

# Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

 **Leeds**  
Law Society

April 2023

Issue 181

## A spring in our society

With summer not far away, Leeds Law Society is busy with preparations for the year ahead

### Leeds JLD

Leanne Gibson provides tips for managing and maintaining your mental health

### News

Fletchers Group has opened a new office in Leeds as it looks to expand its operations

### Society

Bring colleagues, clients and friends to join us at Leeds Law Society's flagship black-tie event on 18 May 2023

### Last Word

Steven Newdal from Levi Solicitors discusses running a law firm in 2023, being local and national, and more

### Comment

In his latest column, Patrick Walker sits by the pool but remains a grumpy old man



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Leeds Law Society  
62 Wellington Street, Leeds,  
LS1 2EE  
DX 12079 Leeds  
Tel: 0113 245 4997

**EDITORIAL**

**Editor:** Mark Dugdale  
0113 5216092  
[mark.dugdale@barkerbrooks.co.uk](mailto:mark.dugdale@barkerbrooks.co.uk)  
**Founding Editor:**  
Ian McCombie

**PRODUCTION**

**Head of design:**  
Compton Sheldon

**ADVERTISING**

**Project manager:**  
Matt Gotting  
0113 5216087  
[matt.gotting@barkerbrooks.co.uk](mailto:matt.gotting@barkerbrooks.co.uk)  
**Published by:**  
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Tel: 0113 5216092  
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[info@barkerbrooks.co.uk](mailto:info@barkerbrooks.co.uk)  
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Matthew Jones is an associate solicitor in the real estate team at Weightmans and president of Leeds Law Society

Well spring is well and truly here, isn't it? The trees are full of blossom, the daffodils are in full bloom and the days are getting longer. After the cold months of winter, it is refreshing to see the change in the seasons. There is a slight warmth to the sun, and we find ourselves eagerly awaiting the arrival of warmer days.

Spring is certainly a time of rejuvenation and looking forward, and while nature is preparing itself for summer, many firms are drawing to a close their financial year and preparing themselves for a new year and ventures. Leo Tolstoy aptly summarises spring in his novel *Anna Karenina* when he writes: "Spring is the time of plans and projects."

It therefore comes as no surprise that Leeds Law Society is busy with preparations for the year ahead. A dedicated team is putting the final touches to the Leeds Law Society Annual Dinner, which will be held on 18 May at the Queens Hotel. It is safe to say that this year's looks set to be another wonderful event.

Our directors have also been planning events for the upcoming year, including a number of roundtables, the Legal Walk and, of

# A spring in our society

course, Leeds Pride, which is set to take place on 06 August 2023. If you haven't already done so, please put this in your diary and register your interest through our website.

Spring is not just a time for planning, but it is also a time for new beginnings. While nature is breathing new life after being dormant over the long, cold, winter months, Leeds Law Society is also preparing itself for a fresh start in the form of a new president.

At the end of May, my time as president will draw to a close and I will hand over the chain of office to Shanika Varga at Stowe Family Law, who is certain to bring her infectious passion to the role. I know that you, our members, will welcome her as warmly as you did me nearly 12 months ago. Shanika, I wish you every success.

My time as president has gone by in the blink of an eye. It seems like only yesterday when I had the privilege of being elected as president of Leeds Law Society and with my appointment, the honour of being the first openly gay man to hold the role in the society's 150-year history.

When I first started my legal career, I wasn't aware of any openly gay practitioners in my own firm, let alone Leeds Law Society. It is therefore incredibly touching that I have been made so very welcome during my time as president. I have been moved and heartened by the stories of many of our LGBTQ+ members and allies. Indeed, one of the highlights of my term is the society's participation in Leeds Pride in 2022. To have more than 100 of our members march together throughout the city to demonstrate and show our support for the LGBTQ+ community will be something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. For that, I thank you all.

During my term, I have seen a great deal of change both nationally and within the society: a cost-of-living crisis, three changes of prime minister, the passing of her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II and, soon, we will see the coronation of King Charles III and

Queen Camilla.

Within the society, we have overhauled our fee structure to support our member firms during the cost-of-living crisis, and we have continued to provide our members with high-quality events and to promote Leeds as a centre of legal excellence. We are at the forefront of diversity and inclusion, bringing about change and fighting for equality. And to top all of that off, I married the love of my life on 07 January. It has been a very busy year.

In this, my final article as president, I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to a number of people: my fellow directors and officers who strive to make Leeds Law Society the best it can be, and my husband, who has supported me throughout my presidency. A special thank you must go to Rachel Windle and Lucia Perdios, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that Leeds Law Society runs like clockwork. You are both a credit to the society and, in the words of a rather famous singer, "You're simply the best."

To be president of Leeds Law Society has been the highlight of my career to-date. Having met many of our members throughout the year, it has reinforced my belief that the Leeds legal sector is something rather special indeed. We are a city filled with passionate and dedicated legal practitioners. What my time as president has taught me is that we have a duty to retain this talent. The Leeds legal sector is enviable and, in my view, one of the best in the country. If we are to continue, then we must ensure that we not only retain this talent but grow and build on our success to attract the best of the best.

The legal sector faces challenges. But as I have seen during my time as president, we have a strong community here in Leeds who I know will stand and work together to weather the storm and drive forward change so that this city's legal sector remains ahead of the curve and continues to influence the changing landscape of the law.



# Join us for the 2023 Leeds Law Society Annual Dinner

Celebrating Leeds as a centre of legal excellence at  
The Queens Hotel on 18 May 2023

## Leeds has a bright future—let's take a moment and celebrate that!

Bring colleagues, clients and friends to join us at Leeds Law Society's flagship black-tie event on 18 May 2023, hosted by the president of Leeds Law Society, Matthew Jones.

This will be a spectacular evening at The Queens Hotel in Leeds, with speeches from highly acclaimed guests

A welcome drink will be available on arrival followed by a scrumptious three-course meal. Each table will be provided with a 1/2 bottle of wine per person.

Ticket prices and details are in the next column. See the Leeds Law Society website for all terms and conditions.

### Individual tickets

- Members: £100 + VAT
- Non-Members: £130 + VAT

Please book online via: [https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar\\_detail.html?eid=F69AEE05-D645-474F-BB7B-F90789999D12](https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar_detail.html?eid=F69AEE05-D645-474F-BB7B-F90789999D12).

### Tables of 10

- Members: £1,000 + VAT
- Non-Members: £1,300 + VAT

If you require a table, please contact [events@leedslawsociety.org.uk](mailto:events@leedslawsociety.org.uk).



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# Upcoming events at Leeds Law Society

**Increase your staff resilience or take a break over 18 holes**

**What?** Junior Lawyers Wellbeing and Resilience Taster Session

**When?** 17.05.23 @ 12.30pm until 2.30pm

The health and well-being of leaders and staff is important, so Leeds Law Society, in collaboration with Naila Hussain, executive coach from Atomic Mind, is running a resilience and wellbeing webinar.

