

Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

Leeds
Law Society

December 2025

Issue 197



A Year In Review

Legal milestones, landmark cases & reflections.

Business Development
Crombie Wilkinson achieves Investors in People Gold Accreditation

Leeds JLD
Sophie Hudson reflects on 2025.

Regulatory
Compli's Andrea Cohen gives an update on regulatory matters and compliance

People Moves
MD Law solicitor unveiled as new President of the Sheffield and District Law Society

Last word
We catch up with Sarah Ratcliffe, commercial property partner at Gordons





Unlock the power of Legal AI

LEAP supports over 25,000 legal professionals across thousands of law firms across the United Kingdom.

LEAP provides legal practice management and document automation within a single cloud-based platform, for all practice areas of law. Enhanced by the power of award-winning AI, LEAP enables firms to practice law more efficiently.

Find out more at: leap.co.uk



Strategic Partner



The Law
Society

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

EDITORIAL

Editor: Francesca Kaye
francesca.kaye@barkerbrooks.co.uk
Founding Editor:
Ian McCombie

PRODUCTION

Design:
Harry Hainstock

ADVERTISING

Project manager:
Scott James
0113 521 6087
scott.james@barkerbrooks.co.uk

Published by:

Barker Brooks Communications Ltd
26 Airedale House, 423 Kirkstall
Road, Leeds, LS4 2EW
Tel: 0113 340 4239
www.barkerbrooks.co.uk
info@barkerbrooks.co.uk
© 2025 Leeds Law Society & Barker
Brooks Communications Ltd. All rights
in and relating to this publication are
expressly reserved. No part of this
publication may be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system or transmitted in any
form or by any means without written
permission from the publishers. The
views expressed in Leeds & Yorkshire
Lawyer are not necessarily those of the
Leeds Law Society or the publisher. While
the publishers have taken every care
in compiling this publication to ensure
accuracy at the time of going to press,
they do not accept liability or responsibility
for errors or omissions therein however
caused.

Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

September 2025 | Issue 196

Society

President's column..... 4

*Luke Corcoran, Senior Lawyer at
Government Legal Department and
President of Leeds Law Society*

Leeds Annual Legal Dinner.....5

News

Business Development.....6

- *Knights set for growth in Yorkshire as revenue and profits rise*
- *Ground breaking scheme launched to give Britain's pet owners "peace of mind"*
- *Taylor Emmet secures recognition in 2026 Legal 500 rankings*
- *Exchange Chambers celebrates 15 years in Leeds*

Charity & Social.....15

- *Glittering Launch for the Schofield Sweeney Bradford Professionals Network*
- *Winston Solicitors Supports Remember a Charity in Your Will Week 2025*
- *Yorkshire-based Pippa Bradley named Trainee Solicitor of the Year*
- *Sponsorship opportunities open to law firms for the Apprenticeship Guide Awards 2026*

People moves.....20

- *Public Funding Specialist Joins Ward Hadaway as Partner*
- *Knights launches Family law team in Leeds with two new hires*
- *Switalskis welcomes largest training cohort in firms' history*
- *MD Law solicitor unveiled as new President of the Sheffield and District Law Society*

Focus

Balancing service with compliance.....14

Andrea Cohen, legal director in the Compliance team at Weightmans, is back with our regular update on regulatory matters and risk and compliance.

Reflecting on 2025 with Leeds JLD.....19

Sophie Hudson, a Commercial Litigation Associate at Weightmans and this year's Chair of Leeds Junior Lawyers Division, reflects on 2025.

Justice through service.....21

James Staton, President of the Yorkshire Union of Law Societies and Partner at Schofield Sweeney, reflects on the past 12 months including legal milestones and landmark cases.

Last Word.....31

We catch up with Sarah Ratcliffe, commercial property partner at Gordons Solicitors



President's column



Luke Corcoran is a Senior Lawyer at Government Legal Department and current President of Leeds Law Society Society.

Welcome to the 197th edition of the Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer, official journal of Leeds Law Society. This month's edition is focused on legal milestones, landmark cases & reflections.

Looking back on 2025 it would be remiss to not mention the judgment in *Mazur v Charles Russell Speechlys*. As I write these words the long-term impact of that case remains uncertain. I won't be foolhardy enough to predict the outcome of any appeal but it does have the potential to be a seismic judgment for our profession for some time to come, regardless of what happens next. Whatever the outcome our profession will adapt, as it always does, but in the meantime we should take the time to consider the personal impact this will have on our colleagues and support them in whatever way we can.

Reflecting on the work of Leeds Law Society this

year, we have a lot to be proud of. To name just a few: our first ever social mobility conference, the largest ever legal walk outside of London, our employment committee providing a wide variety of events, events focusing on menopause and our continuing presence at Leeds Pride. Combined with training on everything from TUPE to neurodiversity in the workplace, from apprenticeships to AML, the variety is endless.

2026 promises more of the same as we strive to fulfil our objective: "to represent, support and help solicitors in Leeds". We can't do any of this without the support of our directors, office staff, sponsors, members and volunteers. As I enter the second half of my year as President I can only say thank you to everyone who has supported us through 2025 and I hope you support us again in 2026.

The end of the year gives pause to reflect on the past and to think about the year to come. 2026 will mark the 400th anniversary of the granting of a royal charter to Leeds. In that time, it has grown from a very small town to one of the UK's biggest cities. For much of the four centuries since that charter, Leeds and the surrounding areas were dominated by the cloth industry, typified by Gotts Mill in Armley, once the largest factory in the world. What's left of Gotts Mill today is now Leeds Industrial Museum, reflective of the changing times. In recent decades financial and legal services have become the lifeblood of the city and the region. Professional services have replaced wool and cloth as the trade that drives the city forward. It would be easy to overlook how important our industry is to the economy of the region, let us hope that 2026 sees it go from strength to strength.

If you are interested in getting involved with Leeds Law Society – with a practice-area committee or otherwise – please do get in contact with us; we would be delighted to hear from you. Contact in the first instance should be to our head of operations, Rachel Windle, on rachel.windle@leedslawsociety.org.uk or by calling our office on **0113 245 4997**.



LEEDS ANNUAL LEGAL DINNER 2026

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF LEEDS
AS A CENTRE OF LEGAL EXCELLENCE.

BOOK NOW

LUKE COCORAN, PRESIDENT OF LEEDS LAW SOCIETY

THE QUEENS HOTEL | CITY SQUARE | LEEDS LS1 1PJ

07.05.26



Knights set for growth in Yorkshire as revenue and profits rise



Yorkshire-based legal and professional services firm Knights is looking ahead with confidence after reporting a strong set of

financial results for the 2025 financial year.

The firm, which employs 159 professionals across Leeds, Sheffield and York, recorded annual revenue of £162m, up 8% year on year, while profit rose 11% to £28m. Across the UK, Knights now has 1,350 professionals working from 32 locations.

Growth in Yorkshire has been marked by 80 new hires, the launch of Family teams in Leeds and

Sheffield, and high-profile advisory work, including acting on the £120m acquisition of Clear Line by Fasadgruppen Group AB.

Chief executive David Beech said the results reflected the success of the firm's long-term strategy, despite wider economic challenges. He highlighted improved margins, strong recruitment momentum, reduced staff turnover and continued progress on acquisitions, including the largest deal in the firm's history.

Knights has also expanded its regional footprint during 2025, completing acquisitions in the South East and Thames Valley and opening a new office in Cardiff, positioning the business for continued profitable growth in the year ahead.

Legal 500 Launches UK Rankings 2026

The Legal 500 UK 2026 rankings have been published following extensive research during 2025, showcasing the leading law firms and lawyers across the country. This year's guide covers nearly 1,200 firms and more than 13,000 individuals, and is the first UK edition to launch with the new Legal 500 comparison tool, allowing users to compare up to three firms across rankings, matters and lawyer accolades.

The Yorkshire legal market has experienced a busy and unpredictable year, shaped by economic uncertainty and a continued trend of regional expansion by London-based firms. Firm consolidation has been a defining feature, most notably the merger of Wilkin Chapman and Rollets, creating a combined Yorkshire presence across Hull, York and Beverley. Other significant moves include the merger of Bell & Buxton with Sills & Betteridge and Flint Bishop's acquisition of Leeds-based Lupton Fawcett.

The region features almost 550 rankings across 45 practice areas. Walker Morris, DLA Piper and Addleshaw Goddard lead the tables, with Pinsent Masons and Irwin Mitchell also featuring strongly. Clarion continues to perform well among Leeds-based firms, while Sheffield and Hull maintain distinct and competitive legal markets.

Legal 500 editors congratulated all firms and individuals recognised in the 2026 rankings.



Ground breaking scheme launched to give Britain's pet owners "peace of mind"



With millions of UK households owning pets, a York solicitor has launched a new digital legal tool designed to protect animals if their owners can no longer care for them.

Rachel Roche, founder of award-winning law firm Roche Legal, has developed PetPact®, an online service that allows owners to record who should look after their pets in the event of serious illness, death or relationship breakdown. The tool enables owners to name a trusted carer and clearly set out their wishes, providing peace of mind and helping to

prevent disputes.

