

Liverpool Law



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



The Liverpool Legal Careers Open Evening:

Welcoming the next generation
of legal professionals - p.26





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March 2026

CONTENTS

DEADLINES



4	The latest from the Editor, Jennifer Powell
5	From the President
6	LLS Meetings & events
6	Consultation Papers
7	Director's interview: Andrew Ormrod
8	Routes into the law
9	Interest on Lawyers' Client Accounts Scheme
9	Regional Salary Thresholds and Skilled Worker Visas
10	Duo strengthen team at Jackson Lees Group
11	DWF's UK corporate team advises on 148 deals worth £5.84bn in 2025
14	Fletchers Solicitors strengthens Clinical Negligence leadership
15	Donna Scully shares vision for an inclusive insurance culture
15	Complex Law continues expansion
16	Weightmans reappointed to Torus multi- lot legal panel
17	DWF successfully advises Dairy UK
18	Brabners delivers fourth consecutive year of dealmaking growth
19	Legal Aid Agency Cyber-Attack: Parliamentary Responses
19	Sub-Committee News
21	MJLD
22	Dedicated partners can help you reap the rich apprenticeship harvest
23	Higher Rights of Audience Training Expands Across the North West
24	A single vision of fair compensation across the housing sector
25	Merseyside First-Time Buyers on the Rise, Says Local Conveyancing Expert
26	Liverpool Legal Careers Open Evening
29	Give to gain: female leadership from one generation to the next
30	International Women's Day in law and the role of ESG
32	Vauxhall Law Centre
34	Regulation Update
36	Charity Spotlight: Yellow House
38	Personal liability under s.71(3) of the Solicitors Act 1974
40	The importance of trusts in modern financial planning
42	LEAP Estates releases 2026 Private Client Industry Report on Wills and Estate Planning Trends
44	Liverpool Law Society Training Courses
48	Social Media Highlights

April 2026 edition: Friday, 20.03.26
 May 2026 edition: Tuesday, 21.04.26
 June 2026 edition: Friday, 22.05.26
 July 2026 edition: Monday, 22.06.26
 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

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

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Editorial Committee Dates 2026

Meetings start at 01.00 pm.
unless otherwise noted.

- Tuesday 17th March
- Wednesday 15th April
- Tuesday 19th May
- Tuesday 16th June
- Tuesday 21st July
- No August Meeting
- Tuesday 15th September
- Tuesday 20th October
- Tuesday 17th November

Welcome to the March edition of Liverpool Law



Half term is over and I feel like I'm back at work for the rest! I hope you all managed to have a more peaceful time off. The sun is finally starting to break through after a record number of continuous rainy days in the UK, hopefully spring is starting to arrive. Rather frustratingly the Mazur appeal is happening as at the time of writing we are on day 3. More may be known by the time we publish so please do send in your articles to us and we can include in the magazine. It has been an eventful time to say the least but hopefully this Appeal will draw a line under it all and provide reassurance for our Members.

The focus of this months magazine seems to be on bringing on the next generation of lawyers and mentoring, with this being a particular emphasis for International Women's Day. There was a Careers Open evening arranged with LLS and Fletchers which we have featured on our front page and LLS' Pathways to the Profession event is also detailed, so please do pass on to anyone interested in embarking a career in law to attend.

I've mentioned before how lucky I was in my career to have a wonderful mentor in past President **Charlie Jones**, who remains one of my very good friends today. It was a chance meeting at a legal event where I met Charlie rather than a formal arrangement but any chance you can get to mentor someone I would encourage. And mentorship doesn't only apply to juniors, during my career move I was given an opportunity by Partner **Sian Evans** and then paired with my lovely colleague **Jenny Woods**, both of whom I'm pleased to say have an articles featured this month. Both helped me navigate a new area of law and gave encouragement and Jen remains my daily listening ear! So let's raise each other up and strengthen our legal community together.

We have the MJLD v LLS quiz on 26 March 2026 which is a great opportunity for less formal discussion with junior members of the legal profession and imparting some words of wisdom - plus a healthy dose of competition! So sign up if you haven't already and as always send in your pictures for us to include in the magazine and tag us in your social media posts to include in our highlights.

Many thanks

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

Welcome to new members

We would like to give a warm welcome to our new members who were approved for membership at February's General Committee meeting. There were 39 individuals from the following organisations:

- 7 Harrington Street Chambers
- Brabners
- Clyde & Co
- Complex Law
- County Cost Consultants
- Hall Brown Family Law
- Hill Dickinson
- Hilton Spence Law
- In-House Legal Solutions
- Jackson Lees Group
- MSB Solicitors
- United Utilities Plc

Liverpool Law Society's membership now exceeds 2,385 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

Supporting the Next Generation: A Shared Responsibility and Opportunity

As President of Liverpool Law Society, I have had the recent opportunities to meet many newly qualified lawyers and law students from across the region. I had the privilege of attending our NQ evening with **Mr Rebello OBE** HM Coroner for Merseyside. Then I was invited to speak at a law Fair for third year university students arranged by Fletcher's Solicitors, supported by Liverpool Law Society. Liverpool Law Society works closely with universities, education providers and our member firms to offer opportunities to develop the careers of our law students, trainees, paralegals, and apprentices; providing opportunities for learning and experience.

As solicitors across Liverpool, we are acutely aware that entry into our profession can feel daunting. The pathway is demanding, competitive and, at times, difficult to navigate—particularly for those without established networks within the legal community. If we are committed to a profession that is diverse, resilient and truly reflective of the communities we serve, then supporting students and aspiring solicitors must be a shared priority for Liverpool law firms of all sizes.

There are many practical and meaningful ways firms can assist. Structured work experience placements, open days and insight evenings help demystify legal practice and showcase the breadth of opportunity within our city's vibrant legal sector. Mentoring—whether formal programmes or informal partnerships—can be transformative, offering guidance on qualification routes, applications and the realities of practice. Workshops on advocacy, ethics and commercial awareness, delivered in collaboration with local schools and universities, further equip students with essential skills and confidence.

Liverpool Law Society is proud to support this work through our Pathways to Law programme, which brings together law firms, schools, colleges and universities to widen access and create clearer routes into the profession. By working collaboratively, we can ensure that talented students across the Liverpool City Region are aware of the opportunities available and feel empowered to pursue them.

Importantly, meaningful engagement need not be resource-intensive. A week's placement, a CV clinic, participation in a careers panel or hosting a student visit can have lasting



impact. For many young people—particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds—such experiences provide not only practical insight but also belief.

The benefits to firms are considerable. Early engagement enables practices to identify and nurture emerging talent, build sustainable recruitment pipelines and strengthen community ties. Students bring fresh perspectives, digital fluency and intellectual curiosity—qualities that enrich our teams and enhance client service.

By investing in the next generation through initiatives such as Pathways to Law, Liverpool law firms are not only supporting individual careers but safeguarding the strength, diversity and future of our profession.

Sarah Mansfield

President

president@liverpoollawsociety.org.uk

LLS Meetings & events – March 2026

Start Time	Meeting/Event
10/03/2026 12:30	General Committee
12/03/2026 12:00	Joint TLS/LLS Industrial Strategy Roundtable – by invitation only
12/03/2026 15:00	TLS event at LJMU to discuss a career in law (VP speaking on panel)
12/03/2026 16:00	Family Business Sub-Committee
12/03/2026 18:00	Solicitor judges' joint event with TLS (VP on panel)
13/03/2026 13:00	Directors' Meeting with local MPs
17/03/2026 13:00	Editorial Sub-Committee
18/03/2026 13:00	Civil Litigation Sub-Committee
19/03/2026 13:00	Future Planning Sub-Committee
19/03/2026 16:00	Criminal Practice Sub-Committee
24/03/2026 12:30	Finance & Policy Sub-Committee
25/03/2026 16:00	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee
26/03/2026 12:00	Hybrid Joint V Meeting (hosted by Leeds)
14/04/2026 12:30	General Committee

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

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

Consultation Papers & Call for Evidence 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

Committee	Consultation Paper title	Closing date
All Committees	Interest on Lawyers' Client Accounts Scheme consultation - Ministry of Justice - Citizen Space	09/03/26
Non-Contentious Business	Enhanced protections for homeowners on freehold estates	12/03/26
Civil Litigation & Criminal Practice	Housing offences sentencing guidelines	09/04/26

Director's interview: Andrew Ormrod



Andrew Ormrod

Andrew Ormrod, a Senior Associate family solicitor and Resolution Accredited specialist at Slater and Gordon, has been elected to serve as a Director of the Liverpool Law Society for the 2025–2026 term.

Originally born in Heywood, Manchester, Andrew relocated to Lytham St Annes on the Fylde Coast at the age of eight, where he attended Lytham St Annes High School. Following the completion of his A-levels, he spent two years gaining diverse work experience in various roles, including working for Premium Bonds in Blackpool and as a supervisor in a local supermarket. It was during this period that he decided it was time to start looking for a career.

His interest in the legal profession was sparked during his youth by a fondness for courtroom dramas such as *A Few Good Men* and *A Time to Kill*. He was drawn to the intellectual challenge of litigating a case and the profound impact a solicitor can make on a client's life by securing a favourable outcome. This desire to advocate for others led him to Liverpool John Moores University in 1996 to study law, and he has remained a dedicated member of the Liverpool community ever since.

After graduating with his LLB, Andrew initially worked as a residential care officer in children's homes. Although his

primary ambition was always to practice law, he prioritised earning a living while gaining invaluable life experience. This role involved supporting children under care orders, providing him with a unique perspective on the challenges facing young people. In 2004, he secured a training contract with Goodmans Solicitors. Although entering the legal field took longer than the traditional route due to finding alternative employment before and immediately after his law degree, his extensive experience with local youth services proved to be a significant asset. He quickly discovered a passion for family law, finding it to be a fast-paced, challenging, and remarkably varied discipline. During this demanding period, he continued his residential care work part-time at weekends while completing his Legal Practice Course during Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and working full time as a trainee with Goodmans throughout the week, until qualification in 2007.

When Goodmans disbanded in 2009, the firm split into three separate entities. One of these absorbed the entire family department and rebranded as Heaney Watson, which became a niche family law firm. Andrew's career progressed rapidly within the firm, where he rose from trainee to solicitor, to assistant solicitor, and eventually an associate. His dedication and expertise culminated in his appointment as a Director of Heaney Watson. Following the firm's closure in 2017, he joined Brodie Jackson Canter. His successful tenure there saw him promoted to Associate Director and subsequently Deputy Head of Department.

After more than seven years with Brodie Jackson Canter, Andrew joined his current firm, Slater and Gordon, in late 2024. Throughout his career, he has handled all facets of family law, including public law, divorce, matrimonial finance, children's matters, and cohabitee disputes. However, upon joining Slater and Gordon, he chose to specialise in privately funded financial remedy work.

Working alongside **Jenny Brunt**, the head of practice for the family team, Andrew is focused on his professional growth. While Jenny is based on the Wirral, Andrew operates out of the Liverpool office with the specific goal of expanding the family law presence there and ensuring the department's long-term success.

His involvement with the Liverpool Law Society is a relatively recent but significant development, following his election as Director in November. Having previously worked with past presidents such as **Chris Topping** and **Andrew Holroyd**, he gained a deep insight into the Society's vital role within the legal community. He hopes to contribute his expertise to the Society while simultaneously bringing valuable perspectives back to his firm. As a Director, Andrew is keen to highlight the Society's work and currently sits on the Family Committee. He is also eager to join the Finance and Policy Committee and remains open to suggestions from members regarding how he can best represent their interests, particularly from the perspective of a national firm like Slater and Gordon.

Outside of his professional life, Andrew is a devoted father to his two daughters, fifteen-year-old **Maisie** and fourteen-year-old **Nancy**. He spends much of his spare time transporting them to various Irish dancing competitions and **Maisie** is currently preparing to compete in the All-Ireland Championships. A staunch supporter of Everton Football Club, he holds a season ticket, along with his daughters and attends most home matches. Furthermore, he has fostered a sense of community within Slater and Gordon by establishing a midweek five-a-side football session. This initiative has been well-received, providing colleagues from various departments with an opportunity to socialise and build relationships outside the office environment.

We wish Andrew every success in his new role as Director.

Routes into the law: Cara O'Neill



Cara O'Neill

Cara O'Neill, a Paralegal with Broudie Jackson Canter Solicitors, has been elected to serve as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Representative on the MJLD Committee for the 2025–2026 year.