Research by Leadership IQ found that employees with high resilience are more likely to love their jobs than employees with low resilience, and having high resilience (ie, surviving difficult times with little trouble) explains 25% of an employee's inspiration at work.

It really does affect your bottom line and the business case to increase staff resilience couldn't be stronger.

So come and join Naila in this special webinar where she will share insights and tools to improve not only your own resilience and wellbeing, but tools you can start

implementing immediately in your organisations and businesses.

**Where do I sign up?** [https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar\\_detail.html?eid=0BA0DBF0-8306-4F1A-AED4-F8E707A8DC9F](https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar_detail.html?eid=0BA0DBF0-8306-4F1A-AED4-F8E707A8DC9F)

**What?** Oulton Hall Golf Day and Lessons

**When?** 07.09.23 @ 10am until 8.30pm

Following the success of last year's event, Leeds Law Society invites you to join us at our golf day based at the prestigious Oulton Hall Hotel in Leeds.

Enjoy a day of golfing over 18 holes or take a two-hour lesson with a professional golfing coach.

**Where do I sign up?** Visit [https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar\\_detail.html?eid=E56EB3B9-E098-4594-BB2D-BCE602371F39](https://my.leedslawsociety.org.uk/calendar_detail.html?eid=E56EB3B9-E098-4594-BB2D-BCE602371F39) for more information and email [events@leedslawsociety.org.uk](mailto:events@leedslawsociety.org.uk) to make a booking.



# Step out in style at FB Fashion Ball



## The event is taking place on 27 April at New Dock Hall in Leeds

FB Fashion Ball is the north's leading glamorous black-tie charity gala awards dinner, featuring a 10-scene vibrant fashion show. The ball is firmly established as the 'must attend' event within the Yorkshire business community and is hosted in several cities across the UK, including Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool, with exciting plans for London and Newcastle. It is the ultimate collaboration between business, fashion, beauty and lifestyle organisations, creating a unique and successful platform to raise personal, business and brand profile and make impressive connections. FB Fashion Ball celebrates more than 25 years of success!

The event is renowned for bringing together the business community for a fun-filled evening and glamorous networking. The Yorkshire Hero Awards publicly honour and applaud local entrepreneurial individuals and businesses that have made outstanding contributions to the local business economy and continue to achieve and deliver beyond expectation. The awards also promote the unsung heroes, role model employees and rising stars of local businesses across the region. The fun and spectacular fashion show sees high profile business leaders and influencers, along with young professionals, strut to raise awareness for their chosen local charities. The fashion show partners with local and international fashion designers and high-profile brands such as John Lewis & Partners, Reiss, Ted Baker, Jigsaw, Huge Boss, Hawes & Curtis, Ralph Lauren, Charlotte Tilbury, Mac, Hobbs, All Saints, Lavish and Glamour Rocks, to name a few.

FB Fashion Ball is grateful to the many businesses and societies that continue to support the event, some 20 years on. They include: Addleshaw Goddard, Lloyds, Deloitte, Squire Patton Boggs, KPMG, Clarion, AGS Finance, EY, Begbies Traynor, LCF Law, RSM UK, Schofield Sweeney, Gateley Legal, Barclays, Ford Campbell Freedman, Gordons, TFG Capital, HSBC, Walker Morris, Thomas Coombs, PwC, Ridley & Hall, Pinsent Masons, Weightmans, Bygott Biggs, Handelsbanken, BDO, Progeny, Zest Training, Campbell Fletcher Recruitment, Cardale, Reward Finance Group, gunnercooke, Leeds Law Society, ICAEW, JLD, LCASS, LYP, P100, PM Forum, Yorkshire Leadership

Group, thebusinessdesk.com, Yorkshire Post, The Yorkshire Businesswoman, Marketing Adventures, Dakota Hotel, J9 Advisory, Aimee Willow Connex, Tomoro, Nucleus, Phillip Stoner Jewellers and Asenda.

The event comprises:

- Glitzy champagne drinks reception
- Lifestyle village and pamper zone
- Three-course celebratory dinner
- Yorkshire Hero Awards
- Live 10-scene fashion show
- Entertainment until late

The evening offers so many opportunities to engage with your people, to support worthy causes, enjoy amazing team building, and is a fabulous way to entertain and spend time with your clients. You are invited to get involved and partner with us, take advantage of the many exceptional opportunities with unique and effective strategies to grow and promote your business. Support your people as they step out on the catwalk to represent your firm, recognise and reward them and connect with the best in business at the north's largest business, fashion and lifestyle event outside of London.

To become a sponsor, model, exhibitor, partner or to book your table/ticket, contact Lisa Darwin, founder and organiser of FB Fashion Ball, via email: [lisa@fbfashionball.show](mailto:lisa@fbfashionball.show).



# Prioritising your mental health as a junior lawyer

**Leanne Gibson**, a trainee solicitor at Ramsdens and events officer at Leeds JLD, provides tips for managing and maintaining your mental health

Society is now, more than ever, open to conversations surrounding mental health. It is no longer a 'taboo' subject, and it is widely acknowledged as having as much of an impact on a person as their physical health.

A career in law, although rewarding and enjoyable, can come with intense pressures. This may be for a variety of reasons, whether that is working long hours, feeling the pressure of meeting supervisors' expectations, complying with strict time schedules or even as a result of your own perfectionist imposter syndrome.

The LawCare report, *Life in the Law*, published in September 2021, reported that more than 69% of respondents had suffered mental ill-health in the 12 months preceding the survey. Almost a quarter of respondents were aged between 26 and 35 and therefore more likely to be at the 'junior' stages of their career.

Therefore, as one of the events officers for Leeds Junior Lawyers Division (JLD), I think it is key to run events that allow our members to speak with like-minded individuals and understand that they are not alone in navigating life as a junior lawyer. Each year, we also run an event that is specifically aimed at talking about mental health, the impact it can have on your work and personal life, and what you can do to help those around you that may be struggling.

## Top tips for wellbeing

With the above in mind, the Leeds JLD committee put together these tips for promoting wellbeing:

**Exercise.** Breaking away from work to take time to exercise, whether that be your favourite exercise class or just going out for a walk to get fresh air.

**Hobby.** If you have a hobby that relaxes you, then make sure you take the time to do this on a weekly basis. Personally, I always find picking up a good book helps me to switch off from work, even if it is just for an hour!

**Family and friends.** Make time to see your loved ones. It is surprising how a good catch-up can make you feel.

**Sleep.** Do not underestimate the power of a good night's sleep. It is fine to work longer hours—early mornings and late nights—if that is how you operate best, but do not forfeit your sleep to do so. You are more likely to burnout if you do not take time to rest.

**Reflect.** If imposter syndrome is telling you that you



are not good enough, reflect on how far you have already come. Remember all those times you said you could not do something... but you did!

**Do nothing.** The best of them all. Make time to do nothing. Switch off for the day, watch a good film, eat your favourite food, and enjoy the time to yourself.

