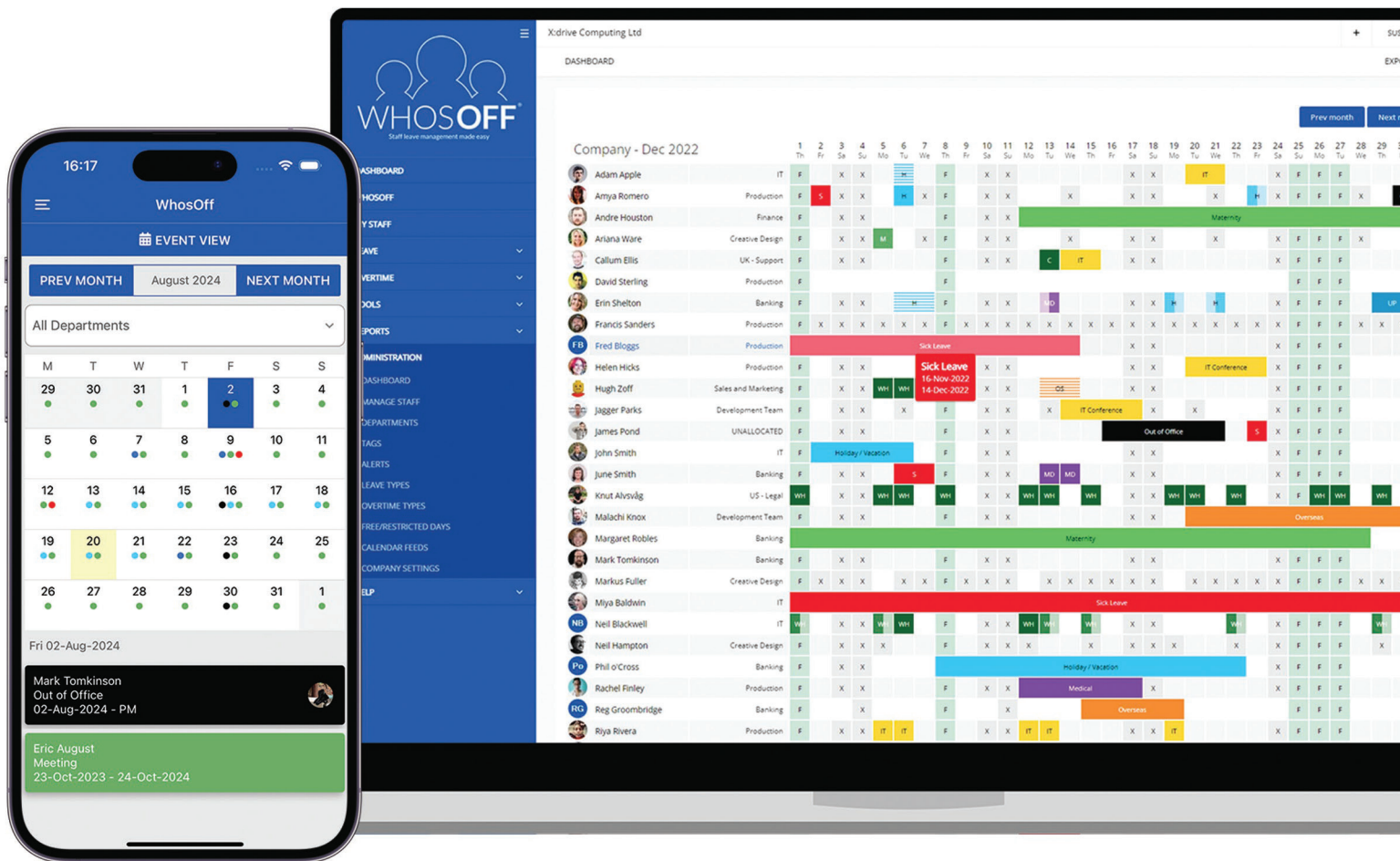
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# Failure to get a Bill of Costs right can lead to heavy reductions

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## Introduction

**The recovery of costs after a successful claim cannot be left as an after-thought. It is incredibly important to ensure that you have a Bill of Costs prepared by a Cost Lawyer or an experienced Costs Draftsperson to ensure that all of your hard work undertaken does not end up unrewarded.**

Costs rules are technical and require a level of understanding and application to ensure that a compliant Bill of Costs is prepared and which does not contain fundamental mistakes. Failure to provide a compliant and accurate Bill of Costs can ultimately lead to sanctions in respect of the costs which are recovered.

## The Background to *Hyder v Aidat-Sarran & Anor* [2025] EWHC 3686 (SCCO)

In this matter the Court had to deal with two distinct points. Firstly, the Receiving Party had made an application for a relief from sanctions for the late service of the Bill of Costs. In this case there was an unless order requiring a Bill of Costs to be served upon the Paying Party by a certain date.

A Bill of Costs was prepared and served upon the Paying Party one day late. However, the Paying Party argued that the Bill of Costs served was seriously defective and, as such, it was submitted that the service of such a defective Bill did not comply with the terms of the unless order.

The second point related to the Paying Party seeking to strike out the claim for costs under CPR 44.11 due to the numerous errors contained within the original Bill of Costs which was served and a subsequent Bill of Costs. CPR 44.11 provides the Court a discretion to disallow all or part of the costs which are being assessed as a result of a failure to comply with the rules, practice direction or an Order and that the conduct of the

party is found to be unreasonable or improper.

Whilst not set out in the judgment of Deputy Costs Judge Roy KC, the Cost Lawyer representing the Paying Party, Simon Gibbs, has set out the numerous defects which were identified and raised in Points of Dispute in his own blog. The Defects included but were not limited to:

- Failing to prepare the original Bill of Costs in electronic format,
- failing to distinguish the phases for the work carried out when there was a costs management order in place,
- failing to provide details of the fee earners who had carried out the work,
- including costs which had already been subject to summary assessment,
- including costs which related to Orders where 'no order as to costs' had been made and,
- failing to include a signed certificate confirming that the indemnity principle had not been breached.

## The Costs Decisions

The Deputy Cost Judge considered the first point and, following a brief consideration of authorities, came to the conclusion that the terms of the unless order were not specific enough to require the service of a 'compliant' Bill of Costs, and simply required the service of a Bill of Costs. As such, and following a finding that the breach of one day was not serious or significant pursuant to the Denton principles, relief from sanctions was granted.

The Deputy Costs Judge then turned to the second point and considered the numerous defects which had been identified by the Paying Party and which had not been rectified by the Receiving Party. The Cost Judge considered that both limbs of CPR 44.11 had been met in that there had been clear non-compliance with the rules and that the conduct was certainly unreasonable and verging on improper. The Deputy

Cost Judge concluded by stating that he found that there had been "multiple compound breaches. They have been serious. They have been persistent. They are unexplained, and they are inexcusable for the most part".

When considering the level of sanction to apply the Deputy Cost Judge noted that to strike out the claim for costs would be too draconian, however, he considered that a severe sanction was warranted. He proceeded to make an Order for a 75% reduction to whatever the costs would be subsequently assessed at.

## Takeaway Points

Failing to ensure that a compliant and accurate Bill of Costs is prepared and served can lead to significant costs sanctions which means that either you or your client will be left significantly out of pocket. As such, the preparation of a Bill of Costs cannot be neglected at the end of a claim if you want to recover the costs that you have incurred. Furthermore, the responsibility remains with the conducting solicitor and any errors or mistakes cannot be laid at the door of an unregulated costs draftsperson in accordance with the decision of *Gempriede*.