Cara spent her early years in Alberta. Her father is Canadian and her mother is Irish, and her childhood in Canada exposed her to a range of activities that she would not have encountered had she grown up in the United Kingdom. She learned to swim and skate at a young age and spent time camping in the wilderness, experiences that were readily available in the Canadian environment. In addition, her mother encouraged her to participate in Irish dancing, wishing her to retain a connection to her Irish heritage.

When Cara was fifteen, her family moved to the North of Ireland. The move took place shortly before she was due to sit her GCSEs, and she remained there to complete both her GCSEs and her A Levels. During her A Levels at Limavady Grammar School, she realised that she wanted a career that involved helping people, although she had not yet identified a specific profession. She studied A Level Politics, which she particularly enjoyed, and

this interest led her to consider a career in law.

Cara went on to study Law at Edge Hill University. Her younger sister has Down Syndrome, and she undertook work experience at her sister's SEND school. She also volunteered with her sister's Down Syndrome group. These experiences gave her a strong interest in advocacy and in supporting individuals who may not always be able to speak up for themselves. As a result, she developed a particular interest in family law, where she felt she could work to protect vulnerable people.

After completing her Law degree, Cara worked for Haven Holidays during the summer months while applying for legal positions. She later secured a role with Express Solicitors in Manchester. The firm placed emphasis on training and education, providing a sixweek programme covering a wide range of legal areas before assigning her to a specific department. Cara remained with Express Solicitors for over a year, commuting daily from Liverpool and working in personal injury law. Although she gained valuable experience, personal injury was not her preferred area of practice, as she wished to work in family law and also to be based in Liverpool. This led to her successful application for a position with Broudie Jackson Canter (also known as Jackson Lees Group). Cara feels that her values, including her wish to make a difference, were aligned with those of her new firm.

In her current role, Cara is a Paralegal in the family team and assists two solicitors. Her responsibilities include managing new enquiries as they are received, advising clients by telephone, speaking with third parties, taking court notes and attending client appointments. She is keen to qualify in family law and

hopes to progress through the SQE route. Her recent work has involved cases concerning parents, and she has an interest in representing children directly in the future.

Cara joined MJLD in September of last year and was subsequently elected as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Representative. She has been actively involved in the organisation, meeting members from a range of firms and forming new professional connections. She is currently organising a Neurodiversity event for March, focusing on how the legal profession can support neurodiverse colleagues. Her aims as EDI Representative include supporting anyone who requires assistance and encouraging discussion of topics that are not always addressed within the legal sector. Events such as the Neurodiversity event are intended to bring people together and to highlight ways in which colleagues can support one another. Cara is also due to return to her former university in March to take part in a Women's Day panel event.

Outside her professional responsibilities, Cara undertakes a significant amount of voluntary work. She continues to volunteer with her sister's Down Syndrome group and teaches children how to swim. She has also begun volunteering with Age UK, taking part in their befriending service by speaking on the telephone with elderly individuals who may be lonely or vulnerable. Within her firm, she is a member of the Social and Diversity Committee and attends careers fairs and school visits to speak to pupils who may not previously have been aware of the opportunities available within the legal profession.

We wish Cara every success in her future career.

Interest on Lawyers' Client Accounts Scheme consultation extended – responses encouraged

The Ministry of Justice has **extended the deadline for submissions** to their consultation on the proposed **Interest on Lawyers' Client Accounts (ILCA) Scheme**. The new deadline date is now **9 March 2026**.

If you haven't already done so, please do submit a response to this consultation, and encourage as many of your colleagues to do so too.

You can visit our News website for further information on this consultation paper [here](#).

Regional Salary Thresholds and Skilled Worker Visas: National Simplicity vs Regional Reality

As mentioned in last months' edition, a number of written questions were submitted by the Directors of Liverpool Law Society to Parliament through Marie Rimmer MP. One of those questions raised the issue of regional bandings in respect of the base minimum salary thresholds and occupation-specific going rates for businesses employing people with skilled worker visas.

In his response, **Mike Tapp MP** (Under-Secretary of State in the Home Office), confirmed there was no plan to introduce varying salary requirements based on location, the intention being to have a single immigration system operating consistently across the UK.

The rationale given in the response included that *"having a national salary limit keeps the Skilled Worker immigration route simple to operate and allows for movement between locations for larger companies. [...] The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published a review of Skilled Worker salary requirements on 17 December, and repeated a recommendations they have made many times previously, that salary thresholds should be set at a UK-wide level: "We continue to believe that 'regional salary thresholds also bring more complexity and may be harder to enforce within the*

migration system, particularly as the UK is geographically small, making it is easy to live in one region and work in another. We also do not want to institutionalise some parts of the UK as 'lower wage'. Furthermore, as the MAC has shown previously, wages vary far more within regions than across them so even if thresholds were set at a regional level there would still be many areas of the UK that would struggle to meet them."

It was also specified that the intention of the current general salary threshold for Skilled Worker applicants at £41,700 was to ensure resident workers' wages are not undercut, and overseas workers are not exploited through artificially low pay.

The absence of regional flexibility has understandably prompted concern among employers across the North West. **Lauren Cannon**, of the In-House Lawyers' Sub-Committee, comments: *"This is unwelcome news for businesses and employers in the Liverpool City Region and beyond in the North West, where salary rates are typically lower compared to London and the South East, including in the legal industry. This pushes talented workers from outside of the UK away from the North West and into regions of the UK where higher minimum salary requirements are easily met. Businesses based in the North West lose competitiveness*

compared to London based and national based businesses and is disappointing given Liverpool's hub for graduate talent. With our four universities that accept a large number of overseas students each year, they may be pushed into employment away from their university location."

Her remarks capture the concern that uniform national thresholds could unintentionally advantage London and the South East, where prevailing salaries are typically higher - with cities such as Liverpool then grappling with issues of graduate retention, workforce distribution, and long-term regional growth.

The emphasis on administrative simplicity is understandable, but the wider question highlighted by the Government's response is whether uniformity necessarily produces equitable outcomes across a geographically and economically diverse country.

Liverpool Law Society continues to engage constructively with local MPs and Councillors to ensure that the perspectives of regional legal communities remain part of national policy discussions.

Laura Spence
Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Jannina gains promotion as duo strengthen team at Jackson Lees Group



Laura Beattie, Jannina Barker and Catherine McCrindle

A lawyer who joined her firm as a secretary has been promoted to senior associate and team leader in its wills, trusts and probate department, which has welcomed two new solicitors to further strengthen its offering.

Jannina Barker's promotion at Jackson Lees Group comes alongside the arrival of Laura Beattie and Catherine McCrindle.

Jannina began as a secretary in 2009 at the firm's forerunner Lees Solicitors, then trained as a paralegal. After a spell at Bell Lamb & Joynson Solicitors, she returned in 2021 and became a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX).

She advises clients on wills, lasting powers of attorney, probate and inheritance tax planning matters.

Laura has joined Jackson Lees Group from Kennan Doyle Solicitors and is based in the Liverpool office. Catherine has moved from McHale & Co Solicitors and is based in the Hoylake office.

John-Paul Dennis, divisional director of the private client division which includes the wills, trusts and probate department,

said: "Jannina has gone from strength to strength, both as a fantastic lawyer and team leader.

"Her promotion is brilliant recognition for her amazing hard work. It's also a great example of people growing their careers with us, showing that, whatever their route into the law, the way we can make a positive difference for our clients is all the same.

"Laura and Catherine join us at an exciting time, as we are seeing a significant increase in demand for private client advice.

"In line with this growth in demand we are expanding our team, and the excellent experience which Laura and Catherine bring will further enhance our offering."

Jackson Lees Group is a full-service practice which comprises Jackson Lees, Broudie Jackson Canter and Farrington Law. The group employs 240 people across offices in Liverpool, Wirral and Southport.

It is part of MAPD Group, which was founded by Brian Cullen and Joanna Kingston-Davies in 2020 to power the growth of local law firms nationally

through acquisition. The initials stand for Making a Positive Difference.

Jannina said: "I'm passionate about my work and supporting my clients in what can often be difficult and sensitive matters.

"I look forward to continuing to support our clients and the department as we grow and develop the team and encourage a new generation of lawyers."

Laura said: "I'm thrilled to join a firm where I can continue to make a positive difference to clients' lives. Seeing clients and building up a rapport with them, being the face they trust, is one of the best parts of the job.

"I'm excited for what lies ahead, and for the opportunity to enhance my knowledge from the many experienced colleagues around me."

Catherine said: "I'm delighted to join a team with such a wealth of experience at a firm which promotes such positive values. Being able to provide meaningful support and make a real difference to clients and their families is incredibly rewarding, and I am excited for the future at Jackson Lees."

DWF's UK corporate team advises on 148 deals worth £5.84bn in 2025



Frank Shephard

DWF has advised on over 150 corporate deals in 2025, with a combined deal value of over £6 billion, reflecting another strong year for the firm's UK & Ireland corporate team.

Throughout 2025, DWF's corporate team remained focused on its core sectors, advising clients on a broad

range of complex, high-value and strategically significant transactions globally. Activity was strongest in technology, followed by real estate and financial services, with continued momentum across energy and industrials and consumer. The team's cornerstone private equity and venture capital deals continued supporting clients on investment processes from seed capital and development capital through to ultimate exit.

In the technology and telecoms space, the team advised Daisy Communications Holdings Limited in relation to its merger with Virgin Media O2, creating a £1.4 billion turnover business-to-business communications group and one of the UK's most significant telecoms transactions of the year.

The team also advised a number of financial services and private equity clients, including Tatton Asset Management plc and Inflexion on an investment into a newly established IFA consolidator backed by £115 million of funding, Elyssian Capital on its investment into IMS Euro Group Ltd, and Horizon Capital on its disposal of Ascent ai.

Further highlights included advising Foresight Group LLP on its venture capital investment into Singapore-based KYC technology company Asiaverify, Healthcare Ireland's acquisition of Kathryn Homes Limited from Runwood Limited, the shareholders of Digital Enforcement Concepts on its sale to US-based IP House, and Furrows Limited on a complex group reorganisation and subsequent sale to an Employee Ownership Trust.

In Scotland, DWF assisted the Scottish National Investment Bank with eight investment deals, . These transactions aligned with the Bank's objectives, promoting net zero

initiatives and innovation, and provided patient capital to businesses across Scotland.

Frank Shephard, global head of corporate at DWF, commented: "2025 was a strong year for our corporate team, with sustained activity across our core sectors and continued demand for high-quality transactional advice. We have remained committed to delivering complex and strategically important advice to our clients in our chosen locations with the support of our international footprint and specialists in our commercial and regulatory, and real estate teams.

"Our focus on key markets such as TMT, consumer, energy, insurance and financial services have been crucial to maintaining momentum in a challenging market. As we move into 2026, we remain optimistic about opportunities across private equity, venture capital and strategic M&A, as investors continue to seek growth and long-term value."



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ADILA

Annual Dinner featuring Legal Awards

Liverpool Law Society's 2026
Annual Dinner and Legal Awards
will take place on Thursday, 12th November
at the Rum Warehouse, Liverpool

Liverpool City Region's lawyers are invited to come together to celebrate being part of a progressive and dynamic legal community.

Members and non-members can attend the Dinner.

Nominations for the 2026 Legal Awards will open in early July and close early September. Details on the categories appear opposite.

Bookings now open

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The Legal Awards are back for 2026!

Open to members of Liverpool Law Society

Categories

- Outstanding Team Award - Dispute Resolution & Litigation
- Outstanding Team Award - Non-Contentious
- Outstanding Team Award - Family Law
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Award
- Rising Star Award
- Outstanding Lawyer Award
- Law Firm Award (1-49 Employees)
- Law Firm Award (50+ Employees)

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

The winners of the 2026 Legal Awards will be revealed at a glittering black-tie ceremony during the Annual Dinner on Thursday, 12th November 2026.

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

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Fletchers Solicitors strengthens Clinical Negligence leadership with two Director promotions



Alison Flaherty

Fletchers Solicitors has announced the appointment of Alison Flaherty and Phil Barnes as Directors within its Clinical Negligence practice, further strengthening the firm's senior leadership team following a period of significant growth.

Alison Flaherty is a long-standing senior leader at Fletchers and leads specialist teams handling complex spinal, brain injury and amputation claims. She has played a central role in shaping the firm's approach to supporting seriously injured clients and their families, consistently delivering high-quality outcomes across some of the most challenging clinical negligence cases.

