

Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

 **Leeds**
Law Society

August 2021

Issue 171



For every job, there is a tool

For law firms, the trick is knowing which is the right tool and how to use it to their best advantage

Local

Leeds JLD weighs up the pros and cons of returning to the office

News

Corporate work dominates the headlines in Leeds and Yorkshire, plus much-missed social and charity stories

Society

The Diversity & Inclusion Conference is taking place across two weeks in September

Last Word

Anna Newport on entering law, the firm's new internship programme and more

Comment

Patrick Walker finds there is (usually) more to life than bird droppings



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Here for you



Catherine Woodward is a solicitor in the commercial litigation department of Gordons and president of Leeds Law Society

Leeds Law Society is planning to survey members on what they expect from the society as life returns to some semblance of (new) normality

It seems fair to say that 2020 and 2021 have given many of us an opportunity to reflect on what we want from life, in terms of career, family and pastimes. Removed from our usual routines, commutes and office-related time constraints, we have been given the opportunity to reflect on what is important to us and what we want to achieve through all aspects of our life.

For many of us, the opportunity to work from home has allowed us the time to understand more about ourselves and the other inhabitants of our homes. Whether this is a good or a bad thing may depend on those inhabitants—I have certainly learnt that my cat can find any butter I have within 20 seconds of it being spread.

This extends to considering our jobs and how they work for us. We may often forget how fortunate we are to have a career in law. It is a hard won position and allows you entry into a fascinating and ever evolving profession.

However, it is one that often comes with many demands and long hours, for solicitors across all levels of qualification. The pressures of working in the law coupled with increased demands at home, particularly for those of us with caring obligations beyond a buttery cat, have undoubtedly made life harder for many lawyers.

As restrictions begin to lift, new concerns emerge and the shift back to pre-2020 life seems unattainable and, for certain aspects, undesirable. The debate regarding working from home, far from being settled, continues with each firm taking a different approach and each lawyer having a different view on what will work best for them.

We want to understand how to support our members through this transition, understanding what changes you want to see stay for good and what you miss and want to see return. We also want to understand what support, contact and training you need from your local law society—we are here for you.

A survey will be coming out to our members so we can find out more about what we can offer you. Alongside this, we will be running roundtables, panel events and discussion groups across different sectors, different qualification levels and our ongoing inclusion work.

Leeds Law Society recently hosted an enlightening event aimed at women working in the law, with speakers from Addleshaw Goddard, Cox Automotive, Gordons, Ridley & Hall and Womble Bond Dickinson. Topics for discussions ranged from tips for junior employees, advice on best practice and suggestions as to how to deal with difficult supervisions and clients.

Building on this, we are looking forward to this year's Diversity & Inclusion Conference, which the directors of Leeds Law Society's Diversity & Inclusion Committee have worked tirelessly on to support and encourage our members both already in the legal profession and those considering joining.

With speakers ranging from Lady Hale to I Stephanie Boyce, this year's conference is going to be informative and inspirational.

The event is supported by the Law Society of England and Wales and is open to all. If you haven't signed up yet, details of how to do so can be found at our website: <https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/eventdetails.aspx?eidQS=0B5C9CDC-825F-42D2-9CAE-6D4B08FFB225>.

Finally, we were unable to host a celebration of Leeds Law Society's 150 year anniversary. That we might be delayed will not stop us from celebrating this achievement with our members once the world is safer and further details will be sent out shortly.

I hope that, as life starts to open up more, though while keeping safe, that I will have the opportunity to meet with more of our members and discuss what your local law society can do for you. In the meantime, enjoy your summer.

Diversity and Inclusion Conference

September 2021

Promoting a modern, diverse and inclusive profession

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By popular demand and following the successful event held in 2020, Leeds Law Society and the Law Society of England and Wales are again holding a free virtual diversity and inclusion conference around National Inclusion Week from 14 to 30 September 2021. With a theme of 'promoting a modern, diverse and inclusive profession', the conference will consist of virtual events across six days, with pre-recorded sessions being released at the same time. Each will focus on a particular strand of diversity and inclusion:

- Mental Wellbeing: Tuesday 14 September (17.00 to 19.00)
- LGBTQ+: Thursday 16 September (17.00 to 19.00)
- Gender: Tuesday 21 September (17.00 to 19.00)
- Social Mobility: Thursday 23 September (12.00 to 14.00)
- Disability: Tuesday 28 September (12.00 to 14.00)
- Race and Ethnicity: Thursday 30 September (17.00 to 19.00)

- Religion and Belief: Pre-recorded session
- Age: Pre-recorded session
- Intersectionality: Pre-recorded session

The events will comprise talks and panel discussions with leading figures, together with hints and tips on diversity and inclusion best practice. Confirmed speakers include Lady Hale, Lord Shinkwin and Judge Victoria McLoud, together with representatives from #10000BlackInterns, LawCare and The Bridge Group. A representative from the Law Society of England and Wales and Leeds Law Society will speak at each event, with a member from either Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool or Manchester Law Societies joining the panel discussion.

Visit <https://linktr.ee/VirtualApproval> to book your place.

Mental Wellbeing

Tuesday 14 September (17.00 to 19.00)

Representatives from Leeds Law Society and the Law Society of England and Wales will welcome people to the conference. The event itself will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include LawCare, The Sleep Geek and representatives from Liverpool Law Society and Freshfields.



Social Mobility

Thursday 23 September (12.00 to 14.00)

The event will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include I. Stephanie Boyce (president of the Law Society of England and Wales) and Inez Brown (Birmingham Law Society), and representatives from The Bridge Group and the Law Society's Social Mobility Ambassadors.



LGBTQ+

Thursday 16 September (17.00 to 19.00)

The event will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include Rachel Reese (Global Butterflies), Judge Victoria McCloud and representatives from Manchester Law Society and the Law Society's LGBTQ+ Lawyers Division.



Disability

Tuesday 28 September (12.00 to 14.00)

The event will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include Lord Shinkwin, the Legally Disabled? researchers Professor Debbie Foster and Dr Natasha Hurst, together with representatives from Cardiff Law Society and the Law Society's Lawyers with Disabilities Division.



Gender

Tuesday 21 September (17.00 to 19.00)

The event will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include Lady Hale, Coral Hill (founder and editor of Legal Women Magazine) and representatives from Leeds Law Society and the Law Society's Women Lawyers Division.



Race and Ethnicity

Thursday 30 September (17.00 to 19.00)

The event will include short presentations, followed by a panel discussion. Confirmed participants include Dawid Konotey-Ahulu (#10000BlackInterns), Lubna Shuja (vice president of the Law Society of England and Wales), together with representatives from Bristol Law Society and the Law Society's Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division. As this is the last night, representatives from Leeds Law Society and the Law Society of England and Wales will formally close the conference.



Womble Bond Dickinson advises Northern Telecom on acquisition



Womble Bond Dickinson has advised Leeds-based telecoms provider Northern Telecom on its acquisition of IT support and security specialist Soda Consulting.

This represents Northern Telecom's fourth acquisition in just three years and the addition of Soda to its portfolio will help enhance its service offering.

The Womble Bond Dickinson team advising Northern Telecom was

led by Leeds-based partner Sam Dixon (pictured), with the firm providing key legal expertise. Dixon commented: "It has been a pleasure working with the Northern Telecom team on this exciting new acquisition. Womble Bond Dickinson always takes great pride in playing a part in the growth of successful local businesses like Northern Telecom."

Jon Graves, managing director at Northern Telecom, added: "Northern Telecom has grown significantly over the last few years, but for some time we've understood that there is potential to expand our services beyond that of a traditional telecoms provider. In Soda we saw a product offering that hasn't yet been able to break out from West Yorkshire and service clients further afield."

"We're very grateful to Sam and his team at Womble Bond Dickinson for their work on bringing this deal together in what seemed like a matter of days. It felt good working with someone I have known on a personal level for many years."

Clarion supports creative agency in acquisition and LA expansion



Leeds law firm Clarion has advised fast-growing creative agency OC on its acquisition of the respected global digital creative company Zero Degrees West (ZDW), one of the leading agencies in the film and entertainment sector.

The deal increases OC's global footprint to include Los Angeles, a key growth driver for the entertainment-focused agency.

The acquisition forms part of a wider restructure for OC, which has created a new parent company, OC Group, with

new enterprise after ensuring a smooth transition for current clients and staff.

Alex Carter (pictured), founder of OC, will serve as chief executive officer across both agencies and will be supported by his senior management team.

Established in both London and Los Angeles, ZDW was founded in 2005 by Waterhouse, specialising in digital, design and AV, bringing insight, data and strategic solutions to top entertainment and brand clients throughout the world.

Its strategy expertise and innovative thinking has led to numerous industry awards (including two prestigious Clios) and a strong reputation within the film industry.

Founded in 2006 by Alex and Loraine Carter, OC continues to show significant growth, expanding to a team of 35 with global clients including Sony Pictures, BBC, Britbox, YouTube and Lionsgate. It was recently awarded Creative Agency of the Year by the esteemed industry body BASE, voted for by leaders across the film and entertainment industry.

Alex Carter commented: "We are proud to announce our first acquisition. ZDW is one of the most respected names in the film sector and Jodie has built a genuinely incredible business—I am truly honoured to take the agency to the next stage of its evolution. Importantly, it will allow the OC Group to collectively push forward while expanding our digital and strategic solutions, bolstering the wider OC offering including key art, packaging, campaigns and OOH; as well as taking the group into the all-important LA entertainment market."

Waterhouse added: "ZDW couldn't be in safer hands than with Alex and the OC Group team. They are highly creative, forward-thinking and have an unrivalled passion for the entertainment industry. It is this common ground between our agencies and teams which gave me the confidence in joining forces. The potential success, combined talent and drive for both agencies, and, importantly, our clients, in the coming months and years is brilliant news for everyone."

The deal was brokered by management and growth consultancy the arc. Other advisers included Alex Cooper of Clarion, which advised OC.

both brands operating independently yet collaboratively. OC was previously known as Obviously Creative but rebranded earlier this year.

ZDW, whose recent clients include Netflix, Warner Media, Amazon Studios, Sony Music and NBCUniversal, will retain all full-time staff as part of the deal, including global creative director Ipar L'Aimable, and all existing clients and projects will continue unaffected in both London and Los Angeles.

Following an initial consulting period, ZDW founder and current chief executive officer Jodie Waterhouse will depart the

Corporate deals at Andrew Jackson signal positive start to new financial year



Andrew Jackson Solicitors has facilitated a range of corporate transactions to end the financial year and made a positive start to the first quarter of the new one, despite the unique challenges created by the pandemic.

Recent transactions include advising Burton Roofing, the UK subsidiary of Cupa Group, on

its acquisition of Rinus Roofing Supplies, strengthening Burton Roofing's position as one of the largest independent specialist distributors of roofing materials in the UK.