Therefore, if you would like regulated and authorised Costs Lawyers and experienced Costs Draftspeople to ensure that your Bills of Costs are prepared in a compliant and accurate fashion Peak Costs are willing to help.



*Kris Kilsby is a Costs Lawyer at Peak Costs and a Council member of the Association of Costs Lawyers. For any further questions or queries about QOCS or if you are interested in further in-depth training on the topic please get in touch at [kris.kilsby@peakcosts.com](mailto:kris.kilsby@peakcosts.com).*



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## The latest Conference updates from Kirsty Barker

# AI Event



Kirsty Barker

On Thursday 27th November Liverpool Law Society hosted the AI in Legal Services: Foundations and Future seminar which brought together leading experts from Hill Dickinson, Weightmans, Taylor Wessing, Freeths, and Liverpool John Moores University to explore how artificial

intelligence is reshaping the legal profession. The event provided a deep dive into adoption trends, practical benefits, regulatory challenges, and ethical considerations.

The discussion opened with **Edmund Chan** from Hill Dickinson, who shared striking data on the rapid acceleration of AI adoption. Firmwide implementation has surged from just nine percent in 2023 to ninety-six percent in 2025. Individual lawyer usage has climbed from eleven percent to sixty-one percent, signalling that AI is no longer a distant concept but an integral part of legal practice. AI adoption in legal services is accelerating rapidly, yet policy frameworks, regulatory standards, and educational initiatives are still struggling to keep pace. While AI offers significant value when its impact is measured against clear, quantifiable metrics, it is far from being a universal solution. Persistent challenges such as bias, hallucination, confidentiality risks, data quality issues, and even environmental concerns continue to shape its responsible use.

In the next presentation **Catriona Wolfenden** from Weightmans examined generative AI and cut through the surrounding hype by focusing on real-world applications. She drew on recent news stories and sector data to demonstrate how AI is already being used in practice. The data shows growing adoption across the legal industry, with both legal-specific and general AI tools becoming embedded in day-to-day work. Current use is concentrated on routine tasks such as document review, legal research and document summarisation, which are delivering significant efficiency gains potentially saving lawyers around 240 hours a year. However, **Wolfenden** emphasised that errors remain common, making human oversight a critical part of any AI-enabled workflow.

**Olivia Wyld** of Taylor Wessing highlighted the transformative benefits AI brings to law firms. Efficiency gains, cost reductions,

and scalability are driving competitive advantage, while enhanced accuracy and faster turnaround times are improving client service. These tools also support talent attraction and skills development, enabling lawyers to focus on meaningful work rather than repetitive tasks.

In the next presentation **Josh Bates** of Freeths provided a clear overview of the data and regulations surrounding the adoption of AI emphasising that AI introduces a complex web of data and regulatory challenges. The framework for safe adoption focused on four pillars: compliance with UK GDPR, robust vendor due diligence, mitigation of cyber and operational threats, and adherence to Solicitors Regulation Authority duties. Bates warned that AI does not exempt firms from existing obligations; rather, it amplifies the need for strong governance. Solicitors remain fully accountable for AI outputs, making transparency and competence non-negotiable.

Ethical considerations were brought to the forefront by **Dr. Alison Lui** of Liverpool John Moores University, who examined the “black box” problem outlining the lack of transparency in how AI systems make decisions. She cautioned against risks such as bias, fairness, and accountability gaps, urging the profession to champion explainable AI, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and demand auditability. Her closing message was unequivocal: AI is here to stay, and how the legal sector chooses to use it will define its future.

The seminar closed with a dynamic group discussion, culminating in a shared understanding that while AI brings significant advantages, its adoption within legal services must be anchored in strong governance, ethical leadership, and unwavering professional accountability. Technology can enhance capability, but it cannot replace human judgment. We would like to extend our thanks to our speakers for sharing their expertise, to our chair **Olivia Wyld** and to Taylor Wessing for their generous hospitality in hosting and supporting this important discussion.



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# Financial Responsibilities in Legal Practice: A Post-Event Review

On Wednesday 19th November, Liverpool Law Society hosted the online Conference Legal Finance in Focus: From Cashiering to Compliance that brought together speakers in legal finance, compliance, tax structuring, and cyber security. The day offered a rich exploration of how law firms can better manage client money, navigate incorporation, and protect themselves against rising digital threats, while also sharpening their professional visibility.

Our Chair **Joanne Houlston** of Weightmans LLP kicked off the event welcoming all attendees setting the stage for a day filled with expert insights and practical advice.

**Andrew Baker** from RSM opened the event by providing an insightful overview of the current Accounts Rules, highlighting the increased scrutiny following high-profile failures such as Axiom Ince, and detailing practical challenges in managing banking facilities, residual balances, and client money, emphasizing compliance with key rules which focus on the proper receipt, processing, and return of funds. Addressing the critical issue of credit

control, **Paul Smith** of LifeHarbour Transformation stressed that expecting timely payment is reasonable and outlined the fundamentals of effective credit control, noting a concerning trend post-Covid where many firms rely solely on email for chasing payments and advocating a return to more direct communication methods like phone calls, while balancing credit control with employee wellbeing and mental health.

**Amanda Perrotton** from Bell, Howley, Perrotton discussed the merits and tax implications of transferring a law firm to a limited company, clarifying the differences between LLPs and Limited Companies, and providing valuable guidance for firms considering incorporation.

Highlighting the growing importance of cybersecurity in financial management, **Henry Kibirige** of Caladium Cyber outlined key risks and shared best practices to safeguard law firms against cyber threats, reinforcing the need for robust security measures.

**Rachel Booth** and **Christine Champion** from Mighty Moxie

delivered a dynamic session aimed at lawyers less familiar with technology, where in just 30 minutes attendees learned practical tips to enhance their LinkedIn profiles and confidently use AI tools like ChatGPT and Copilot, all while maintaining compliance.

Concluding the event, **Alison Holt** of Legal Eye provided a timely update on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) compliance by reviewing the latest National Risk Assessment findings, underscoring the persistent high risk of money laundering in the legal sector, and sharing real-life cautionary tales and practical advice on source of funds and wealth checks to help firms stay compliant.

This event provided a 360° view of the financial duties facing modern legal practices, equipping attendees with essential knowledge and actionable strategies to navigate the complex regulatory and operational environment. A huge thank you to our incredible speakers, our chair **Joanne Houlston**, and Taylor Wessing for hosting us and making this event possible. We look forward to welcoming you all to next year's conference!

## Law Fair

Liverpool Law Society is proud to partner with **Fletchers Group** to host the upcoming Legal Careers Open Evening on Wednesday, 11 February 2026.

This insightful event will welcome first-year law students from the region's four universities—Liverpool John Moores University, Edge Hill University, the University of Liverpool, and Liverpool Hope University. The evening is designed to give students valuable early exposure to the diverse career paths within the legal

profession, connecting them directly with firms that represent a wide spectrum of practice areas.

Thanks to a direct appeal to Liverpool Law Society member firms, we are delighted to confirm that all exhibitor slots have now been filled. Alongside Liverpool Law Society, the Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division, and Fletchers Group, the event will also feature Morecrofts Solicitors, Rowlinsons Solicitors, In House Legal Solutions,

and CEL Solicitors.

Representatives from each organisation will give a short talk on their area of legal expertise, exhibit at the event with team members available to answer student questions and take part in networking with aspiring legal professionals.

Together, they will showcase the breadth of opportunities within the sector while promoting the strength and diversity of our industry.



# Electronic wills. Opportunity or undue influence?



Andy Hitchon

## Are electronic wills the future, or does going digital place some clients at greater risk of coercion and undue influence?

Andy Hitchon, Head of [LEAP Estates](#), examines the main risks linked to digital will writing and what private client practitioners can do to overcome them.