In addition to her casework leadership, Alison leads Fletchers' collaborative work with NHS Resolution and its Solicitor Panel, developing constructive, solutions-focused relationships aimed at achieving fair and timely outcomes for claimants. Her appointment formally recognises her contribution to the development, reputation and strategic direction of the Clinical Negligence practice.

Phil Barnes brings more than 25 years' experience representing patients and families affected by serious injury. He is widely respected within the sector for his work on complex, high-value birth injury, brain injury and spinal injury claims, and is known for his calm, strategic approach and unwavering focus on client care.

Following Fletchers' acquisition of the Shoosmiths Serious



Phil Barnes

Injury team earlier this year, Phil has played a key role in integrating colleagues across Birmingham, Northampton and Reading, supporting the creation of a cohesive, nationally connected practice.

His appointment reflects his contribution to strengthening the firm's specialist capabilities and enhancing support for both clients and colleagues across the UK.

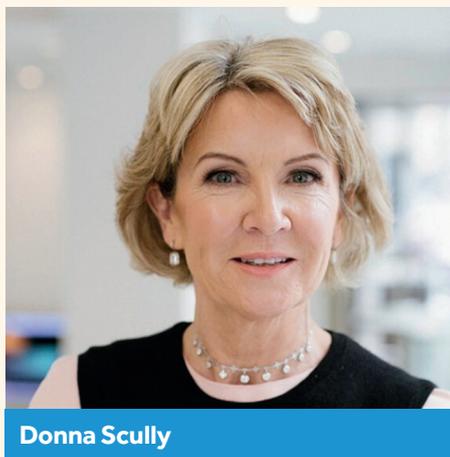
Commenting on the appointments, Peter Rigby, Managing Director of Clinical Negligence at Fletchers, said: "Alison and Phil are exceptional leaders and highly respected lawyers whose experience, judgement and values reflect the very best of our Clinical Negligence practice."

"Alison's strategic leadership and collaborative approach, alongside Phil's deep expertise and ability to bring teams together, make them ideally placed to help guide the practice through its next phase of development."

"These appointments recognise the significant contribution both have made and will continue to make for our clients, colleagues and the wider firm."

The promotions underline Fletchers' ongoing investment in senior leadership and specialist expertise within its Clinical Negligence practice and follow the promotion of Michelle Heyes and Gillian Lakes at the end of 2025 to Directors within Fletchers' serious injury division.

Donna Scully shares vision for an inclusive insurance culture



Donna Scully

Carpenters Group is proud to highlight insights from our Owner and Director, Donna Scully, following her appearance

at Insurance Times' Destination Insurance event last week. Donna spoke on the importance of building a culture within the insurance profession that attracts and retains the very best talent.

In her follow-up article, *How Insurance is Building a Culture Where Everyone Can Thrive*, Donna explores how the sector can continue to strengthen its foundations of inclusion and opportunity. She emphasises the role of leadership in removing barriers, the value of career pathways and development programmes, and the need for transparency around progression and pay.

Donna writes:

"There's so much to be proud of already; a sector with heart, leaders who care, and a strong commitment to talent and opportunity. By sharing more openly, widening our focus and continuing to invest in people and partnerships, we can set an even stronger benchmark."

The article also calls for greater focus on social mobility, neurodiversity, and intersectionality, alongside practical steps such as mentoring, sponsorship, and employee-led groups to embed diversity, equity and inclusion into everyday culture.

Read the full article [here](#)

Complex Law continues expansion



Complex Law continues to consolidate its position as a growing force within the Liverpool legal market following a period of sustained expansion and investment.

With a history in the UK legal sector spanning more than 30 years, the firm entered a new phase of growth in 2023 after coming under the leadership of Liverpool-based legal and commercial professionals. This transition prompted a full rebrand, repositioning Complex Law as a modern, technology-led practice with a strong focus on consumer protection.

Over the past 18 months, the firm has grown from two people to a team of

21, supported by five office moves to accommodate its expanding workforce. Growth has been driven in part by the strategic use of technology and artificial intelligence, improving efficiency across document review, data analysis, and case management, and enabling fee earners to focus on complex matters including property disputes, fraud, and professional negligence.

Complex Law places a strong emphasis on talent and culture, fostering a collaborative and transparent working environment. The firm's commitment to excellence has been recognised by Legal 500, with clients highlighting its strengths in lawyer and team quality, billing and efficiency, and

sector knowledge. This focus on client satisfaction is further reflected in the firm's Lexcel accreditation and over 5,000 five-star reviews recorded on Trustpilot, demonstrating the trust and confidence clients place in its services.

Managing partner, **Thomas Blanchfield** said:

"I'm incredibly proud of the momentum we've built over the last 18 months. We've grown from a team of two to 21 people, and we're still moving quickly. Securing additional office space for a further 16 colleagues is a major milestone for us, and a transformative step for our Liverpool base of operations."

"Liverpool is a city we have close ties to, and we're committed to playing our part in its continued growth and development. By making strategic yet ambitious appointments, we're demonstrating that we're a thriving business with long-term intent: to keep investing in talent, building capability, and helping make Liverpool, and the complex law sector more broadly, a place where both junior and experienced people genuinely want to join and build their careers."

Weightmans reappointed to Torus multi-lot legal panel

The firm will be a key partner in the growth strategy of the North West's largest social housing provider



Sian Evans



Jen Hankinson



Steve Coffey

Weightmans has been reappointed as a supplier to a new four-year legal panel by the North West's largest social housing provider, Torus.

As part of its continued expansion, the panel award will see Weightmans support Torus with a wider range of legal solutions and services including development, sales and property transactions. The Weightmans' team will continue to deliver existing HR and employment support and solutions.

Torus procured the framework - worth £6.48 million - last year, marking its first major procurement exercise conducted under the Procurement Act 2023. The four-year framework, which runs from 2026 to 2030, will support Torus' ongoing development, corporate and housing management activities by providing access to specialist external legal expertise, in addition to its in-house legal team.

Spanning five lots, it expands on a previous framework to support Torus' increasing needs as it embarks on a substantial growth strategy that will see a significant uplift in the number of new homes it builds beyond the 1,000 a year it currently delivers.

[Jen Hankinson](#), Partner at Weightmans, said:

"We are delighted to have been reappointed to the Torus panel to provide this crucial legal work. We look forward to working alongside Torus as it takes the next steps in furthering its vision of growing stronger communities, improving lives and supporting the development of economically vibrant communities and independent lives."

"As part of Weightmans' strategic growth for our specialist social housing team, Torus is exactly the type of exciting client we want to continue to support as a strategic partner. We look forward to supporting its ambitions

in making a difference to local communities across the North West."

Steve Coffey, Torus CEO, said:

"Expanding our framework reflects the ambition of our growth strategy that will require significantly more legal support and expertise."

"The response, quality and quantity of tenders received to the legal framework was excellent with some existing law firms retained and new companies added."

"We are really pleased to welcome everyone on board as they play an intrinsic role as key partners helping us deliver crucial services to our tenants and communities."

Weightmans is an [established partner](#) to the UK's property, housing and built environment sector.

Sian Evans
Weightmans

DWF successfully advises Dairy UK in Supreme Court victory against Oatly



Asima Rana

DWF has advised Dairy UK on its successful defence of a Supreme Court appeal brought by Oatly AB, culminating in a landmark judgment handed down.

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court dismissed Oatly's appeal and confirmed that its trade mark "Post Milk Generation"

was invalid for use in relation to oat-based food and drink products. The Court held that the use of the term "milk" in the mark was prohibited under assimilated EU law governing the use of protected dairy designations.

The appeal centred on the interpretation of Regulation (EU) No. 1308/2013, which protects the use of dairy terms such as "milk", "cheese" and "yogurt". Oatly argued that the word "milk" in the mark was not being used as a "designation" under the Regulation and therefore fell outside the scope of the prohibition. It also contended that, even if the term was caught by the legislation, the trade mark was saved by an exception allowing designations that clearly describe a characteristic quality of a product.

Rejecting those arguments, the Supreme Court held that "designation" has a broad meaning and is not limited to the generic name of a product. The Court confirmed that the prohibition applies where protected dairy terms are used in respect of non-dairy products, even where they are not used as the product's name. The court also found that "Post Milk Generation" did not clearly describe a characteristic quality of oat-based products and therefore does not fall within the statutory exception.

The judgment provides authoritative clarification on the scope of protection afforded to dairy terms in the UK post-Brexit and offers important guidance for brand owners operating in regulated markets, particularly in relation to trade mark registrability, use and enforcement. It confirms that the regulatory regime extends to trade marks and is designed to uphold fair conditions of competition within the agricultural sector.

The DWF team advising Dairy UK was led by Director in the Intellectual Property team, **Asima Rana**, supported by Associate **Jake Slinger** and counsel, **Tom Moody-Stuart KC** of 8 New Square.

Commenting on the judgment, **Asima** said: "The Supreme Court's decision brings welcome clarity and confirms how the relevant regulatory framework is to be applied in practice. Importantly, it provides greater certainty for businesses operating in the food and drink sector."

Judith Bryans, Chief Executive of Dairy UK, added: "This is a significant and welcome judgment for the UK dairy industry. The Supreme Court's decision reinforces the long-established legal protections for dairy terms and ensures that they cannot be used inappropriately in ways that undermine fair competition. We are grateful to DWF and counsel for their expert guidance and support throughout this litigation."

ejm investigations

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Brabners delivers fourth consecutive year of dealmaking growth



Mark Rathbone

Brabners' corporate team has delivered a 16% jump in deal making activity in the past year, as the gross total value of deals that the firm advised on surpassed £900 million.

Despite ongoing headwinds in the UK M&A market during 2025, the leading independent law firm delivered a more than £130 million increase in annual dealmaking values, having advised on more than £940 million-worth of activity across 168 separate deals (188 in 2024). This was driven in part by a number of significant deals with key long-term clients such as William Hare Group and Matcher Technologies Limited.

Recognised as one of the UK's most active dealmakers, the firm's more than 60-strong team supports businesses across the full lifecycle and also provides complementary deal advisory services through its specialist team of corporate finance accountants. It is one of the largest corporate teams in the North and was named Corporate Law Firm of the Year at the Insider North West Dealmaker Awards 2025.

Notable deals and high-growth sectors

This marks the fourth consecutive year of growth for the team – which operates across Brabners' Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire and Leeds offices – as it continues to support

clients through growth, investment, succession and exit. Activity was driven by strong interest in employee ownership, with more than a quarter of deal values (27%) accounted for by transitions to Employee Ownership Trusts. Notable transactions included advising digital marketing agency The SEO Works and training provider Partnership Training Limited on their moves to employee ownership. Share sales and purchases retained the highest proportion of deal value, representing almost £600 million-worth of transactions and showing sustained acquisitive demand from larger corporates.

The team also continued to support clients across a number of high-growth sectors, particularly healthcare, logistics and manufacturing and engineering. In one example, Brabners advised engineering consultancy Omnia Projects on its acquisition by Egis and separately delivered the buy-in management buyout of Associated Polymer Services, a collaborative effort between DSG Chartered Accountants and Brabners' legal and deal advisory teams. The team also advised international clients on high-value, complex infrastructure joint venture projects in Africa and Asia.

2025's successes and dealmaking momentum were supported by ongoing investment in talent. Following the appointment of partner **Dan McCormack** in Leeds at the end of 2024, Brabners made further strategic partner hires during the year – including automotive specialist **Brett Cooper** in Lancashire and tax specialist, **Euri Yoon**. Euri joined the firm to enhance its tax advisory capabilities, further strengthening the value-added services provided by the corporate team, which remains the only UK law firm to offer a dedicated in-house deal advisory function.

Brabners retained its leading market position, achieving a top-tier ranking in The Legal 500 2025 for corporate and commercial matters, and was commended in the 'company and commercial' category of The Times Best Law Firms 2026. Head

of corporate, Mark Rathbone, has also been nominated for Corporate Lawyer of the Year in the Legal 500 Northern Powerhouse Awards.

The corporate team's continued success remains a key growth driver for the firm, which surpassed £60m in revenue in the trading year ending April 2025. Brabners recorded pre-tax profits of £20.3m – compared to £18.1m in 2024 – marking its eighth consecutive year of profitable growth.