If you are struggling, tell a work colleague or speak to your supervisor. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help and they would certainly rather help you than for you to suffer in silence. Equally, if you notice that a colleague is struggling or perhaps is not being their usual self, take the time to ask them if they are okay and actively listen to their response.

Leeds JLD's charity of the year is Andy's Man Club (AMC). AMC is a UK charitable organisation described as "a talking group, creating a place for men to come together in a safe environment to talk about issues and problems they have faced or are currently facing".

We look forward to welcoming AMC to speak at our mental health event on 27 April at Sedulo. Tickets will be free for members so please do keep your eyes peeled for the announcement and you do not miss out. We are also hopeful to raise lots of funds for AMC's very important cause over the coming year.

To get involved with Leeds JLD, read more about our committee and our aims, or keep posted with our upcoming events, visit our website: <https://www.leedsjld.com>.







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**Scan the code to download our recent whitepaper on overcoming the skills shortage and retaining talent in the legal sector.**



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## Andrew Jackson advises Kexgill Group on £25m refinance facility

Andrew Jackson Solicitors has advised Kexgill Group, one of the largest privately owned providers of student accommodation in the UK, on a £25m refinance facility from InterBay Bank.

The substantial transaction, which is a 10-year, interest-only commercial investment refinance loan, involved the refinancing of 55 residential units at Bradford, Hull, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Nottingham, and Preston.

Kexgill's legal advice was provided by a multi-disciplinary legal team at Andrew Jackson, led by property partner Helen Mellors.

Claire Ramsden, Robert Hill, Adrian West and Ailish Ward in the real estate and property team supported Mellors, as well as Philip Ashworth, Nick Scott, Martin Frost and Benn Shilleto in the corporate team.

Hull-headquartered Kexgill is an award-winning student accommodation provider with a consistent track record of successfully re-investing in its expanding portfolio, as Richard Stott, its managing director, explained: "Securing medium term fixed rate debt in a variable market is important for our group particularly where we are creating scale in locations outside



our Hull base. We are delighted that this latest transaction has been stress-free in a market which has seen considerable flux in recent months.

"We are grateful for the help and advice of those involved in this deal, including Andrew Jackson Solicitors, who remain our trusted legal partner and whose expertise in complex matters is essential to help us realise our commercial objectives."

## Clarion achieves double-digit revenue growth



Clarion has achieved double digit growth, seeing turnover rise from £23.2m in 2021 to £26.9m last year.

The 16% revenue growth for the financial year ending 31 May 2022 sets the Leeds-based law firm up for an even better 2023, with turnover in its current financial year set to further increase to £30m.

Clarion also reached the milestone of 300 colleagues in January this year.

Commenting on the firm's success, Roger Hutton, joint managing partner at Clarion, said: "While we are a relatively young firm, we've always had big ambitions and having proved our ability to rival the large national firms with offices in Leeds, we are increasingly winning work not only from London and across the UK, but also internationally as, post-COVID, businesses look for the best value advice, regardless of location."

Hutton continued: "2022 was another strong year for us with the team achieving the national and international recognition they deserve by winning a plethora of prestigious awards, as well as adding more and more blue-chip companies and national brands to our client roster.

"In such a tough economy, our continued expansion is largely enabled by our growing reputation as a national alternative to the biggest firms, both for major UK corporates and international clients."

He added: "With Leeds successfully establishing itself as the main UK legal hub outside London, we're seeing an interesting dynamic with many talented lawyers looking beyond the capital and seeking challenging career opportunities which can also deliver a better quality of life."

"Last year alone, we recruited another 15 colleagues, both from the rich pool of talent we have in the North and also by attracting best-of-breed lawyers from top London firms as our strategy gains momentum."

Clarion expects to continue this momentum in 2023 and beyond. Hutton said: "We saw impressive growth across most of our practices last year, with the corporate and real estate teams in particular both putting in strong performances.

"As we look ahead to the next 12 months, we expect there to be more demand for our dispute resolution and restructuring services as business resilience is tested by the pressure of the current challenging marketplace.

"However, there's no doubt that there is still an appetite for growth, despite the strong economic headwinds, and many companies are continuing to do well."

He concluded: "As an established firm with a strong identity and culture, and an ambitious management team at the helm, we know where we are now and where we want to be in the next five years.

"We have worked incredibly hard to create an inclusive and collaborative environment where colleagues feel valued.

"Investing in and valuing our people remains one of our core values and goes hand-in-hand with our ability to attract exciting work, increasingly from national or international companies.

"Our vision goes beyond geographic boundaries—last year alone, we worked across 75 countries, and we plan to strengthen our international team and client base.

"We are proud of having consistently achieved double-digit growth every year for the last eight years, and, having already seen momentum grow over the last quarter, we look forward to continuing to drive the business forward."

## Ward Hadaway advises Sano Physiotherapy on acquisition

Adrian Ballam and Olivia Field from Ward Hadaway have advised Leeds-based Sano Physiotherapy on its acquisition of Back in Action UK.

The transaction makes Sano one of the largest providers of occupational health physiotherapy in the UK.

It has doubled the size of Sano's occupational health physiotherapy services, expanding its expertise into new industries such as rail, travel and utilities.

The enlarged Sano group now employs more than 100 full-time staff across its customer locations and operates nationally.

Matthew Taylor, managing director of Sano, said: "This is an exciting time for Sano as we continue to accelerate our ambitious growth plans in the occupational health space.

"Back in Action UK is a company I have admired for many years, and I am highly impressed with the clinical quality and ethos of the business which aligns to how we operate at Sano.

"This acquisition fits perfectly with our strategic goal of providing rapid access to high quality physiotherapy services for UK workforces. In a post-covid landscape with lengthy NHS waiting lists, this acquisition will add significant value to our growing customer base."

Ballam, a partner in the corporate team at Ward Hadaway,

commented: "It's been a pleasure to support Sano on its acquisition of Back in Action UK which not only further enhances the Sano offering in the South of England, but also demonstrates their ambitious plans for further growth.

"It's always a great pleasure to see our region's SMEs develop and thrive."

Completion of Ward Hadaway's work on this acquisition follows news that the law firm has been named the third most active dealmaker in Yorkshire and Humber.

Ward Hadaway has moved up two places in the Yorkshire and Humber rankings of the annual Experian MarketIQ league tables to third across 2022.

In terms of national rankings, the firm has moved up for the fifth year running to seventh overall.

Rob Thompson, head of corporate at Ward Hadaway, said: "Our move into the top three in Yorkshire and Humber is a particularly outstanding result given the trading landscape in the region.

"To see us achieve growth at a time when Experian is showing the total number of deals down by 7% overall really reflects the success we are seeing across the Leeds office as a whole."

## Gordons advises on £17m sale of converted mill in Leeds

Gordons has advised JM Construction on the £17m sale of a converted mill at the Victoria Riverside development in Hunslet, Leeds to global real estate investment and fund management firm, LRC Group.