Estate lawyers are well used to evolution. With legal technology advancing rapidly and many lawyers now comfortable managing their work through a screen, it is understandable that the Law Commission is reviewing the [Wills Act 1837](#) to modernise the field. Proposals ranging from electronic signatures to video witnessing aim to make will making more accessible, efficient and digital. For clients who struggle to attend appointments or prefer to handle matters outside standard working hours, this shift could remove longstanding barriers.

However, practitioners know that the safeguards around the will making process are as important as the document itself. Any change should strengthen, not weaken, the protection of vulnerable clients.

### Digitising the will writing process

The Law Commission's new bill

proposes that wills can be created, signed and stored electronically, witnessed remotely through video systems, and that the age of testamentary capacity is reduced from 18 to 16. It also suggests aligning the test for testamentary capacity with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 instead of the older *Banks v Goodfellow* case law.

Although many believe these updates will make will drafting simpler, quicker and more accessible, the shift to a fully digital process raises clear concerns. A will created without a physical pen ever touching paper presents risks of coercion, undue influence and increased vulnerability.

### Electronic wills: progress or pitfall?

Coercion and undue influence have always been major considerations when taking instructions. These issues are difficult to prove in court, yet the proposals may heighten the risk. Without physical presence, how can lawyers be confident the testator is alone? Could someone off camera be exerting pressure?

The potential abuse of technology also creates new challenges. Deepfakes and AI generated audio could be used to imitate a testator's instructions. Forged electronic signatures are another concern if strict verification is not implemented. If wills are stored on unsafe platforms, they may be accessed, corrupted or altered. Cyberattacks and data loss also present significant threats.

### Crucial issues to consider when creating digital wills.

#### Safeguarding all clients in the digital age

Vulnerable clients must remain front of mind. Those who are elderly or living with physical or mental conditions often require in person meetings to assess capacity. Some wills need more

than one meeting, particularly when instructions are complex.

Lowering the age of testamentary capacity to 16 also raises questions. With many legal rights still tied to the age of 18, there is a genuine risk of a will becoming outdated or accidentally revoked.

### Overcoming the risks

While technology will shape the future of will writing, the transition must be gradual and inclusive. Legal software can help by prompting checks on capacity and understanding, flagging unusual instructions and advising clients to seek professional confirmation when needed. Facial recognition, ID verification and clear audit trails, combined with secure document storage that uses encryption, multi factor authentication and regulated platforms, will also reduce risk.

### The future of will making

Modernisation is necessary, but progress must not outpace protection. Electronic wills may become part of everyday practice, but only if supported by rigorous processes, secure storage and the continued use of in person meetings where required. Digital options should enhance support for clients, not replace the careful, human centred judgement that sits at the heart of good estate planning.

**Andy Hitchon,**  
Head of Estates,  
LEAP Legal Software.



## Invitation: Empowering solicitors on the road to the judiciary, Thursday 12 March 2026

The Law Society of England and Wales is holding a **free event**, kindly hosted by Liverpool John Moores University, designed to **encourage solicitors on their journey to the judiciary**. This event is being held in collaboration with [Liverpool Law Society](#).

Discover the procedures involved in judicial appointments, understand the skills and experience needed to begin a career in the judiciary, and gain insights into the daily working life as a judge.

Hear first hand experiences from our panel of solicitor judges about the barriers they faced and how they overcame them. Additionally, start building a supportive network by connecting with fellow solicitors who are considering or have already started applying for judicial positions, as well as with working judges.

Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and make meaningful connections. We look forward to seeing you there!

**Date and time:** Thursday 12 March, 6.15pm - 8.30pm

**Location:** Liverpool John Moores University, Legal Advice Centre, 15-19 Hardman Street L1 9AS

**RSVP:** Places are limited – [Find out more and book your space today](#)

As this is an **in-person event only**, **spaces are limited** and you are encouraged to **RSVP** early to avoid disappointment.



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## The latest news from Vauxhall Law Centre. Providing Access to Justice in the community since 1973.



Isabel Moon-Parry

### Thank you, Isabel!

Elly and Sam have been lucky enough to have the support of a Development Volunteer. Isabel Moon-Parry has been hard at work in over the last month for our law centre, and so we thought we would ask her to share her thoughts and insight into her first month here:

*"I joined the Law Centre having recently graduated with my BA in European Politics and having lived in London for the duration of my studies. Moving home to Liverpool was daunting, trying to readjust and reorientate. For me, the opportunity to volunteer at the law centre in a bid writing role was one that I jumped at. I'd had some brief experience with similar roles while at university, and so it seemed to be like a natural fit.*

*Having started at Vauxhall Law Centre in November as a Volunteer, I've been working within the Development team to support the law centre's work through applications*

*for grants and funding. By shadowing and assisting the work of the full-time Development Officers, Sam and Elly, I've been able to gain in-depth experience on how the law centre functions.*

*As a Development Volunteer, I spend most of my time writing the applications for our smaller grants. With that, you must always be prepared for rejection. There's a good chance that the applications you send will not be accepted, and another good chance that there'll be no response to your funding request. But, despite how scary sending the first application may seem, it really does become easier as you go. You find your voice in the words, and as you come to spend more time in the law centre and understand the work first-hand, explaining what we do becomes second nature, and those words begin to flow.*

*And it is that understanding of the work that the law centre does that makes the role so fulfilling. The knowledge that any money gained through the hours of grant applications being written and sent goes towards benefiting people who need that extra help and support within our community is so rewarding. As somebody from Kirkdale, near Vauxhall, I've always been aware of the struggles that many in the area face. So, to be able to support the law centre's work even in a small way is something truly special."*

### Impact Report Launch Event

In our last article, we shared with you our Impact Report for 24/25, which featured some of our key financial and work figures, as well as some key insights from our caseworkers and solicitors on their work and some of their thoughts on their areas of practice. On December 4th we celebrated this work with a launch event, featuring talks from our board,



staff and supporters. Trustees **Alan Kelly**, **Abi O'Connor** and **Chris Topping** spoke about their experiences at the Law Centre, with **Chris** discussing some of his earliest interactions with VLC, as well as his thoughts on access to justice. **Abi** spoke alongside Housing Caseworker **Joe Bowly** about the current state of housing in our city, with **Joe** providing real-life examples of the need for more council-owned property and a reformed Legal Aid system. Finally, **Paul Khan**, current chair of Spirit of Shankly – Liverpool Supporters Union, and one of the Fans Supporting Foodbanks organisers, shared his kind words about the spirit of VLC's work, and what the work means to local communities that have been supported.

We're incredibly proud of the work of our staff here in Vauxhall and across the city, so taking the opportunity to talk about that work in more detail helped make the evening a special one. We'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone who could attend, and many thanks also to both The Casa and Homebaked Bakery for helping make the event happen.





Additionally, we'd like to send a very special thank you to Broudie Jackson Canter for their support in funding the evening's event, as well as helping us spread the word more widely about our work.

#### Four Years of our Homebaked Drop-in



Back in November, we celebrated four years of our drop-in Welfare Rights advice service in Homebaked Anfield. The service has been a huge success for

local residents, with almost £1,000,000 in financial gains recovered for clients. The service wouldn't be possible without the generous funding from Spirit of Shankly – Liverpool Supporters Union and Hombaked Anfield, who each week donate a private room in their community bakery for our advisors to meet members of the community comfortably.