Mark Rathbone, partner and head of corporate at Brabners, said:

"It's been yet another strong year for our team, exceeding £900m in deal value, driven by an increasing number of high-value, complex mandates and a continued focus on supporting clients through the full lifecycle of their business. Despite continued market headwinds, the appetite to transact remained relatively resilient. We have been pleased to see stronger activity return in Q4, which hopefully bodes well for 2026.

"We've supported a diverse range of clients – from owner-managed businesses to international groups – and have seen particular growth in employee ownership, cross-border M&A and complex joint ventures and work in sectors like engineering, logistics, healthcare and technology. Deal readiness is ever more critical – it's clear that those businesses which invest early in preparation are best placed to take advantage of opportunities in what remains a selective market.

"As we look to 2026, cautious optimism is returning. Interest rates are easing, buyer confidence is improving and our pipeline reflects that momentum. With our full-service capability and national reach, we're well placed to help clients navigate the next phase, and we look forward to building on that in the year ahead."

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

Legal Aid Agency Cyber-Attack: Parliamentary Responses



Laura Spence

Members will recall that Liverpool Law Society liaised with Marie Rimmer MP to submit written parliamentary questions surrounding the cyber-attack last year on the Legal Aid Agency (LAA). The responses received provide important insight into the handling of the incident, including notification procedures, system resilience, provider support and future safeguards.

It was confirmed that the published public notice on the Gov.uk website constituted the entirety of the notification issued to affected individuals. The response acknowledged that there had not been any notification or contact to individuals directly – the rationale being that many stored contact addresses could be outdated, and mass correspondence could itself risk creating a further data breach. As might be expected, the Government declined to disclose the specific method by which unauthorised access was obtained, or the precise technical protections now in place.

One of the most notable confirmations within the response was that no digital disaster recovery plan had been in place prior to the cyber-attack. While business continuity plans existed and were implemented during the disruption, the absence of a formal digital recovery framework has attracted particular attention.

In terms of financial impact on practitioners, the response

acknowledged the constructive approach taken by providers during disruption but confirmed that it does not intend to create a bespoke compensation scheme. **Ian Townley**, Chair of the Society's Access to Justice Committee, remains in dialogue with The Law Society about the prospect of compensation for the many practitioners and firms impacted.

Taken together, and as had been somewhat anticipated, the responses suggest that the incident exposed some gaps in preparedness and highlighted the real importance of robust contingency planning across justice infrastructure. The confirmation that no disaster recovery plan existed prior to the attack is particularly significant.

Liverpool Law Society will continue to monitor developments closely and will keep members informed of any further updates or actions relevant to the profession.

Laura Spence
Parliamentary Liaison Officer,
LLS

Sub-Committee News

The Access to Justice Committee meeting was held on 5th February, the meeting was once again well attended and there were numerous issues to discuss.

A detailed update was provided regarding the Legal Aid Agency, the Cyberattack and the restoration of systems. The issue of compensation to legal aid providers was also discussed together with the response to the written parliamentary question.

The Committee also discussed the current consultation regarding Interest on client money and we were concerned that the proposals completely failed to account for how any funds raised would be dealt with.

The lack of Housing legal aid provision within the City Region was discussed and the Chair referred to the recent meeting with Local Councillors and how this issue was raised with them in the hope that some funding could be obtained to assist in the training of legal aid housing practitioners to alleviate the issue. The Chair has been in contact with Councillor Corbett and is awaiting a response.

The Committee's next meeting will be held in April 2026.

Ian Townley
Chair,
Access to Justice Committee

MJLD

QUIZ

Night

***26 March 2026
@ Bierkeller, Liverpool***

Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division invites you to their quiz night at Bierkeller on 26th March 2026. Prizes will be on offer for the winners and two drink tokens per person & food will be included with your ticket.

Keep your eyes out for tickets as they will be available for purchase on our website on 6 March 2026: <https://www.merseysidejld.com/events-calendar>

This event has been kindly sponsored by
Hundred Court Chambers and HM3 Legal.

***This event is open to both members of Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division
and the Liverpool Law Society.***

MJLD Update



Tija Fitzgerald

I am a paralegal within the Commercial Litigation department at Brabners LLP, also serve as the National Representative on the Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division (MJLD) Committee.

In addition to my professional commitments, I volunteer as an Independent Visitor with NYAS (the National Youth Advocacy Service).

The Role of Independent Visitors through the National Youth Advocacy Service:

NYAS is a leading rightsbased charity that supports children and young people in care across England and Wales, ensuring their voices are heard and their wishes and feelings are represented during important decisions about their lives.

As an Independent Visitor, you are matched with a young person in care and build a longterm, consistent and trusted relationship with them. The role is entirely independent from social services, schools and placement settings; NYAS describes Independent Visitors as trained volunteers who *“befriend and spend time with children in care, creating special memories and becoming someone, they can rely on.”*

I meet with my young person regularly, and together we choose activities that help build their confidence, independence and self-esteem. The heart of the role is simply being a stable, reliable presence, someone who chooses to be there for them, and over time offers continuity that can be difficult to find within the care system.

Volunteering as an Independent Visitor is immensely rewarding and it has deepened my awareness of the social challenges faced by children and young people in care.

MJLD January Social

The MJLD January social was at PINS and was sponsored by G2 Legal. We extend a special thank you to our sponsors G2 Legal. The night involved bowling, darts, pool, plenty of pizza and a healthy dose of competition!

MJLD February Social

MJLD held their February social at City Wine Bar, on 26 February. This was a MJLD bingo night, raising money for Alfie’s Squad. The evening was very kindly sponsored by both MSB Solicitors and St John’s Buildings.

Alfie’s Squad- Supporting children bereaved by suicide

Alfie’s Squad launched in 2023 and is the only support group in the UK for children and young people aged 6-17 who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Alfie’s Squad welcomes up to 50 young members to fun activities in a welcoming space, allowing members to meet others and share their experiences.

Excitingly, Alfie’s Squad has now opened up a second hub, allowing them to reach more individuals and families alike with their support.

There is a significant risk of children and young people bereaved by suicide, struggling with their own mental health in later life, whilst trying to navigate the struggles of every day life. This is why the work that Alfie’s Squad delivers to young people is so imperative.

Tija Fitzgerald,
Paralegal



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FINDING YOUR VOICE IN TODAY’S DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

Dedicated partners can help you reap the rich apprenticeship harvest



Joanne Dalton

The notion of apprenticeships has changed dramatically in recent years. It is now widely recognised that academia need not be the sole route into a professional career, and to counter that, apprenticeships now come in all shapes and sizes and in all careers. Following National Apprenticeship week, MSB Solicitors and the firm's passion for social mobility have embraced this new point of view.

Joanne Dalton is MSB's non-lawyer finance and practice partner. She has worked extensively on bringing apprentices into the practice over the last decade with the support of their partner, Damar Training.

"There was a perception about apprenticeships that they involved exhaustive amounts of paperwork, which

is why so many professional companies and practices shied away from them," says Joanne.

"While this can certainly be the case, working with Damar makes it so much easier for us. They advertise the programmes on their platforms, help us go through the applications from prospective apprentices and then assign coaches to help us with supporting the students throughout the programme," she adds.

With Damar's support, MSB has successfully developed new and existing members of the team through solicitor, customer service and paralegal apprenticeships. MSB also has an IT apprentice with another provider. Dalton is keen to point out that to embark on such programmes with MSB is to start on a job for life with the firm.

"If they begin an apprenticeship in one field but seem like they would be a better fit for another, they can be adjusted. The apprenticeship isn't just an 18-month merry-go-round," she says.

Alumni from the firm's apprenticeship programmes are now thriving, with several working full time in the practice in a way that they would not have been able to do had they nervously applied for a job with MSB at the age of 18.

"We're very proud to work in partnership with MSB on their apprenticeship programmes," says **Kim Powell**, account manager at Damar. *"It's thrilling to see law firms truly embrace apprenticeships, as it can be totally life-changing for the candidate,"* she adds.

Damar Training is also there to be MSB's critical friend when apprentices aren't working as well as they might be and they need a push on to achieve their full potential.

"Coming straight from school into a legal apprenticeship is tough," admits Dalton.

"That said, I think any company that does not take on apprentices is missing the opportunity for someone to excel in the legal profession, while also gaining a qualification alongside their role," she smiles.

"I am extremely proud of every one of our apprentices and the effort they put in. Studying while working can be difficult to juggle, and each of them has managed this brilliantly."

Our apprentice **Heidi Tennant** passed her Legal Administration Apprenticeship with a distinction, and I was delighted to present her with her certificate. Heidi will be moving into our Family team, and her replacement, **Jessica Ngandu**, has already started," she concludes.

Higher Rights of Audience Training Expands Across the North West

Delivered by the UK's Only SRA-Regulated Assessment Provider



Face-to-Face Higher Rights Training Available Across the North West

The University of Law is extending its Higher Rights of Audience (HRA) advocacy training across the North West this Spring, offering practitioners in the region the opportunity to undertake high-quality, face-to-face advocacy training with the UK's sole SRA-regulated provider of the Higher Rights assessment. In addition to our established delivery in Manchester, we are exploring opportunities to schedule further sessions in Liverpool, including hosting programmes at our Liverpool campus, ensuring even greater accessibility for practitioners across the region.

Why Obtain Higher Rights of Audience?

Obtaining Higher Rights of Audience enhances your professional standing, broadens the range of work you can undertake, and supports your long-term career development.

For many solicitors, Higher Rights open the door to appearing in the higher civil and criminal courts, taking greater ownership of cases and developing a more advocacy focused practice.

The training also equips delegates with practical skills that can be applied immediately in day-to-day professional work.

Higher Rights Advocacy Training at The University of Law

The University of Law provide Higher Rights training with unmatched flexibility

and practitioner led expertise. We deliver Civil and Criminal Higher Rights Advocacy Training, designed for trainee solicitors, qualified solicitors and CILEX members.

Each pathway is structured to mirror the format of the Higher Rights assessment and is split into two distinct elements:

Part 1: Written Advocacy

Focuses on ethics, evidence, procedure, analysis and drafting effective written submissions.

Part 2: Practical Advocacy

Develops oral advocacy skills through realistic case scenarios, interim applications, mini trials and structured tutor feedback.

While undertaking training is not a prerequisite for sitting the assessment, our courses are specifically designed to support delegates in becoming assessment-ready while also developing practical advocacy skills that can be applied immediately in practice.

Why Choose Face-to-Face Training?

We are proud to be the only major provider offering both face-to-face and online Higher Rights training. Alongside our Manchester delivery, we are seeking to make sessions available in Liverpool, ensuring convenient access for firms and practitioners based in and around the city.

In-person delivery offers clear benefits:

- Small group sizes
- High levels of interaction
- Live advocacy exercises

- Detailed, individual feedback from experienced practitioner-tutors

This immersive environment allows delegates to build confidence, refine technique and engage fully with advocacy skills in a supportive setting.

Course Format, Pricing and Delivery Options

Each training course element runs over two days and is priced at £555 + VAT, with written and practical elements available to book separately.

We also offer **in-house delivery** for firms wishing to train groups of delegates.

Higher Rights Assessments

Higher Rights assessments are scheduled throughout the year, both online and in person, with full details and specimen materials available on the University of Law's website.

A New Opportunity for North West Practitioners

The expansion of our Higher Rights training across the North West including the potential to deliver on our Liverpool campus represents a significant opportunity for regional practitioners to develop their advocacy careers closer to home.

To book or enquire, visit:

[Higher Rights of Audience | University of Law](#)

[Higher Rights of Audience – Assessment | University of Law](#)

The
University of
LAW

A single vision of fair compensation across the housing sector

Following the Housing Ombudsman’s severe maladministration report published this month, Jenny Woods of Weightmans considers the call for “a single vision of fair compensation across the housing sector”.

New compensation guidance, effective from 1 April 2026, has been published by the Housing Ombudsman to streamline and focus the approach to resolving complaints. Landlords and residents experiences have been considered to provide industry guidance and to manage expectations of both parties to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.

Individual circumstances may impact compensation awards, but the core principles should be common to all complaints. Whilst the guidance provides clear parameters for compensation payments, it also stresses that compensation is not always the appropriate remedy, this maybe a speedy repair or an apology.

The report highlights 3 key themes:

1. landlords not applying their own compensation policies
2. compensation increased after stage 2
3. significant gaps between landlord offers and our orders.

Compensation policies

Before considering any appropriate compensation award, the report focuses the importance of landlords considering if their policies and procedures are accurate and effective. This includes accurate record keeping and a post inspection system to confirm works have been completed within a reasonable timeframe and to an adequate standard.