Comprising 93 apartments, Mill F (pictured) was the final mill to be sold in a wider project that is converting a mix of grade II- and II\*-listed former Hunslet and Victoria flax spinning mills into a new £50m residential site.

Now completed, Victoria Riverside comprises 350 high-quality one-, two- and three-bedroom units, including penthouse apartments, across six individual buildings.

A team from Leeds- and Bradford-based law firm Gordons, led by partner and head of residential development, Michael Finnett, advised JM Construction on the sale.

Commenting on the sale, John Mulleady, managing director at JM Construction, said: "Victoria Riverside is a development where classic meets contemporary and is truly a landmark scheme for Leeds.

"It was great to work with Gordons on this latest sale. The firm's effective, practical and straight-talking advice has been instrumental throughout the development's entire journey."

Finnett added: "JM Construction is a developer with a strong track record for converting derelict buildings and brownfield sites



to create modern housing.

"It is exciting being involved in this award-winning development turning buildings that were once the industrial fabric of Leeds into modern properties without sacrificing their character."

JM Construction was named Construction Specialist of the Year for Yorkshire in the Local Authority Building Control Building Excellence Awards 2021 for Victoria Riverside.

James Smart, managing director of Smart Investments, which acted as the agent for the sale, commented: "Victoria Riverside is an opportunity for tenants to live in a historic building with a modern architectural design and excellent location next to the River Aire—a great asset for the purchaser to add to their portfolio."



## Best Solicitors reports growth in conveyancing market share

Sheffield-headquartered Best Solicitors has reported more than a 20% year-on-year increase in its conveyancing market share in South Yorkshire and is currently ranked in second place for completions in the region.

The data, published by TwentyConvey, relates to residential



property purchases. The team, based at the firm's Sheffield and Barnsley offices, completed on 431 property purchases in the region in the previous 12 months.

Elizabeth Harris (pictured), director of residential conveyancing at Best Solicitors, said: "We are delighted to achieve significant growth in a competitive marketplace. We pride ourselves on delivering an excellent service to clients during their property sale or purchase. We understand that this can often be a stressful time.

"In addition to successfully completing on 431 purchases, the team acted on 273 sales during the same period. Moving home has a substantial impact on individuals and families, affecting finances and the quality of life. We are committed to making the process as quick and worry free as possible."

The Best Solicitors conveyancing team acts for clients across England and Wales. The average cost of a residential property purchase in the previous 12 months in South Yorkshire was £185,966.

The team was shortlisted in the Residential Property Team of the Year at the Sheffield and District Law Society Awards 2022.

Established in 2001, Best Solicitors has offices in Sheffield, Barnsley, Stocksbridge and Filey, and offers a range of legal services to individuals and businesses.

## Fletchers Group opens new office in Leeds

Fletchers Group has opened a new office in Leeds as it looks to expand its operations across the north of England.

The move will strengthen the group's market reach and help it tap into new talent across Yorkshire and Northeast England.

The new base sits in the heart of the city's central business district, in the recently renovated Northspring building on Wellington Street.

The office will house the Minton Morrill team. They are specialists in medical negligence and private client, who firm Fletchers acquired in 2022.

The office features a range of modern facilities spread across almost 3,500 sqft, including a state-of-the-art communal workspace, rooftop garden, gym, cycle store and podcast studio.

Fletchers employs more than 500 people in Manchester city centre and Southport. With expansion plans over the next three years, 2023 will see the group increase its regional presence with further new offices planned, including Liverpool in the spring.

Peter Haden, chief executive officer of Fletchers Group, commented: "Opening an office in Leeds, one of the fastest growing business and financial hubs in the UK, was the next natural step for the group, particularly after the acquisition of Minton Morrill.

"Leeds is an exciting and vibrant city, and our new base will allow us to expand our team, attract top talent, better serve our clients, and build lasting partnerships with key stakeholders across the region.

"We really wanted to create a great work environment that will enhance productivity and employee wellbeing and Northspring has it all. We're so excited with the opportunities we are already creating in Leeds, and look forward to welcoming clients, partners and colleagues to our fantastic new home!"



## DLA Piper takes students on development journey to launch new Leeds office

An initiative that will see students experience the construction and completion of DLA Piper's new Leeds office has recently launched with the first of five engaging careers and skills events.



MyExperience@ City Square House will span the development cycle of the new office building, providing students with an insight into the wide range of businesses, professionals and skills involved in such a significant project.

Delivered by Ahead Partnership, the initiative will engage students on five different occasions as they progress from year seven to year nine and begin to think about their future careers.

The initial launch event took place on 24 March at DLA Piper's current Princes Square office, with students receiving a tour of the existing corporate office and taking part in an interactive building modelling competition.

There was also an opportunity to speed network with colleagues from the property and workplace department at DLA Piper, as well as with the building contractor, developer, and firms

advising DLA Piper, including Gardiner and Theobald.

Stephanie Burras CBE, founder and chief executive of Ahead Partnership, said: "The emphasis of our partnership is on creating a long-term approach to social impact that connects young people to opportunity and provides support as their thinking around careers and future pathways develops over time.

"Students will join the programme as the firm undertakes its development journey and get to see City Square House literally rise up from the ground into an innovative workplace of the future.

"By meeting with professionals working across different disciplines and aspects of development over a three-year period, students will better understand what types of decisions are made throughout the process and why, as well as seeing the influence that these have on the end result.

"They'll also get a valuable insight into what it's like to work for a large corporate firm in areas from legal to HR and management."

Ruth Williamson, partner at DLA Piper, also commented: "This multi-year programme allows us to engage with young people in our local area, providing multiple opportunities for engagement, so they gain a good understanding of the various career paths in professional firms, whilst building confidence, employability skills and career aspirations."

## Ward Hadaway partners with The University of Law to deliver tailored support for all of its trainees

Ward Hadaway has partnered with one of the UK's largest providers of legal education to help develop its future lawyers.

Ward Hadaway has teamed up with The University of Law to provide its future trainee solicitors with solicitors qualifying examination (SQE) training.

The firm's trainees across Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle will be enrolled onto the university's SQE master of laws (LLM) programme, which prepares students for their SQE1 and SQE2 exams as well as additional study content that many law firms desire when recruiting trainees, including key practice areas and enhanced skills.

Caroline Jones, recruitment and emerging talent manager at Ward Hadaway, said: "This partnership comes at the right time for us as a firm as we continue to increase the size of our intake of trainees in order to support our continued growth across all three of our office locations.

"Partnering with The University of Law will allow all of our future trainees to come together as a cohort before they join us and will help in our aim of ensuring they are integrated into Ward Hadaway's community and grow an internal network before they start with us."

Last year, Ward Hadaway recruited 13 trainee solicitors and one solicitor apprentice as it continues to expand its workforce. The appointments follow a strong financial year for Ward Hadaway, where firm-wide growth increased by 11%.