To give more context to the work, the following is a brief case study for one client who attended the drop-in:

*Client, in their early 40s, attended the drop-in at Homebaked for assistance with a PIP appeal. The client was refused PIP and scored 0 points for all activities. The client had anxiety and depression and was under the care of a support worker from Crisis, as a result of their frequent history of insecure and temporary housing. They were assisted with the appeal process from lodging the appeal, gathering further evidence and representation at a tribunal hearing. Following the hearing in April 2025, the tribunal awarded the client enhanced rate daily living and standard rate mobility. The award was back-dated to March 2023 when the client first applied for PIP. The client's financial gain included a backdated payment of £14,719.25 and a £7259.20 annual award going forward, resulting in total financial gains of over*

*£20,000, a life-changing amount of money. The client expressed their gratitude for assistance with the appeal and how the money will significantly change their life and assist their well-being.*

#### Can you help Vauxhall Law Centre?

We would be grateful if you could support our organisation's work [by making a donation towards our charity](#), helping us to continue providing access to justice to those who need it most. As a charity, we are reliant on funding and donations. Without this, we would not be able to meet the increasingly high level of demand on our services.

[Further information can be found on our website.](#)

Alternatively, if you think you or your company can support our work at VCLIC, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are looking for volunteers with skills in a wide range of areas such as Financial Management, HR, Technology, Fundraising, and Advice. If you have any skills and would like to get on board with us, please drop us a line at [recruitment@vauxhalllawcentre.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@vauxhalllawcentre.org.uk)

Please consider using volunteering as a means to meet some of your company's Corporate Social Responsibility commitments and support the local community.



# Council Member's Report



Jeremy Myers

**The meeting in London on 10 December was an opportunity to meet many of the newly-elected members who took office in October. The process of getting to know each other was turbo-charged by a Speed Networking session following the meeting.**

This followed a special online meeting on 29 October. We discussed the report into SSB prepared for the Legal Services Board (LSB) regarding the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). The LSB is likely to issue enforcement steps against the SRA. We also covered the matter of a change of threshold for a Special General Meeting, on which more below. There was a fair amount of internal business of The Law Society (TLS) to

process. Remuneration level for members of the TLS Board (akin to its Executive) was approved as was the proposal to make permanent the role of Deputy. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee will in future report to the Board, rather than Council, a move intended to be consistent with other committees and to streamline TLS's work.

The bicentenary of TLS was reviewed. We were informed that a total of 1,650 members had attended the various events around the Jurisdiction (including the one in Liverpool in June). The ballot on the Bye-Law change – for raising the threshold to call a SGM – is progressing.

Campaigning on matters of justice is always a vital part of TLS's work. The President, Mark Evans, reported on lobbying for the role of Jury Trials as it is under threat. Linked with this is the recent High Court decision on Mazur which affects some practices' models for ensuring access to justice for clients, and TLS as an intervenor is awaiting Directions about the Appeal.

There were two topics on which I contributed in debate. A Resolution had been circulated to ensure respect for Trans and Non-Binary Solicitors. This is welcome although – as I pointed out – equally respect for others is required so I

raised the concern of women about their lavatories being used by those who may be regarded as male.

The second topic was the Solicitors Qualifying Examination review. TLS is to be part of a working group which will include the SRA. I made the point that there should be a change to SQE 1 which is solely a multiple-choice exam. My feeling is that there should be some scope for writing reasoned answers in this exam as well as in SQE 2.

The "Get Involved" campaign is online. I do encourage all members to visit TLS's website to read more about "Get Involved" and to volunteer to play a role in drawing their own expertise and experience.

Before Council meets on 18 March 2026, we shall get together in London on 24 February to review and develop TLS's Strategy for the period 2025-28. The Strategy takes in topics such as Technology, Conditions for Growth, Responsible Business, Justice plus the Rule of Law, and the Member experience, and is an important framework for the ongoing development of our profession's members.

**Jeremy Myers**  
TLS Council Member

## Cashflow planning in divorce: a strategic tool for solicitors and clients



Robert Pocock

**Divorce is a significant life event that reshapes the financial landscape for both parties. For solicitors advising clients through separation and settlement, cashflow planning offers a powerful,**

**data-driven approach to support informed decision-making and long-term financial stability.**

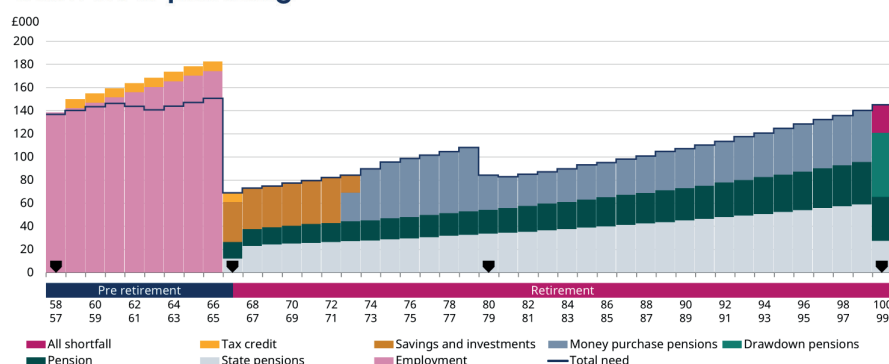
Used effectively, cashflow modelling can provide clarity, reduce conflict, and help assess the sustainability of proposed settlements. It is increasingly recognised by financial planners and legal professionals as a valuable tool in both pre- and post-divorce financial planning.

### What is cashflow planning?

Cashflow planning involves projecting an individual's financial position over time, incorporating income, expenditure, assets, liabilities, and key life events. The resulting model provides a visual representation of how financial decisions made today may impact future outcomes.

In the context of divorce, cashflow

## Cash flow planning



planning can be used in two distinct ways:

1. **Personal planning** – to help an individual understand their financial future post-divorce.
2. **Impartial analysis** – to support fair division of assets and assess the viability of proposed settlements.

### How does it work?

#### 1. Visualising financial futures

Cashflow modelling helps clients understand the long-term implications of settlement decisions. It can illustrate how choices such as retaining the family home or receiving a pension share will affect financial security over time.

#### 2. Assessing settlement sustainability

Cashflow planning can be used to evaluate whether proposed arrangements are financially viable. For example, can one party afford to retain the family home? Will a pension sharing order provide sufficient retirement income?

#### 3. Determining support needs

Cashflow models can assess the affordability and sustainability of spousal or child maintenance payments. This ensures that support obligations are realistic and fair to both parties.

#### 4. Reducing conflict

By providing objective, evidence-based insights, cashflow planning can reduce emotionally driven decision-making. It supports more amicable negotiations and can be a useful tool in mediation or collaborative law settings.

#### 5. Post-divorce financial planning

Following the final order, cashflow planning continues to play a vital role. It can be used as part of the advice process to help prepare for the future, along with immediate and longer-term advice needs. For example, the sale of the family home, or implementation of pension sharing orders, preparing for retirement or other financial goals.

It's important to note that the tool is based on assumptions and is adjusted throughout the years to accommodate changes in legislation, cost of living and changes in the client's circumstances.

### Client outcomes: clarity, confidence, control

Cashflow planning empowers clients with three key outcomes:

- **Clarity** – a clear view of how their financial future may unfold year by year.
- **Confidence** – understanding the impact of key decisions on long-term financial wellbeing.
- **Control** – the ability to test different scenarios, such as downsizing, delaying retirement, or adjusting spending.

For solicitors, integrating cashflow planning into the divorce advice process can enhance the quality of financial guidance provided to clients. It supports fair settlements, reduces uncertainty, and helps clients transition into the next chapter of their lives with greater financial confidence.

Collaboration with financial planners who specialise in cashflow modelling can be particularly beneficial, ensuring that



legal advice is complemented by robust financial analysis.