If a complaint is received, is there a suitable complaint and compensation policy which is utilised and applied correctly to put things right when

they go wrong? Do those policies and procedures allow for a level of flexibility to ensure an individual’s circumstances are taken into consideration? Guidance on how and when to offer compensation to resolve a resident’s complaint will ensure consistency.

Compensation increased after stage 2

The new compensation guidance aims to clarify when financial compensation should be offered and how to calculate this. It seeks to avoid a lengthy complaint process and delays in making or increasing offers. The latest report noted several cases where compensation was only increased after a complaint moved to stage two or the Housing Ombudsman became involved. Landlords are encouraged to review information as it comes to light and aim to put things right during the formal complaint process.

Significant gaps between landlord offers and Housing Ombudsman awards

Early resolution of complaints can help the relationship between a landlord and resident. The new guidance aims to assist in focusing the parties’ expectations and narrowing the issues at an early stage. Common reasons for complaints escalating past a landlords formal complaint process include:

- landlords offering compensation for complaint handling failings only and not the cause/length of time of the actual issue at the property
- residents’ unrealistic expectation of compensation for failings.

The guidance sets out clear parameters depending on individual circumstances of each case. Mitigating factors are also clearly defined:

Appendix 1 - Specific compensation orders

Service	Redress	Considerations
Loss of heating and/or hot water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apology • £15 per day for complete loss • £8 per day for loss of one service (heating or hot water) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the landlord’s policy sets out higher amounts for the same specific services, we will order compensation in line with that higher amount • where the use of a room is substantially impaired (unable to be used for its intended purpose), compensation will be based on the rent charged (see section 7, ‘Loss of use of the property’) • where the impact on the resident is significant and exceptional, we may order additional compensation (see section 9, ‘impact of service failings’) • compensation for loss of heating should not be ordered where suitable, alternative heating is supplied • compensation should be ordered after the end of the applicable repair timeframe.

Mitigating factors

We'll consider whether the resident's actions contributed to the situation. We'll consider whether they exacerbated, or failed to minimise, the impact. These factors may mitigate or reduce the level of compensation ordered. Examples may include the resident:

- failing to communicate clearly with, or respond to contact from, the landlord
- failing to bring matters to a landlord's attention within a reasonable timeframe.
- refusing help to make a coherent complaint
- repeatedly refusing to allow a landlord reasonable access to the property to resolve the matters

complained of

- pursuing a complaint in an unreasonable or excessive way.

A link to the [Housing Ombudsman Compensation Guidance](#) can be found here.

Next steps for landlords

- consider current practices to ensure they are accurate and effective, for example record keeping for repairs, post inspections and complaint handling
- review the Housing Ombudsman Compensation Guidance against internal complaint and compensation policies to identify areas for adjustment
- staff training - ensure consistency when dealing with complaints by

utilising and applying complaint and compensation policies. Are staff aware of how to put things right when they go wrong?

For further information on the compensation guidance or advice relating to housing matters, please contact Jenny Woods or Matthew Lake in the Weightmans Property Litigation Team.



Jenny Woods
Principal Associate,
Weightmans



Matthew Lake
Partner,
Weightmans

Merseyside First-Time Buyers on the Rise, Says Local Conveyancing Expert



Stephanie Thomas

Despite continued headlines about rising UK house prices, a subtle but important shift is emerging in the local property market, according to Liverpool city region conveyancing lawyer Stephanie Williams of Gregory Abrams Davidson (GAD).

Stephanie, part of GAD's well-established property team, says the firm is seeing growing activity from first-time buyers across Merseyside, particularly in areas still considered affordable and offering realistic entry points onto the property ladder.

"Across many parts of Merseyside, we're noticing more first-time buyers coming

forward," she explains. "Sellers are increasingly drawn to buyers who are ready to move quickly, and first-timers often fit that profile well."

More Properties Coming to Market
Stephanie notes that the current supply of homes appears to be outpacing demand, giving buyers more choice and helping to cool prices slightly – though not enough yet to create significant price drops.

She adds that regional differences remain strong, with the North West showing a more resilient market than parts of the South.

Suburban and Semi-Rural Areas Still in Demand

The shift toward suburban living, which gained momentum during the pandemic, remains a defining trend.

"Families and first-time buyers alike continue to prioritise outdoor space, parking, and strong school or transport links," Stephanie says. This has helped maintain demand in areas across South Liverpool and the wider region.

Meanwhile, Liverpool's rental market continues to perform well, particularly in neighbourhoods with solid yields and strong tenant demand.

The Challenge of Long Transaction Times

One of the biggest frustrations for buyers, Stephanie acknowledges, is the length of time it takes to complete a property purchase in England and Wales.

At an average of almost six months, UK transaction times are significantly slower than in other countries. Contributing factors include:

- Delays in returning local authority searches
- New legislation such as the Building Safety Act
- Complex stamp duty rules
- The risk of mortgage offers expiring before completion

"The longer a transaction takes, the higher the chance someone withdraws," Stephanie explains, adding that the current system can cause stress, wasted fees and uncertainty for all parties.

Liverpool Legal Careers Open Evening



to speak directly with experienced practitioners fostered a supportive atmosphere where questions were welcomed and ambitions encouraged.

Liverpool Law Society President Sarah Mansfield shared her own route into the profession. Her reflections underscored the importance of resilience, proactive networking and building strong professional relationships which are all key foundations for a successful legal career.

The event highlighted the strength and collaborative spirit of the Liverpool legal community. By bringing together local organisations and institutions, firms and chambers, the evening not only informed attendees but also inspired those preparing to take their first steps into practice.

On the 11th February, Liverpool Law Society and Fletchers Group partnered to host the Liverpool Legal Careers Open Evening, welcoming the next generation of legal professionals from across the region.

Held for students from Liverpool John Moores University, Edge Hill University, University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University, the event provided an invaluable introduction to the breadth of opportunities available within the legal profession. With approximately 80 students in attendance and a diverse range of exhibitors, the evening offered a dynamic forum for insight, conversation and connection.

Alongside the organisers, representatives from Merseyside Junior Lawyers Division, Morecrofts LLP, Rowlinsons Solicitors, In-House Legal Solutions and Exchange Chambers were also in attendance, showcasing the depth and diversity of the region's legal community.

Throughout the evening, speakers from each organisation delivered engaging presentations on their areas of expertise, sharing practical guidance as well as

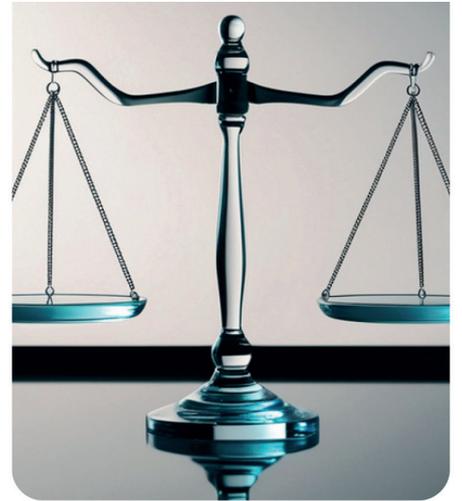
personal reflections on their career journeys. Covering everything from commercial and in-house practice to life at the Bar and within regional firms, students gained valuable first-hand insight into the wide range of pathways available to aspiring lawyers. The chance

Sincere thanks to all contributors whose support helped make the event such a success, and to the students whose enthusiasm and ambition signal a bright future for the profession across the region.

Kirsty Barker







Liverpool Law Society

Pathways to the legal profession

04.03.26

1.30pm - 3.30pm

 Zoom

PROGRAMME

Apprenticeships
The University of Law

The University route, costs and the benefits of studying for a degree
University of Liverpool

Going into Law having a non-law degree
Liverpool John Moores University

The Solicitors Qualifying Examination
The University of Law

The Legal Executive Route

Becoming a barrister & daily life in the Law

Recruiting process for both graduates and apprentices at a law firm
Weightmans

Benefits of being a solicitor apprentice & life in the law
Weightmans

LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT ROUTES INTO THE LAW

Organised by the Society's Education & Charities Committee, this annual event informs young people how they can pursue a career in the legal sector.

AIMED AT

all year 12 students

at Merseyside schools & colleges

free, online event

CHAIRPERSON

Sarah Mansfield
President
Liverpool Law Society

Sponsored by



Give to gain: female leadership from one generation to the next



Jennifer Brunt and Rebecca Cliff

For International Women's Day, Slater and Gordon are recognising the powerful mentorship between team members Jennifer Brunt and Rebecca Cliff through this year's theme of 'Give to Gain'.

"A female leader in the legal industry plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive, progressive profession."

Jennifer Brunt is soon celebrating her 22nd year since she fully qualified as a family lawyer. Currently [Head of Family Law](#) at Slater and Gordon, she works beside [Rebecca Cliff](#), who spent time as a temporary secretary under Jennifer 16 years ago.

The pair share a telling friendship built from mentorship, with Jennifer saying being a mentor is one of the most meaningful parts of being a female leader.

"It's about leading with confidence and integrity, while also opening doors for

others, challenging outdated norms and demonstrating that strong leadership comes in many forms. Female leaders help create environments where talent is recognised on merit and where diverse perspectives genuinely influence decision-making."

Rebecca has since climbed the ranks and is now an associate solicitor. With **Jennifer's** mentorship under her belt, she is determined to inspire the next generation in the legal space.

"Since the start of my legal career, Jennifer taught me the importance of being a leader and not a boss, where flexibility and engagement are core parts of the role. With that in mind, it is important to know that the teaching never stops, no matter how experienced you are. Whilst I manage my own team now, I know that my team will offer me new insights and perspectives that I can benefit from. This dynamic ultimately creates a strong foundation for success."

In alignment with this year's theme 'Give to Gain', **Jennifer and Rebecca's** professional partnership marks the importance of providing opportunity to those early in their legal profession. Investing in mentorship, training opportunities and even sponsorship can strengthen the entire sector.

As **Jennifer** adds *"Give to Gain reflects the importance of investing in others. By giving time, trust and opportunity, we gain stronger teams, provide better outcomes for clients and we build a more supportive and resilient workplace culture."*

For **Rebecca**, this year's theme of Give to Gain means her *"the importance of continuing to support female growth within a male-led industry. It opens doors for those who might just be starting out in their careers, not knowing where to go and offers the guidance and support that they made need to become the next leaders in the legal world."*

Breaking barriers, building belonging: International Women's Day in law and the role of ESG



Dominique Owens

While the legal profession has made many meaningful strides over recent years in advancing gender equality at entry level, progression into senior leadership remains uneven, particularly for women with intersecting identities.

As Vice Chair of the ESG committee at MSB Solicitors, and as a working mother with a disability, I can see both the progress that has been made but also the work that remains. ESG is not only about environmental responsibility and governance structures; it is also about social impact, including supporting women across our profession.

Challenges facing women in professional services

Women in professional services continue to face structural and cultural barriers, underrepresentation at senior levels, gender pay disparity, unequal access to high-value work and rigid career models. In the legal sector, billable hours and client development expectations can disproportionately affect women with caregiving responsibilities.

Working mothers experience a 'double burden' of professional excellence and primary caregiving while women with



disabilities face stigma and assumptions about capability. Such challenges are compounded for women with intersecting identities, such as women of colour.

Women of colour

Representation of women of colour in law remains a persistent issue, as they are significantly underrepresented in senior roles, leadership positions and influential decision-making spaces. This lack of visibility can limit access to mentorship, sponsorship and progression opportunities.

Greater awareness of equity, diversion and inclusion has influenced progress and opened conversations in the profession. However, there is still more to be done. Socio-economic barriers remain, particularly for women of colour from disadvantaged backgrounds. Rising costs of qualification routes create financial obstacles affecting those without alternative means to support career advancement.

Legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 played an important role in prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race or sex. However, while

the law offers an essential framework, meaningful change still relies on how organisations implement it in practice.

Optimism for the future will rely on continued commitment to inclusion policies, financial accessibility and genuine representation at senior levels that will ensure women of colour are inspired to thrive in legal services.

Lamya Al Saqqaf,
Paralegal – Trainee Solicitor, MSB Solicitors

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities can face limited leadership representation and assumptions about productivity. The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments, but true inclusion means proactive systems designed with diversity in mind: flexible working models, accessible technology and normalising conversations around disability. Flexibility should be an enabler, not a concession.