Matt Cormack, training principal at Ward Hadaway, said: "We are really impressed with the breadth of the programme provided by The University of Law which covers technical, commercial and behavioural learning. It is vital that we equip



**Matthew Tomlinson, Larissa Hope-Rogers, Matt Cormack and Heather Ramsay**

our future trainees with the skills they need to provide service excellence to our clients.

"With 38% of our current management board having trained with Ward Hadaway, we understand how to provide trainees with a good grounding in the skills required for future leadership and management roles."

The SQE LLM programme ensures trainee solicitors are fully prepared both academically and for the realities of working life as a solicitor, according to Ward Hadaway, with fully qualified and experienced lawyers delivering the content.

Heather Ramsay, a current trainee at Ward Hadaway, commented: "Ward Hadaway goes that extra mile in helping cohorts of trainees to settle in and develop strong working relationships with each other—through formal group training, organising community partnerships which we can all take part in, as well as regular team socials.

"All these activities help nurture our development and I feel that the partnership with The University of Law will further add to this for future trainees."

# Moving on up

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



Three new appointments have joined **Morrish Solicitors** in Leeds.

The additions of Asifa Rehman and Jamie Jaskolka bolster Morrish's fast-growing employment team, which works with 30 trade union and associations as well as private clients nationally.

Rehman has worked in-house for Network Rail and Sainsburys, where she advised on employment and HR matters. She joined Morrish as an employment solicitor.

During her career, Rehman has specialised in employment law cases, including assisting in securing a large settlement against a FTSE 500 company for race and sex discrimination.

Jaskolka has also joined the employment team. He graduated from Coventry University in 2021 and subsequently worked as a court usher in York while volunteering as witness support at the Leeds Magistrates Court.

Prior to joining Morrish, Jaskolka worked as a legal assistant in wills and probate at Oakwood Solicitors.

The third new appointment at Morrish, Jamie Wallace, joins as IT manager. Wallace previously worked at BW Legal, where he was IT operations manager.

David Sorensen, managing partner at Morrish, commented: "The partners and I are delighted to welcome Asifa and Jamie to our ever-expanding employment team.

"Both will be invaluable to the firm as we continue to grow and develop our work, including new relationships with unions and associations around the country, and delivering exceptional service to our clients.

"We are also very pleased to be welcoming Jamie Wallace as our new IT manager.

"As a firm we are proud of our strong track record in cyber security, our eagerness to adopt new technologies, and giving our teams the tools to provide the best service possible.

"This is an exciting time for Jamie to join us as we invest in our IT and make great advances in the firm's IT infrastructure and technology."

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**Irwin Mitchell** in Leeds has recruited partner Terry Saeedi and senior associate Matthew Ambler from Clyde & Co's pensions team.

Saeedi has specialised in pensions law for more than 25 years and advises employers and trustees on the full range of



legal issues, including scheme restructurings and disputes.

Previously head of pensions at Clyde & Co, Saeedi advises clients across a range of sectors, including insurance, energy and transport.

She is a past chair of the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association Yorkshire Group and a full member of the Association of Pension Lawyers.

In her new role at Irwin Mitchell, she will be based in the firm's Leeds office but operate nationally, working closely with Penny Cogher and national head of pensions Martin Jenkins.

Also moving from Clyde & Co, Ambler will be based in the Leeds office. He advises employers, trustees, contractors and public sector bodies on the full range of pensions issues. He operates across several sectors, including banking, infrastructure and energy.

Both are being joined by practice development lawyer Harriet Fletcher, who sits in the knowledge management team at Irwin Mitchell.

Commenting on her appointment at Irwin Mitchell, Saeedi said: "Organisations are dealing with a substantial increase in regulation relating to pensions and this year looks set to see a raft of new legislation and increased expectation on scheme sponsors and trustees.

"Providing timely legal advice is therefore more important than ever and I look forward to working with a brilliant and well-respected team to ensure our clients receive the highest standard of support and expertise."

Fergal Dowling, director of legal services for commercial advisory and disputes, added: "These three senior hires represent a significant investment in our pensions team. This is an important area for growth for Irwin Mitchell and as demand has increased, it's vital we continue recruiting the highest calibre lawyers who share our vision and ambition."

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**Blacks Solicitors** has welcomed back four returnees to strengthen its offering and bring its headcount to 195.

Kirsteen McFadzean has been reappointed as business development director to drive the business development function of the Leeds-based firm.

Saby Sambhi has re-joined Blacks as a partner in the corporate team and Pete Konieczko-Hansom is a senior associate solicitor across the corporate and commercial teams, and as well as head of intellectual property.





Blacks has also invested in its niche specialisms with the return of Pete Bott to establish the music law arm of the firm.

McFadzean previously joined Blacks in 2013 as head of business development. She has spent several years working in firms across Yorkshire to build on her experience, including Shulmans and LCF Law.

At Blacks, McFadzean aims to build the business development function to drive referrals and support the teams in delivering an excellent service to existing and new clients.

Commenting on her return, McFadzean said: "Blacks is one of Yorkshire's leading law firms and is well-positioned as a full-service firm in the region, assisting clients across the UK. The firm has great potential and my role will support the teams in realising this.

"People who work or who have worked at Blacks will also be aware of the positive, progressive and vibrant culture. It has a brilliant team that feels like family, which is one of the key reasons that I decided to return. You are always encouraged and supported, and free to take your ideas through to implementation."

Sambhi and Konieczko-Hansom have re-joined to strengthen the firm's corporate and commercial offerings.

Sambhi initially joined Blacks in 2014, before joining the corporate team of a leading national firm where he developed his expertise in private equity backed and multi-jurisdictional transactions. He was recently promoted to partner.

Konieczko-Hansom first joined Blacks in 2016. During his time away, he gained significant experience working for different firms across Yorkshire, as well in London for the Government Legal Department.

He re-joined Blacks as a senior associate solicitor and brings extensive experience in a wide range of matters, including share sale, management buyouts, supply and distribution agreements.

Following a successful career in the music industry, Bott trained as a solicitor and qualified at Blacks in 2012.

Bott recently returned to Blacks as a partner and head of music law, after working for two specialist music law firms in London.

Tom Moyes, equity partner at Blacks, added: "We are delighted to welcome back all four returnees. Their decisions to return to the firm are testament to the progressive and positive culture which we have built.

"Without our people we wouldn't be able to service our clients as well as we do. We have a significant focus on building a supportive environment that our team is proud to be a part of."



**Arc Pensions Law** has promoted Claire Goodby to senior associate.

Goodby, who joined Arc in November 2019 as an associate and is based in Leeds, advises employers and trustees on all aspects of pensions law.

She has expertise in working with and advising on defined benefit schemes, hybrid pension arrangements, and corporate activity, including acquisitions, disposals, group reorganisations and joint ventures.

Commenting on her appointment to senior associate, Goodby said: "I am delighted to be moving onto the next stage of my career with Arc—the firm has a stellar reputation for advising on the most novel and complex pensions issues and I look forward to contributing to our continued success in the years to come.