PetPact® can sit alongside a Will and is suitable for all types of pets, from dogs and cats to birds and reptiles. While pets are still generally treated as property under UK law, recent cases in the UK and the US have increasingly considered animal welfare when deciding who should keep a pet.

Rachel said PetPact® is intended as a practical first step towards modernising how the law views and protects pets. Her innovation has gained international recognition, with PetPact® selected for Innovate UK's Global Incubator Programme in partnership with Canada's Legal Innovation Zone.

The service is completed online, can be updated at any time, and costs £45 for individuals or £55 for couples, with £5 donated to an animal charity for each PetPact® created.

Taylor Emmet secures recognition in 2026 Legal 500 rankings

Leading law firm, [Taylor Emmet](#), has once again been acknowledged for its excellence in the Legal 500 rankings.

The firm has maintained its impressive position as a Tier One firm in the 2026 rankings, demonstrating its continued commitment to providing high-quality legal services.

Taylor Emmet's Family Law team has yet again been ranked in Tier One. Headed by Michaela Evans, who is described as 'phenomenal' and noted for her 'holistic approach', the team offers expertise across complex financial remedies, cohabitation matters, domestic abuse issues, and children law matters.

The Contentious Trusts and Probate team has also maintained its Tier One ranking. Led by Alex Watkinson, who is praised for his 'exceptional knowledge of the law', the team continues to demonstrate broad expertise in will validity and inheritance disputes.

The firm has also achieved Tier Three rankings across three departments, including the Clinical Negligence team led by James Drydale, the Personal Injury team headed by John Green, and the

Personal Tax, Trusts and Probate team led by Richard King.

Steve Hinshelwood, CEO of Taylor Emmet, said: "We are delighted with our continued recognition in the 2026 Legal 500 rankings. This achievement showcases our strong position and commitment to supporting and protecting our clients across a range of legal services."

"Congratulations to our Contentious Trusts and Probate and Family Law teams for maintaining their Tier One status, as well as our Clinical Negligence, Personal Injury and Personal Tax, Trusts and Probate departments for continuing to be recognised for their excellence. This acknowledgement across multiple practice areas reflects the hard work, dedication and expertise of everyone here at Taylor Emmet."



Law firm Gordons achieves 5 years of growth as net profit rises 9% and turnover by 7%



Leeds-headquartered law firm Gordons has reported a strong set of financial results, with net profit rising nine per cent to £13.2m for the year ended 31 March 2025 and annual revenues

increasing seven per cent to £23.8m.

The latest figures mark the firm's fifth consecutive year of growth, with net profit and turnover up 60 per cent and 32 per cent respectively since 2020. Reflecting the firm's performance, all staff received a bonus equivalent to five per cent of their annual salary. Gordons has also made a positive start to the current financial year, with turnover up eight per cent in the first half compared with the same period last year.

Revenue growth was driven by increased instructions from existing clients and new business wins, particularly in the retail and technology sectors. The firm's commercial practice performed strongly, recording a 12 per cent increase in turnover. Gordons' client base includes AO, Iceland Foods, Morrisons, Ocado Retail, Wren Kitchens, Molson Coors and Evri.

During the year, the firm promoted two new partners and continued its commitment to social mobility through its law apprenticeship scheme. Managing partner Victoria Davey said the results reflected the strength of client relationships and the firm's distinctive culture.

Taylor Emmet brings together local businesses for launch of new Peak District office

Taylor Emmet has officially launched its new Peak District office with a major networking event attended by more than 150 people from businesses across the region.

The celebration took place at the Thornbridge Brewery Tap Room in Bakewell and marked the firm's relocation to Riverside Business Park, the largest development of its kind in the Peak District. The Mayor of Bakewell, Alyson Hill, carried out the official ribbon-cutting, while representatives from the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Edale Mountain Rescue spoke about their work in the area.

The move represents a significant step in Taylor Emmet's growth, relocating from its former central Bakewell premises to a modern, open-plan office alongside high-profile neighbours including Thornbridge Brewery and Chatsworth. The new space

can accommodate up to 25 colleagues and includes collaborative breakout areas and flexible meeting rooms.

The firm says the relocation supports its evolving identity from "Bakewell-based" to "Peak District lawyers", reflecting a broad client base across the region while complementing its Sheffield office.

Martin Sissons, partner and head of the Peak District office, said the move would help the firm better serve its growing client base and continue supporting rural communities through specialised legal services.



Han Law Co and Inspire Legal Group Merge to Strengthen Yorkshire's Legal Sector

Han Law Co and Inspire Legal Group have joined forces in a strategic merger designed to strengthen Yorkshire's legal offering and drive a new phase of growth and innovation for both firms.

As part of the merger, Han Law Co founder Hannah Strawbridge takes on a senior leadership role at Inspire Legal Group as Head of Legal, a shareholder and a member of the Board of Directors. She will work alongside Inspire's founder and CEO Natalie Foster and partner Bill Tilley, forming a leadership team focused on collaboration, innovation and high-quality client care.

The merger brings together two well-known Yorkshire legal entrepreneurs with a shared vision for modern, accessible legal services. The expanded firm will continue to operate with a remote-first model for its lawyers, supported by a dedicated client services team based at Inspire Legal Group's headquarters

in Scarborough.

Clients will benefit from enhanced support across a wide range of legal services, including employment law and HR, litigation, residential property, disability and discrimination, and commercial and corporate law, with a continued focus on improving access to justice.

Natalie Foster said the partnership would strengthen Inspire's capabilities and culture, while Hannah Strawbridge described the merger as a "meeting of minds" built on shared values and a forward-thinking approach to legal services in Yorkshire.



Yorkshire's Ramsdens Solicitors celebrates multiple Legal 500 rankings and individual honours



Yorkshire-based Ramsdens Solicitors has once again been recognised as a 'Leading Firm' in the 2025 edition of the Legal 500, securing rankings across nine practice areas and

achieving a significant rise in individual recognition. A total of 33 Ramsdens team members have been named as recommended lawyers, up from 22 in the previous year, reflecting the firm's continued growth and investment in expertise.

Two departments recorded notable improvements. Family Law rose to Tier 2, with the team praised for its strength in child matters, domestic abuse and separation cases. The department is led by Sarah Ward and Joanne Coen,

with additional recognition for Vikki Horspool's nationally distinctive expertise in female genital mutilation. The Court of Protection team entered the rankings for the first time at Tier 4, with judges commending its compassionate approach and specialist knowledge in health and welfare matters under the leadership of Natalie Lang.

Other departments retaining strong rankings include Clinical Negligence (Tier 4), Commercial Property (Tier 4), Contentious Trusts and Probate (Tier 3) and Personal Injury (Tier 4).

The Legal 500 also highlighted individual excellence, with Liam Brooke once again named a Next Generation Partner. Joint CEO Lindsey Frith said the results reflected the firm's commitment to high-quality client care and professional development across Yorkshire and beyond.

Exchange Chambers celebrates 15 years in Leeds

Exchange Chambers is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary in Leeds, marking a period of significant growth and national success for the barristers' set.

The chambers opened in Leeds in October 2010 with just four barristers and a senior clerk. Fifteen years on, it now has more than 40 Leeds-based members, including several King's Counsel, and over 200 members nationally. From the outset, the aim was to operate as a single, modern chambers across major cities along the M62 corridor, offering a national service rather than a regional outpost.

Nick Johnson KC, who has been with Exchange since it opened in Leeds and took silk in 2016, said the focus on organic growth and excellence over rapid expansion has paid off, with the chambers winning the Chambers UK Regional Set of the Year award twice in recent years. He also highlighted pride in being the first home-grown silk from the Leeds chambers.

Ian Spencer, who joined as senior clerk in 2010 and is now chambers director in Leeds, said it has been a privilege to see the chambers develop, with continued investment in talent and services to meet client needs.

Exchange's Leeds-based barristers have acted on landmark cases, achieved national recognition and progressed to senior judicial roles, reinforcing the chambers' strong reputation within the North Eastern Circuit and beyond.



All in Place partners with Taylor Emmet to provide peace of mind for SME owners

All in Place, the online software and services platform for the accountancy sector, has formed a strategic partnership with leading law firm Taylor Emmet to give accountancy clients direct access to specialist legal advice on succession and personal planning.

The collaboration will allow accountancy firms using the All in Place platform to offer SME clients support with Wills, Lasting Powers of Attorney, and tax and inheritance planning, strengthening their advisory services and helping clients protect their families and businesses.

The partnership addresses a significant gap in the market. Research by All in Place shows that 85% of UK accountancy firms do not know whether their clients have up-to-date Wills or LPAs in place, leaving many business owners exposed to financial and personal risk in the event of death or incapacity.

Through the partnership, clients can access Taylor Emmet's 'For You. For Life' planning service, designed to support

long-term planning, asset protection and intergenerational wealth transfer while mitigating inheritance tax liabilities.