Women from the LGBTQ+ community

Women may feel pressure regarding visibility in client-facing roles. Microaggressions, a lack of senior role models and exclusion from informal



networks can hinder progression. Legislative protections including the Equality Act 2010 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 are foundational, but culture determines whether individuals feel safe to thrive. Visible allyship, inclusive parental policies and zero-tolerance policies to discrimination are crucial.

Looking forward

The future for women in law depends on going beyond compliance and instead embracing courageous leadership. True inclusion normalises flexibility, embeds universal design, prioritises sponsorship

over informal networks and reflects diversity at every level.

It is not just an equality issue; it is commercially and ethically imperative. Diverse leadership strengthens decision-making, enhances relationships and builds resilience.

Liverpool's legal profession has long been collaborative and forward-thinking. Continued partnership, accountability and open dialogue will ensure the next generation of women in law inherit a profession defined by belonging, not by barriers.

Dominique Owens,
Vice Chair of ESG and Associate Client Relationship Executive, MSB Solicitors

**International
Women's Day:
6th March
2026**





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



(L-R) Elly Smith with Abi O'Connor

Change of Chair

In our most recent AGM, we welcomed a new chair of our trustees. Abi O'Connor (pictured above, with our Development Officer Elly Smith), who joined our board last year, has

taken the position of Chair following our existing Chair, Pauline Connolly's stepping down.

Abi O'Connor is a former researcher at the New Economics Foundation

(NEF), and is currently a researcher at the University of Sheffield. As well as this, Abi is a passionate activist, having previously been an active member of ACORN community union, and is a founding member of Liverpool Residents Action (LRA), a grassroots group that focuses predominantly on housing injustice.

On taking the position, Abi told us: *"I am honoured to be appointed Chair of VLC. It is a true privilege to work alongside such dedicated staff who are unwavering in their commitment to improving the lives of others. In increasingly divisive times, when inequality is rising rapidly, the law centre's work is more important than ever."*

Our out-going Chair **Pauline**, has been steering our law centre for many years. Her long-standing commitment to the Vauxhall community, both in this role and as head of Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council, has been instrumental to VLC's success, and our organisation would not be the same without her valued contribution to our work. In this spirit, from everyone at Vauxhall Law Centre, we would like to thank Pauline for her years of service as chair of our board and for all of her important work in our community.

Mind and Money Programme

We're approaching the end of our the Mind & Money Programme, organised by The Women's Organisation with the aim to reduce poverty, and help people who may have reached a crisis point and need urgent support following the cost-of-living crisis. Since the programme began in 2023, we have worked alongside Citizens Advice Bureaus across the city, as



well as Pennysmart and The Women's Organisation. All participating organisations have been working with individuals to assist them with either debt problems, welfare rights issues, housing legal matters, and fuel advice. We helped one recent client through this programme, for which the following case study describes:

Our Client first came to the Law Centre for advice on a PIP Claim in Summer 2024. The client is late 30s and unable to work due to long-term ill health. They had already found LCWRA by Universal Credit and were looking into disability benefit claims for the first time to support with the extra costs of their health needs.

We helped them make an application for PIP, and several months later they received an award of the Standard rate of Daily Living only. We felt that they had been under-assessed and that vital evidence had been ignored by DWP. We helped them to request Mandatory Reconsideration. DWP refused to change the decision so we appealed.

The appeal was adjourned by HMCTS twice. The first time it was because the Tribunal did not have the technology to view our client's crucial video evidence. The second adjournment was because the Tribunal was listed late in the day, and there was not enough time. On both occasions, our vulnerable client with mobility needs travelled to the Tribunal, despite HMCTS having contact details for

the client and for VLC as representatives. By the second adjournment, there could be no doubt they were aware of their physical and mental difficulties with leaving the house.

At the Third hearing, the tribunal quickly made a decision based on our written submissions and evidence to award the client the enhanced rates of Daily Living and Mobility. This represents a financial increase from the original award of £73.90 a week to £187.45 a week – over double – and backdated to the date of their initial claim. This secured the client's arrears of roughly £6000.

Through exploring our clients' circumstances we also identified additional support needs of their daughter. VLC helped with a Child DLA claim and secured the middle rate Care and low rate Mobility component, which we are currently challenging by Mandatory Reconsideration, as again, DWP have under-assessed the restrictions reported and medical evidence.

This additional income will massively help our client with extra costs related to their health conditions, as they reported being able to fund extra aids and adaptations to their property, as well as a new mobility aid. This will help the client to live independently, as they reported having to previously rely on their teenage son for help with personal care.

The case identifies the widespread problems with DWP making lower-value awards, which are under-assessments of need. The flaws in decision making places undue pressure on HMCTS, which directly impacted our client's receiving the correct award at the first available opportunity. Our client states throughout the case that she would not have been able to manage the appeal process without our help.

Can you help Vauxhall Law Centre?

We would be grateful if you could support our organisation's work by making a donation towards our charity¹, 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.²

Alternatively, if you think you or your company can support our work at VLCIC, 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

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

¹ <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/15894#!/DonationDetails>

² <https://www.vauxhalllawcentre.org.uk/support-us>

Regulation Update

March 2026

The latest Regulation news from Andrea Cohen of Weightmans LLP



Andrea Cohen

As we move into March, regulatory activity remains elevated across all areas, including anti-money laundering and sanctions, claims management, client care, and, at the date of writing, the profession watches reporting of Mazur appeal with much interest (live streaming of the proceedings having been restricted to those applying for, and obtaining permission to observe). The SRA continues to emphasise transparency in high-volume consumer work, while OFSI has introduced a more structured enforcement framework and invited feedback on ownership and control. Complaint pressures remain high at the Legal Ombudsman, and recent tribunal outcomes underscore the centrality of integrity, robust systems and clear client communication.

Regulatory focus on claims management and fee transparency

Regulators continue to scrutinise the conduct of claims firms, with intensified attention on the clarity of no-win, no-fee arrangements. Recent commentary from the Legal Services Board and the SRA, as well as FCA, highlights persistent issues around transparency, client understanding and the management of high-volume consumer claims. Firms offering these models should review client-care materials to ensure that risk,

cost and termination implications are explained in plain language. The SRA recently issued a warning notice ‘No win, no fee’ and other fee arrangements in high-volume consumer claims’ and advised that as at the end of December 2025, it had 83 open investigations relating to 72 firms working in the claims market, and has contacted some firms requiring them to confirm that they understand and are following the rules. As with previous declarations, e.g. in relation to AML FWRA and PCPs, it is likely that such declarations will be considered by the SRA if those firms are subsequently investigated and found not to be following the rules.

Joint messaging from the SRA and the FCA also flags poor practice in multiple representation, termination charges and motor-finance claims. Firms should stress-test conflicts procedures and ensure costs provisions are fair, well-documented and communicated early—especially where clients may be vulnerable or unfamiliar with litigation funding.

Client care and complaint trends

The Legal Ombudsman reports sustained, record-level demand. The most common themes remain delay, gaps in communication and uncertainty about costs. Firms investing in proactive updates, realistic timelines and clear costs information continue to see fewer escalations and faster resolution. As referred to previously, we have noted a large increase in complaints to our firm clients drafted by/with the assistance of AI, which can run to many pages, produce responses in minutes and cause additional stress to fee earners.

AML developments

The SRA has updated the Sectoral Risk Assessment - Anti-money laundering and terrorist financing (4 February 2026) and its section, ‘Your AML obligations’ although, rather unhelpfully, it has not

indicated what changes have been made. There is a link to the searchable database of designated persons and entities on the sectoral risk assessment, and the tab, ‘Historic high-risk third countries list’ has been updated to add Kuwait and Papua New Guinea, but as there is no version control and no way to access the previous versions, that may not be the only update. If anyone has any further details, please get in touch.

If your FWRA and PCPs include dates of guidance referred to, now may be a good time to revisit them.

Financial Sanctions

A user guide has been published to accompany the UK Sanctions List search tool, which sets out the functions and features of the search tool, how it works and how to use it, and helps to explain a number of features to help determine if a person, entity, or ship is included on the UK Sanctions List, including exact matches and partial matches of a search term, fuzzy searching etc.

OFSI has implemented updates to its enforcement and monetary penalties guidance, including penalty reductions for prompt notifications, clearer outcome signposts and fixed monetary penalties of £5,000 and £10,000 for specified information and reporting offences.

It has launched a call for evidence on how the ownership and control test operates in practice, including scenarios of ‘hypothetical control’. The focus is on practical challenges, impacts on compliance costs and whether current concepts remain proportionate and workable. Responses are invited until 13 April 2026.

As you will be aware, the sanctions regime applies to all areas of legal services, so it is worth noting that OFSI recently issued a £160,000 penalty to

Bank of Scotland for breaches of Russia sanctions after processing payments linked to a designated person. OFSI's commentary stresses the configuration of screening tools, clear escalation routes and training that reflects geopolitical developments. Prompt voluntary disclosure attracted a 50% reduction in this case.

Mazur

While this part of our update may be redundant by the time this article goes to print following the appeal hearing which starts on 23 February, in the event that it isn't, it is worth noting that the Law Society updated its practice note on 29 January 2026, although, at the date of writing and in similar fashion to the SRA, without a summary of changes, and unhelpfully not including the previous version dated 18 November 2025 in the archived versions. With the assistance of Copilot, the January version includes a new, expanded explanation confirming that Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeal Tribunal proceedings are not within the reserved activity of conducting litigation, clarifies distinctions between tribunal types falling inside/outside reserved litigation, re-emphasises when CILEX authorised entities or individuals may be authorised and provides more streamlined examples, particularly round escalation points and the division of responsibilities between authorised and non-authorised staff. It notes changes are evolution, not redirection, which is helpful to firms refining internal processes following the Mazur judgment. The Q&As have also been updated, but again without an indication of the changes/additional questions.

New/updated practice notes and guidance

SRA

- [SRA | Sanctions regime - firm-wide risk assessments | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)
- [SRA | 'No win, no fee' and other](#)

[fee arrangements in high-volume consumer claims | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

- [SRA | Claims management activity | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)
- [SRA | Complying with the UK Sanctions Regime | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

Law Society

- [Mazur and the conduct of litigation | The Law Society](#)

Disciplinary and regulatory decisions

Latest SRA fines for AML non-compliance

A series of recent fines, ranging from £3,500 to £25,000 highlights recurring weaknesses in basic AML hygiene—customer due diligence, ongoing monitoring and lack of/non-compliant documentation, with one firm being fined for not maintaining in writing its record of PCPs from 2011 - 2017. Quite clearly, firms cannot turn the clock back, but present FWRAs, PCPs etc. should be in order, and if your firm has not yet had an independent AML audit, now is the time to consider one so that you can be in the best position possible in the event of a SRA visit/investigation.

Struck off for lying on CV

A recently qualified solicitor has been struck off the roll after the SDT found that he deliberately falsified his academic record to secure a role at a City law firm. The tribunal concluded that such dishonesty undermined trust in the profession and breached the fundamental principle of integrity required of solicitors. He also had to pay over £5000 costs.

Struck off for covering up late court arrival

The SDT has struck off a solicitor who attempted to conceal his late arrival at court by submitting a deliberately misleading statement from the attendance note, giving false reasons for

the matter being adjourned. He said he requested an adjournment because of a lack of instructions and that defence counsel had not received certain documents, but he had actually arrived late for the hearing, by which time defence counsel had left and the judge decided to adjourn the case.

Dishonesty ends solicitor's 50-year career

A solicitor with a career spanning over 50 years, who was being investigated for backdating a document and then denied on an indemnity and insurance application that he was subject to any SRA investigation, was struck off, the SDT deciding that the two incidents were not isolated or a momentary lapse of judgment as they occurred 15 months apart. He was also ordered to pay almost £15,000 costs.

Senior solicitor suspended following misconduct at work social event

A former senior partner was suspended by the SDT and ordered to pay £30,000 costs, following findings that he made unwanted sexually inappropriate comments to colleagues during a firm Christmas party. He was suspended from work after internal disciplinary proceedings were commenced and retired before those proceedings concluded. The tribunal determined that his behaviour, which included remarks that were unwelcome and offensive in nature, fell seriously below the standard expected of a solicitor, even in a social setting and amounted to professional misconduct.

How Compli can help...