Andrew Jackson assisted Arcus on its acquisition by ERM, one of the world's largest sustainability consultancies, which included a significant cross-border aspect.

The firm also advised CambridgeHOK, a specialist in the creation of automated vertical farming centres and commercial glasshouses, on its sale to current management team members Patrick Harte and Louis Bradley, who joined a major new shareholder, Netherlands-based global consortium Atrium Agri,

in leading the business in its future growth.

Andrew Jackson's corporate team was also delighted to advise the sole shareholder of DAM Structures, Phil Cook, on the sale of 100% of the share capital of the innovative steel fabrication company to market leading structural steel group, Severfield.

The team also advised the shareholders of Weldtite, the UK's leading cycle maintenance manufacturer, on their sale to incumbent managing director Paul Davis, via a management buyout. This year sees Weldtite become a new technical partner to Team DSM, a professional German cycling team at UCI World Team level.

Andrew Funnell (pictured), partner and head of the corporate team at Andrew Jackson, said: "Despite having faced unprecedented challenges over the past year, it is hugely rewarding that all kinds of businesses—including long-standing clients—have turned to Andrew Jackson as their trusted adviser, to help them achieve their ambitions."

"Having successfully adapted our service provision to overcome these challenges, and shown our ability and commitment to deliver exceptional legal services built around our clients' needs, we are looking forward to helping even more clients realise their goals."

Linetime and InfoTrack boost integration

Firms can now manage their conveyancing business digitally

Linetime and InfoTrack have announced productivity enhancements to their two-way integration, enabling conveyancing departments to achieve end-to-end conveyancing, digitally.

InfoTrack's File Importer enables users to select files held within the matter to be accessed, removing the hassle of saving to desktop, renaming, and uploading. Preventing the risk of misplaced or misfiled documents, all results are returned directly to the matter in Linetime.

Further enhancement ensures posting slips can be generated with the full transaction-related order information and posted directly to the client ledger on order or await approval on a line-by-line basis, reducing manual errors and missed disbursements. Built to optimise conveyancing workflows, the integration is already being embraced by Catteralls and Rogers and Norton Solicitors.

Kerry Ridley, practice manager at Catteralls, comments: "This integration makes life so much easier. It provides us with access to a suite of products that address the issue of time and resource. The Land Registry integration is particularly valuable. We were wary initially of promises relating to an integration, but the process was simple, and the results have been very positive for our firm. The smooth delivery was achieved by efficient communication with our case management provider. We have immediate access to property reports, Land Registry and SDLT services, which is already saving us lots of time, and all costs returned to the ledger within Linetime reduces errors and missed disbursements."

Bruce Faulkner, director at Rogers and Norton Solicitors, adds: "I wish this integration had been available years ago.



Conveyancing continues to be very busy, but the integration is saving our conveyancing and accounts teams huge amounts of time. We're not having to re-enter information and with costs coming back to the ledger automatically

it ensures we don't miss any payments when billing, which will save us writing off expenditure going forwards. It's a fantastic enhancement to the software, and between Linetime and InfoTrack, we can clearly see the benefits of performing end-to-end conveyancing processes digitally."

Speaking about the importance of integrations to firms, Scott Bozinis, chief executive officer of InfoTrack, says: "Firms working within a CMS must look to integrate, especially with the shift toward flexible working arrangements. More firms now operate early in the morning and late into the evening. Integrations by InfoTrack ensure activities by individual users are simple and accessible, but also recorded using automation, ultimately reducing errors and increasing productivity. These enhancements are fantastic for all parties progressing through a conveyancing transaction."

Adam Bullion, general manager of marketing at Linetime, says: "Firms using the integration are experiencing the benefits across all aspects of the conveyancing journey from instruction to post-completion. We have been particularly impressed with InfoTrack's Property Report and eCOS; products which both solve a lot of challenges that firms have been facing for some time. These enhancements apply real value to InfoTrack's offering within an integration, full of digital conveyancing products, meaning firms are focused on managing the business and not the software."

To find out more, visit www.infotrack.co.uk/integration.

Squire Patton Boggs in Leeds advises on £840m of deals in H1 2021

Squire Patton Boggs in Leeds has led on 36 transactions worth circa £840 million during the first half of 2021.

Headline deals included advising WM Morrison Supermarkets on the acquisition of Falfish, advising on the management buyouts of Hippo Digital and Ligentia Group, and advising Elaghmore on the £25 million acquisition of Orchard House Foods.

A Squire Patton Boggs team comprising corporate partner Hannah Kendrick and associates Louise Parker and Olivia Baccarella advised WM Morrison Supermarkets on the acquisition of Falfish, a family-owned wholesaler of sustainably sourced seafood based in Cornwall.

Corporate partner and UK head of private equity Paul Mann, together with partners Mae Salem and David Milne and associates Joshua Lodge, Nathan Bentley and Emily Downie, advised on the management buyout of leading digital transformation company Hippo Digital.

Mann also led the management buyout of international supply chain solutions business Ligentia Group, a deal that included its subsidiaries in Australia, Hong Kong, China, Vietnam and Poland. He was assisted by director Jayne Aarons,

senior associate Craig Pettit, and Downie and Baccarella.

Kendrick, assisted by senior associate Hannah Crosland and associate Joshua Headley, advised private equity fund Elaghmore on the £25 million acquisition of prepared fruit, fresh fruit drinks and desserts supplier Orchard House Foods from Hain Celestial.

"While pent up demand and anxiety around a potential tax increase in the Budget contributed to a bumper start to the year, activity is continuing and our deal pipeline is strong," commented Kendrick, who leads the Leeds corporate practice at Squire Patton Boggs. "There are an array of issues driving activity—whether trade, regulatory or technological change, the need to secure supply chains or address sustainability, businesses are having to adapt and evolve to position themselves for future growth."

Salem, who became a partner in the team on 1 May 2021, added: "We have had an exceptionally busy first half of the year and with sponsors increasingly looking at healthcare, life sciences and tech-focused investments, activity continues to look strong in these and other sectors as the private equity community seek to deploy their capital."

Schofield Sweeney advises Riverside Motor Group on latest acquisition



Sweeney advised Riverside on both the acquisition at Calder Park and lease of the premises in Barnsley.

Established in 1982, Riverside is an independently owned business trading from sites in Doncaster, Wakefield, and Hull. The group has a reputation for creating a warm, friendly environment, and providing an exceptional car buying and ownership experience.

Basharat Ali, partner in the commercial property team at Schofield Sweeney, said: "We are pleased to have acted on behalf of Riverside in their latest acquisition. The transaction required a quick turnaround and a team-based approach not only from our commercial property and corporate colleagues but also from external tax advisers and surveyors. I would like to congratulate Mark Denton and his team at Riverside on this latest acquisition and wish

Riverside all the best going forward."

Mark Denton, managing director at Riverside, said: "Despite the Covid restrictions, the team at Schofield Sweeney were on hand throughout. Acquiring the Honda site has given us the opportunity to further expand our footprint in the region. We will continue to invest in the business and build on our well established reputation."

Basharat Ali and Howard Jenkins (commercial property) and Angela Cashin and Ben Jackson (corporate) from Schofield Sweeney acted as legal advisers to Riverside.

Schofield Sweeney has advised on four significant transactions in the motor sector this year, including Ringways Motor Group and Smart Fleet Solutions.

Schofield Sweeney has advised Yorkshire-based Riverside Motor Group on its acquisition of Harratts Group's Honda site at Calder Park Wakefield for an undisclosed sum.

The deal includes Harratts's Honda dealership and assets at Calder Park, its former Kia showroom, and a lease of premises at Darton, Barnsley, for a period of 10 years.

Riverside will represent Honda for Wakefield and Barnsley and the Honda dealership will continue to operate from Calder Park in Wakefield. Riverside is retaining all existing staff.

Honda becomes the fifth franchise to join the growing Riverside family as the group also represents Volvo, SEAT, CUPRA, and Mitsubishi.

The corporate and commercial property teams at Schofield

LCF Law advises national timber group on sale



Yorkshire-based LCF Law has advised a national timber group, with a portfolio of businesses across the region, during its sale to a leading investment partnership focused on the acquisition of industrial companies throughout Europe and North America.

Rubicon Partners has acquired the share capital of Consolidated Timber Holdings Group (CTHG), a leading importer, distributor and manufacturer of timber products.

Companies within the group include Triesse, which is based in Sherburn in Elmet and is one of the UK's largest independent processors of wood-based panels and manufacturers of veneered and laminated boards.

Susan Clark (pictured), partner and head of corporate at LCF Law, advised the director-shareholders of CTHG, after previously guiding Triesse on a management buy-out 27 years ago.

Other companies in the group include MBM Speciality Forest Products, which has a base in Hull and imports and distributes

timber products, and Falcon Panel Products, which specialises in wood-based sheet materials, and has a depot in Normanton. CTHG's other companies are Compass Forest Products, Hoffman Thornwood and MBM Forest Products.

Rubicon's investment will facilitate an agreed ownership-management transition for the director-shareholders of CTHG under the guidance of newly appointed group chief executive officer Nick Cullen. Four of the five director-shareholders will remain at CTHG, providing continuity and assisting with the transition over a two-year period.

Clark said: "After originally advising Triesse's managing director, David Colman, when he led a management buy-out of the business in 1994, it has been a privilege to provide legal support and advice on the sale of CTHG."

Cullen said: "Rubicon has acquired CTHG due to the market opportunities, the significant potential to grow the group by investing in both the distribution and manufacturing sides of the business, and the increasing appeal of timber products as a sustainable material in the UK residential and commercial construction market. The Rubicon and CTHG teams look forward to continuing to work with current suppliers and customers in a seamless manner."

LEAP announces partnership with the Law Society

LEAP is a Law Society strategic partner for case management, accounting and other legal software



LEAP, the leading practice management software

provider, is delighted to announce a strategic partnership with the Law Society of England and Wales.

After a rigorous process of due diligence, the Law Society has

appointed LEAP as a strategic partner for case management, accounting and other legal software. This agreement will see the two organisations work in tandem for the benefit of the Law Society's 150,000 members, which includes all qualified practising lawyers in England and Wales.

Fiona O'Mahony, head of partnerships, the Law Society, says: "We are delighted to welcome LEAP on board as a strategic partner of the Law Society. An established provider of legal software, LEAP offers a leading, cloud-based, case management and accounting software, and through customer-led development and innovation, provides software solutions to support and benefit small to mid-sized law firms."

John Espley, chief executive officer of LEAP UK, comments: "We are extremely proud to work with the Law Society to support the legal profession in England and Wales. This strategic



LEAP

partnership is aligned with LEAP's vision to deliver the best technology solutions to enable law firms operate more effectively, to survive and thrive in these

uncertain times, and to make them more profitable. We are looking forward to meeting more of the Law Society members, showcasing our products at seminars and events and upholding the joint ethos of the two organisations."