Richard Bertin, chief executive of All in Place, said the partnership simplifies difficult conversations around life and death

planning and helps accountants play a more proactive role in managing client risk. Steve Hinshelwood, CEO of Taylor Emmet, added that the collaboration aligns with the firm's commitment to providing clear, practical legal solutions that protect clients, their families and their businesses.



Harper James secures Band 1 ranking in Chambers & Partners' 2026 UK guide for SME law firms



Harper James has been ranked Band 1 in the Chambers and Partners UK 2026 guide for SME-focused law firms, achieving the top ranking in its first year of entry.

Chambers & Partners

is one of the legal profession's most respected independent directories, with rankings based on detailed research and extensive client feedback. The guide praised Harper James for opening up access to legal support for small and medium-sized businesses through its flexible, subscription-based pricing model, as well as its strong track record in the technology sector, including emerging areas such as AI.

The recognition reflects Harper James' long-standing focus on supporting entrepreneurial and growth-focused businesses through a scalable, cost-effective service delivered by senior lawyers working remotely across the UK. Client feedback highlighted the firm's breadth of expertise, with one testimonial describing Harper James as "a one-stop shop for anything legal".

Founded in 2014, Harper James has grown to a 150-strong team and has supported more than 6,500 clients nationwide. The firm combines legal expertise with technology-led innovation, including proprietary AI tools, and has delivered double-digit growth every year since launch.

Founder and CEO Toby Harper said the ranking demonstrated that a law firm designed specifically for SMEs can compete confidently with the best in the profession.

Law firm's podcasts provide platform to promote best practice for charities

Wilkin Chapman Rollits has strengthened its support for the region's charity sector with the launch of a new podcast series featuring charity chief officers and trustees.

The initiative is led by the firm's specialist charity lawyers, partner and head of charity Gerry Morrison and associate Harriet Wheeldon. The first episode features Andy Barber, a long-standing charity chief executive and trustee with more than 20 years' experience in the sector, and will be released ahead of Trustees' Week in early November.

Future episodes will include Olly Burdett, a trustee of The Tigers Trust, and Lisa Dawson, director of education charity Run With It, with further charity leaders due to appear later in the year. The guests have been selected to showcase the wide range of skills and experience trustees bring to their organisations, from leadership and governance to marketing, communications and education.

Gerry Morrison said the idea grew out of training and education work the firm already delivers for charities. He added that the aim is to give

charity leaders a platform to share real-life experiences, rather than focusing solely on legal commentary.

The podcasts will be available in full on YouTube, with shorter clips shared on social media. The firm will also host two events during Trustees' Week exploring effective charity governance.



Jones Myers retains top Legal 500 and Chambers rankings for over three decades

Niche family law firm Jones Myers has once again secured top-tier rankings in the Legal 500 and Chambers guides, maintaining its leading position for more than three decades.

The Legal 500 2026 describes the firm as a “fantastic team” praised for managing clients’ expectations, with its child abduction team recognised as “a leader for all of Yorkshire”. Managing partner Richard Peaker, head of the Financial Remedies Department, retains his status as a Leading Partner for his work on complex, high-value financial disputes, including multi-jurisdictional cases and matters involving corporate and offshore trust structures.

Kate Banerjee, head of the Children’s Department, also remains a Leading Partner, with expertise spanning public and private children law, international child abduction, residence and contact disputes, and care proceedings. Partner Anthony Parrish retains his Next Generation Partner status, while Elizabeth Bell and in-house barrister

Andrew Fox are named as Key Lawyers. Partner Nicki Mitchell is also recognised for her work as a mediator and collaborative family lawyer.

In Chambers 2026, Jones Myers achieved a Band 1 ranking for Yorkshire, with Richard Peaker, Kate Banerjee, Elizabeth Bell and Nicki Mitchell individually ranked, including recognition for mediation work.

Richard Peaker said the long-standing recognition reflected the depth of expertise across the firm’s teams in Leeds, Harrogate and York. Founded in 1992, Jones Myers continues to expand its specialist family law practice across the region.



Walker Morris obtains permission to appeal CAT decision regarding GMCA loans



Walker Morris has announced its role in securing the Court of Appeal’s permission to appeal the Competition Appeal Tribunal’s (CAT) judgment regarding two loans, totalling

£140 million, awarded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to Manchester developer Renaker.

Walker Morris has advised the Weis Group in challenging the award under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The original challenge argued that the loans were unlawful subsidies provided on non-market terms that

distorted the market in and around Manchester, an argument the CAT dismissed in July 2025.

In granting permission to appeal, the Court of Appeal found that all grounds for appeal have a “real as opposed to fanciful prospect of success” and raise “novel issues of importance” to the subsidies regime. The appeal is set to be heard before the end of July 2026.

Sarah Ward, Partners in the Competition team, commented: “We’re pleased with the outcome of the permission to appeal hearing. The Court of Appeal’s decision to grant our client the right to challenge the GMCA’s loan awards is a significant step forward. We look forward to presenting our case and addressing the novel issues raised by this matter.”

Womble Bond Dickinson Advises Endless on SALE OF Realise Training Group

Womble Bond Dickinson (WBD) has advised Yorkshire-based investor Endless on the sale of leading training provider Realise Training Group to AQA, the UK’s largest exam board and an independent education charity.

Realise has grown significantly over the past five years to become one of the UK’s major apprenticeships and adult skills providers, supporting more than 18,000 learners each year with a workforce of over 500 people. The business was acquired by Endless’ SME fund Enact in October 2020 through a management buyout from Interserve Group, when it was previously known as Interserve Learning & Employment.

Since then, Realise has undergone major expansion under the leadership of chief executive Gregg Scott. During Enact’s ownership, the business completed three acquisitions – FW Solutions, Training Plus and Smart Gas Training and Assessment Centre, now rebranded as Smart Energy – and moved from a loss-making position to an expected £4m profit in the 2024

financial year. The provider delivers apprenticeships across sectors including early years, health and social care, business services and transport.

WBD partners James Cook and David Ridley, alongside solicitor Alex Dolling, led the legal team advising Enact and management on the sale. The transaction marks one of Enact’s most significant exits and reflects WBD’s role advising throughout the full lifecycle of the investment.



Private equity deal boosts personal injury law firm

Manchester-based Express Solicitors has secured private equity investment from Ufenau Capital Partners in a move set to accelerate the firm's rapid growth and acquisition strategy.

The deal follows another strong year for the personal injury specialist, with turnover rising to £88.5m, up from £70.6m last year, including figures from sister company Ontime Reports. The investment will support Express Solicitors' ongoing buy-and-build strategy, following the recent acquisitions of HNK Solicitors and Graham Coffey & Co Solicitors.

Chief executive James Maxey described the investment as a milestone in the firm's 25th anniversary year, which has also seen 65 internal promotions and further progress up The Lawyer's UK 200 rankings, climbing from 70th to 64th place. The firm has again been recognised as an Outstanding Company to Work For by Best Companies.

Ufenau Capital Partners will work closely with Express Solicitors' existing management team. Managing partner Ralf Flore said the investment marked Ufenau's first UK platform investment since opening its UK office in 2024 and

highlighted Express as a strong base for its buy-and-build approach in the fragmented legal services market.

Express Solicitors continues to recruit across the business as it expands its operations and service offering.



Raworths retains top-tier recognition in the UK's leading legal guides



Harrogate-based law firm Raworths has once again been recognised in two of the UK's leading legal directories, reinforcing its reputation for excellence across both its commercial and

private client practices.

In the Chambers UK Guide 2026, Raworths has retained Band 1 rankings for its Corporate and Commercial, Employment and Family teams. Additional recognition was awarded to Dispute Resolution, Property Litigation, Commercial Property and Agriculture & Rural, reflecting the breadth of expertise across the firm.

The firm's Trusts, Wills and Estates (TWE) team also maintained its Band 1 ranking in the Chambers High Net Worth Guide, aimed at the international private wealth market. In total, 14 Raworths lawyers were ranked across the Chambers UK and Chambers HNW guides, representing around half of the firm's legal team.

Raworths has also performed strongly in the Legal 500 UK Guide 2026, with all practice areas recognised. The TWE team retained its top-tier ranking, while 19 individual lawyers were highlighted for their expertise. Managing Partner Simon Morris was awarded 'Eminent Practitioner' status, recognising his leadership and influence within the firm.

Simon Morris said the results reflected rigorous independent research and client feedback, underlining the trust clients place in Raworths' integrated and collaborative approach.

Law Firm Opens 24th Yorkshire Office With New Middlesbrough Branch

Ison Harrison has opened a new regional office in Middlesbrough, taking its total network to 24 offices and extending its specialist legal services further across the North.

The new office will focus on inquest, personal injury and civil liberties work and is led by highly regarded lawyer Sarah Magson, who joins from Watson Woodhouse Solicitors. Sarah brings extensive experience in representing families at inquests, supporting clients with life-changing injuries and pursuing civil claims against public authorities. She was named Lawyer of the Year at the Northern Law Awards 2024 and Inspirational Female Business Leader at the National Business Hero Awards 2024.