### Meet the team

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### Get in touch

Robert Pocock FPFs MCSI

E: [Robert.pocock@benchmarkfp.co.uk](mailto:Robert.pocock@benchmarkfp.co.uk)

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*This article is for general information only and is aimed at Professional connections.*

*This article does not constitute tax, legal or financial advice and should not be relied upon as such. Tax treatment depends on the individual circumstances of each client and may be subject to change in the future. For guidance, seek professional advice.*

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# Regulation Update

## January 2026

The latest Regulation news from Andrea Cohen of Weightmans LLP



Andrea Cohen

**We hope you've had a good break. The start of a new year is always a good time to reflect on the previous year, and do some horizon scanning and anticipate what's in store for 2026, as well as providing our usual update on regulatory matters, risk and compliance, and recent disciplinary decisions.**

### 2025 year in review and future legal trends

2025 was no different to previous years for lawyers, with constant juggling between client requirements, keeping up to date with changes in the law, ever increasing regulatory obligations etc. while running and growing a business, and keeping an eye on what is on the horizon so that we don't get left behind by competitors.

There have been a range of significant milestones, from major regulatory reforms to advances in legal technology, the news that the FCA will become responsible for all AML regulation from, it is anticipated, around the end of 2027, and cases

that sent shock waves through the profession e.g. Mazur, together with swathes of SRA guidance, Law Society practice notes, updated LSAG guidance alongside new statutory requirements and regulations etc. - there's never a dull moment in the world of regulatory compliance!

### Regulatory shifts and compliance pressures

The SRA's updated sectoral risk assessment on AML and terrorist financing led firms to review and document their FWRA and PCPs, and the annual AML and sanctions data collection has led to 100s of firms receiving letters from the SRA in the last few weeks. The SRA have indicated there will be a thematic review around PCPs early 2026, and no reduction in inspections, investigations etc.

The decision in Mazur led to much commentary and speculation in the legal press, LinkedIn etc. with comments ranging from the decision causing widespread panic and nationwide disruption, particularly in firms dealing with high volume claims who employ a large proportion of non-admitted staff, to firms having to evidence processes in the event they are queried at a later date, with the possibility of satellite legislation relating to earlier pleadings. The Law Society has produced guidance, the latest version (as at the date of writing) on 18 November 2025. CILEX have been granted permission to appeal, but that may not be heard for some time.

The introduction of ECCTA created a new offence for failing to prevent fraud in large organisations and removed the cap on SRA fines for certain economic crime breaches, and mandatory identity verification for

company directors and PSCs made non-compliance a criminal offence for both companies and individuals. These changes have forced firms to update their policies, procedures, and training, emphasising the need for strong compliance frameworks.

### The impact of AI and technology

The rapid adoption of AI has been both a boon and a challenge for the profession. While AI offers efficiencies in drafting documents and responding to client queries, it also introduces risks—such as the use of fabricated case citations and the proliferation of AI-generated complaints. Courts have issued warnings about the misuse of AI, and firms are advised to implement clear policies and ensure that all advice and submissions are checked for accuracy.

Cybersecurity has also remained a critical concern, with several high-profile breaches affecting firms' finances and reputations.

### Disciplinary trends and professional ethics

Disciplinary decisions in 2025 have highlighted the SRA's continuing willingness to impose substantial fines and take decisive action against both firms and individuals. Notable cases include a law firm fined £58,000 (plus £20,000 costs) for lacking an AML risk assessment and independent audit, and a director fined £32,500 (plus £50,000 costs) for failing to verify the source of funds for a PEP and misusing the client account.

Other disciplinary actions have addressed issues such as misleading clients, falsifying emails, misuse of client account and over-recording time. These cases serve as stark reminders of the importance of ethical conduct and the risks of succumbing

to commercial pressures or poor leadership. The LSB has voiced concerns about declining ethical standards, prompting consultations on upholding professional duties and the potential for regulatory reform.

### Future legal trends: navigating the road ahead

Looking ahead, several emerging trends promise to shape the legal profession:

- **Evolving regulatory landscape:** Regulators are expected to further embrace dynamic, risk-based approaches to supervision and enforcement. This could include, as is already the case with the FCA, real-time data collection, greater use of technology to monitor compliance, and a greater shift toward focused regulation that emphasizes results over processes. While we don't know what AML will look like under the FCA, getting 'in shape' now, with up-to-date FWRAs, independent AML audits etc is sound advice.
- **AI and automation:** AI will continue to revolutionise legal practice, from streamlined document review and contract analysis to predictive case outcome analytics. While these technologies boost efficiency, firms must remain vigilant about accuracy, ethical use, and regulatory compliance.
- **Data security and privacy:** The rise in cyber threats means robust data protection is more important than ever. Firms will be expected to invest in advanced cybersecurity, staff training, and incident response plans. Regulatory focus on both data breaches and client confidentiality is likely to intensify.
- **Flexible and hybrid working:** Firms must adapt management,

supervision, and training practices to support distributed teams, ensuring that high professional standards and quality client service are maintained regardless of location.

- **ESG and social responsibility:** Environmental, social, and governance considerations are now central to clients and regulators alike. Firms will be required to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, diversity and ethical business practices, both in advice and in their operations.
- **Access to justice and innovation:** Technology will play a pivotal role in expanding access to justice, with online dispute resolution, virtual hearings, and digital legal services becoming mainstream. Firms that balance innovation with strong compliance and ethical standards will be best positioned to thrive.

Together, these trends signal a profession that is increasingly defined by adaptability, innovation, and social consciousness. By both reflecting on the achievements of 2025 and proactively preparing for the road ahead, we can continue to deliver value to clients and society while upholding the highest standards of integrity and service.

### SRA consultations and thematic reviews

On 11 December 2025, the SRA published its consultation on client money in legal services, a follow up from the 2024 consultation, and, in addition to proposals regarding accountants' reports, it proposes that in firms that meet specified risk thresholds, namely annual turnover of over £600,000 and/or firms holding more than £500,000 client money at any point in the

most recent accounting period, any individual who can unilaterally determine or direct significant management decisions in a firm cannot be the COLP or COFA. In relation to sole owner-manager firms, the consultation says 'it is more likely that these firms would have to take on an appropriate employee / contractor to carry out the compliance roles' as there may be difficulty in finding people with sufficient seniority internally, with an exemption, on a proportionality basis, to separate just the COFA role. Alongside the consultation, the SRA published a thematic review relating to compliance officers, following visits to 25 law firms and speaking with 36 individuals.

The consultation closes 20 February 2026.

A further consultation in the area, relating to the SRA's oversight over firms changing their profile, including possible new notification and information requirements, is expected to be published around end May 2026.

On the same date, 11 December 2025, the SRA published another report 'Growth strategies thematic review: Accumulator, Acquisition and Consultant models'.

### Sanctions

New pages have been launched on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) following the cross-government sanctions review and user requests for clearer guidance. The consolidation of the UK Sanctions List into a single list from 28 January 2026 will simplify monitoring obligations and firms should revise screening systems and compliance frameworks accordingly.

*Continues over page...*

### Regulation Update Continued

#### New practice notes and guidance SRA guidance

- [SRA | Money laundering and terrorist financing suspicious activity reports | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)
- [SRA | How we make decisions and the criteria we apply | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

#### Law Society practice notes and guidance

- [Protection for client accounts | The Law Society](#)
- [Conflict of interests | The Law Society](#)
- [Criminal Finances Act 2017 | The Law Society](#)
- [Anti-terrorism | The Law Society](#)

#### Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

##### Fine for failing to spot fraud

A solicitor was fined £15,000 for failing to spot indicators of

sophisticated fraud in two loan matters, having not identified or responded to warning signs and contributing to breaches of regulatory requirements. The SDT noted that although he did not act dishonestly, his approach fell below expected standards, particularly in relation to due diligence checks.