Focused on the needs of small to mid-sized law firms and with more than 17,000 legal professionals using its software in the UK, LEAP is dedicated to developing legal practice management software that helps generate efficiencies, profit and improve service. The solution enables legal professionals to access integrated matter management, document automation and legal accounting from anywhere, 24/7, and from any connected device.

LEAP is committed to providing world-class practice management software. Innovation is at the heart of the company's research and development, with an annual global investment of more than £12 million per year. LEAP delivers industry leading software that is attune to the ever-changing needs of its clients.

For further information on the partnership visit www.lawsociety.org.uk/membership/offers/leap-legal-software.

Hudgell Solicitors makes 'locally loyal' commitment

Hudgell Solicitors has launched a new community programme that will focus on being 'locally loyal' by partnering with neighbouring businesses and organisations.

The law firm aims to ensure that, wherever possible, it invests back into the community in the locality of its two main operational hubs in Hull and Manchester.

Its new corporate social responsibility programme will focus on local partnerships and investment, an annual charity of choice, departmental charity support, and a benevolent fund and pro bono advice for clients in need with limited means.

Rachel Di Clemente, chief executive of Hudgell Solicitors, said: "As a business we have never lost sight of the fact that we have developed to become recognised as a top 200 law firm in the UK because we have been able to draw exceptionally talented and motivated people from within the communities we serve, firstly in and around Hull for 23 years and more recently in Manchester where our impact to local people is growing."

"We have found that the most successful and rewarding partnerships we have entered into have been those with local businesses and organisations, where we both come into it with a collective passion to do well for one another, and the locality. We want relationships with business partners to be collaborative, working together to support one another and sharing a common passion to do the very best for each other's clients."

"We see this as a collective responsibility to support our community and to ensure our clients benefit from the close relationships with our partners who truly understand our values and purpose."

Hudgell Solicitors already has a number of established relationships with local organisations, service suppliers and charities.

Its PR and media activities have been managed by Willerby-based Arrival Design and PR since 2013, most recently handling national media interest in cases including the Post Office Horizon Scandal and the Manchester Arena Inquiry.

Hudgell Solicitors has also partnered with Pace Communications, based in the Fruit Market, Hull, on a number of branding campaigns; Hull-based Eskimo Soup, which is bringing the firm's work to life through video story-telling; digital Marketing specialist 43 Clicks North; IT services firm Intrasource; and audio production specialist Engine 7.

The 'locally loyal' approach also runs through recruitment at Hudgell Solicitors and its commitment to upskilling those it employs.

Earlier this year, the firm launched a new training contract programme that supports trainees to earn and learn over two years as they complete a legal practice course (LPC) part-time, offering people a more flexible and attainable route into the highly-desired legal sector.

It also introduced a new 'associate' role within the business, positions to which 10 senior members of the legal teams in Hull and Manchester have been promoted, offering them greater opportunity and the chance

to progress their careers.

Di Clemente said: "Our aim is to have a positive impact within the community in every aspect of what we do. That will include how we recruit people into our firm and how we develop them when they are here."

"It will influence decisions as to the businesses we choose to work with long term, and ensure we support organisations which align not only with our own purpose and values, but also the aims, needs and aspirations of the wider community."

Hudgell Solicitors has long supported the P.A.U.L for Brain Recovery community centre in Hull, which it has provided dedicated support for those adapting to life after a brain injury. Sports clubs including the Electric Eels Powerchair Football Club, Barton Old Boys FC Bridlington Town FC and Hull Kingston Rovers have also been long-term partners.

The law firm recently revealed its 2021/22 Annual Charity of Choice to be Martin's Mountain, which is raising funds for the Spinal Injuries Association.

The charity was chosen in support of client Martin Hibbert, who was one of the closest people to the terrorist blast at the Manchester Arena in May 2017 to survive, suffering life-changing injuries that left him in a wheelchair.

He is hoping to raise £1 million to provide better support to people who suffer spinal injuries in the UK by climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in a custom-built Bowhead hand bike.

Hudgell Solicitors has not only pledged to support the cause, but raise £100,000 towards it.

Di Clemente said: "Martin is from Bolton which is of course local to our Manchester office and the SIA is a charity which is aligned to our focus of securing our clients access to organisations which give them the best chance at 'life after' injury."

"We have set ourselves the goal of raising £100,000 of the overall £1 million target and we will look to achieve this through a series of internal and external fundraising events, and through personal and corporate donations from people who, like us, want to make a positive difference to lives."

"Today marks the start of us setting our goals of being much more than a successful business. We are striving to be a successful local business, making a positive impact within the communities we serve in all that we do. If we achieve that, we'll continue to be successful."

**Hudgell Solicitors's
headquarters in Hull's
Fruit Market**



New Bradford office and heads of chambers for Broadway House



Rodney Ferm, Tahir Khan QC and Stephen Wood QC

Broadway House Chambers has recently moved from premises at 9 Bank Street to a newly refurbished office at Devere House on Vicar Lane in the Little Germany area of Bradford.

The new office at Devere House have been transformed to meet a new way of working in bright open-plan rooms for the barristers and clerks.

The office is fully equipped with state-of-the-art remote conferencing facilities and meeting rooms, helping clients access legal services throughout the UK. High-tech video and audio facilities can host conferences and hearings on platforms such as Zoom, CVP, Microsoft Teams and Skype.

Devere House has disabled access up to Broadway House Chambers's office on the second floor.

The new office is a two-minute walk from the city's respective Combined Court Centre and a five-minute walk to the Magistrates' Court.

Broadway House Chambers also has an office in the newly refurbished 1 City Square, Leeds.

In other recent news, the set has appointed Tahir Khan QC and Stephen Wood QC as joint heads of chambers. Rodney Ferm, who stepped down from the role in June, said: "I have enjoyed my term as head of chambers and I am delighted that chambers has taken the step of appointing joint heads as a team to lead us in the coming years".

Khan said, "Taking on the joint leadership of chambers is both a privilege and an honour for me. I can think of nobody better to share that responsibility with than Stephen, my friend for nearly three decades. We owe a debt of gratitude to Rodney Ferm for his stewardship of chambers and for maintaining the stability that is the hallmark of chambers. We hope to build on that stability in the years to come."

Wood said: "It is an honour to be elected to lead the chambers where I have spent my entire professional career but more so given that I will share that responsibility with a very dear friend and colleague in Tahir. We must pay tribute to Rodney Ferm who has led us all with skill, patience and good humour."

Lupton Fawcett earns Platinum Employer Partner accreditation

Yorkshire law firm Lupton Fawcett has achieved Platinum Employer Partner accreditation for the second time from the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP).

STEP members are lawyers, accountants, financial advisors and other professionals. The organisation has more than 20,000 members around the world.

Platinum Employer Partner accreditation is the highest level awarded by STEP within its Employer Partnership Programme and is for three years. The programme accredits trust and estate businesses' learning and development provision.

Lupton Fawcett was awarded the accreditation in recognition of its initiatives that demonstrate the importance it attributes to staff training, career development, and learning and development procedures.

Lupton Fawcett provides legal advice on all aspects of private client work, including wills, trusts and estates; lasting powers of attorney; Court of Protection; and personal tax planning advice, particularly to families who hold interests in family-run businesses.

Amanda Simmonds, senior associate in private client at Lupton Fawcett where she leads the business families team, and who is also deputy worldwide chair of STEP, said: "Many of our private client team are members of STEP in recognition of its commitment to promote high professional standards among trust and estate practitioners. We are proud to have achieved the highest standard of this highly respected, global and multi-disciplinary body—the award endorses the expertise Lupton Fawcett offers across all aspects of private client law."

Parklane Plowden plans refurbishment of Leeds city centre premises



Leeds-based barristers set Parklane Plowden Chambers has announced six figure refurbishment plans for its 11,000 sqft premises on Westgate in Leeds city centre.

The set is investing in a complete reorganisation of the chambers' internal space to create a high-quality new environment to support flexible working patterns and an increasing number of remote hearings.

The refurbished premises will feature a lounge and study to support agile working, and dedicated case rooms and phone booths for remote conferences and hearings.

There will be an external face lift for the building's entrance and flexible meeting rooms will also be introduced

alongside a south-facing roof terrace and bar. A new ventilation system will also be installed throughout the building to enhance airflow.

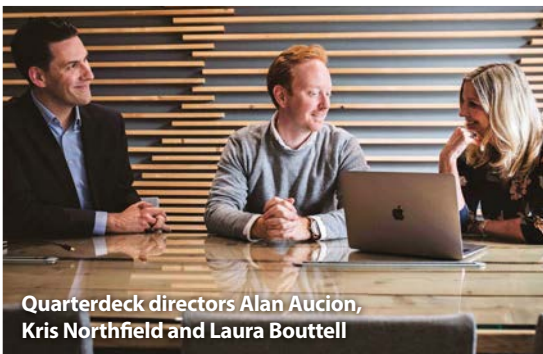
Refurbishment work is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. While the work takes place, Parklane Plowden will be temporarily relocating to Avenue HQ in Leeds.

James Murphy, head of chambers at Parklane Plowden, said: "Our goal is to further enhance our reputation as an excellent, vibrant and progressive chambers alive to the needs of its clients and colleagues. It is our shared purpose to make a positive difference in all we do through expert advice and advocacy, excellent client care, and by being the place where talented people want to work."

"That is why we are investing to create an excellent new working environment to meet the evolving needs of our colleagues and clients. It's a very exciting project and we are looking forward to moving into our newly-refurbished premises later this year."

Leeds-based Bowman Riley Architects designed the new workspace, which is being fitted out by Hurst Stores & Interiors of Bradford. Shelby Group, a construction consultancy based in Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, has been appointed to manage the delivery of the project.

Walker Morris invests in training to help tackle the challenges of remote working, with a focus on improving resiliency and wellbeing



Leeds law firm Walker Morris is investing in improving colleagues' performance and wellbeing by giving them access to CPD-accredited digital courses from training specialist Quarterdeck.

The training business specialises in leadership and people management programmes and started working with Walker Morris last October. Since then, the 450-strong firm has benefitted from Quarterdeck's user-friendly library of more than 100 video courses and lessons.

Quarterdeck also developed bespoke content for the law firm to help tackle the challenges of remote working post-Covid by focusing on improving resiliency and wellbeing. The training has seen strong engagement with Walker Morris colleagues having accessed more than 1,000 Quarterdeck videos over the last nine months.

Emma Wilkinson, learning and development manager at Walker Morris, said: "Having previously attended one of

Quarterdeck's taster sessions, I really liked their delivery style, and with colleagues facing the challenges of leading and managing hybrid/virtual teams during the last year, the company's online solution seemed to perfectly meet the training needs we had identified."