Sarah is joined by a team of experienced lawyers, creating one of the North's most specialist practices in this complex area of law. The team includes Dawn Makepeace, an expert in inquests and human rights claims; Alistair Smith, who specialises in complex inquest investigations; Sophie Kendall, who works across personal injury, CICA, inquest and human rights claims; and Sarah Finney, an experienced caseworker in

actions against public authorities. Paul Henderson will join the team in January.

Located opposite Middlesbrough Law Courts, the new office strengthens Ison Harrison's presence in a key legal hub.

Gareth Naylor, director and head of personal injury and inquests, said the expansion reflects the firm's people-led growth strategy and commitment to specialist legal excellence and access to justice.

Ison Harrison now employs more than 400 people across Yorkshire and the North East and has almost doubled its turnover since becoming employee-owned in 2022.



Switalskis solicitor gains accreditation for work protecting vulnerable children and adults

Gabrielle Richardson, a solicitor in Switalskis' Child Care team, has achieved specialist accreditation in private children law and advocacy from Resolution, the UK's leading organisation for family law professionals.

The nationally recognised accreditation is awarded only to solicitors who demonstrate exceptional expertise, advocacy skills and professional competence. Candidates must complete a rigorous two-stage assessment process, including written examinations, advocacy tests and the submission of detailed case portfolios.

Gabrielle joined Switalskis as a newly qualified solicitor in 2023 and is based in the firm's Leeds office. She specialises in supporting survivors of domestic abuse, securing protective injunctions, resolving parental disputes over child arrangements and advising on special guardianship matters. Her work also includes public law children cases and international child abduction matters.

Gabrielle said achieving the accreditation was about providing reassurance to vulnerable clients who are often navigating highly distressing circumstances. She added that the recognition reflects her commitment to ensuring families receive skilled and compassionate legal support.

Ruth Coneron, head of Switalskis' Child Care team, praised Gabrielle's achievement, describing the accreditation process as highly demanding. She said Gabrielle's success underlines her expertise and dedication, and reinforces Switalskis' commitment to delivering high-quality specialist advice for children and families.



Capsticks appointed to support First Choice Homes Oldham



Capsticks' housing team has been appointed to act for First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO), further strengthening the firm's position as a leading adviser in the social housing sector across

the North of England.

FCHO owns and manages around 11,500 homes in Oldham and surrounding areas of Greater Manchester. Under the four-year appointment, Capsticks will provide Housing Management legal services, supporting FCHO in delivering safe, well-managed communities and a strong customer experience.

Jayne Lawson, executive director of customer experience

at FCHO, said strong legal partnerships are essential when intervention is required, helping the organisation deliver the ambitions set out in its Customer and Communities Strategy.

Susie Rogers, partner and head of housing at Capsticks, said the appointment was a significant achievement for the firm and a valuable opportunity to build on its established expertise in the sector, while strengthening its full-service housing offering in the North.

Partner Paul Lloyd added that the partnership reinforces Capsticks' commitment to supporting social housing providers and further establishing the firm as a sector leader.

Capsticks works exclusively with organisations that make a difference, providing practical, innovative legal advice tailored to the challenges faced by social housing providers and other public and private sector clients.

Knights looking ahead to growth in Yorkshire with revenue and profits set to rise

Yorkshire-based legal and professional services business Knights has reported a strong financial performance for the six months to 31 October 2025, positioning the firm for further growth.

The update shows anticipated revenue of £103.2m for the period, representing a 30% increase on the prior year. Underlying profit before tax is expected to rise 12% to £16.4m. Knights employs around 155 people across its Yorkshire offices in Sheffield, Leeds and York, and has a total nationwide workforce of 1,350 professionals.

The results build on a positive year in Yorkshire, with 28 new hires including partners Katrina Allen, Charlie Markillie, Milena Falciano-Padron and Andrew Price. The firm has also secured a successful multi-million-pound High Court win for client Sharpsmart.

Chief executive David Beech said: "The Group delivered a strong first-half results, achieving 30% revenue growth and

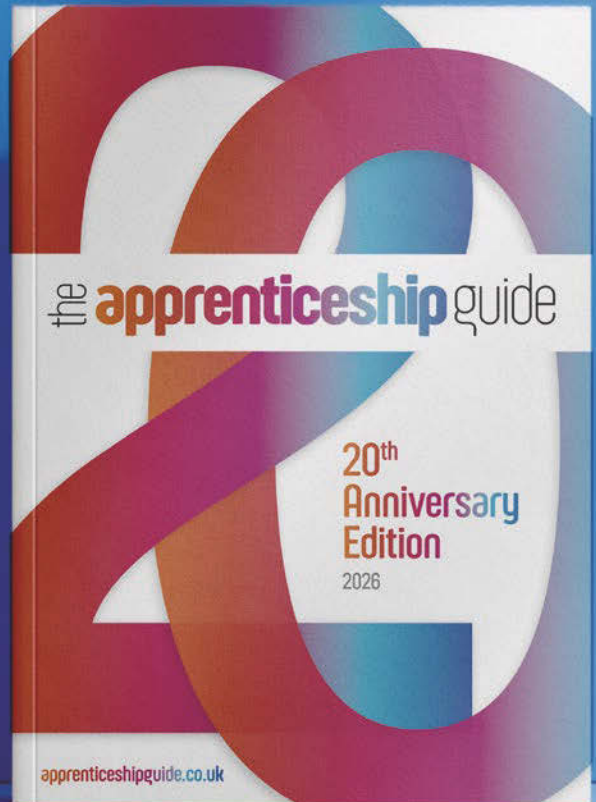
a return to organic expansion. Recent acquisitions have been integrated seamlessly, supported by continued financial discipline and robust cash generation.

Looking ahead, the second half is set to benefit from recent experienced hires and full contributions of acquisitions, keeping us firmly on track to meet investor expectations."

Knights' continued growth in 2025 also reflects its expanding regional presence, including acquisitions in the South East and Thames Valley and the opening of a new office in Cardiff.



Shaping the future of legal talent



Get in front of
tomorrow's top
legal talent, today!



Connect with future legal talent.
Get your programme featured online.

Celebrating 20 years of championing apprenticeships, The Apprenticeship Guide marks its milestone anniversary with the launch of a dedicated legal sector section. This year, our 20th edition will reach thousands of students

and young adults nationwide. Don't miss your chance to get ahead – showcase your firm's apprenticeship programme and connect with the next generation of legal talent, locally or across the UK.

apprenticeshipguide.co.uk/advertise

the **apprenticeship** guide

Legal Milestones and reflections: 2025 Year in review and future legal trends

Andrea Cohen, legal director in the Compli team at Weightmans, is back with our regular update on regulatory matters and risk and compliance:

As 2025 draws to a close, the year has been much like previous ones – juggling client needs, staying current with legal changes, meeting growing regulatory obligations, running and growing a business, and keeping ahead of competitors.

There have been significant milestones: major regulatory reforms, advances in legal technology, the FCA taking on all AML regulation (anticipated by the end of 2027), and cases like Mazur shaking the profession. Alongside these, SRA guidance, Law Society practice notes, updated LSAG guidance, and new statutory requirements have kept regulatory compliance anything but dull!

Regulatory shifts and compliance pressure

The SRA's updated sectoral risk assessment on AML and terrorist financing prompted firms to review and document their FWRA and PCPs. Recent annual AML and sanctions data collection has resulted in hundreds of firms receiving letters from the SRA. A thematic review on PCPs is expected in early 2026, with inspections and investigations continuing as usual.

The Mazur decision sparked widespread commentary across the legal press and LinkedIn, with reactions ranging from concern over disruption in high-volume claims firms employing many non-admitted staff, to the need for firms to evidence processes in case of future queries or satellite legislation on earlier pleadings. The Law Society issued updated guidance on 18 November 2025. CILEX has permission to appeal, though the hearing may take some time.

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

These developments have required firms to update policies, procedures, and training, highlighting the importance of strong compliance frameworks.

Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA)

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

Disciplinary trends and professional ethics

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

Other disciplinary actions have addressed issues such as misleading clients, falsifying emails, misuse of client account and over-recording time. These cases serve as stark reminders of the importance of ethical conduct and the risks of succumbing to commercial pressures or poor leadership. The LSB has voiced concerns about declining ethical standards, prompting consultations on upholding professional duties and the potential for regulatory reform.

Future legal trends: navigating the road ahead

Looking ahead, several trends are set to shape the legal profession:

- **Evolving regulation:** Regulators are moving toward risk-based, tech-driven approaches focused on outcomes rather than processes. While AML under the FCA remains uncertain, keeping FWRAs current and conducting independent audits is sound practice.
- **AI and automation:** AI will streamline document review, contract analysis, and predictive analytics, but firms must ensure accuracy, ethics, and compliance.
- **Data security:** Rising cyber threats make robust protection, staff training, and incident response critical, with regulatory scrutiny on breaches and client confidentiality likely to grow.
- **Flexible working:** Firms must adapt management and training for hybrid teams while maintaining high standards.
- **ESG and social responsibility:** Sustainability, diversity, and ethical practices are increasingly central to clients and regulators.
- **Access to justice and innovation:** Online dispute resolution, virtual hearings, and digital services will expand access while requiring strong compliance.