"I am also grateful for the excellent relationships I have built up with both my colleagues and my clients."

Leeds-based Arc partner Vikki Massarano commented: "Claire is an integral member of our team and an excellent lawyer. We are excited to further build on her practice and look forward to many more years working with her."

Senior partner Anna Rogers commented: "We are delighted to announce Claire's promotion—a testament to her expertise and experience in advising employers and trustees on their complex pensions needs. She is a real asset to our growing team at Arc Pensions Law."



UK and European patent attorneys Chris Mason and Parminder Lally have joined the **Appleyard Lees** partnership, while partner Bill Lister has retired.

Mason and Lally are the latest additions to a partnership that has grown from 15 to 20 partners in the last five years. The Leeds-headquartered firm's roster of attorneys and trainee attorneys also grew by 60% during this time.

Mason is experienced in developing and managing global patent portfolios, with specialisms in the chemical and life science sectors.

Lally specialises in drafting and prosecuting patent applications for computer-implemented inventions, including those involving developments in artificial intelligence.

They have followed different paths to partnership. Mason began his career at Appleyard Lees as a trainee in the Leeds office in September 2011 and has since risen through the ranks.

Lally also joined the patent profession in September 2011 and has worked in private practice and in-house. She joined the Cambridge office of Appleyard Lees in February 2019.

Their different paths to partnership also reflect Appleyard Lees's commitment to promoting diversity and equality within the firm.

Commenting on their promotions, David Clark, managing partner at Appleyard Lees, said: "The commitment of Chris and Parminder to their work for Appleyard Lees is not only first-class, but inspiring. Although they have taken different paths to get where they are today, they have both made valuable contributions to our firm through their excellent client service and high-quality work.

"I am sure they will both be great assets to the partnership, in the immediate term and in years to come. We are delighted to welcome them both into the partnership."

Meanwhile, Bill Lister, a solicitor, trade mark attorney and mediator, retired from the partnership on 31 March. He will continue to work as a consultant for the firm.

Lister joined the Appleyard Lees partnership in 2018, a pivotal time in the development of the firm's litigation team. He, a well-respected specialist intellectual property litigator, brought with him a wealth of IP litigation experience to the firm.

Lister helped shape the Appleyard Lees litigation offering, strengthening its capabilities and assisting with the growth of the team

Commenting on Lister's retirement, Clark said: "It is with sadness that we announce Bill's retirement from Appleyard Lees. Bill achieved great success for his clients in many complex IP litigation cases. His wealth of knowledge and expertise has positively impacted our growing litigation team, aiding in the support we continue to be able to offer clients

"It has been a privilege to work with Bill and I am happy he will continue as a consultant."

Robert Cumming, head of litigation and trade marks, will continue to lead the firm's litigation offering.

Cumming is supported by Chris Hoole, partner, solicitor and trade mark attorney, and a growing team of specialist IP solicitors and paralegals.



**Raworths** in Harrogate has appointed Heather Roberts as legal director of its commercial property team.

Roberts is a commercial property specialist with more than 20 years of experience.

She acts for investors, developers, landlords, tenants and banks, and offers a breadth of expertise, from investment, development and asset management work to advising SME clients on their portfolio purchases and management.

Roberts joins Raworths from McCormicks Solicitors in Harrogate, bringing with her wealth of knowledge of the local and wider regional market.

Matthew Hill, head of commercial client services at Raworths, commented: "We welcome Heather, whose specialist commercial property expertise will be a huge asset to our growing team which has benefitted from a raft of new client wins over the past few months.

"There are major opportunities for us to grow our business in this sector, driven by a stronger than anticipated market post-pandemic and growth more broadly across the region where the demand for space continues to surge.

"Heather's appointment is part of a strategic recruitment drive for our commercial team as we look to grow our client portfolio across the region and nationwide."

As part of her remit, Roberts will also work closely with the

wider commercial practice at Raworths, including the dispute resolution, employment, and corporate and commercial teams.

Roberts added: "I have been aware of Raworths' reputation as a legal firm which builds lasting relationships with its clients, and at the heart of that is the unique way the team can draw upon the skills and expertise of their colleagues across disciplines.

"This approach really appeals to me, and I'm excited to add to the incredible pool of talent here to help grow the commercial property business.

"The firm proactively supports and nurtures the ongoing development of its team at all levels, and I also hope to play a key role in cultivating the skills of our expanding team going forwards."



Experienced litigator Peter Duffus has joined Yorkshire-based **Graham & Rosen Solicitors** as a consultant to assist them with a wide range of litigation matters.

He brings more than 30 years of experience to the firm, as well as a long track record of success in disputes over estates, property, insurance coverage, dishonest personal injury claims, partnerships, defamation, and professional negligence.

Duffus also has experience of disputes over the sale of derivatives and industrial espionage, some of which have involved worldwide freezing injunctions.

Admitted to the profession in 1986, Duffus became a partner at a highly respected Yorkshire-based firm in 1995, where he worked until 2022.

In his time there, he acquired a reputation for handling unusual disputes with great skill and determination, while developing a pragmatic approach.

Duffus is also noted for his staunch dedication to client causes, operating honestly and transparently to serve their interests.

Over the past three decades, Duffus has been involved in several exceptional cases where he has demonstrated his wide-ranging litigation expertise.

These include acting successfully for the claimant in a hotly contested case of disputed paternity within an intestate estate, defence of a dishonest personal injury claim for £1m, and successfully representing a businessman sued for several million pounds in relation to liabilities arising out of spread betting and contracts for differences.

Duffus felt the time was now right in his career to consult for Graham & Rosen. He explained: "About a year ago, I decided to take a career break and went trekking in Nepal on the trip of a lifetime.

"On my return, however, I was missing the challenge of practising law and the camaraderie of being around likeminded professionals.

"Having known the partners at Graham & Rosen since 1993, I was aware that they worked to extremely high standards and felt I could add some value to their practice. I was pleased to be asked to join them and am confident that my long experience will add another string to their bow."

Iain Boyle, finance and managing director at Graham & Rosen, added: "We've known and respected Peter for many years, and are delighted to have him on board.

"He was at another high-profile firm for over 25 years, so his experience is beyond question, and we're looking forward to

harnessing his knowledge to the benefit of our clients.

“Peter lives and breathes our philosophy of putting clients’ needs front and centre, and when it comes to his ability and specialism, he is at the top of the tree.”



**Holden Smith** has appointed Rob Kelly as director and head of corporate law.

The firm, which employs more than 100 people across offices in Denby Dale, Elland, Leeds Crossgates, Ilkley and Horsforth, has appointed Kelly to help lead its corporate and commercial department and support overall business growth.

David Bancroft, director and co-founder at Holden Smith, said: “Rob is a well-known and highly regarded corporate lawyer with many years of experience working with businesses of all sizes across the area of mergers and acquisitions.

“Having spent several years in industry working in finance director and managing director roles before becoming a solicitor, Rob has the commercialism his clients demand, and an empathy with their business needs.