"We were aware that in this unique lockdown situation, the firm's leaders needed to pull different management levers as they coped with issues around remote supervision as well as providing support to colleagues with potential stress and mental health issues, including helping in areas probably not tackled before, such as resilience."

"The flexibility of options from Quarterdeck Online with the bite-sized on-demand nature of the courses, meant that our people could access the learning as a way to break up their day, at times that suited them. The playlists enabled me to handpick courses for different groups such as new managers and supervisors, trainees, etc."

"I was also really impressed by the 'Quick Coach' offering, a chat function that allows individuals to contact the Quarterdeck experts direct for advice about the issues they face and gain a valuable external perspective."

Laura Bouttall, managing director of Quarterdeck, added: "Walker Morris is a great example of a forward-looking business which is finding new ways of supporting its team as they adapt to the challenges of working in the post-Covid world."

"Our practical approach to training, with a focus on solving problems and changing patterns of behaviour, has been well-received by the firm and we are pleased to have been chosen by Walker Morris as its on-demand learning partner for developing leadership and softer skills."

Ibbotson Brady Solicitors celebrates 20 years in business



Leeds-based Ibbotson Brady Solicitors is celebrating 20 years in operation.

The law firm opened its doors in Leeds on 2 July 2001, offering niche advice on personal injury, clinical negligence and professional negligence litigation.

John Ibbotson (pictured), managing director of the firm,

reflected on the past two decades and what is to come: "It was a very exciting time for us, and it was not something people were really doing back then. The number of firms had remained fairly steady for years and many commented that we must be mad to strike out on our own."

"The model then was very much to keep your head down in the firm you were at and see if a partnership was in the offing, whether it really suited you or not. Going 'niche' was regarded as daft back then too."

Ibbotson was "pleased to see that times have changed considerably since then". He continued: "Setting up new firms has become much more common. It has been a good thing and somewhat of a disruptor to certain established firms, who had to raise their game to keep talent, or simply think

differently. Also, it is no longer remotely 'niche' to go 'niche'."

He put the success of Ibbotson Brady Solicitors down to making the client's experience and service levels priorities for the firm: "It takes time, but organic growth from reputation, recommendation and, quite simply, being really good to your clients works and then becomes a rock steady foundation. We always thought that was a far better solution than spending a fortune on constantly marketing fairly blindly for new clients, then doing an average job for them because resources are stretched."

"Over 70% of our new work comes from former clients and recommendations, often from fellow solicitors at other firms. We've never simply overfed the scattergun marketing beast, or what is often called the leaky bucket."

Ibbotson concluded: "What gives me the most satisfaction is the lovely people who have worked with us and the terrific job we have done for happy clients. If I perhaps didn't fully appreciate it at the time 20 years ago, I've certainly learned that good people are absolutely the most important resource and business imperative, as well as being a pleasure to have as colleagues and friends."

"We can look to the future with a rock-solid business base and see more exciting times as we grow and evolve. There have been many dabblers in our sector who seem to have lost their appetite or to wax and wane, so opportunities abound."

Blacks Solicitors reveals innovative return to work



Chris Allen, managing partner, and Ian Errington, a partner and head of the residential property team

Leeds-based Blacks Solicitors has consolidated 11 departments into its City Point office on King Street, in response to the unique demands of Covid-19.

Since moving into the office in 2017, the firm has grown significantly, with turnover increasing to more than £12.6 million in 2021, and staff numbers growing to 170.

The firm's residential property, IT, human resources and accounts departments have joined seven other teams, including corporate, commercial property, and employment, at the 11,000 sqft City Point office.

Chris Allen, managing partner at Blacks Solicitors, commented: "The restrictions placed on the UK due to the

pandemic have played a crucial role in us bringing the whole firm together under one roof. Working from home has been particularly effective and this has led to us adopting a modern flexible working model, giving staff the opportunity to hot desk when necessary."

The consolidation coincides with 19 new hires, including a paralegal in the wills and probate team, solicitors in the corporate and commercial and family teams, an associate solicitor and a partner in the commercial dispute resolution team, and a new partner in the commercial property team, bringing the total number of partners at the firm to 26.

The firm has invested in a range of updates to its headquarters, including additional desk and computer space, casual meeting booths, and a locker wall. Advanced technology has also been incorporated to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, including a purpose-built virtual hearing room, iPad and phone stands, and webcams throughout the office.

Allen continued: "Despite being extremely challenging, the pandemic has given us the unique opportunity to innovate our ways of working, and by responding to the situation quickly and decisively we've maintained our reputation of being ahead of the curve. I'm looking forward to seeing how our teams moving into City Point settle in, and the ongoing impact of our new flexible working strategy."

The office remains Covid secure with hand sanitiser stations, antibacterial wipes, face masks, and strict social distancing guidelines.

Since first moving into the City Point office in 2017, Blacks Solicitors has won numerous prestigious awards, including Medium Law Firm of the Year and Managing Partner of the Year at the Yorkshire Legal Awards.

Experienced business development director joins LCF Law

Kirsteen McFadzean has joined leading Yorkshire firm LCF Law as business development director.

McFadzean brings a wealth of experience to the role after previously overseeing business development at several regional, national and international law firms.

She is well-accustomed to harnessing a full range of business development activities to drive growth in the legal sector, as well as creating sales and marketing strategies spanning PR, events, seminars, sponsorship, advertising, online and social media.

McFadzean said: "LCF Law has a solid reputation as a growing and ambitious law firm, with a large team across offices in Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate and Ilkley, who are straight talking and always approachable."

"People buy people, so this is a great foundation to build upon. I am now looking forward to helping LCF Law realise its potential in the Yorkshire region and beyond, as the firm continues to grow its already impressive client base across its full range of services."

Simon Stell, managing partner at LCF Law, said: "Kirsteen has a long and successful track record working in business development within the legal industry and a thorough understanding of the inner workings of a full-service law firm."

"Following two acquisitions and our Leeds office expanding into new offices at 33 Park Place last year, along with several



high-profile hires, we plan to build on our successes and continue with our next planned phase of growth. Kirsteen is the ideal person to support this, and we're delighted to welcome her to the team and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead."

Knights moves to design-led York office space



Legal and professional services business Knights has started the fit out of its new office as it relocates its York base to new modern premises.

Knights is the first commercial tenant to occupy Hudson Quarter in Central York and supports the wider group's plans to significantly increase its presence in the city with the new 4,700 sqft office.

Hudson Quarter is a prestigious, sustainable development located opposite York's train station and includes new landscaped grounds in the heart of the city. In this landmark location, Knights is fulfilling its strategy to grow share in key

geographic markets outside London. The office will play a key role in supporting continued recruitment and growth in the region.

The Palace Capital developed scheme has been recently completed after a 26-month construction programme with Caddick Construction acting as main contractor. The mixed-use development also includes further office space, homes and landscaped grounds. This deal has set a record for York office rents at £25 per sqft.

Commenting on the new office and plans for growth in York, Jonathan Moore, partner at Knights, commented: "It's a privilege to work in York and we've enjoyed building our team organically over the past year with the recruitment of high quality partners who have been attracted to Knights due to its unique culture and business model, which offers energetic and commercially minded professionals outstanding opportunities to flourish in their careers."

"The new offices at Hudson Quarter provide us with a great runway for growth in the region, as we continue to make positive steps to build the leading, premium legal and professional services business outside London."

"Hudson Quarter really is exceptional, and we can't wait to welcome colleagues and clients to the building in the near future."

Neil Sinclair, chief executive of Palace Capital, added: "Knights is a forward thinking and ambitious business and so we are thrilled to welcome them to Hudson Quarter as our first commercial occupier."

"There has also been tremendous interest in the remaining office space and we feel that this development offers something unique in the city."

Jones Myers Oxygen for India fundraising exceeds £12k



A local Just Giving campaign supported by niche family law firm Jones Myers to help millions of Covid-19 sufferers in India has raised more than £12,000.

The Oxygen for India Emergency Appeal, which was set up by the British Asian Trust following the catastrophic rise in Covid-19 cases in India, has

received more than £5 million in donations to date.

The contributions are enabling the purchase of oxygen concentrators and other vital medical support. Wider campaign goals include increasing access to vaccinations, protecting children's wellbeing and safety, and rebuilding livelihoods.

Jones Myers partner Kate Banerjee (pictured) and her husband, Paul Banerjee, initiated the local appeal and are delighted with the heartfelt response it has received. Kate has conducted a virtual meeting with Richard Hawkes, chief executive officer of the British Asian Trust, and will continue to liaise with the trustees as the campaign evolves.

Kate: "The oxygen for India appeal has helped thousands of

people and continues to make a significant difference to so many. Positive signs and cause for hope are emerging and hard to reach communities are being helped."

"Planning is underway for the next stage and, as so many aspects of life in India and South Asia have been devastated and children left orphaned, there is much to do. The British Asian Trust will continue to provide help and support. Heartfelt thanks to everyone for your contribution and ongoing support."

The inspirational charity, which tackles poverty across South Asia to help people transform their lives, was set up in 2007 by the Prince of Wales and a group of British Asian business leaders.

All donations go directly towards funding the emergency appeal and assist those who require oxygen treatment or emergency support during the current wave of the pandemic in India.

Since the beginning of May, record daily infections and deaths are being reported from rural areas, home to more than 70% of India's 1.3 billion population where hunger, reduced income, and insufficient access to food are widespread.

You can support the Jones Myers Just Giving fundraising appeal here: <https://bit.ly/2Rsyik4>.

Tour de Ramsdens 3 raises money for Yorkshire Children's Centre



A team of cyclists from Ramsdens Solicitors took on the 100-mile route across the law firm's 14 offices in July in aid of Yorkshire Children's Centre.

The team started in York at 6am and finished at the Ramsdens Street office in Huddersfield at 7.30pm. They have raised an amazing £1,075 (inc Gift Aid) for the charity so far, smashing their original target of £500.

Yorkshire Children's Centre, which was set up by Brian Jackson more than 40 years ago, is dedicated to improving the lives of residents in Kirklees, offering their support to children, young people, adults, families and the elderly.

The charity has been fundamental in helping the local community throughout the pandemic, from offering befriending and victim support services to helping people get back to work.

Sara Altman, head of income and partnerships at Yorkshire Children's Centre, commented: "We would like to say a huge thank you to the team and all of the cyclists at Ramsdens Solicitors who have taken on the #TourDeRamsdens 100

mile cycle challenge to support the work of Yorkshire Children's Centre."

"As a registered charity, we rely on the business community to help us raise the £3m needed each year to provide our vital services for children, young people and adults across Kirklees. We are delighted that the team at Ramsdens have chosen to support Yorkshire Children's Centre, and are all extremely grateful for their kindness and generosity."

Jonathan Cornes, lead organiser of the charity event at Ramsdens that is now in its third year, said: "I want to say thank you to all the staff across Ramsdens for their hospitality and encouragement for the Tour de Ramsdens and to everyone who has supported us and donated."