These trends point to a profession defined by adaptability, innovation, and social responsibility, combining achievements of 2025 with preparation for the future.

How Compli can help...

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



Glittering Launch for the Schofield Sweeney Bradford Professionals Network



Commercial law firm Schofield Sweeney has launched its Bradford Professionals Network,

welcoming almost 200 guests to an inaugural event at the newly opened Bradford Live venue.

The launch, held in the Ballroom at Bradford Live, brought together businesses and organisations from across the Bradford district to promote and celebrate the local business community. Guests attended from sectors including professional services, manufacturing, retail, financial and real estate, alongside representatives from charities, education and leisure, and local dignitaries.

Managing Partner Graham Sweeney, whose firm was founded in Bradford in 1998, said the network

was designed to strengthen collaboration at a time of major change and opportunity for the city. He highlighted Bradford's City of Culture status, the opening of Bradford Live and Darley Street Market, and wider improvements to transport and the city centre as reasons to build a stronger professional network and keep Bradford "at the forefront of people's minds beyond 2025".

Bradford Council's Executive Member for Regeneration, Planning and Transport, Alex Ross-Shaw, welcomed the initiative, describing it as an important step in supporting a thriving professional sector and growing the local economy.

Further Bradford Professionals Network events are planned for 2026. Those interested in attending can contact Ann-Marie Keighley at Schofield Sweeney.

Winston Solicitors Supports Remember a Charity in Your Will Week 2025



Winston Solicitors has once again shown its commitment to supporting national awareness campaigns by taking part in Remember a Charity in Your Will Week 2025, which ran from

8–14 September.

The campaign, led by Remember a Charity, encourages people to consider leaving a gift to charity in their Will. Such gifts generate billions of pounds for good causes each year, funding essential services ranging from medical research to community projects. Despite this, only a small percentage of people currently include a charity in their Will.

The Leeds-based firm's Private Client team, which specialises in Wills, Trusts, Lasting Powers of Attorney and

Probate, used the week to raise awareness, share advice and speak directly with clients about how easy it can be to leave a legacy. The team highlighted the flexibility of charitable giving through Wills, whether by leaving a set sum of money, a percentage of the estate, or even specific possessions. They also advised on the potential tax benefits, including a reduced rate of Inheritance Tax when 10% or more of an estate is gifted to charity.

Earlier this year, Winston Solicitors also took part in Update Your Will Week, helping to promote the importance of reviewing Wills regularly as circumstances change. Both campaigns reflect the firm's ongoing efforts to support clients in planning for the future while also encouraging people to think about the wider impact of their legacies.

Monika Volsing, Head of Private Client at Winston Solicitors said: "Remember a Charity in Your Will Week is an excellent opportunity to highlight just how much of a difference even a small legacy gift can make. We were delighted to play our part in raising awareness for a local charity and supporting clients to make decisions that benefit both their loved ones and the causes they care about."

Gateley celebrates decade of shaping the future of housebuilding talent

Professional services group Gateley is celebrating ten years of its national academy for housebuilders, which has supported more than 650 junior professionals since launching in 2016.

The free programme is aimed at graduates and early-career professionals working in the residential development sector, particularly those in land, planning and technical roles. Delivered through a series of workshop-style modules, the academy is designed to help participants build a strong practical understanding of the residential development process.

Workshops are hosted at Gateley's offices in London, Birmingham and Leeds and are led primarily by Gateley Legal's residential development lawyers, alongside specialists from across the wider Gateley Group. The programme runs over 12 months and includes four modules following the full lifecycle

of a development site, from agreeing heads of terms through to plot sales and scheme exit. Sessions also cover planning issues, statutory notices and customer care, with specialist input from Gateley Capitus tax experts and Gateley Hamer land and utilities consultants.

Andy Wilson, partner and national head of residential development at Gateley Legal, said the academy reflected the firm's commitment to adding value for clients by helping to shape future industry talent. He thanked colleagues and alumni for their contribution to the programme's success over the past decade.



Switalskis celebrates triple honours at Yorkshire Legal Awards



Law firm Switalskis has been recognised for its outstanding client service after winning a rare hat-trick of awards at this year's Yorkshire Legal Awards.

The firm, which has offices across Yorkshire and in London, collected awards in the residential property, criminal law - for the second consecutive year - and wills & probate categories.

Switalskis' conveyancing teams provide personalised advice through buying and selling homes, while its wills & probate team handles estate planning and administration, managing sensitive matters with care and professionalism. In criminal law, Switalskis' back-to-back wins reflect its work across

both general and serious crime cases. The team specialises in a range of criminal cases, with expertise in representing vulnerable defendants and those requiring psychiatric assessment.

John Durkan, Switalskis' managing director, says: "Winning three awards in one night is a real testament to the hard work and dedication of our teams. I'm incredibly proud of everyone at Switalskis - these wins are theirs as much as they are the firm's and reflect the high level of service we strive to give every client. Congratulations to everyone and every firm who received awards at the ceremony, proving that Yorkshire continues to be a leading force in legal excellence."

The Yorkshire Legal Awards celebrate excellence and recognise achievements of the region's legal sector, highlighting outstanding performance across a wide range of disciplines. The awards ceremony took place on Thursday 9 October at New Dock Hall, Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds.

Mills & Reeve claims prestigious IP award for second year running

Mills & Reeve's Leeds office has been named winner of the Intellectual Property award at the Yorkshire Legal Awards for the second year in a row.

The awards recognise excellence across the Yorkshire legal community, with winners selected by an independent judging panel drawn from the region's profession. Mills & Reeve secured the top spot in a competitive IP category, with judges praising the team's practical and innovative approach.

The panel highlighted the Leeds team's development of priority matrix tools for clients and a free top tech programme, commending its creative thinking and focus on delivering clear, tangible value. These initiatives were said to clearly distinguish the firm from other entrants.

Alex Newman, partner at Mills & Reeve, said the recognition was particularly rewarding for a second

consecutive year, noting the firm's commitment to delivering commercially focused and collaborative advice on complex IP matters. He added

that the award reflected the strength of the Leeds-based team and the wider national support behind it.

Mills & Reeve advises clients across the full intellectual property lifecycle, supporting businesses in protecting, managing and maximising the value of their IP assets.



Yorkshire-based Pippa Bradley named Trainee Solicitor of the Year

A lawyer based at Knights' Leeds office has been named Trainee Solicitor of the Year at the Yorkshire Legal Awards.

Pippa Bradley, who qualified into the firm's Employment team in September, was recognised as Yorkshire's top trainee for her outstanding contribution, talent and dedication during her training contract.

While training at Knights, Pippa worked closely with the Employment team, developing skills in legal research, drafting strategic client advice, defending complex Employment Tribunal claims and delivering in-house training to clients across sectors including travel, retail, hospitality and manufacturing.

She was also selected for a three-month in-house secondment at Flutter Entertainment PLC, owner of brands including Sky Bet and Paddy Power, where she joined the Commercial legal team. The secondment broadened her commercial experience and understanding of in-house legal operations.

The Yorkshire Legal Awards celebrate excellence, innovation and achievement across the region's legal profession.

Pippa said the award reflected the breadth of opportunities she was given during her training, from client-facing work and business development to hosting seminars. She credited Knights' supportive culture with helping her develop and make a meaningful impact early in her career.

Lisa Shacklock, Group Client Services Director at Knights in Leeds, said Pippa was thoroughly deserving of the award, praising her consistently high-quality work, enthusiasm and positive attitude. Knights employs around 1,350 professionals across 32 offices nationwide.



Sheffield solicitors BRM swaps fees for philanthropy for Will Aid 2025



Sheffield-based law firm BRM is supporting the nationwide Will Aid campaign for the third consecutive year, offering free Will-writing services in November in return for charitable

donations.

As part of the initiative, BRM's solicitors will waive their usual fees and instead invite clients to make voluntary donations, helping raise funds for charities supporting the elderly, children, homeless people and victims of conflict and disaster. Suggested donations are £120 for a basic single Will or £200 for a pair of mirror Wills.

BRM has raised £11,225 for Will Aid over the past two years and joins firms across the UK in contributing to more than £24m raised since the campaign began in 1988. This year's funds will support eight charities, including Age UK, the British Red Cross, NSPCC, Christian Aid, SCIAF and Trócaire, with Crisis and Shelter joining the campaign for 2025.

Richard Barlow, head of private client services at BRM, said the firm was proud to volunteer its time and expertise while helping clients put essential arrangements in place for their families.

The campaign also highlights the importance of Will writing, with a recent poll showing 66% of UK adults either do not have a Will or have one that is out of date.

The Will Aid campaign runs throughout November.

Taylor Emmet sponsors own champion cyclist

Taylor Emmet has sponsored corporate partner Charlotte Higgins' cycling jersey as she defended her World Masters titles in October at Roubaix.