“He understands numbers inside out and can guide and advise clients through all areas connected to business sales, share sales, and business purchases.”

Commenting on his appointment, Kelly said: “Holden Smith is a driven and dynamic firm that is going places and I’m delighted to have joined the team to be part of the journey.

“The firm is known for its innovative and results driven approach and for taking time to really understand a client’s business and its people, so that advice and solutions can be tailored to meet the client’s commercial needs.”



Solicitor David Lister has joined **Ward Hadaway** in Leeds as a partner in its family and matrimonial team.

He will focus on the growth and development of the team and expanding Ward Hadaway’s family and matrimonial client base across Yorkshire.

Nationally, Christine Barker and Liz Bottrill lead the Ward Hadaway family team, which has grown significantly under their leadership.

The team regularly advises clients on divorce and cohabitation issues, prenuptial and postnuptial agreements and financial solutions, and issues relating to children, as well as surrogacy agreements.

Lister has built a reputation across Yorkshire and nationally for his innovative approach to family law. For instance, he was the first solicitor in England and Wales to represent both parties in a divorce and financial proceedings in 2021.

Now known as the ‘one lawyer per couple’ model, it is one of the fastest growing methods of resolving family disputes.

Lister specialises in complex cases involving separation and children in areas such as financial disputes and parental alienation. During his prolific career, he has acted for a range

of high-profile TV personalities and sports stars.

He also sits on the national committee of Resolution, the main family law member body.

Emma Digby, executive partner of Ward Hadaway Leeds, said: “David is one of the best family lawyers not just in the region but in the UK and I’m absolutely thrilled to have someone of his calibre on board as our family and matrimonial services continue to grow.

“David’s exceptional skillset and great character are an asset to our hugely talented and motivated team. He adds even further momentum as the Leeds office grows at an exponential rate—a testament to the hardworking and all-round brilliant solicitors we have at Ward Hadaway.”

The appointment follows a strong performance from Ward Hadaway over the last financial year, with its Leeds office turnover increasing nearly a quarter (24%).

Barker, a partner and joint head of the matrimonial team, said: “Our highly skilled and innovative team of lawyers, with a diverse range of experience, sets us apart.

“David’s appointment brings with it an added dimension. We are really excited to be working together, and to achieving great things for our clients, and for Ward Hadaway.”

David won Partner of the Year at the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2022 and was the youngest solicitor in the British legal system to be appointed as a national head in a large law firm at the age of 33.

Discussing his appointment, he said: “I chose Ward Hadaway because of its people and its potential. The opportunities for development at the firm are endless and Ward Hadaway has made some huge strides recently, experiencing firm-wide growth and expansion of the team across numerous departments.

“It’s exciting to be a part of such a driven and skilled team. My main objective is to raise the profile of Ward Hadaway’s family and matrimonial services in Yorkshire, driving growth by working alongside and supporting the team to innovate and develop. I can’t wait to get started.”



**Hawkswell Kilvington**, the specialist construction and engineering law firm, has continued the expansion of its practice with the appointment of a new associate.

Rebecca Jackson brings considerable expertise and in-depth knowledge of construction law, according to Leeds- and London-based Hawkswell Kilvington.

She specialises in resolving complex construction disputes via all forms of dispute resolution, including litigation, adjudication, and arbitration.

David Spires, a partner at the niche law firm, said: “Hot on the heels of our office move, this is an incredibly exciting appointment for us.

“Rebecca is a vastly experienced solicitor who I am confident will be a great addition to the team and will further strengthen our offering.”

Jackson commented: “I am thrilled to be joining Hawkswell Kilvington not only because of the firm’s continued investment in growth, but also because of [its] unique position nationally as eminent construction specialists.

“My litigation experience and focus on delivering excellent client service aligns well with Hawkswell Kilvington’s outstanding reputation and I look forward to contributing in every way I can to the growth of the firm and the breadth of expertise that Hawkswell Kilvington offers.”





## Enter the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2023 by 30 June

It's official! The Yorkshire Legal Awards 2023 is now open to submissions.

There are 12 practice area categories, recognising the achievements of practitioners, teams, departments and firms in Yorkshire's major areas of expertise, including family law, corporate and commercial, and—new for 2023—personal injury.

There are also eight organisation categories suitable for law firms, barristers' chambers and in-house legal departments, from Law Firm of the Year (small, medium and large) to the new Best ESG Campaign.

Finally, Yorkshire's best practitioners can compete for six talent categories, including the prestigious Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year.

We've revamped the criteria and rolled out a new format this year, to enable the judges to quickly get to the heart of your achievements.

All that's required to enter is between 250 and 1,000 words

in total, or a video up to three minutes in length. Both formats must follow the Q&A criteria where possible.

Our independent panel of judges is currently being assembled and we'll make an announcement on who is participating soon.

The entry deadline is 30 June 2023—make sure you make a note of it in your calendar!

Of course, there is also the ceremony at New Dock Hall in Leeds to look forward to.

The ceremony is taking place on 05 October and is sure to be biggest yet.

And don't forget to check out the sponsors supporting the Yorkshire Legal Awards this year—we have 17 confirmed already!

To view the categories, access the entry form and keep up to date with everything happening at the Yorkshire Legal Awards, visit [www.yorkshirelegalnews.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirelegalnews.co.uk).

## Sponsors of the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2023



# Bouncing back

**Lisa Haythorne**, president of Sheffield & District Law Society, reflects on her time in the role and looks forward to what's to come for the society

As I come to the end of my third year as president of Sheffield & District Law Society, I can reflect on the extraordinary times I have been president through and how far we have come. It has been an honour. I have been the first woman to hold the role for more than one year. The last president to do so was in 1875; I'm not quite old enough to remember him!

I became president just after we had entered the first lockdown and the AGM had been held online. My photo for the website was taken in my garden with my slippers on; they weren't visible on the photo! Throughout the pandemic, the society held online events, mainly quizzes, which were well attended and gave us a feeling of unity as we all joined in from home. Asking people to pose on camera so I could judge the Christmas jumper competition was a particular high.

Over the last few years, people have embraced home working and we have seen a change in the profession. Many wish to continue doing so, with a mixture of hybrid and home working. It seems most firms have developed this way of working and it is here to stay.

The biggest task now for Sheffield & District Law Society is to rebuild our committee. Over the pandemic and possibly due to a lack of in-person meetings, membership on the committee has reduced. We are keen to change this and are holding a meeting on 27 April 2023 at the Law Society Hall on Campo Lane.

We hope to attract new people who would like to be on the committee and help us to plan new events, activities and training. We will have refreshments, including alcohol, in the hope that's an incentive to attend.

We have our AGM on 25 May, when I will stand down and our vice president, Denney Lau, will take over. That will also be the last meeting for our honorary secretary, Paul Singh, who has been a huge part of the committee and a past president in 2018-2019. Paul's friendliness and enthusiasm will be hugely missed, and he has been a huge asset to us, especially with his jokes.