"This event, now in its third year, is always so special but even more so this year, not just because of how little we have seen of each other at all of our offices but also after the hardships we have all faced. That's why we felt it was so important to support a charity that has helped so many families across the region throughout the pandemic."

Cheer for charities as Rollits resumes annual golf day



Two of Yorkshire's major charities breathed a sigh of relief as businesses took to the golf course at a fundraising event organised by law firm Rollits for the first time in nearly two years.

Dove House Hospice and Muscular Dystrophy UK expect to receive a significant cash injection from the proceeds of the Rollits Charity Golf Day, which took place at Brough Golf Club and attracted 20 teams from the firm, its clients and contacts.

The charities voiced their appreciation for the support of participants and for the businesses that sponsored prizes and each of the 18 holes.

Captains of the teams told of their hope that the event, which Rollits has been sponsoring and organising for more than 30 years and has raised almost £150,000 during this time, signalled a growing confidence to resume social calendars.

Brian Deehan of the East Yorkshire Branch of Muscular Dystrophy UK said: "The proceeds from this amazing 34th Annual Event organised by Rollits will continue to help fund research projects and improve care."

"Zolgensma, the first ever life saving gene therapy for a muscle condition, costs up to £2 million for the one dose treatment. Thankfully the first baby with spinal muscular atrophy to be helped in our region was treated at Leeds last month. We hope this is the first of many new therapies for the 70+ different types of neuromuscular conditions and this is how fundraising events like this can really make a difference to people's lives."

Jethro Shearring, fundraising coordinator for Dove House, applauded Rollits for adopting an innovative approach after last year's golf day was cancelled.

He said: "It wasn't possible to play 18 holes of golf so they came up with other fundraising ideas around the theme of 18, and people who would never go near a golf club were able to take part in other challenges."

"From a practical fundraising point of view, the landscape of Covid has affected the way in which businesses can help because there haven't been the numbers of people in the workplace."

"Traditional forms of fundraising such as dress-down days and other activities at work have been hugely affected and we have seen a big shift into virtual fundraising with the emphasis on staff and businesses pushing events outside the workplace."

"We have also been very reliant on businesses looking at what they would normally raise and making a one-off donation but that's not really sustainable for a long period of time. There is still a sense of uncertainty around when we will be able to resume our normal fundraising activities but fortunately businesses are still finding a way to make a difference."

Ian Jones, managing director of The Strata Group, led the first team to tee off. He said: "We haven't had a corporate event for a couple of years. This is the first one since 2019 and we've got another coming up soon so it feels as though life is starting to get its act together again."

Pat Coyle, director of marketing and client relations of Rollits, commented: "After the events of the last 15 months, it was an absolute joy and a relief for so many reasons to be able to go ahead with our golf day, which guests have told us is their first corporate event since the summer of 2019."

"We're so pleased with the response from businesses which have turned up to play and to sponsor the various elements of the event, and most of all we're delighted that we were able to support two very deserving charities which have found things very difficult over the last year."

"The atmosphere throughout the day was fantastic, with a real togetherness as everybody savoured the opportunity to enjoy themselves and support two great causes. We're already looking forward to next year and we send our best wishes to everybody else who is planning corporate events in the coming weeks and months."

Irwin Mitchell in Leeds educates Year 11 pupils on entering work

Legal experts from the Irwin Mitchell Leeds office have taken a virtual trip back to school to offer Year 11 pupils important tips as they begin their journey into the world of work.

A team of Irwin Mitchell lawyers held a special online session about CV writing and job interviews for students from Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School in Meanwood.

The purpose of the event was to offer advice on drafting a good quality CV, as well as to provide pointers on the best way to approach an interview. Staff from Irwin Mitchell even held a mock interview to highlight the key differences between good and bad techniques.

The session via Microsoft Teams was held as part of Irwin Mitchell's continued commitment to social responsibility and supporting the communities in which it is based.

Alan Ball, the serious injury lawyer at Irwin Mitchell's Leeds

office who organised the event, said: "Applying for jobs can be a nerve-wracking process, so our aim was to provide some clear guidance on what employers hope for from CVs and job interviews."

"These sessions are always fun and, while it was a little different to doing it in person, the online approach worked really well. Staff at Irwin Mitchell enjoy getting involved in community initiatives and we hope that the students enjoyed it too."

Dominic Kelly, head teacher at Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, said: "The Irwin Mitchell CV building session was informative, interesting and relevant for our Year 11 students."

"Exposure to these types of life skills events and experiences, working with companies such as Irwin Mitchell, are essential to prepare our young people, whether that be further or higher education, apprenticeships or the world of work."

Moving on up

A round-up of the latest appointments and promotions in Leeds and Yorkshire



Blacks Solicitors is marking another successful year for its litigation services with the appointment of three new hires, taking the total number of team members to 19.

James Martin has joined the team as an associate solicitor, with Aaron Johnson qualifying as a solicitor after completing his two years as a trainee at the firm. Johnson will officially qualify in October 2021.

Martin brings with him more than 10 years of experience in commercial chancery and contractual disputes, specialising in complex professional negligence, contractual and construction disputes. He will provide support not only to the commercial dispute resolution team, but also to the commercial and corporate client base across the firm.

Johnson is an example of Blacks Solicitors's ethos of investing in the talent of the future. He has completed three years in insolvency litigation as a paralegal, alongside his two years as a trainee in the corporate, employment, and property teams.

As a newly qualified solicitor, Johnson will specialise in insolvency and work alongside two senior lawyers in the commercial dispute resolution team.

Luke Patel, head of litigation at Blacks Solicitors, commented: "The demand for specialist litigation services has grown over the last 15 months. The combination of the pandemic, Brexit and the unstable economic climate have all been contributing factors requiring specialist legal support. The demand for these services was anticipated at the start of the pandemic and has expedited as we ease out of the lockdown restrictions, leading to us strengthening the litigation teams with new hires."

Alongside the appointments of Martin and Johnson to the commercial dispute resolution team, Blacks Solicitors has also invested in its property litigation service with the appointment of Luke Maidens as partner and head of the property disputes team.

Maidens's skill set spans all areas of complex property litigation with a particular expertise in the telecoms sector and also acting for property investor and developer clients. His personality,

wealth of experience and no-nonsense approach make him a perfect fit with the litigation team, and has enabled the firm to expand its offering with a view to onboarding new clients in the telecoms, investment and development retail sectors.

Patel added: "The strengthening of the litigation team and its specialist offering will ensure the continued delivery of our exceptional offering to meet demand and service our client base. I am confident that this expansion and integration of new talent will strengthen our teams to support our clients who are faced with continuing new challenges and 'distresses', fitting squarely with our vision."

"I wish all the new hires the best for the future and I am committed to providing the support they require to ensure their successful career development and progression at Blacks Solicitors."



The Leeds office of national law firm **Mills & Reeve** has appointed Ellen Lucas as an associate in the family team.

Lucas, who has joined the team from Jones Nickolds, advises on a wide spectrum of family law, including complex financial

matters, cohabitation and child arrangements.

She joins the family team at Mills & Reeve, which the firm says has a formidable reputation both in the Yorkshire region and nationally for its knowledge of family law and commitment to clients, at a time of expansion as it continues to secure new talent and client wins.

Philip Way, family partner and head of the Leeds office at Mills & Reeve, said: "It gives me great pleasure to welcome Ellen to the firm and I'm confident she will be a great asset to our family practice."

"The expansion of our team and the Leeds office is gathering pace and our reputation for being a great place to work is demonstrated by our recent ranking in the UK 100 Best Companies to Work For 2021 list which saw the firm placed 23rd, and also achieved an impressive second place in Law's 20 Best Firms to Work For. This is a fantastic achievement and will help attract more highly-skilled lawyers as we continue to grow our team."



Michael Wilcock has been offered a permanent role with **Wrigleys Solicitors** in Leeds following his successful training contract.

Wilcock joined the firm as a trainee in 2019 and undertook training contract seats in pensions, private client, charities and social economy, and property. He

found that his natural high-level technical legal ability perfectly matched the pensions team, which provides legal advice to employers and trustees.

He said: "Since joining the firm almost two years ago as a trainee, I have really enjoyed my time at Wrigleys. I honestly enjoyed every department that I worked in as part of my training contract and have learnt a great deal about various niche areas of law. The culture for trainees and staff generally at the firm is wonderful and I am really excited to see what the future holds now that I have qualified into the pensions team."

Kate Buckham, who jointly leads the pensions team at Wrigleys, commented: "We are really pleased to welcome Michael to the pensions team. He provided us with a fantastic level of support during his training contract showing enthusiasm and a genuine aptitude for the technical detail which is a key element of pensions law. We look forward to introducing him to our clients and getting him involved in on-going projects including GMP equalisation."

Sue Greaves, training principal at Wrigleys, added: "We aim to retain all of our trainees on qualification, but it's quite unusual for us to recruit into the pensions team in this way. This difficult specialism is very challenging for a newly qualified solicitor, and Michael has really risen to that challenge, demonstrating outstanding insight and a strong ability that give him a solid base from which to grow his career."



Berwins has added to its leadership team with the appointment of a new director.

Danielle Day, who leads the firm's family law unit, also joins the Berwins board.

The achievement is the latest in a string of promotions for Day, who has been recognised as a 'rising star' by legal sector guides and as a finalist at the Yorkshire Legal Awards.

Commenting on the appointment, senior partner Paul Berwin said: "Danielle has made a fantastic contribution to Berwins during her time with the firm. She has combined the development of a burgeoning professional reputation with initiatives which have advanced both the firm and the legal profession more widely."

"Latterly, she has proven herself to be a shrewd manager through leadership of a family law team ranked in the top tier of those in the region by industry guides. Her appointment to the board recognises that and her ability to deliver support the continued growth of the business."

The announcement comes after an impressive 12 months for Berwins, which has seen investment in people, processes and technology matched by growth in all areas of work.

Reflecting on the appointment, Day added: "As a firm, Berwins is in an exciting place to be. Having navigated the unprecedented circumstances the past 16 months brought, the business is in a great place to continue supporting clients with the highest levels of both service and advice."

"I'm thrilled to have joined the board at this time and am looking forward to continuing to contribute to the continued growth and development of the firm."



The growing costs and litigation funding team at **Clarion** is continuing to develop with three promotions.

Stephanie Kaye, who leads Clarion's court of protection costs service, has been promoted from senior associate to legal director. Over the last eight years with the firm, she has been instrumental in the practice's growth and continued success.

Having progressed through the CILEx qualified route, Kaye has helped the Clarion costs and litigation funding team gain recognition as a standout provider for Court of Protection costs work in the UK. As well as helping to manage numerous client relationships, she oversees seven of the firm's apprentices.

Kaye also uses her market and technical knowledge to enhance the firm's reputation by speaking at numerous national conferences and regularly presenting seminars.