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

Andrea Cohen
Compli,
Weightmans LLP

Charity Spotlight:

A Beacon of Creative Hope



For over four decades, The Yellow House (Registered Charity 1025950) has stood as a quiet yet vital institution on Merseyside, dedicated to a singular, transformative mission: to empower the city’s most isolated young people through the arts to foster positive mental health and well-being earning a reputation for our innovative exciting, approach to connect with those young people whom traditional services deem “hard to reach.”

The challenge these young individuals face is immense, with participants often grappling with the deep-rooted effects of poverty, social exclusion, and significant health inequalities. We work daily with young people suffering from depression, low self-esteem, self-harming, and the profound trauma caused by domestic violence, bullying, and abuse. For many, the invisible disability of loneliness and isolation is a daily struggle, a feeling amplified in the post-Covid world. The Yellow House offers a crucial safety net for those on the extreme edges of society, providing a place to truly live, not just exist.

Our Mission: Creativity as a Life Changer.

At Yellow House, we believe the arts are a powerful catalyst for change. Our approach is holistic, moving beyond simple engagement to address the core issues of mental health. Our weekly

creative sessions, open forums, and workshops are meticulously designed to focus on:

- **Confidence Building and Self-Expression:** Providing a safe space for young people to find their voice and share their opinions.
- **Pastoral Care and Peer Support:** Offering invaluable support sessions and a friendship program, especially for those who have never had friends before.
- **Campaigning for Change:** Encouraging participants to discuss issues they face and then campaign for change.

Our current group is a diverse collection of Neurodiverse young people, young carers, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Yellow House is a true reflection of the community it serves.



Innovation in Practice: The Projects
To meet the growing needs of our community, Yellow House is continually

developing groundbreaking programs. One such project is **Good Vibrations**, the concept of an Acoustic Orchestra based on Acoustic Sound Theory. This initiative, developed with the young people, is a profound method of engagement and expression for the group, particularly those who are neurodiverse. This project is accompanied by **The Human Handbook**, a piece of work built around the varied and complex experiences of the participants, designed to foster emotional understanding and connection through creativity.

Most excitingly, **Yellow House is preparing to launch The Yellow House Cultural Creative Coffee Centre** Neurodiverse Wellbeing Cafe in a prestigious Central Liverpool location at the Albert Dock. This pilot project, conceived and planned entirely with our young people and supported by partners like LCVS, will be a coffee, cake, and creative space, run for and by Neurodiverse young people. All proceeds will go directly back into funding Yellow House’s vital services, transforming the young people from beneficiaries into entrepreneurs and community leaders.

A 40-Year Commitment: The Founder’s Story

The commitment of The Yellow



return to the Charity, which his Cancer Consultant has called a “miracle,” is a living testament to the spirit and resilience that Yellow House instils in every young person it supports. He continues to run the Charity with the dedication of a man recalled to life, ensuring the services often managed alongside **Christian Anderson**, an Artistic Director who is an ex-service user himself, remain a constant for those who need it most.

In George’s own words, it is Yellow House that “keeps them together and offers them some signs of a future and of attaining/realising their visions/dreams/aspirations.”



“The Road Ahead”

Our dedication is unwavering, but the financial challenges for grassroots charities are tougher than ever, with funding becoming increasingly difficult to secure. As we continue to develop innovative projects like the Wellbeing Cafe and the Good Vibrations Orchestra, we invite the Liverpool Law Society community to stand with us. Support for The Yellow House is an investment in the future of Merseyside’s most vulnerable youth, an investment that enables these young people to transcend their circumstances and realise their full potential.

Donate to [The Yellow House](https://localgiving.org/donation/yellowhouse/start) - - <https://localgiving.org/donation/yellowhouse/start>

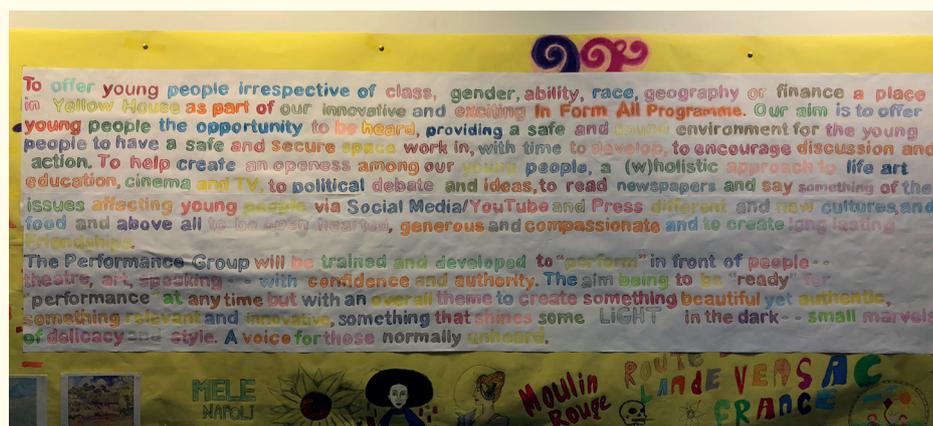
House is perhaps best embodied by its Founder and Mentor, George Mc Kane. George has worked extensively with young people across Merseyside, the UK, and Europe for over 40 years, taking the Charity from the suburbs of Bootle to a level of international recognition.

His commitment has never been more profound than in recent years. While seriously ill with Blood Cancer, spending thirteen months in isolation, George was told he was about to die on three occasions. Yet, even in his darkest moments, the work of Yellow House remained his purpose and strength. Look at these:

<https://www.facebook.com/george.m.kane/videos/1305740981256484>
 - - <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1XsUVxscyP/> George’s survival and

You can contact George via:

Email: georgemck1853@gmail.com
 Phone/Text/WhatsApp: 07972611052



Personal liability under s.71(3) of the Solicitors Act 1974



Solicitors Act assessments have become increasingly complex and more prevalent following the decision in *Kenig* which opened the door to more parties and for wider assessments under s.71(3) of the Solicitors Act 1974. However, we are now starting to see how those wider assessments take shape in reality and it may not be as beneficial as initially considered.

The Background to *Tucker & Anor v Howe* [2026] EWHC 208 (SCCO)

The Executrices were seeking a s.71(3) assessment under the Solicitors Act 1974 of the costs of the former administrator of the estate of Steven Howe (deceased). The matter had been subject to ongoing probate litigation which concerned a challenge to the will of the deceased. The Claimants in this matter were two of four equal residuary beneficiaries of the will and had been appointed as executrices.

The Claimants were unable to administer the estate until the probate litigation had resolved and subsequently made an application for the appointment of Mr Mark Keeley, a solicitor and a partner at Freeths LLP, as administrator. The Order appointing the Administrator provided for him to charge reasonable professional fees in respect of the administration of the estate.

The Claimants took issue with the costs incurred by the Administrator. An agreement was reached to resolve certain matters and an Order was prepared and approved which provided for the Administrator's costs to be 'determined by way of a third-party detailed assessment pursuant to section 71(3) of the Solicitors Act 1974 if not agreed'.

Cost Judge Leonard proceeded to carry out the assessment. The Bill of Cost totalled £147,436.33. The detailed assessment took place over 9 days and this was mainly due to the position adopted by the Claimants including producing Points of Dispute which were 67 pages in length. Numerous allegations were raised and CJ Leonard

noted significant elements of hyperbole which were unfounded and unjustified.

Furthermore, there were numerous elements of the assessment where the Claimants were seeking to challenge areas which could only be assessed under s.71(3) of the Act including the hourly rates which had been agreed between the Administrator and Freeths LLP.

The Bill of Costs was assessed in the total of £129,686.76. This was just below 88% of the bill as drawn and CJ Leonard did not find any evidence of the serious allegations made by the Claimants. As a result of the assessment the one fifth rule was engaged so the Claimants were liable for the Administrator's costs of assessment.

Furthermore, CJ Leonard made an order for such costs to be assessed on the indemnity basis as a result of the Claimants' conduct which was found to be 'unreasonable to a high degree'. The costs of assessment were assessed at £132,400 exclusive of VAT.

However, the Claimants sought to discharge their costs liability by arguing that they should be borne by the estate given that they were appointed as executrices.

The Costs Decision

Cost Judge Leonard considered the position regarding the burden of costs and noted that it had an element of significance given that the estate of Mr Howe is now insolvent.

It was noted that there is a material difference between seeking an assessment under s.71(1) of the Act compared to an assessment under s.71(3). Under s.71(1), the assessment is carried out as if the third party were bringing the application for an assessment as if they were the party chargeable and the Court is limited to make such an order as if they were the party chargeable. In practice, this means that is very difficult ('if not impossible' per CJ Leonard) for a third party to challenge any element of costs that has been agreed between the solicitor and the client, as the party chargeable with the bill.

Whereas, an assessment under s.71(3) of the Act, following the decision in *Kenig*, has opened up the areas to which a third party, including beneficiaries, can challenge the costs incurred and to be paid out of a fund to which they have an interest in.

CJ Leonard found that it was clear that the Claimants were pursuing the assessment in the role of beneficiaries and not as executrices. Furthermore, the Claimants heavily relied upon the s.71(3) of the Solicitors Act to broaden their challenges as much as possible.

As such, CJ Leonard could not arrive at any other conclusion than the Claimants had brought the assessment in the role of beneficiaries in their own personal capacity. Therefore, CJ Leonard concluded that the Claimants were therefore personally liable for the costs of assessment and that these should not be borne by the estate.

Takeaway Points

The decision in *Kenig* did open the door to third parties, particularly beneficiaries, to bring broader challenges to solicitors costs to be paid out of funds which they have an interest in. However, it remains clear that the same hurdles remain in place as in other solicitor/own client assessments.

The one fifth rule combined with a Solicitors Act assessment being conducted on the indemnity basis means that accurate cost benefit analyses are required before proceeding with a Solicitors Act assessment. This is because the costs of assessment can quickly dwarf the reductions achieved resulting in a net loss for a client.



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.

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PROFESSOR
ELIZABETH
J. SOILLEUX

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Our reports



The importance of trusts in modern financial planning



Robert Pocock

In today's evolving financial landscape, trusts are becoming an increasingly vital component in long-term estate and tax planning. From 6 April 2027 pension benefits will fall inside the estate for inheritance tax (IHT) purposes. This further highlights the importance of trust structures – particularly for clients with significant pension wealth or complex family circumstances. Under the forthcoming rules, most unused defined contribution pension funds and death benefits will be brought within the value of an individual's estate for IHT purposes, unless payable to an exempt beneficiary such as a spouse, civil partner or charity.

For legal professionals, partnering with a financial planning firm that deeply understands trust-based planning can enhance client outcomes, reduce risks, and provide coordinated advice that supports long-term family goals.

Why trusts matter more than ever

Trusts have long been a cornerstone of UK estate planning, but their relevance has grown as family structures diversify and wealth becomes more multifaceted. The right trust can help:

- Control when and how beneficiaries receive assets
- Protect family wealth against divorce, bankruptcy or external influence
- Reduce tax exposure, especially

- around IHT
- Provide flexibility as circumstances evolve

With changes impacting pensions and death benefits, trusts can help ensure assets are transferred efficiently and in line with client intentions.

Key types of UK trusts and when they're useful

Bare Trusts

A simple structure giving the beneficiary an immediate and absolute right to the assets. Useful for gifts to children or straightforward legacy arrangements.

Interest in Possession Trusts

The beneficiary receives income from the trust while capital passes to others later. Useful for second marriages, family homes and blended family arrangements.

Discretionary Trusts

Trustees control how and when beneficiaries receive funds, offering maximum flexibility. Useful for vulnerable beneficiaries, divorce risk mitigation, or uncertain future needs.

Mixed or Hybrid Trusts

Blending elements of discretionary and interest in possession structures. Useful for clients with varied or complex beneficiary groups.

Will Trusts

Created through a will and activated on death. Useful for property planning, blended families, and protecting assets for children.

Pension Death Benefit Trusts (Bypass Trusts)

Designed to keep pension wealth outside the estate for IHT purposes and offer greater control over distribution. Useful for high-value pension holders and multigenerational planning.

Lifestyle Trusts

A Lifestyle Trust is a type of discretionary,

Benchmark

IHT planning trust, often using investment bonds, that allows the settlor (person creating the trust) to gift assets while retaining the flexibility to receive scheduled, regular capital withdrawals. It enables wealth to be moved out of the estate for IHT purposes after seven years, while providing access to funds for living expenses.