##### Struck off using drug money to pay mortgage

A solicitor was struck off by the SDT after it found that he had knowingly used money derived from his brother's drug-trafficking to pay his mortgage. The tribunal held that the solicitor's conduct demonstrated serious dishonesty and a failure to uphold the standards expected of the profession, and removal from the roll was the only appropriate sanction.

##### Solicitor cleared over discounted sale of elderly client's home

A solicitor was cleared by the SDT

over the handling of a discounted sale of an 82-year-old client's home. The SDT said that practitioners cannot be expected to second-guess the instructions of a client who has full mental capacity, and the allegations of misconduct were dismissed after it concluded the solicitor acted appropriately in the circumstances.

#### 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](mailto:compli@weightmans.com).

Andrea Cohen

Compli,  
Weightmans LLP

## Alfie's Squad Update/MJLD Social Update

On behalf of the MJLD, we trust everyone had a great Christmas and New Year, and we hope everyone is feeling refreshed for 2026. Please see an update on MJLD's charity & pre-loved sale, as well as an update on our upcoming January social.



Supporting children bereaved by suicide

#### Race for a Reason

Alfie's Squad is the MJLD's nominated charity for 2025/26 and they offer peer support to children and young people who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Between 14-16 November 2025, Alfie's Squad hosted Race for a Reason, inspired by the BBC's Race Around the World. The event involved teams of two tasked

with travelling from Anfield Stadium in Liverpool, the starting point, to Stamford Bridge in London, the finish line. The route was not known to the teams beforehand, however, and they had to solve puzzles and challenges at various checkpoints throughout their journey. Each checkpoint was carefully designed to reflect the impact of suicide.

The event raised over a massive £55,000 for Alfie's Squad, which will be used to continue supporting young people and enable additional outreach to families who require assistance. A massive congratulations to all. Donations can be made here: <https://www.justgiving.com/charity/alfies-squad>

Again, we thank everyone who attends and contributes to our events in our effort to foster a welcoming and inclusive junior legal community in Liverpool. Please follow us on our social media pages to stay up to date with what we have planned for 2026.

**Sofia Rescorla-Brown**

Paralegal & MJLD Representative

#### JANUARY SOCIAL

MJLD's January social will take place on 29 January 2026 at 18:00 at PINS Liverpool. A brilliant opportunity for networking amongst junior lawyers, with the inclusion of food, drink and activities included in the ticket price. Please stay tuned into our socials for further updates on when tickets become available.

✉ [hello@merseysidejld.com](mailto:hello@merseysidejld.com)  
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# Charity Spotlight: Pain Relief Foundation



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**CAN YOU HELP US FIGHT PAIN ?**

**PAIN RELIEF FOUNDATION**

RELIEVING CHRONIC PAIN THROUGH RESEARCH



## Chronic Pain, unseen, unequal and unfair

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the Pain Relief Foundation, a Liverpool-based charity dedicated to addressing the causes of chronic pain and supporting those affected by it.

meant to persist indefinitely. Acute pain typically lasts less than three to six months, but for some, pain can become chronic, lasting beyond this timeframe and significantly affecting their quality of life.

a vicious cycle where pain leads to preoccupation, depression, and irritability, which in turn exacerbates the pain and can lead to dependency on medications or unnecessary surgeries.



Chronic pain can lead to a cascade of losses—friendships, career opportunities, and future plans. The emotional toll of these losses, combined with the pain itself, can be devastating, impacting not only the individual but also their families. This often creates

The statistics surrounding chronic pain are alarming. Individuals experiencing high- impact chronic pain are twice as likely to reside in deprived areas, and they face a higher risk of developing psychological disorders, including major depressive disorder and suicidal ideation.

Chronic pain is often referred to as an “invisible condition.” It affects millions of individuals in the UK, making it one of the leading causes of disability. While the physical manifestations of chronic pain may not be visible, its impact is profound, often leading to exhaustion, life limitations, and a sense of hopelessness for those who suffer from it.

At some point in our lives, we all experience pain—whether physical or emotional—stemming from illness, injury, or distressing events. While pain serves a protective purpose, alerting us to potential harm, it is not



The Pain Relief Foundation Faculty, 2025



*The Centre at University  
Hospital, Aintree*



Chronic pain encompasses a wide range of conditions, from spinal cord injuries and fibromyalgia to cancer pain, yet research funding in this area remains disproportionately low compared to other diseases. The cost of treating chronic pain in the NHS exceeds that of treating, coronary disease, and cancer combined, amounting to £10 million annually.

The Pain Relief Foundation is unique in its commitment to conducting research on chronic pain and developing innovative treatment methods. Our multidisciplinary approach involves collaboration among doctors, researchers, psychologists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists, all working together to advance our understanding and treatment of chronic pain. Importantly, the new treatments we develop are distributed to pain clinics across the UK, benefiting chronic pain sufferers nationwide. We also prioritise education



**The Pain Relief Foundation Management & Administration Team:**  
**Jo Stephens - Fundraising, Julie Williams - Charity Manager,**  
**Hayley McCullough - Administrator**

for healthcare professionals to ensure the best care for patients.

To continue our vital work, we urgently need increased funding for research. With your support, we can make significant strides in developing new treatments and improving the lives of thousands of chronic pain patients

#### How You Can Help.

The Foundation is appealing to the public to expand its impact through:

- Legacy Giving: Leave a gift in your will to ensure a lasting legacy of pain relief.
- Donations: Any contribution helps fund vital research and education.

**Help Support people with chronic pain with a legacy gift in your will or make a donation today.**

For more information about the Pain Relief Foundation, please visit our website

[www.painreliefoundation.org.uk](http://www.painreliefoundation.org.uk)

Email [Hayley.McCullough@painreliefoundation.org.uk](mailto:Hayley.McCullough@painreliefoundation.org.uk) or call 0151 529 5820

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1156227

# A guide to AI in accounting and finance: Prompts and challenges

Having previously cast a lens on artificial intelligence's transformation of the accounting and finance function specifically examining the benefits and outputs of AI technology (take a look at [www.jayvaglobal.com/news/ai-accounting-benefits-outputs](http://www.jayvaglobal.com/news/ai-accounting-benefits-outputs)), we're now focusing on prompt examples to apply and pitfalls to overcome – in order to succeed in your AI strategies and objectives.

## Example prompts and scenarios for AI queries

In bookkeeping, collecting information from various sources, consolidating it and preparing reports and documents for period end (and routine) activities or in readiness for annual auditing from scratch takes an excessively long time. With AI, these tasks happen in minutes. Here are a few real-life scenarios of AI prompts in an accounting and finance setting:

1. Summarise the financial position of the firm for July, August and September, covering the specific headings 'working capital', 'client liabilities', 'cash flow movement', 'fee performance by staff member' and 'profit'.
2. Create a management report which includes the key financials from each month in the quarter ending 30th September, with an executive summary of financial position, identifying any concerning large debtor and WIP balances which need to be actioned.
3. Compare the document titled office receipts report and cross reference with the invoices reports for each month, identifying the average number of days between the invoice date and invoice receipt date. Utilise that information to calculate an average number of debtor days on invoices where receipts have been paid against invoices with the same invoice number.
4. Review fee earner summary reports for the three-month period from July

to September and identify which staff members have the highest fees billed amount compared with their fees entered budget figure for the same period.