Charlotte, who joined the firm in December 2022, is one of the UK's most decorated Masters cyclists and recently secured her 33rd title in seven years of competitive racing. Her honours include 22 national titles, 11 world titles, two world records and multiple British records, with wins across both elite and Masters events.

Since 2018, she has retained her national Individual Pursuit title in her age group each year. More recently she has also excelled in mass-start racing, winning scratch and points races at the last three World Championship events.

Steve Hinshelwood, CEO of Taylor Emmet, said

the firm was proud to support Charlotte, adding that her sporting achievements reflect the dedication and excellence she brings to client work.

Charlotte said it was a major milestone to reach her 33rd title and that she returned from Roubaix with three gold medals and one silver, successfully defending three of her four titles.



Sponsorship opportunities open to law firms for the Apprenticeship Guide Awards 2026



The Apprenticeship Guide Awards 2026 is now welcoming sponsors from across the legal sector, offering law firms a high-impact platform to champion skills, training and the next generation of talent. Taking place in 2026, the awards will celebrate the employers, training providers and apprentices driving excellence in professional development.

Law firms are playing a growing role in shaping the future of legal apprenticeships, from paralegal

and solicitor pathways to business operations roles. Sponsoring the awards gives firms the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in widening access to the profession and supporting alternative routes into law.

The event brings together senior decision-makers from business, education and industry, creating a valuable environment for relationship building and brand visibility. Packages include category sponsorship, partner branding, and tailored options designed to suit firms of all sizes and specialisms.

Organisations interested in aligning their brand with apprenticeship excellence can find full details at apprenticeshipguideawards.co.uk/sponsors/.

The Apprenticeship Guide Awards 2026 is delivered by the team behind the national Apprenticeship Guide, now in its 20th year. The awards aim to recognise outstanding achievement and provide a showcase for the organisations investing in meaningful career pathways.

For sponsorship enquiries, visit:
apprenticeshipguideawards.co.uk/sponsors/

Taylor Emmet raises over £2,000 at inaugural Charity Golf Day

Leading law firm Taylor Emmet has raised over £2,000 for charity following its inaugural Golf Day at Hallamshire Golf Club.

The event brought together businesses from across Sheffield for a day of golf, networking, and fundraising in support of the firm's charity partners: Alzheimer's Society, Support Dogs, Sheffield Children's Hospital, and Weston Park Cancer Charity.

The day featured 18 holes of golf in team format, on-course competitions, team prizes, with representatives from all four charities speaking during the opening of the event.

The money raised on the day will contribute towards the firm's annual target of £20,000 for these organisations. In previous years, the firm has hosted a variety of fundraising events for its charity partners, including charity marathon walks, bungee jumps, 'Dog and Doughnut Days', and a family fun day. Taylor Emmet also offers a 'Volunteer Day' programme, offering all employees the opportunity to volunteer their time to support the charities.



Steve Hinshelwood, CEO of Taylor Emmet, said: "We are thrilled with the success of our Golf Day. Raising over £2,000 for charities that are so close to our hearts is a fantastic achievement.

"It was a wonderful day that brought colleagues and businesses from across our region together for an important cause. The support we received was incredible, and we're grateful to everyone who participated and donated."

Reflecting on 2025 with Leeds JLD

Sophie Hudson, a Commercial Litigation Associate at Weightmans and this year's Chair of Leeds Junior Lawyers Division, reflects on 2025.

The end of 2025 marks the end of my time with Leeds JLD, after an incredible three years. I started out as the Charity and Education Officer in 2023, moving into the role of Vice-Chair in 2024 and ultimately spending the final year as Chair of an amazing committee. Leeds JLD has grown into a real community, offering members great opportunities, being what we hope is an inclusive and welcoming environment.

What we did

We never have a quiet year, and in 2025 we held over 30 events, catering to everyone, from traditional socials and educational sessions to sports and apprentice or trainee-focused activities. We kicked off with our Launch Party in January and finished with our Christmas Social in December.

One highlight is May's "Mental Health May" when we step away from larger socials to host smaller, relaxed events. This year included the return of our Financial Wellbeing Panel, plus Pilates, pottery painting, and wellbeing in the workplace activities, giving everyone a chance to pause and focus on self-care.

Apprentices and trainees were especially involved this year, with two dedicated events run by our new Apprentice or Trainee Representative, helping them connect and feel represented on the committee.

Our biggest event remains the Annual Winter Ball, which sold out rapidly. This year's edition featured extra entertainment, including a giant Pac-Man and dance machine, hosting 250 junior lawyers for a three-course meal and afterparty.

Other highlights included walking in Leeds Pride, a joint afterparty with Leeds Law Society, the Easter Murder Mystery, Annual Comedy Night, and continued collaboration with LegalTech Leeds and Leeds Chartered Accountants Student Society.

Giving back

One of the many fantastic things about Leeds JLD is that we always use the opportunity to support a new charity each year, selecting one that is local and we can make a real impact to by our fundraising. This year we have been supporting The Ella Dawson Foundation – their mission is that every young adult with cancer and their families have the tools and support they need to live well and feel empowered.

Our members are very generous, always buying plenty of raffle tickets at the Summer Social and Winter Ball, two of our main fundraising events. This year, we have also been able to manage ticket sales for our events to increase charitable giving, with many events contributing towards the fundraising with a donation included in the ticket. A highlight charity event is our Annual Charity Netball Tournament, which this year was managed to ensure that every team's entry equated to pure donations, meaning we raised £2,000 from the event. Our fundraising hasn't stopped yet, as the proceeds of the ticket sales for the Christmas Social this year will be donated to charity too.

Whilst we are still going at the time of writing this article, I am delighted to announce that once again we have increased our annual fundraising beyond the prior year and raised £5,760!

Thank you

Leeds JLD wouldn't be what it is without the amazing individuals who support our events and the companies who sponsor us and donate to our raffles. I want to say a very heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported us in 2025. There are too many to list, but they know who they are, and they are greatly appreciated.

The last three years on Leeds JLD have been unforgettable, and I've had brilliant opportunities from being a part of the committee, including being invited to judge at the 2025 Yorkshire Legal Awards and speak with the Law Society at Leeds Beckett University. It is a lot of work, much of which is behind the scenes and our members don't see, but it is worth it with the enthusiasm and gratitude we receive. The 2025 committee has gone above and beyond and Leeds JLD would not be what it is if it wasn't for all efforts of the individuals on the committee. My biggest thanks does have to be to them!

If I was asked if I would do it all again, the answer would always be yes. I'm looking forward to seeing the new heights the committee reaches next year under new leadership. See you all in 2026!



Public Funding Specialist Joins Ward Hadaway as Partner



UK Top 100 law firm Ward Hadaway has strengthened its public sector practice with the appointment of Alexander Rose as a partner.

Alexander joins from international firm DWF and is recognised as one of the UK's leading specialists in public funding, subsidy control and grant programmes. He advises public authorities and private organisations on the lawful use of public money.

With more than 20 years' experience, Alexander has advised on the compliance of over £3.5bn in public funding, including major regeneration and inward

investment projects, and acted on the UK's first Subsidy Control court case. He has also given expert evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Subsidy Control Bill. Earlier in his career, he spent more than seven years at the Government Legal Department, helping to draft national guidance and advising ministers on funding initiatives such as devolution deals and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

His appointment supports Ward Hadaway's ambition to expand its public sector offering, helping clients navigate changes in funding linked to devolution, regeneration and the Levelling Up agenda.

The move follows a period of significant growth for the firm, including lateral hires, its merger with The Endeavour Partnership in Teesside and the opening of a Birmingham office, as Ward Hadaway continues to build its national presence

Knights launches Family law team in Leeds with two new hires

National professional services firm Knights has expanded its Leeds office with the launch of a dedicated Family law team, following the appointment of Senior Associate Ella Dodgson and Associate Rebecca Laffan.

Ella joins from Ward Hadaway, while Rebecca has moved from Harrowells Limited. Both specialise in complex financial matters arising from divorce, acting for entrepreneurs, business owners and individuals with inherited or generational wealth.

Ella advises on high-value and intricate financial settlements, as well as pre- and post-nuptial agreements designed to protect personal assets. Rebecca focuses on achieving fair financial outcomes for clients and has extensive experience in private law children cases, including matters involving safeguarding concerns.

The pair previously worked together at Harrowells in 2022

and their appointment reunites an established professional partnership. Their arrival introduces a Family law presence in Leeds for the first time, complementing Knights' existing Family teams nationwide.

Lisa Shacklock, Group Client Services Director at Knights, said the appointments strengthened the firm's Family offering and underlined its commitment to expanding private client services in Leeds.

Knights operates from 32 offices nationwide, employing around 1,350 professionals, and is ranked among the UK's top 50 law firms by revenue.



Switalskis welcomes largest training cohort in firms' history



Switalskis has expanded its training programme with its largest intake to date, welcoming a new cohort of solicitor apprentices and trainee solicitors across the firm.