I was in the past a recipient of the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme (DAS) and I'm lucky to work with two other former recipients. Sheffield & District Law Society is currently promoting the scheme. DAS is a unique scholarship programme, designed to address key barriers to the solicitors' profession faced by those from less advantaged backgrounds. We are keen to encourage people to apply. Although the closing date for this year's applicants was 17 April, further opportunities will be available in the future.



One of my final events is to welcome national Law Society president Lubna to Sheffield & District Law Society on 16 May 2023, when she will be speaking to members about DAS, her career and the work of the national society in representing the profession. All are welcome to attend and details will be sent out to members and on the website very soon.

The society has just held a student event where we tried to encourage students to take up membership and have input in the direction that some of the training and events go. We hope this will be an opportunity for the committee to have a fresh outlook and to build on relationships with local universities.

Sheffield is also bringing back the city treasure hunt this summer, which is an event that we used to have every year. It's all arranged for 17 May and we have ordered sunshine but can't guarantee its delivery in time! The hunt is around the city centre, concluding where we intend to have food and drink and do some networking. There will be a prize awarded on the evening and knowing how competitive some of the firms we usually see are, it could be tense.

Lastly and by no means least, we have the Sheffield Legal Walk on 15 June. It is a great event where we can get out and about up the many hills of Sheffield to raise money for the Access to Justice Foundation, which supports local advice agencies. As a solicitor at a Law Centre, I know how important grants from the Access to Justice Foundation are to those organisations. There is a coveted trophy for the firm that raises the most money, which will be presented at the annual dinner in 2024.

# Gripe expectations



**Patrick Walker** is an independent mediator:  
[www.imediate.co.uk](http://www.imediate.co.uk)

**Patrick Walker** sits by the pool but remains a grumpy old man

Of course, I don't want to make anyone envious, but I am sitting by the poolside at old hotel in Mallorca. A giant cactus competes with a lemon tree laden with ripe fruit and there is just enough breeze. If you check out Villa Sa Barcella in Sineu, you will find almost nothing but praise, which is unusual. I never cease to be amazed by the apparent need to criticise and while some is constructive, poor reviews of last night's hotel include complaint that it was too close to the airport—its first selling point is its proximity to the airport!

It is a reminder that we all view things from a different angle and with different priorities. A time will come when somebody comments adversely on the absence of a night club or a cocktail bar in this quiet oasis 500 metres from the church square and the dizzy choice of four restaurants. For me it may be tapas and no, I don't want the "bottomless cocktail tapas deal" currently on offer in my hometown.

Okay, so it's just my age, but here's the thing. I am surrounded by youngsters determined to change my ways or call me out, and I do put my hands up to being neither 'woke' nor awake to many issues that didn't trouble us in the 70s and 80s but should have. But I do sometimes wonder whether there is a proper distinction between rejecting ageism and allowing those of us brought up with a slide rule and sufficient coins for the telephone box to not totally embrace the digital and scarily close to deepfake world, where Facebook

lives are perfection and I get into trouble for not 'loving' some photo or comment on yet another social media platform I have no desire to stand on (if that's what you do!).

It is not a rejection of technology—those who mediate with me know I was quick to embrace online mediation, and there is something quite reassuring about having a good Wi-Fi signal at the poolside! But I still want to be in control. I don't want to be shamed for not having an Instagram account and I don't want to be looked at as if I am very weird for looking at a real paper map. Of course, satnav can be amazing, but it is difficult to see the wider picture and really does disconnect us from our natural sense of direction. I can hear my nephews groaning—in what sense is satnav amazing, it's just there on everybody's phone and has been around forever?

Well, it hasn't. Even I haven't been around that long. Just long enough to be labelled a grumpy old man. But I'm alright with that. In fact, maybe it is my generation that leads the Tripadvisor crusade. And now I come to think of it, those lemons hanging over the pool might just fall on my head—an obvious danger, so an opportunity to give a one-star rating and a frowning face (if I knew which button to press!). But here comes the hotel proprietor with something to catch the lemon—a glass already charged with gin and tonic!





# An exciting challenge

**Steven Newdall**, managing partner of Leeds- and London-based Levi Solicitors, discusses running a law firm in 2023

***With your managing partner hat on, what's it like running a Yorkshire and London-based firm in 2023?***

Exciting but challenging!

The last few years have certainly been challenging times not just for us but for the wider legal community.

As we settle into 2023, we face a fierce talent war, rising operational costs, rising inflation, a workplace that continues to evolve post-pandemic and clients that just simply want more.

Our focus for the coming year is all about achieving growth that allows us to future-proof our business for the long term.

Growth across our business, our practice teams, expanding our existing client relationships, exploiting greater efficiencies, and maximising our geographic reach.

***Levi Solicitors appears to be a firm aiming to be local in nature but national in reach—is this fair? And if so, how are you aiming to achieve it?***

We are a very proud, independent Leeds firm. In fact, next year we will be celebrating our 90th anniversary! Levi Solicitors was founded in 1934 by Jack Levi with the aim of representing ordinary, working people. While times have since changed, our aims have not.

Whilst our roots are in Leeds, we do have a national reach, offering our services nationwide.

We are firmly focused on giving our clients the service they want. What works for them, works for us—wherever they are in the country.

Our presence in London reflects the increasing demand for our services and has allowed us to open up our reach outside Yorkshire.

When you're neither the biggest nor the smallest, differentiation is very important and that's where our service standards come into play. Irrespective of firm size or location, we offer a personal service whether that's in-person or online. That's what makes good client service and that's what we do at Levi's.

***What insights do you have for delivering a legal service in Leeds and Yorkshire in 2023?***

Clients are people and should expect a good service. We, as lawyers, are selling a service, and that service has to be the best we can give.

Purchasing legal services of any kind tends to be stressful



and we need to be mindful of that.

Most clients do not want to run the legal case themselves, but they do want to be consulted and kept informed.

I do not believe it is good enough in this day and age to allow yourself to get into a position where clients are complaining that they cannot get hold of you or calls and emails are not returned. Clients demand, expect and should receive the best service we, as professionals, can give. This is where our focus is as a firm.

***Are there any modernisations or improvements that you think firms in the region need to implement to better serve clients?***

I think two of the biggest opportunities that we can control are around managing the evolving workplace and workforce and having a greater focus on driving operational efficiencies. Being able to deliver more efficient legal services and enhanced staff experiences will ultimately better serve our colleagues and clients.

In the last two years, we have strengthened our management team with specialists in legal project management, operations, strategy and business development, technology, and finance. We have an exceptional team at Levi Solicitors, and we are in the process of adding more specialist expertise in the coming months across various roles (visit our website to see our latest vacancies).

With our management team, we've been able to drive efficiencies across the business, helping us manage matters and budgets, staffing and much more. All of this allows us to fulfil our client expectations and continue our growth.

So, as I said in the beginning of this interview when asked, "what's it like running a Yorkshire and London-based firm in 2023?", it's challenging but the forecast is incredibly exciting!



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