Trusts and IHT: A growing priority

With pensions being brought within the estate, the role of trusts in effective IHT planning is becoming increasingly significant. For many clients, pension wealth represents one of their largest assets, and any change to its tax treatment could substantially alter their estate position. Trusts provide a valuable mechanism to help maintain tax efficiency, protect long-term wealth, and give families greater certainty at a time when legislative direction remains in flux.

Trust structures can:

- Help reduce the overall inheritance tax liability, depending on what an individual can afford to gift or place into trust.
- Provide controlled, staged distributions to multiple generations, allowing trustees to adapt decisions as family needs evolve.
- Prevent mismanagement or unintended diversion of wealth by ensuring assets are passed on responsibly and in accordance with the client's wishes.

In addition, trusts can offer wider safeguards that extend beyond the pension conversation – including asset protection, control over how wealth is accessed, and greater certainty of outcomes for complex or blended families. As IHT planning often involves navigating detailed rules, such as potential gift-with-reservation issues or lifetime transfer implications, early engagement between solicitors and financial planners is essential. This ensures that strategies are robust,

compliant, and closely aligned with the client’s wider financial objectives, long-term intentions, and evolving legislative environment.

Working together for better client outcomes

Benchmark Financial Planning collaborates closely with solicitors to ensure trust-based planning is technically sound, tax efficient and tailored to real world family dynamics. Our approach supports solicitors by offering clients:

- Clarity over their financial future

- through cashflow planning
- Confidence in how today’s decisions shape tomorrow
- Control over how assets pass through generations

Get in touch

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W: www.benchmarkfp.co.uk

Benchmark Financial Planning Limited is an Appointed Representative of Best Practice IFA Group Limited

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Approved by Best Practice IFA Group on 17 February 2026

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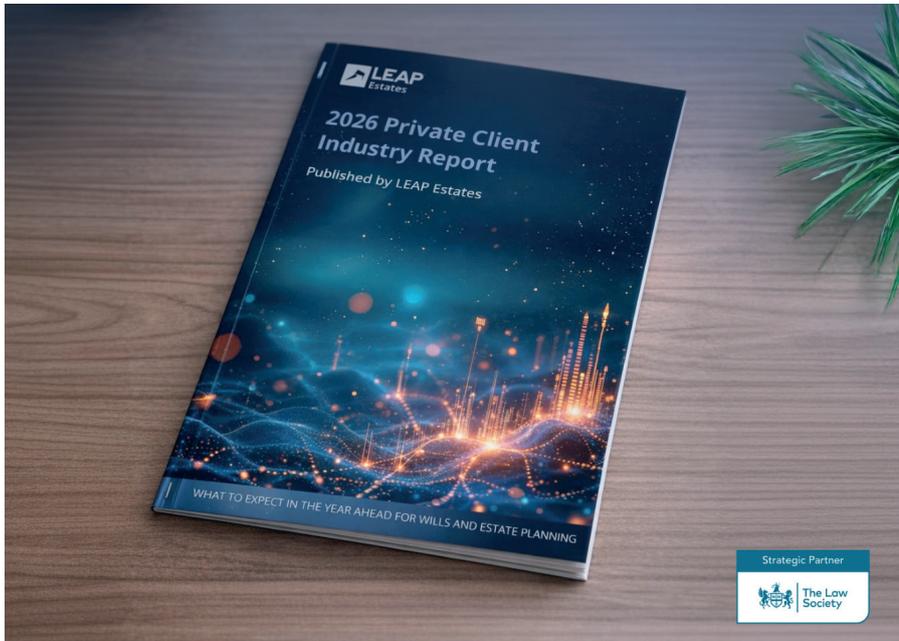


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LEAP Estates releases 2026 Private Client Industry Report on Wills and Estate Planning Trends



LEAP Estates has released its 2026 Private Client Industry Report, providing detailed insight into wills and estate planning trends across England and Wales. The report draws on aggregated, anonymised data from the LEAP, LEAP Estates and Willsuite platforms, offering a large-scale, data-led view of private client legal activity during the 2025 reporting year.

Drawing on 242,895 wills, 176,277 lasting powers of attorney (LPAs), and 87,833 wills containing trusts, the report offers one of the most comprehensive datasets available within the private client and estate planning sector. By analysing real client matters across a single, consistent dataset, the findings present a clear picture of how individuals are responding to changing social, demographic and regulatory conditions.

The 2026 Private Client Industry Report explores how demographic shifts, increasing life expectancy,

complex family structures and regulatory developments are reshaping demand for private client legal services. It also reflects the growing role of digital assets and modern estate considerations in wills and long-term planning.

The report focuses on four core areas shaping the industry in 2026:

- Demographic shifts influencing demand for wills and LPAs
- The impact of longevity on trust planning and asset protection
- The rise in blended families and increased exclusions in wills
- Regulatory updates prompting procedural and compliance changes

As longevity increases, more clients are incorporating trust provisions within their wills to provide flexibility, asset protection and structured wealth transfer. At the same time, the data indicates continued growth in blended family arrangements, contributing to more tailored estate planning and, in

some cases, clearer exclusions within testamentary documents.

Regulatory developments are also driving change within the private client and estate planning profession. Firms are adapting processes to maintain compliance while improving efficiency through digital systems and integrated platforms.

Andy Hitchon, Head of Private Client at LEAP Legal Software, says: *“This year’s Private Client Industry Report is grounded in observed behaviour, giving us a clear indication of what individuals are putting in place when engaging with estate planning, thus offering a more accurate picture of how social, economic and legal shifts are impacting the industry in 2026.”*

By combining large-scale data analysis with practical interpretation, the LEAP Estates 2026 Private Client Industry Report provides essential insight for solicitors, probate practitioners and estate planning professionals. It offers a clear understanding of current market activity while helping firms anticipate how client demand for wills, trusts and lasting powers of attorney is likely to evolve in the year ahead.

The LEAP Estates 2026 Private Client Industry Report is available to download now.

To access the full report and explore the data in detail, visit:

<https://www.leapestates.co.uk/brochures/2026-private-client-industry-report/>





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Forthcoming Courses

****NEW****

MULTI DELEGATE DISCOUNT FOR MEMBERS

In September we launched our brand-new members-only benefit - booking multiple delegates on the same legal training course will enjoy substantial discounts, making it ideal for teams looking to learn together or firms aiming to offer equal training opportunities across departments.

This offer cannot be used in conjunction with the Training Passport.

DATE	EVENT	SPEAKER
05/03/2026	International Women's Day	Various
12/03/2026	Conveyancing and the Family Home	Richard Snape
18/03/2026	Financial Orders: Law and Practice	Safda Mahmood
18/03/2026	Cohabitation: Law Practice	Safda Mahmood
15/04/2026	2026 Public Child Law Conference	Various
21/04/2026	Divorce And Financial Orders Certificate	Safda Mahmood
22/04/2026	2026 Clinical Negligence Conference	Various
29/04/2026	Commercial Property Update	Hannah Mackinlay
30/04/2026	All About Alphabet Shares	Jackie Sheldon
13/05/2026	2026 Private Client Conference	Various
17/06/2026	Civil Litigation Update	Andrew McLoughlin
17/06/2026	Personal Injury Update	Andrew McLoughlin

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:

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


 Liverpool Law Society

International Women's Day

Thursday 5th March 2026, 4.00pm till 6.45pm
In Person Event at Evelyn Partners

Join fellow professionals in celebrating International Women's Day 2026 with an inspiring evening of thought-provoking sessions and networking. The event will feature motivational speakers covering a range of topics, including practical strategies for managing stress, the benefits of mentoring, and financial confidence through life's key turning points. You'll also hear from an active member of Liverpool's legal profession on her pathway into law, followed by valuable insights on career reinvention and navigating "squiggly" careers. The programme includes opportunities to connect over refreshments and engage with ideas that empower women to thrive both personally and professionally.

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Property

Conveyancing and The Family Home

with Richard Snape

Online, 12th March, 1.30pm - 4.30pm



Conveyancing involving the family home can present a range of challenges. This course is designed to explore these difficulties and provide practical solutions, making it an invaluable resource for both conveyancers and family law practitioners.

Topics we will cover include:

- Declarations of trust and their implications
- Gifts from parents to children
- Managing undue influence and conflicts of interest
- Overriding interests and consent forms
- Issues surrounding severance
- SDLT considerations

Join us for an insightful session that equips you with the knowledge to handle these intricate matters confidently.

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 Liverpool Law Society

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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 Liverpool Law Society

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.

[BOOK NOW](#)



Public Child Law Conference

Wednesday 15th April 2026, 9.30am till 3.30pm
Hybrid Event - Online or In Person

Join us for the upcoming Public Child Law Conference offering practical guidance on key issues including HRA injunctions involving notice to remove children under final care orders, understanding and interpreting drug and alcohol test results, and formulating effective questions for experts to address evidential gaps. Additional agenda items will be announced shortly, with the full programme designed to equip practitioners with timely insights and useful tools for complex cases.

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2026 Clinical Negligence Conference

Wednesday 22nd April 2026, 9.30am till 3.30pm
Hybrid Event - Online or In Person

This Clinical Negligence Conference offers a fast-paced overview of key developments in the field, including the latest on fixed costs and hourly rates, updates in fatal accident claims, practical guidance on evidence gathering and case building, strategies for navigating Intermediate Track Costs, insight into common themes in anaesthesia and general surgery claims, and a comprehensive legal update reviewing major decisions from the past year and what to expect in 2026.

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Property

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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Company & Commercial

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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Liverpool Law Society

Private Client Conference

Wednesday 13th May 2026, 9.00am till 4.00pm
In Person Event at Crowne Plaza, Liverpool

Join leading experts and fellow professionals for an in-depth exploration of key developments in Private Client law, designed for legal practitioners, estate and financial planners, investment and wealth managers, tax advisors, and others working in this evolving field.

With expert contributions from Rebecca Roscoe, Professor Lesley King Nina Ferris and Anthony Whittaker, the programme will cover a range of essential topics including Financial Planning Hot Topics with a focus on managing deceased investment accounts, the modern trustee's responsibilities in "Accountability Starts with Accounts", and a practical session on Understanding the Residence Nil Rate Band, examining technical pitfalls and real-world scenarios where relief is commonly lost.

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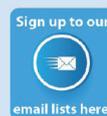
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Social Media Highlights

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

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The North West Asbestos Team has taken part in a sponsored walk for Mesothelioma UK as part of #FitnessFebruary – a challenge that saw them take in some of Liverpool's most iconic sights, including a climb to the top of the ...more

42 likes · 1 comment · 4 reposts

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Irwin Mitchell 34,580 followers
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We continue our campaign for maternity safety today, as **Geeta Nayar** and **Anne Kavanagh** (Stanton) joined **Theo Clarke**, **Louise Thompson**, **The MASIC Foundation** and **Birth Trauma Association** (UK), in raising awareness and ...more

Our medical negligence legal experts support today's Maternity Commissioner Rally

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Excello Law 6,480 followers
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Yesterday our Excello Inspires events programme continued with a team lunch in Chester at **Maray Restaurants**. ...more

57 likes · 9 comments

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Jackson Lees Group 4,355 followers
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Last week, we were delighted to welcome so many colleagues, partners, and friends to our New Year Connections: Jackson Lees Group Mixer at the **Liverpool Gin Distillery**. ...more

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7 Harrington Street Chambers 4,144 followers
6d · 📍

Last week, we were delighted to take part in the **MSB Social Housing and Regeneration Team's Housing Condition Claim Mock Trial**, with **Gary Reynolds**, **Direct Access Barrister and Mediator** representing 7 Harrington Street ...more

Louise Murphy Partner & Head of Social Housing and Regeneration at MSB / Leg...
1w · 📍

We had a great day at **MSB Social Housing and Regeneration Team's Housing Condition Claim Mock Trial**. ...more

2 likes

In-House Legal Solutions 2,490 followers
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Wishing our friends, colleagues and clients a happy lunar new year of the Fire Horse!

Wishing you a happy Lunar new year of the Fire Horse!

2 likes

Aaron & Partners LLP 4,029 followers
2w · Edited · 📍

Our Restructuring and Insolvency Team had a brilliant evening last Thursday, welcoming guests from businesses across the UK to their Country and Western themed event at **The Abode**, Chester. The team and their guests enjoyed a ...more

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St John's Buildings Barristers' Chambers 8,351 followers
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Thanks to all our Family Law clients, members and staff for making last night's wine tasting such a brilliant event. Thanks also to **Claire Scorer** from **Jean Juniviere Ltd** for being such a fantastic host and bringing along such great wines. We ...more

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