She was recently appointed to the Working Group of the Professional Deputies Forum, a national not-for-profit body that acts as the 'voice' of professional deputies and campaigns for positive change in Court of Protection matters.

Paralegals in the costs and litigation funding team, Tanya Foran and Bridie Sanderson, have both been promoted to associates (non-qualified lawyers).

Foran specialises in Court of Protection Costs, with a focus on increasing recovery rates. She deals with general management bills, statutory wills and applications, and is skilled in preparing

succinct and accurate bills of costs for assessment.

Her colleague, Sanderson, has experience of preparing bills of costs for general management, deputyship applications and statutory will applications. She also assists with providing Office of the Public Guardian breakdowns and advises on Court of Protection billing-related queries.

Ella Wilkinson, who joined the team in 2018 as a non-qualified paralegal, has finished her paralegal apprenticeship with Damar and is now a qualified paralegal.

Andrew McAulay, partner and head of the costs and litigation funding team, said: "With our legal costs services continuing to go from strength to strength, I am pleased to see key members of the team progressing in this way."

"There's no doubt that Stephanie has been an important driver in our success, she's a great all-rounder as well as being recognised as a national expert in the field of Court of Protection Costs. Her career route makes Stephanie an inspiring role model and she has taken on a valuable mentoring and management role with more junior colleagues, helping them to enhance their skills.

"It's also satisfying to see two of our talented legal services team, Tanya and Bridie, being rewarded for their important contribution to the team—we look forward to them continuing to develop their careers with Clarion."

Clarion's 24-strong Costs and Litigation Funding team specialises in the areas of court of protection, commercial litigation and personal injury/medical negligence costs claims. It deals with the full spectrum of legal costs work, including costs management and detailed assessments.

The team acts for both the paying or receiving party and is regularly instructed directly by lay clients. It supports more than 200 law firms across the UK.

Ramsdens has promoted nine team members across a range of legal services.

The promotions include two new partners, three senior associates and four associates.

Taking on their new role as partner are Helen Cain from the firm's child care department and Sarah Hodgkinson from its wills, trusts and probate department.

Christopher Annable in commercial property, Jolene Briggs in

conveyancing and Michael Robinson in wills, trusts and probate have all been promoted to senior associate.

The four new associates are Jennifer Slater in wills, trusts and probate, Nicola Rhodes in child care, Rachel Sharp in clinical negligence and Rhys Craddock in commercial property.

Commenting on the promotion, Cain said: "I am delighted to have become a partner at Ramsdens. I am looking forward to the challenges my new role will bring and my aim is to continue to represent my clients to the best of my ability and to promote Ramsdens as one of the leading firms in Yorkshire."

Hodkinson added: "I see this as very much a reflection and recognition of the hard work and commitment shown by the whole team. Over the last 15 months we have experienced an unprecedented increase in business from both new and existing clients, whilst continuing to provide an exceptional level of service, despite the challenging working environment. I look forward to continuing to develop the private client business at Ramsdens, as we hopefully return to a normal way of living."

Commenting on the new promotions, Paul Joyce, managing partner at Ramsdens, said: "Congratulations to all of our colleagues on their achievements and we wish them every success on the next stage of their careers at Ramsdens. The last 15 months have been incredibly challenging for all of us... these promotions play a strategic role in creating further opportunities for growth across our firm."

Womble Bond Dickinson has confirmed a number of senior promotions across its UK offices, including new partners Fiona Graham and Andrew Hirst in the firm's Leeds office.

Graham joined the firm's property disputes team in 2005 and specialises in commercial property litigation, advising both landlords and tenants across a wide range of sectors on complex contentious property matters. She works across both Womble Bond Dickinson's Leeds and Newcastle offices.

Hirst is a projects and procurement lawyer with more than 13 years of experience advising on public sector contracts and public procurement. His key specialisms include heat networks, leisure, waste and PFI handback.

The good news in Leeds is part of a wider raft of promotions across Womble Bond Dickinson's offices in the UK, including seven partner and six legal director promotions. This also follows





the promotions of 23 new managing associates and associates last month, including four in Leeds.

Jonathan Blair, UK managing partner at Womble Bond Dickinson, commented: "Congratulations to all of our new partners and legal directors, whose hard work, commitment and contribution to the growth of our business deserves to be recognised and celebrated."

"We're proud of the incredible talent we've developed at the firm. People are at the heart of what we do and we want them to enjoy long and successful careers with us. This is why we make it our priority to ensure everyone has the opportunity to develop, grow and be rewarded for their success."

This year's partner promotions follow a number of senior hires across the firm, with new partners Kathryn Wood (real estate, Leeds), Deborah Ramshaw (public sector, Newcastle), Jessica Tresham (construction, London and Southampton), Will Ford (private client, London), Paul Mason (real estate, Edinburgh), and James Radcliffe (private client, Bristol) joining the firm since May 2020.

Womble Bond Dickinson recently announced the election of its new UK managing partner, Paul Stewart, who will succeed Jonathan Blair at the end of his current term in early 2022.



Rollits has promoted one of its specialist employment lawyers to partner.

Caroline Neadley, who joined the firm in October 2017, steps up from the role of associate having performed exceptionally well and contributed to all aspects of the employment team's success.

Neadley started her career in 2002 and spent 11 years in private practice, specialising in employment law, before joining the legal department at Humberside Police in 2013 as its in-house employment law solicitor. Her duties included advising the chief constables as part of a 10-strong team of lawyers covering the Humber region and South Yorkshire in a collaboration between both forces.

Neadley was promoted to the position of deputy force solicitor before making the decision to return to private practice with Rollits.

Since joining firm, Neadley has worked across the firm's Hull and York offices, dealing with all aspects of employment law, including discrimination, unfair dismissal, TUPE, employment tribunal claims, settlement agreements, contracts of employment and senior executive service agreements.

Within the firm, along with head of HR Linda Cook, Neadley leads the Employee Forum. The group spearheads employee engagement and staff wellbeing at Rollits, which is a fundamental part of the firm's commitment to supporting its employees and which has been key to keeping colleagues

connected while working from home.

Ed Jenneson, head of employment at Rollits, said: "Caroline has gained significant experience in a number of different sectors during her career and developed a unique understanding of both the public and private sector business landscape including education, not-for-profit and manufacturing."

"At a time when the employment team's workload has been complex and demanding, she has continued to be a real asset to the firm, her colleagues and our clients."

Neadley, who lives in Hessle, balances her professional career as a solicitor with being a busy mum-of-two, a governor at Swanland Primary School and a long-serving committee member of Hull women's networking group Women in Business.



Gateley Legal has announced four promotions across its Leeds office.

Keelie Evans has been promoted to partner in the residential development team and Gemma Irving has been promoted to senior associate in the construction team.

Sarah Burgman and Deirdre Lindsay have both been promoted to the role of associate within the residential development team.

The four promotions in Leeds are in addition to a further 40 promotions across the legal and professional services group, Gateley's Birmingham, London, Manchester, Reading, Guildford, Leicester, and Nottingham offices.

Andrew Johnson, partner and head of Gateley's Leeds office, said: "These promotions are a positive result at the end of a challenging, but ultimately successful year and it is apt that three of them should be within the residential development sector, along with Gemma's in construction, as two industries which are experiencing a real uplift in activity across Yorkshire."

"Keelie, Gemma, Sarah and Deirdre have all gone above and beyond for the business and their clients, demonstrating in abundance, our Gateley Team Spirit which are the shared values which underpin our culture here at Gateley. Every one of these promotions is extremely well deserved."

It's been a positive start to the year for Gateley's Leeds office, with the residential development team advising Lovell Partnerships on a joint venture agreement with Together Housing to create 550 new homes. This is in addition to the appointment to the legal panel of UK nursery brand retailer and manufacturer Mamas & Papas.

The office has also welcomed senior associate David Strafford and associate James Staniford within Gateley's specialist property consultancy business, Gateley Hamer, while Gateley Legal has also added to its ranks with the appointment of intellectual property partner Ed Meikle.

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For every job, there is a tool

For law firms, the trick is knowing which is the right tool and how to use it to their best advantage, says **Andy Clarke**, the new chief technology officer at radar

In your view, what are the biggest challenges facing law firms right now in terms of customer facing technology and internal systems?

I think that the biggest challenge is the misguided belief, which we see in a lot of places, such as the national press, social media, politics, business and from thought leaders, that law firms can rely on technology to create a utopian future all by itself; that somehow, we can just plug and play without having to do anything else, without having to put in the work. It's not like that—it's an enabler, a tool for us to use, and it's going to need a lot of other elements aligned with it to deliver real solutions to customers.

We've also seen—and this is perhaps symptomatic of the sector as a whole—a lack of representation or understanding of the customer leading to incorrectly designed transformation programmes.

I also think that there is a real lack of understanding both of the important differences between customer experience (CX) and customer service experience (CSE) and the way in which they depend on each other.

I've noticed that for many firms, there seems to be a lack of cohesion when it comes to the customer—few processes and structures within the firm are customer-centric in their design and purpose.

Because of this, there is a lack of understanding of how the customer sees things, what they need from their experience. In the legal sector, CX tends to be designed the wrong way around; from the inside out, with this erroneous assumption that the customer should want what the firm chooses to give them, rather than the opposite. The law firm has to give the customer what they want and build the solutions around that.

There's little or no examination of what the customer really wants from their experience. Right across the sector, the voice of the customer (VOC) is being ignored or treated as a small part of the equation, and as such, there is no insight, no analytics available to draw the roadmap of how to build CX that delivers what's needed—from both sides of the equation.

That also leads to a situation where for many firms, there's an inability to anticipate and meet—or even contemplate the existence of—customer expectations that arise from non-legal CX. For example, Amazon, Facebook and Uber. They are really leading the race when it comes to developing new areas of CX and setting the agenda, the trail that others need to follow.

Because a lot of firms haven't caught up with modern day

channels of contact, they're not aligned with where the crucial conversations are happening and where the latest thinking around CX is going. WhatsApp, LiveChat and other new social media platforms—it sometimes seems like the people who make the key decisions within law firms disregard these channels and how they influence the overall customer experience.

All of this feeds into a fundamental lack for many firms of a single view of their customers. They don't have the ability to join the dots internally and see how everything fits together. It leads to decisions being taken with a lack of information.

Another thing I think that's a problem for firms that pay lip service to customer facing technology—or even those who want to try and adopt it but don't know how—is that poor delivery of self-service capabilities means that customers end up going somewhere else to find what they want, or they have to contact the firm directly to resolve their issue.

Just as bad, in its way, as firms that have little or no CX and customer facing technology are those that have developed a system—or perhaps bought one—several years ago and the attitude persists that the technology is there, the work is done, the customer is happy and nothing needs to change. That's a fatal error.