5. Our firm's average debtor days are X. How does this compare with the current average in law firms in the UK?
6. Our EBITDA is 18%. How does this compare in our sector?
7. Create a revised and comprehensive checklist for my legal cashing team to follow as part of robust month end controls. The checklist should identify the tasks required and the sequence of those tasks, identifying any dependencies and also anything required for compliance with the solicitors' accounts rules and HMRC compliance.

This is not an exhaustive list. More suggestions are available at [www.jayvaglobal.com/news/ai-accounting-prompts-challenges](http://www.jayvaglobal.com/news/ai-accounting-prompts-challenges).

## Challenges of using AI in legal accounts

In business-critical accounting and finance roles, there are security and compliance risks associated with AI usage, some of which are outlined here:

- **Client money is sacrosanct.** Protecting client money is the number one priority of any legal accounting professional. Don't become complacent about data security as it increases the risk of data breaches which is an infringement of accounting rules and regulations.
- **Wider impact of AI internally and externally to your organisation.** The impact on professional indemnity insurance, staff retention, supervision oversight, billing models, pricing transparency and more are still evolving.
- **Historically, the law sector hasn't been an early adopter of new innovations.** AI poses an interesting new chapter for practices as they progress along their AI adoption

journey. Companies must strike the right balance between embracing AI's transformational opportunities and fighting AI's privacy threats.

- **Lack of confidentiality within open web-based AI answer engines.** To keep your data safe, only use AI systems which operate in your own protected environment such as Microsoft Copilot or functionality within your case and practice management software. Open web models can memorise and reveal personal information by lacking the necessary safeguards to prevent unauthorised data access.
- **Inability to deliver region-specific results.** You don't want outputs referring to other currencies and VAT/GST rates or other nuanced differences. If your AI system knows your location, results pertain exactly to your region which is much preferable and actionable.

## Final thoughts

The way you interact with AI is just as important as the technology itself. Thoughtfully crafted prompts unlock impressive efficiencies, while a clear-eyed understanding of potential issues ensures AI's operated safely, compliantly and effectively – paramount on the legal cashing stage. As AI evolves, law firms embracing it with both curiosity and caution are best positioned to lead the way.

## Even more help from Jayva

Jayva's here to help you strike the 'curiosity-caution' balance and get the most out of the tools at your disposal.

Read our earlier blogs on [AI at www.jayvaglobal.com/news](http://www.jayvaglobal.com/news), discover our AI services at [www.jayvaglobal.com/ai-consultancy-training](http://www.jayvaglobal.com/ai-consultancy-training), and contact us by emailing [info@jayvaglobal.com](mailto:info@jayvaglobal.com) or calling 0333 2020 995.

*Whether it's upskilling on AI, mentoring cashiers, unravelling and rescuing accounts, setting up bespoke reports, whatever – we've got you covered.*



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DATE	EVENT	SPEAKER
22/01/2026	SRA Business Competencies for 0-3 PQE Solicitors PT1	Keith Harper
22/01/2026	The Renters' Rights Act 2025: Obtaining Vacant Possession in a New Age	Richard Snape
29/01/2026	SRA Business Competencies for 0-3 PQE Solicitors PT2	Keith Harper
10/02/2026	Developing Management and Business Skills for Lawyers	Keith Harper
10/02/2026	Introduction to Wills and Probate, and Connection with Family Law	Safda Mahmood
18/03/2026	Finacial Orders: Law and Practice	Safda Mahmood
18/03/2026	Cohabitation: Law Practice	Safda Mahmood
21/04/2026	Private Children Law: 2026 Update	Safda Mahmood
21/04/2026	Public Children Law: 2026 Update	Safda Mahmood
29/04/2026	Commercial Property Update	Hannah Mackinlay
30/04/2026	All About Alphabet Shares	Jackie Sheldon

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.

**\*\* Training events open to legal professionals nationwide \*\***

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

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## Essential SRA Business Competencies for Newly Qualified Solicitors

Two Part Webinar Sessions with Keith Harper

Online, 22nd January, 9.30am - 12.30pm



The SRA defines competence as “the ability to perform the roles and tasks required by one’s job to the expected standard.” Of the four SRA competency areas for solicitors, three focus on non-technical skills. While technical expertise is expected – and often assumed – by clients, it’s the non-technical competencies that frequently make the greatest impact: on client satisfaction, personal effectiveness, and firm performance.

This practical online course is designed specifically for solicitors with 0–3 years PQE. It focuses on developing the business and professional skills essential for meeting SRA standards, building trusted client relationships, and making a meaningful contribution to your firm’s success.

Session one will focus on ethics, professionalism and judgement, as well as managing yourself and your work, including improving profitability.

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## The Renters' Rights Act 2025: Obtaining Vacant Possession in a New Age

with Richard Snape

Online, 22nd January, 1.30pm - 4.30pm



The Renters Rights Act 2025 received the Royal Assent on October 27th 2025, the changes to assured tenancies will come into force on May 1st, 2026. It is the most important change to security of tenure and obtaining vacant possession in residential leases for a generation. This seminar will provide an overview of key topics with regards to the Renters Rights Act allowing attendees to have a greater understanding of changes come in to force in May 2026.

The topics covered include the abolition of assured shorthold tenancies, tenants’ notice periods, changes to the grounds for possession, student accommodation and HMOs, rental bidding wars, transitional provisions, the maximum duration of assured tenancies, a comparison with the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, and discrimination against keeping pets, benefits tenants, and children.

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## Essential SRA Business Competencies for Newly Qualified Solicitors

Two Part Webinar Sessions with Keith Harper

Online, 29th January, 9.30am - 12.30pm



The SRA defines competence as “the ability to perform the roles and tasks required by one’s job to the expected standard.” Of the four SRA competency areas for solicitors, three focus on non-technical skills. While technical expertise is expected and often assumed by clients, it’s the non-technical competencies that frequently make the greatest impact: on client satisfaction, personal effectiveness, and firm performance.

This practical online course is designed specifically for solicitors with 0–3 years PQE. It focuses on developing the business and professional skills essential for meeting SRA standards, building trusted client relationships, and making a meaningful contribution to your firm’s success.

Session two will focus on working with others, managing and developing client relationships, and collaborating effectively within your firm.

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## Developing Management and Business Skills for Lawyers

with Keith Harper


In Person, 10th February, 9.30am - 4.30pm



The SRA defines competence as “the ability to perform the roles and tasks required by one’s job to the expected standard.” While technical excellence is assumed by clients, it is often the non-technical competencies, leadership, management, communication, and business awareness, that make the crucial difference to client satisfaction and firm performance.

This course is designed for solicitors with at least three years’ PQE who currently hold, or are preparing to take on, management or supervision responsibilities. During this session, delegates will explore how to meet the SRA Competence standards and gain insight into the key aspects of management within law firms, including profitability, people leadership, and client relationship development, building the business skills that drive both individual and firm success.

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Family

## Introduction To Wills And Probate, And Connection with Family Law

with Safda Mahmood

Online, 19th February, 10.00am - 4.00pm



This course is designed to help you become more familiar with the law, practice, and procedure in Wills and Probate, while keeping you up to date with case law and statutory developments. It will enable you to anticipate potential problems in handling cases and provide you with the knowledge and skills to draft wills with greater confidence and be aware of common types of clauses in wills. This course is written and presented by an experienced family solicitor. The course will equip you with the essentials in terms of principles of Wills and probate, and as to how it links into other areas of law, particularly family law.

[BOOK NOW](#)



Family

## Financial Orders: Law and Practice

with Safda Mahmood

Online, 18th March, 10.00am - 12.30pm



This course will consider the various factors surrounding financial orders and the developments in the case law and statutory provisions and will be of benefit to those delegates who seek to be aware of the current themes and developments surrounding this area of law. This course will support you in understanding financial orders and financial remedies, helping you become more knowledgeable about key legislative updates and recent case law developments. It will also enhance your awareness of relevant practice and procedure, prepare you to manage anticipated challenges, and highlight the value of nuptial agreements. Overall, the course is designed to strengthen your confidence and improve your efficiency in this area.