The group includes two solicitor apprentices who have progressed into the final two years of training on the Qualifying Solicitors Programme, alongside eight solicitor apprentices and four trainee solicitors. Of the 14 trainees, 13 have moved into their roles from internal positions, highlighting the firm's commitment to career development from within. One trainee has joined from an external practice.

New trainees have been placed across a range of departments, including Clinical Negligence, Wills and Probate, Court of Protection, Care, Child Abuse Litigation, Family Law and Commercial Property. Earlier this year, Caitlin Nunn and Ellie Dawson also joined the programme and are currently training in Personal Injury and Abuse Litigation respectively.

The intake brings the total number of trainees at Switalskis to 26. Director and training principal Amy Clowrey said the firm's bespoke programme combines structured training, mentoring, senior support and social opportunities, with the aim of developing confident, well-rounded lawyers who feel valued.

The firm is currently accepting internal applications only for its January 2026 intake.

Year in review: legal milestones, landmark cases & reflections

James Staton, President of the Yorkshire Union of Law Societies and Partner at Schofield Sweeney, reflects on two important developments affecting the profession.

It seems to me that there are 2 issues this year that are having, and will have, a profound effect on solicitors and the way litigation will be practiced in the future. Those are the Mazur judgment and the government's proposals for jury trials.

Mazur has a close connection to Yorkshire, the firm at the heart of it has its office round the corner from my firm's Bradford office and the solicitor who took over conduct of the file from the original, unqualified fee earner, was at one time a member of my firm's insolvency litigation team.

Mazur and its ramifications has caused the publication of more column inches of comment, opinion and guidance than any other case this year. The case involved the interpretation of s21(3) Legal Services Act 2007. Did that section allow a person who was not an "authorised person" under s12 or an "exempt person" under s19 to conduct litigation because they were employed by a regulated firm. The answer, which caused shock waves throughout the profession, is 'no'.

When I was an articled clerk the backbone of many litigation teams was the managing clerk, who had come into the law from school and often had many years of experience and vast practical knowledge. Litigation has continued to be practised by what are now called legal executives, Chartered Legal Executives and paralegals at firms across the country. Many debt collecting practices rely on teams of paralegals supervised by maybe 1 or 2 solicitors. Everyone, except the appellants in Mazur failed to appreciate that the 2007 Act had changed the rules. Fee earners who are not "authorised" or "exempt" cannot conduct litigation even if employed by a regulated firm.

This is said to be, "a seismic shift in how law firms... must approach delegation of litigation work" The days of allowing legal executives and paralegals to conduct litigation, even with some supervision are over. Those debt collecting firms will struggle to operate, so will local authority legal teams staffed by legal executives and many private firms. Firms have to decide how litigation is to be handled and what safeguards are to be put in place. My own firm has issued guidelines for the debt collection team. All decisions on files must be taken by a solicitor leaving our legal executives to carry out the mechanics of the strategy laid down by the solicitor.

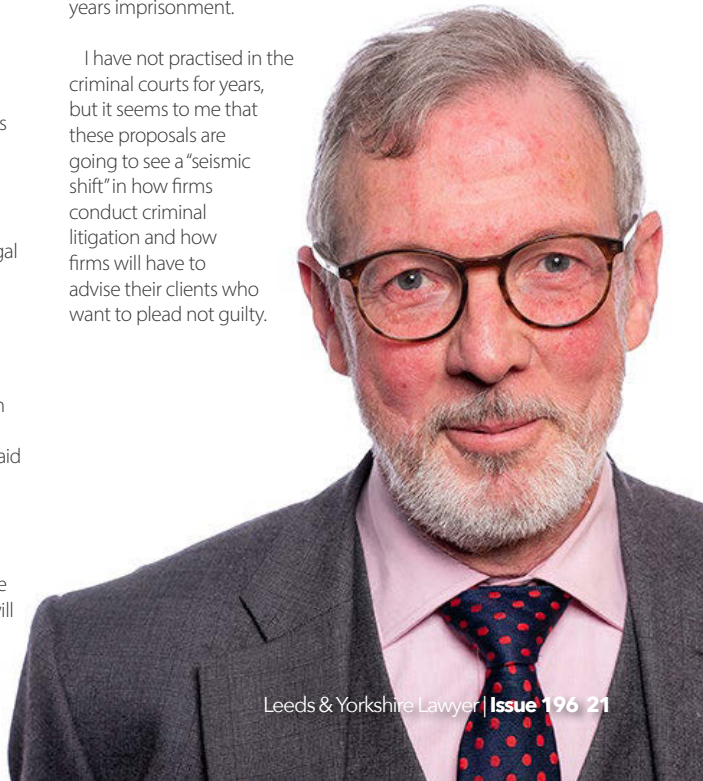
The Law Society has issued guidance to the profession as has the SRA. To add insult to injury the SRA is now inviting firms to self-report historic regulatory breaches which, apparently, will be viewed leniently, although historic breaches not self-reported will not. The SRA could be swamped by a tsunami of self-reporting.

Others see it as an opportunity; I have seen posts by firms inviting clients to use them to recover fees paid to firms who used unauthorised people to act for them in litigation. There will be satellite costs litigation fuelled by Mazur. I believe CILEX has been granted permission to challenge the decision but if legislation is required to deal with the Mazur effect, I cannot see that it will be high on the government's agenda.

Thinking of legislation brings me to my next issue, the government's plans for jury trials. The jury has a long history, Lord Eldon said it was the "greatest blessing which the British Constitution had secured to the subject"; for Lord Devlin it was, "the lamp that shows that freedom lives"; for Lord Judge, 'a safeguard against oppression and dictatorship' and for Lord Denning it was "the bulwark of our liberties". When I regularly appeared in Keighley Magistrates' Court in the 1980s and early 1990s whenever there was a not guilty plea in an either way case trial in the Crown Court was invariably chosen rather than running the risk of a trial before what were thought to be prosecution favouring magistrates.

There is a massive backlog of cases in the Crown Court which has been building for years and was exacerbated by the pandemic. In an effort to address this issue the government has brought forward a number of proposals. It will increase the sentencing power of magistrates to 18 months, bringing more cases within their ambit. It will limit the defendant's opportunity to choose where a case is heard, giving the power to the court instead, which according to the government guidance will, "no longer allow[ing] criminals to game the system." Interestingly that presupposes the defendant is a criminal despite the presumption of innocence which is supposed to apply. There will also be the "Swift Court" in which a judge alone will decide on cases which carry a sentence of under 3 years imprisonment.

I have not practised in the criminal courts for years, but it seems to me that these proposals are going to see a "seismic shift" in how firms conduct criminal litigation and how firms will have to advise their clients who want to plead not guilty.



MD Law solicitor unveiled as new President of the Sheffield and District Law Society



MD Law employment partner Lindsey Gaimster has been appointed as the new President of the Sheffield and District Law Society (SDLS).

Lindsey will serve a year-long term leading the professional association for solicitors across Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Chesterfield and the surrounding area, succeeding Dr Claire Young. Her appointment reflects her long-standing commitment to the local legal community and her focus on strengthening engagement and support for solicitors in the region.

She said her priorities include encouraging greater

collaboration, developing the Society's sub-committees, raising its profile and providing practical training and support for member firms.

Dr Claire Young welcomed Lindsey to the role and confirmed the appointment of James Parden as Vice President and Andrew Smith as Deputy Vice President, forming a new leadership team for the Society.

Lindsey joined MD Law in September 2024 to establish and grow the firm's employment law division, advising businesses and individuals on areas including restructures, redundancies, business transfers and contract reviews.

A Rotherham native, she qualified in 2012 and was a founding member of the Doncaster Junior Lawyers Division, later serving as its national representative.

Two local solicitors appointed to lead Hudgell Solicitors' Hull Clinical Negligence team

Hudgell Solicitors has promoted Elizabeth Maliakal and Hayley Collinson to senior leadership roles within its Hull-based clinical negligence team, reflecting the firm's growing depth of expertise.

Elizabeth Maliakal has been appointed Head of Department, having played a key role since joining Hudgell in 2020 following the acquisition of her former team at Heptonstalls. An APIL-accredited senior litigator and specialist in high-value and complex cases, she has particular expertise in life-changing injuries and fatal claims. Over the past year, she has worked on major investigations into alleged harmful surgeries on children at leading UK hospitals and has acted as a national media spokesperson for the firm.

Elizabeth also serves on the executive team of the Society of Clinical Negligence Lawyers, leads training and business

development within the department and is heavily involved in charity and community work.

Hayley Collinson has been promoted to Deputy Head of Department after more

than 15 years specialising in medical negligence. She joined Hudgell in 2009, qualifying as a solicitor in 2011, and is recognised for her work in birth injury and fatal claims.

National heads of clinical negligence Chris Moore and Vince Shore said both appointments demonstrated Hudgell's commitment to developing talent from within.



Three people to begin training contracts at Knights in Leeds and Sheffield



Knights has awarded training contracts to three emerging legal professionals based in Leeds and Sheffield, as part of its latest national intake.

Zain Mahmood from the Leeds office, alongside Tadiwa Daka and Holly Illingworth from Sheffield, will begin their training contracts on October 1. They will join 28 other trainees from across Knights' 32 UK locations, taking the first formal step towards qualification as solicitors.