Technology moves on so quickly that systems can be out of date in a matter of years, even months if the wrong decision is made in purchasing. The legacy system that's not aligned with how modern customers think and work—that's going to seriously affect the CX and could end up harming the reputation of the firm that hasn't given up, or, for whatever reason, won't give up, the way they've always done things. That attitude is going to hinder a firm's efforts to evolve, even if the will is there, at certain levels, to move forward.

There may be an attitude of tinkering what's there rather than starting from scratch and building something that, firstly, reflects where customers are at and how they want to interact with the system, and secondly is future-proofed so that it can be a simple matter to update and evolve alongside the priorities, life and work of the customer. Such is the importance of data these days that the integration of that data and using it to lead business decisions from legacy systems can be a challenge.

How well placed are most law firms to deal with these challenges? Is there much catching up to do?

There is an incredible amount of catching up to do that goes beyond just getting up to speed with the latest technology.

I think it actually needs a total cultural shift within organisations, moving away from the way that they've done business in the past, in order to become really customer-centric and digitally focused.

But it's important to remember that within that seemingly simple statement, there is an immense amount of work to be done, some of which will prove more difficult. Processes, governance, controls, channels, leadership—and, most importantly and most difficult—people need to be aligned.

The leap from where firms are now to where they need to be in the future, with digital teams, contact centres, CX experts, data and analytics experts, understanding of CX, journeys, and VOC is going to be huge, and I worry that some firms may not realise just what's going to be required of them to make the change. When they do realise this, they may baulk and hesitate—yet they must change if they're to survive and prosper.

For many firms, which have been happy to remain in that halcyon land where things are done just as they've always been done, there will be years of catching up to do just to bring them to where we are now, and once they've reached that point, they'll have to begin again as technology will have moved on, always a few steps ahead of them. The smart move will be anticipating the curve, future-proofing their new systems, rather than just an endless cycle of catching up with a future that's always just out of reach.



How important is the digital client experience becoming to the legal sector? And are there lessons that law firms can learn from other sectors, such as financial services?

It's not just important—it's paramount to the success of law firms as they move into the future. We have to align with the expectations of Generation Z, Generation Alpha and beyond, but at the same time bear in mind that preceding generations will all have their own idiosyncratic ways of using technology and their own expectations of what experience they are looking for.

It's important to bear in mind that when customers are forming their opinion on the experience they have with their law firm, they're not comparing it with other law firms. I think nine out of

10 customers won't have had dealings with any other law firms; using the law is something that people rarely do and when they do, they find a firm they like and stick with it. The yardsticks that customers will use to judge the performance of law firms will be the experience they have of other organisations they use on a daily basis, such as Amazon, online banking, Uber, Domino's, Zara, ASOS and dozens of other apps and websites whose CX is predicated on a totally different model from law firms.

Going from this, the customer is not just going to judge their law firm on how easy it is to do business with them when things are going well, but what happens when there's a problem. In short, how is the firm's customer service department?

This is where I see law firms facing the biggest problems. Many

don't see this as a key function of their business and yet it cuts across all digital and human interactions.

The law is complex, couched in strange language and unfamiliar concepts. It can be extremely daunting getting involved with it—and that's often not a matter of choice—and it's important that customers' experience revolves around simplicity, and they are put at ease as soon as they first contact the firm. They need to be reassured that not only are they in safe hands, but that they understand, and are kept up to date with, developments in their case. Those updates and information need to be couched in language that the customer can understand. Lawyers often write as if for other lawyers, not the layman, so they need to take a step back and consider how the customer is going to interpret what they've written.

Rradar is pursuing a digital transformation roadmap—what examples can you give for other law firms to learn from? Are there any key dos and don'ts?

One thing I have learnt over the years is that a lot of companies start their transformation with a vision of what they think the customer wants. Passion can sometimes override practical considerations and they end up believing that their way is unquestionably best and that the customers will see that and beat a path to their door. A bit like the quote in *Field of Dreams*, "if you build it, they will come", which can be misleading if what gets built is not actually what the customer wants. And how do we find out what the customer wants? It seems logical to actually ask them but it's surprising how few firms do this before they commit to significant and expensive digital transformation projects.

It is also important when scoping out a digital transformation initiative, that law firms shouldn't compare themselves to other companies in their sector—their peers, their direct competitors—there's no point limiting the benchmarking exercise in that way, because those companies will be facing the same issues.

You need to look beyond just the legal sector, at what the unicorns and leaders in the other sectors are doing and use that as your benchmark. These are the ones that are busy disrupting the status quo, not just in their own speciality area or industry, but right across the world, in almost every aspect of life. Jeff Bezos started a delivery company but now there's not an area of modern life Amazon hasn't influenced. Steve Jobs designed a computer and now millions of people carry Apple's latest product in their pockets and can't imagine life without it. The unicorn leader doesn't just exploit opportunities, they create them, seeing the connections nobody else does, taking the risks that need to be taken,

Can a law firm do that? Can it be so influential? I think the answer is yes, definitely.

For obvious reasons, the legal sector is heavily regulated, but some firms tend to use this as an excuse for not embracing radical change and evolving with their customers. This doesn't make sense if you look at it closely—the banking industry is, if anything, even more heavily regulated than the legal sector and yet they're making all the running with digital banking initiatives and their CX is moving at a significant pace, setting out a pattern for other regulated environments where CX evolution is an issue.

Start small and scale. There is no point in aiming for a big bang to change the world when the infrastructure and

foundations are broken, it's just not sustainable. The priority should be to build an achievable plan that can scale and expand as things develop.

Some firms think that a transformation will be a quick and cheap fix to the problems they're facing. A properly designed programme will take time to plan and put into action, and a lot of resources, not just financial but human capital as well. Things may be rocky at first as the change starts to affect all aspects of the firm's culture and performance and there may be those who get nervous that great results aren't immediately forthcoming. A thorough and comprehensive transformation takes time and effort but it's always worthwhile doing it right.

Do you anticipate further modernisation of the legal sector down the line, to future-proof against events such as pandemics?

Definitely! In 2019, we were planning for Brexit and we all thought that was going to be the biggest challenge facing the country. The future is always uncertain and those who plan otherwise lay themselves open to nasty surprises. The pandemic has been a wake-up call to many sectors, not least from a workforce perspective and how quickly they have had to adapt to home working to survive.

Security across the board remains a significant challenge to the legal sector with cyber attacks on the rise. One thing we have noticed during the pandemic and the lockdowns is that cyber security has come to the fore. A lot of people working remotely have found that they are being targeted by scammers, exploiting uncertainty, worry, and a lack of knowledge and awareness about cyber threats. These attacks are on the rise and it's a significant challenge to the legal sector, which handles large amounts of personal information. No organisation should stand still and think that somehow, they're safe. Cyber crime is constantly evolving new tricks and ways of attacking businesses and companies, but equally, there is new tech and ways of combating it.

The legal sector is really at the start of its journey towards modernisation. Once it gets going, that will start a cycle of continual evolution—as long as companies don't start to assume that they have reached a certain stage and can stop there for 30 years, resting on their laurels. Only those companies who embrace the digital era correctly and focus on a culture of continual improvement will survive whatever the future has to throw at them.

Embracing the digital era also means keeping up to date with the rise of new technologies, such as AI, which I think will play a significant part in the evolution of the legal sector. We're only seeing the start of what it can do for law firms. In addition, industry experts such as Bernard Marr, Ronald van Loon and Kirk Borne are doing some significant work, and Tamara McCleary is exploring the issues surrounding the use of big data and AI, which is where we are likely to be seeing major developments in the next few years and where our direction will take us.

These new offerings have to be embraced in the right way to enable firms to keep ahead of the curve. Grabbing the new shiny thing and thinking that it will solve all your problems is, as I have mentioned, a misconception about what technology is and how it can help firms keep pace with customer demand. For every job, there is a tool—for law firms, the trick is knowing which is the right tool and how to use it to their best advantage.



Junior Lawyers Leeds



Back to life, back to reality

Kate Imeson, sports representative for Leeds JLD and commercial solicitor at Travlaw, weighs up the pros and cons of returning to the office

If you were asked to visualise the legal profession, what would spring to mind?

Stereotypically, you might immediately think of people in suits, corporate meetings, modern offices, lawyers speaking in legal jargon and briefcases full of papers. And it's more than likely that this is what you visualised as a law student, too.

Even if you aspired to be part of a flexible, friendly law firm, it is still unlikely that you pictured long lie-ins, pyjamas, working from a dining room table and signalling to the postman to stop knocking on the window when you're on a client call. Nevertheless, this is where we are in 2021, coming out the other end of a countrywide lockdown.

Having been in this lockdown routine for over a year, you may be a bit apprehensive about going back into the 'real world' and heading back to the office. Maybe a few stereotypical thoughts about the legal profession will come whizzing back and make you feel hesitant about your return. That is completely understandable—and remember, you are not alone.

That said, there are some really good benefits to going back into the office and getting back into old routines. Here at the Leeds Junior Lawyers Division (JLD), we have set out some 'pros' and 'cons' below, to help weigh up your thoughts about returning to the office.

Pros

- You will be able to see your colleagues in person and interact with them in a social setting—not over Zoom or Teams!
- You will have a change of scenery from your standard work from home desk—think of the views from your office and surrounding areas.
- You will be able to gradually re-engage into 'normal' post-pandemic life.
- You will increase your confidence and social skills once again.
- You will be able to go to after work drinks and social events.
- You might have more motivation in the office where everyone else is also working.
- You will be able to have spontaneous conversations about work (or life) without having to pick up the phone.



- You will be able to ask your team questions, no matter how small or silly, which you might hesitate to ask over video call or email.
- You will increase your daily step-count walking to or around the office, which will benefit your overall fitness.

And, of course, you will be able to attend Leeds JLD events after work!

Cons

- You might initially find the office quite distracting, but the atmosphere might be fun.
- You might have to commute again, but you can put your favourite songs on for the journey.
- You might get tired more easily, but you will feel productive and positive about it!
- You might not be able to spend as much time at home, but when you do, you will appreciate it more.
- You might spend more on take-out coffee and lunches, but you will be helping out local businesses.

When you weigh up your own pros and cons before returning to the office, be mindful of your own feelings and personal transition. Not everyone will be feeling the same. You might want to speak to your employer about their intentions for returning to work, how often this will be, how you feel about it and whether there will be any changes in the office on your return. Yet one of the main benefits we see at Leeds JLD is the restart of in-person JLD events!

Coming up in the JLD diary, our netball leagues will be starting soon and we have the JLD Summer BBQ at the Tetley in Leeds on 12 August. We also have our Strava competition along with quizzes and Christmas balls. We encourage all junior lawyers to come along and once again enjoy being part of, and socialise with, the network of amazing lawyers in Yorkshire.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Leeds JLD, or would like any further information about any of our upcoming events, please do contact us by visiting www.leedsjld.com or emailing us on leedsjld@outlook.com. We hope to see you all soon!