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Family

## Cohabitation: Law Practice


with Safda Mahmood

Online, 18th March, 1:15pm - 3.45pm



The course will be of benefit to those delegates who seek to become more confident with how to run/defend a case through the courts involving trusts of land and Schedule 1 Children Act Matters. This course offers assistance in understanding the manner in which cohabitation issues are raised in family matters, helping you become more confident with key legislative and case law developments. It aims to increase confidence with the relevant practice and procedure, particularly under TOLATA 1996, and to equip you to deal with anticipated difficulties. You will gain an understanding of the various steps that can be taken to assist cohabiting parties, and overall the course will help you improve your confidence and efficiency.

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Family

## Private Children Law: 2026 Update

with Safda Mahmood

Online, 21st April, 10:00am - 12:30pm



Join us for an essential training session designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice in private children law. This event will help you master key legislative and case law developments, understand crucial procedural steps, and stay ahead of the game in a fast-moving area of law. Gain confidence in applying case law and legislation effectively, avoid common pitfalls, and enhance both your efficiency and professional competence. Whether you're looking to refine your skills or strengthen your practical knowledge, this session will equip you with the tools to succeed.

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## Public Children Law: 2026 Update

with Safda Mahmood

Online, 21st April, 1:15am - 15:45pm



Join us for an in-depth session designed to help you put the theory of public children law into practice with confidence and precision. This course will guide you through key legislative and case law developments, essential procedural steps, and practical strategies to stay ahead in this complex area. You will learn how to apply case law and legislation effectively, avoid common mistakes, and enhance your efficiency in managing cases. By the end of the session, you'll feel more confident and equipped to handle challenges in public children law with clarity and competence.

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## Commercial Property Update

with Hannah Mackinlay

Online, 29th April, 9.30am - 12.30am



In 2024, we witnessed significant changes for commercial real estate lawyers, and we can anticipate even more impactful developments from the new Labour government. Many firms are preparing for upcoming changes.

This half-day online session will prepare you for what's ahead by covering the latest developments in leasehold reform, EPC proposals and their impact on service charges, rent reviews, and alterations, as well as major Supreme Court changes on squatters' rights. You'll also explore updates on commercial lease renewals, deposits and drop-dead dates in conditional contracts, overage and lender priorities, SDLT reclaims, general case law trends, and what the future may hold for commonhold. Stay informed, anticipate challenges, and ensure your practice is ready for the next wave of change.

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## All About Alphabet Shares

with Jackie Sheldon

Online, 30th April, 1.00pm - 2.30pm



This online course will provide an understanding surrounding share classes (including a discussion of different types of shares and an appreciation of class rights). It will practically identify how to create a different class of share and provide a step-by-step guide to follow.

This online course will cover the following:

- Analysis of different classes of shares and examples of methods to draft share particulars
- Extracts from real life articles of association showing how different share classes may be used (and appreciation of why Alphabet Shares may be utilised in practice)
- Case law on alphabet shares
- Practical process to create different classes
- Variation of class rights

**This course is appropriate for paralegals, junior solicitors, accountants or company secretaries that are involved in advising on share capital.**

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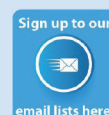
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# Testing for ketamine and other drugs in care proceedings



Forensic Testing Service

The use of [ketamine](#) is on the rise in the UK, especially among [young people](#). Media reports have highlighted the drug's devastating impact on mental and physical health, such as irreversible damage to the bladder.

While we lack data about how widespread use of ketamine is in Merseyside, Liverpool city councillors and local drug charities have indicated it is a growing problem.

Public concern about ketamine and other drugs have also brought forensic testing into focus. In the family courts, forensic toxicology plays a vital role in determining patterns of drug misuse.

However, not all tests are created equal. A recent case that FTS was involved in highlights this perfectly, when a court was almost misled about results.

## When urine testing falls short

In this case, urine testing for ketamine had been performed for a parent and had come back negative. This urine test was a presumptive test, a form of [screening testing](#) for sweat, saliva and urine frequently used by employers, prisons and for court cases because it is quick and cheap.

Questioned in court about how long urine tests can detect drugs for, a rehabilitation centre worker stated that the ketamine urine screening test covered a 14-day period.

FTS' review of the testing revealed a different story. The urine test, which had been outsourced, gave limited information.

FTS reviewed documentation for the test from the outsourced lab, which revealed a detection window of only 1 to 3 days. The negative result and case worker testimony had been taken at face value, potentially overstating the evidence and misleading the courts.

## The value of hair strand analysis

At FTS, we believe that care proceedings

deserve the most rigorous and reliable evidence possible.

This is why we specialise in confirmatory hair testing, which provides a long term, verifiable record of someone's drug use over weeks and months, not just days. In this case, our hair strand analysis revealed a pattern of ongoing ketamine use that the urine testing missed.

Hair testing is a highly accurate method for detecting ketamine and its metabolites, and because FTS interprets all findings in the context of the case, our expert reports provide the court with evidence that is "beyond a reasonable doubt." FTS can also provide expert witnesses to explain results in court.

This case is a powerful reminder that relying on imprecise information from non-experts can have consequences in family court proceedings. British law clearly states that hair strand analysis is to be treated not as a binary "yes or no" test, but as a form of expert opinion evidence.

An expert before the court must explain the testing process, record the results, clearly explain their possible significance, and fully and faithfully report all findings.

FTS boasts the most accreditations on the market for hair strand testing. We run our own UKAS-accredited testing laboratory, and our expert reports are specifically designed to meet the high standards of the family courts.

By providing a full forensic investigation and contextualising all findings, we ensure that the courts are equipped with precise, reliable data needed to make informed safeguarding decisions.

## How FTS can help with testing for new drugs

Ketamine isn't the only drug of concern in Merseyside. Spice and Monkey Dust are just two of the newer synthetic drugs that have emerged in recent years. News reports

have highlighted vapes circulating that are laced with Spice, showing many people are not aware of the drugs they are taking, or indeed that they are even consuming drugs.

This also poses a challenge to local authorities and solicitors when it comes to ordering the right drug test. Drugs are constantly evolving, with newly modified versions being introduced regularly.

Courts are still requesting tests for compounds that are no longer in circulation, while some laboratories are still screening for synthetic cannabinoids that have not been seen in the UK for over 10 years. At the same time, they lack the capacity to screen for the drugs on the streets now.

## Getting a fuller picture of drug use

For public law proceedings, where costs and delays need to be kept to a minimum, it's a waste of public funds to request tests for obsolete drugs. FTS is the industry leader in detecting new and emerging drugs. With one of the largest drug panels in the UK, we can test for a much wider range of substances, ensuring novel street drugs aren't missed.

We lead the way on testing synthetic cannabinoids like Spice and we are the only company in the UK testing for the synthetic cannabinoid ADB Butinaca, currently one of the most used in the UK. FTS is also one of the few providers testing for MDPHP, the active ingredient in Monkey Dust.

We constantly monitor drug trends and develop new methods for testing novel substances. This way we can ensure the family courts can detect the right drugs and are empowered with the facts to make critical safeguarding decisions.

Do you have questions about testing for ketamine or other drugs? Speak to our team about our expert services on 01924 480 272 or email [expert@forensic-testing.co.uk](mailto:expert@forensic-testing.co.uk). Website: [Hair Strand Drug & Alcohol Testing for Court Proceedings | FTS](#)





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