A compromising position



Patrick Walker is an independent mediator:
www.imediate.co.uk

Patrick Walker finds there is (usually) more to life than bird droppings

For several weeks I have watched the pile of bird poo on the roof of my cherished Citroën 2CV get deeper and deeper. It's not that I haven't tried to remove it, it's just that the family of seven swallows nesting above it are getting larger and messier by the day. But then yesterday, as I sat in the garden 'testing' my latest purchase of pale ale, the clear blue sky was suddenly the setting for a quite incredible aeronautical display. The cool of the evening combined with an abundance of flying insects, and possibly also the stench from the overcrowded nest, meant the time had come.

The youngsters' first few wing movements were tentative, but then wheee! We can climb, turn, dive, almost collide, return to the nest at

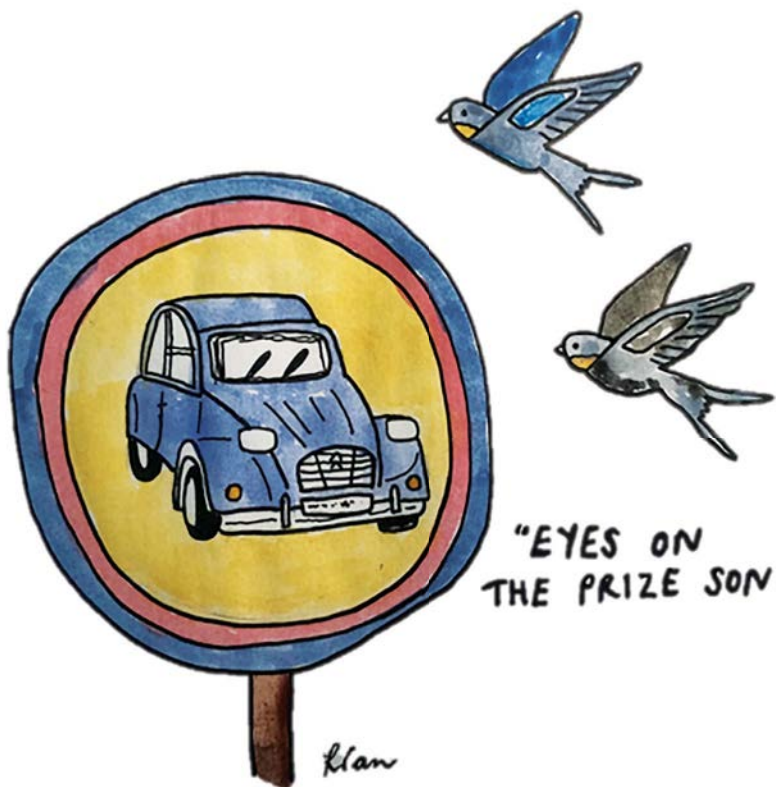
breakneck speed, then return to the sky and another mouthful of midges. Only the smallest perched on the barn beam, beak chattering with a look that said, "I'm just not ready". But a few minutes later, he too was high in the sky, combining a re-enactment of the Battle of Britain with a family supper.

As a mediator I am forever reminding parties of the advantages of compromise, but I am wondering whether I listen enough to my own advice. It was too easy to focus on the pile of swallow poop, aware that it would allow a nest of youngsters to hatch, but not quite getting that if I could be patient, I might witness something that would render the inconvenience an utter irrelevance.

The more I think about it, there are few good things for which there is not a price to be paid, or to put it more positively, most costs, stresses and inconveniences are borne because there is a worthwhile upside. Dogs spray the kitchen with a fine mist of muddy water but greet you so enthusiastically every morning that a really bad night's sleep can be put to one side. Work can be really tough, but it is rare that clients don't bring humour and a new perspective into the day, not to mention fees that open the door to the pleasant indulgence of a new piece of bicycle equipment!

Perhaps, before deciding how to address anything 'bad' or difficult, it would be helpful to identify whether it is just unwelcome and to be avoided, or represents a compromise necessary to achieve a better end. When you look for examples I think it becomes clear that the unpleasant almost always has a positive side. We mourn the dead but only because they and we have enjoyed their lives. We sweat up the mountain to enjoy the views, and I spent several hours removing bird droppings from my classic car as the price of witnessing an amazing display of nature.

So everything's fine now? Well not quite. The car was shining and pristine but apparently if you are a young swallow, a Citroën wing mirror is the place to hang out—eau de poop—because they're worth it!





A creative, problem solving, complex-clause-writing gift of a job

Anna Newport, director of Newport Land and Law, on entering law, the firm's new internship programme and more

Tell us a bit about your background and career—how did you get into this area of law?

I had no ambitions to be a lawyer when I was growing up. I was a good writer and fancied the idea of being a journalist. My family had, perhaps, hoped for medical school or dentistry for me. Maybe they just hoped that I would stop talking. My only experience of property law was when I bought my first house in my late teens, and the experience was absolutely terrifying. When I decided that journalism might not be for me, and I still needed to pay the mortgage, I got a job in a solicitor's firm as a secretary because my best friend worked in that environment, and it paid well.

The writer in me wishes I had a glamorous back story to explain my love of the law, but the truth is that I just happened upon it. I ended up working in the commercial property department of one of the big six in Leeds, working for a lady who saw something in me and who gave me more responsibility. At another firm, one of the partners decided that I would be trouble if she didn't find something to do with my brain and sent me off to do an LLB. She also told me that

being a solicitor was like running a catalogue: just form filling and helping people. I went, I studied, and out of everything I learned, it was still the property law, rooted in the past, telling its stories to the future, that held my attention. The rest (as I believe the cliché has it) is Home Economics.

Why did you decide to set up your own firm? And can you give us some insight into the process?

It's a difficult question to answer without sounding rude and ungrateful to the places I have worked before, but the truth is that I had just come to the end of a long road of working for other people in a way that wasn't right for me. Property law is broadly considered to be purely transactional, as well as the lowest common denominator of the legal profession, but that wasn't my take on it. To me, it is a creative, problem solving, complex-clause-writing gift of a job—but you can't say things like that when you have to bill four times your salary, and you are only allowed to colour within the lines. I don't dress like that, I don't think like that, and I don't work like that, and I knew that I wasn't the only one.

I handed my notice in, left my job, frightened my husband half to death, and started writing again. I did Mary Poppins-style locum work occasionally to pay my bills. But the work kept coming to me, and I kept referring it on until so many clients had pleaded with me to set up on my own (with one offering to pay my insurance) that I thought I might give it a go. I didn't have a big plan, but I thought I would get to be me.

As to the process, you had better like form filling if you want to set up a firm, and if you want to set up a conveyancing firm, you had better like trying to make sure you meet lenders' criteria to go on panel, or at least have a good firm to refer your lender work to (who won't try to take your clients).

Darren Sylvester and my friend Rachel Roche literally wrote the book on starting a law firm, which was published by the Law Society of England and Wales, and I was lucky enough to contribute to it as a case study. It's well worth a read if you are thinking about going down that road.

What are the major issues affecting residential and commercial property right now? Is there still a pandemic impact?

Property work is a totally different world from my early years in the profession. It's a far more dangerous environment, for one thing. Property fraud was almost unheard of, and I wince now to think of the years when we didn't even think to take ID for people. Over the years, there have obviously been peaks and troughs with recessions and boom times, but I have never experienced anything like the last 15 months. The stamp duty holiday made complete sense to me. The country's money is tied up in its real estate, and getting that going got the economy going. How it will work out, in the long run, remains to be seen, of course, but the pandemic is still having an effect.

People want to move: bigger houses so they can work more efficiently from home, smaller houses so that they don't have the financial burden and can travel more, investment properties to secure themselves in an uncertain future, and it looks as though that might be the case for a long time to come.

In property news, leasehold reform seems to be the big-ticket item, along with environmental/clean energy stuff in respect of houses and commercial premises. The shadow of Grenfell and combustible cladding, on which I write courses for the Law Society, is going to affect the sale of apartments for years to come. It's an exciting time to be a land lawyer, but that doesn't come without challenges.

Tell us about your new internship programme—what are you aiming to achieve, and how is it going?

Lots of people don't know that they can be solicitors or that they could love the law. I should know, I was one of them. But people should be able to have a crack at it before they bankrupt themselves by going to law school. We have an undergraduate, a postgraduate and a Kickstart person (who has had no legal ambition before) with us now. It costs us a lot in time spent, but it brings us a lot of joy. You don't grow as a business if all you are is a load of 40- and 50-somethings telling one another hilarious

jokes about the 1936 Public Health Act, although frankly, we might grow in trouser size if the amount of biscuits we consume is anything to go by.

If we can inspire a younger person to find their way into the profession, or indeed, I suppose, if we manage to put someone off who would have been miserable as a solicitor, then that is a reward worth having. Besides which, we might find a superstar, and they might stay with us, which is probably another way of saying that there is no such thing as altruism.

Are there any areas of the legal profession where you're passionate about seeing change?

I giggle every time someone asks me if I am passionate about property. I imagine someone having an amorous interlude with a bungalow. This is because I have the sense of humour of a 13 year old. I also think passion for work is overstated. I would describe myself as an enthusiast, but that's semantics for you.

I just bought a bag that bears the legend, "Ask Me About My Feminist Agenda", which is a bit tongue in cheek, but the truth of the matter is that a lot of the senior profession is still male, pale and stale. Just saying this suggests that the middle-aged lady solicitors are rude, crude and in a mood, but what I feel really feisty about is a bit of balance, some true equality. I long for the day when the Solicitors Regulation Authority doesn't feel inclined to ask you about your sexual orientation or the colour of your skin or the education levels of your parents, not because nobody cares, but because it simply doesn't matter anymore.

We are a long way from that, and while there are more people from the BAME community and more women than ever in the profession, we are a long way from where we need to be. I am not a fundamentalist by any stretch of the imagination, but investing people with the belief that they can be whatever they want to be and opening those avenues to them is so important for all of us.

On the subject of your local area and given your focus on property and land, how would you sell it to a junior lawyer or recent graduate looking for their next/first step into law in Yorkshire?

I do have a naughty tendency to describe the industrial heartlands of West Yorkshire, where I live and work, as the Armpit of the Empire, but the truth is that I love it here. It has everything: big cities, market towns, rural communities, remote countryside, old buildings, young businesses, a great road and rail network, some of the most amazing law firms in the country, both large and small, teaching hospitals, great universities, fabulous restaurants, the brewing industry—why the heck would you go somewhere else? Why pay for London or the Home Counties when you can get Yorkshire for a song?

Yorkshire was always the real prize for me. I thought that if I could make it work here, where there is a cynic in a flat cap on every corner, then I wouldn't be going far wrong. Come to Yorkshire, study here, work here, live here, get the truth. And if you really want to be a lawyer, we have all the choices, especially in property law, which continues to thrive. What's more, you can get to it all by bus.



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