The training contracts recognise the commitment,

performance and positive contribution each individual has already made during their time at the firm. Their appointments also build on a strong year of growth for Knights in Yorkshire, which has included 80 new hires, the launch of Family law teams in Leeds and Sheffield, and high-profile advisory work on the £120m acquisition of Clear Line by Fasadgruppen Group AB.

Lisa Shacklock, Group Client Services Director at Knights, congratulated the new trainees and said developing homegrown talent remains central to the firm's long-term growth strategy.

Knights employs around 1,350 professionals nationwide and is ranked among the UK's top 50 law firms by revenue, providing legal and professional services to both business and private clients.

Chadwick Lawrence welcomes 18 new starters as headcount surpasses 250

Yorkshire law firm Chadwick Lawrence has announced the appointment of 18 new team members, taking its total headcount to 252.

The new recruits are spread across the firm's offices in Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Bradford and Horbury, strengthening teams in every area of the business. The intake reflects Chadwick Lawrence's continued investment in talent, including individuals who have followed non-traditional routes into the legal profession.

Among the appointments is Trent Van Sittert, who joins the Dispute Resolution team as a paralegal. Formerly working in construction in South Africa, he retrained in law and brings valuable practical insight to construction-related disputes. Ben Preece has also joined in Wakefield as a junior IT support analyst through a Level 3 apprenticeship, supporting the firm's IT function while completing formal training.

The wider intake includes new solicitors, paralegals, trainees and business support staff across employment, real estate, clinical negligence, corporate and commercial, litigation and recoveries teams.

Managing Partner Neil Wilson said reaching a 252-strong workforce was a landmark moment, adding that the firm is proud to nurture talent at all levels as it continues to build for the future.

Chadwick Lawrence operates eight offices across West Yorkshire and reported turnover of £16.67m in the year to March 2025, a 35 per cent annual increase.



Leeds law firm welcomes new trainees as part of 2025 intake



Ward Hadaway has welcomed four new trainee solicitors to its Leeds office as part of its 2025 intake, reinforcing the firm's commitment to developing home-grown legal

talent across Yorkshire.

The new Leeds-based trainees – Callum Worts, Alexandra Wood-Tonks, Katharina Looi Kiesel and Hanzala Syed – form part of a wider cohort of 14 graduates joining the firm across Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and, for the first time, Teesside following Ward Hadaway's merger with The Endeavour Partnership.

Caroline Jones, Head of Emerging Talent at Ward Hadaway, said the trainee programme remains a key investment in the firm's future, adding that this year's intake reflects a diverse range of skills and backgrounds. She also highlighted the significance of welcoming the firm's first Teesside-based trainees.

The firm's trainee programme offers exposure to a broad range of practice areas and clients, from regional businesses to national organisations. Looking ahead, Ward Hadaway will extend its trainee opportunities to Birmingham for the first time, with applications for 2027 and 2028 training contracts opening on 1 November 2025.

The Leeds trainees have begun their first seats across departments including corporate, litigation, real estate and employment, gaining hands-on experience while supporting the firm's continued regional growth.

LCF Law strengthens real estate and corporate teams with key appointments

Yorkshire law firm LCF Law has appointed two new lawyers, with Joseph McCullough joining as a senior associate in the real estate team and Sam Durling joining the corporate team.

Joseph brings nearly 20 years' experience in commercial property law, having qualified in 2008. He advises developers and businesses on a broad range of real estate matters, including development projects, site acquisitions, joint ventures, finance arrangements and lease restructures. His recent work includes acting for a national retailer on multiple store acquisitions, advising housing developers on site purchases and funding, and supporting a café chain in York and Leeds on the sale of its business and assets.

Sam qualified in 2022 and has already been recognised in the Legal 500 as a rising star. He specialises in mergers and acquisitions, share and asset disposals, restructures and governance, working closely with family-owned and owner-managed businesses across sectors such

as healthcare, hospitality, nurseries and manufacturing.

Managing partner Ragan Montgomery said the appointments reflected LCF Law's commitment to attracting high-calibre lawyers who deliver practical, commercially focused advice. He added that both Joseph and Sam will play key roles in supporting the firm's growth and client ambitions.

LCF Law employs more than 145 people across offices in Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate and Ilkley.



Ward Hadaway strengthens rural team



Ward Hadaway has expanded its agriculture, rural business and estates offering with a series of senior strategic appointments aimed at strengthening the legal support it

provides to landowners, estate managers, farming families and rural businesses.

The team is led by Tom Wills, who has joined as head of agriculture, rural business and estates. With strong roots in the North East, he advises on a wide range of rural matters including farm and land sales, landed estates, renewable energy projects, business restructuring, succession planning and inheritance.

He is joined by Alison Hall, head of private client, and Jamie Brown, working alongside an established senior team including Stefan Bainbridge, Alex Cox, Andrew Facer and Nick Gholkar. Together, they form part of a wider multi-disciplinary group providing national support across land and property, energy and development schemes, family matters, partnerships, succession planning and disputes.

The team has also been strengthened by the appointment of rural private client specialists Kirsty Allen and Megan Bradley, and rural property solicitor Sam Watts.

Managing Partner Steven Petrie said the appointments reflected Ward Hadaway's continued investment in the rural sector, combining technical expertise with deep understanding of the rural economy to deliver practical, tailored advice and build long-term client relationships across the region.

Gordons expands commercial contracts team as specialisms growth continues

Law firm [Gordons](#) has expanded its commercial contracts team to seven dedicated specialists following two new hires after increasing its revenues by almost a third (32 per cent) over the past three years.

Lawyer Will Powell joins from Eversheds Sutherland, and paralegal Alesia-Maria Iliescu starts her career with the firm.

The recruitment of Will and Alesia follows this September's appointment of Tosif Bashir as a newly qualified solicitor in the commercial team. He initially joined Gordons from Sky Bet in 2022 before completing his training contract with the firm.

Before qualifying as a lawyer, Will was a contracts analyst for emerging markets at biotech company, Illumina. Alesia recently graduated from York University with a law degree.

The firm's commercial contracts clients include kitchen retailer Wren Kitchens; Houseful, the parent company of property website Zoopla; and menswear retailer Moss. The team's expertise covers general commercial contracts, digital and technology and privacy

and data protection.

Gordons partner and head of commercial, Andy Brian, commented: "We've grown fast over the past few years, and we want to continue to do so.

"We need more people in the team to help us deliver that growth, and both Will

and Alesia have made impressive starts. We're also delighted that Tosif chose to stay and develop his career with us.

"We're extremely proud of our client base and grateful for the relationships of trust which enable us to deliver strong financial performance."

Headquartered in Leeds, Gordons employs 180 people.



Simpson Millar Expands Education & Childcare Team with Polly Kerr as Head of Education Law



National law firm Simpson Millar has appointed leading solicitor Polly Kerr as Head of Education and Children's Rights, as part of a wider expansion across its Education and Childcare Law teams.

Polly is a recognised specialist in education and children's rights law, with extensive experience in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), discrimination, school exclusions, safeguarding and judicial review. She joins to lead Simpson Millar's Education Law practice, supporting children, young people and families, while also advising schools and academies on regulatory compliance.

A trustee of SPACE, which supports neurodivergent children, and Neurodiversity in Law, Polly was recently recognised as a Lead Associate in Public Law (Education) and Commercial Litigation in the Legal 500 2026.

Alongside her appointment, the firm has strengthened its Education Law team with new solicitors Kimberley Hircock in London and Cameron Dunleavy in Liverpool, as well as paralegals Kylie Dean, Jekaterina Bodnarchuk and Nathalie Podder in London.

Simpson Millar has also expanded its Childcare Law practice with the appointment of Jonathan Roberts as Senior Associate Solicitor and Team Leader in Liverpool, joined by paralegal Elizabeth Henshall.

Partner Liam Goggin said the appointments reflect the firm's commitment to providing specialist legal support to vulnerable children, young people and families at a time of growing demand.

New employment head for Sheffield solicitors

Sheffield law firm Wake Smith Solicitors has appointed Liam Kenealy as director and head of employment and HR services to lead and grow its employment department.

Liam joins with more than 18 years' post-qualification experience advising both employers and employees on the full range of employment law issues. He has worked across a variety of sectors, including hospitality and manufacturing, and brings particular expertise in discrimination matters and Employment Tribunal advocacy.

He will work closely with associate Harriet Gardner and newly qualified solicitor Charlotte Wallage, supporting clients experiencing workplace issues and helping to expand the firm's employment and HR offering.

Liam said his focus would be on providing practical, solutions-led advice, particularly as employers prepare for significant legislative change. He highlighted the Employment Rights Bill as the most substantial reform of employment law in decades, with

changes expected to be rolled out over the next three years.

Paul Gibbon, joint managing director at Wake Smith, said Liam's appointment strengthened the firm's leadership team, adding that his experience and sector knowledge will be key to growing Wake Smith's legal services portfolio.

Liam previously worked for the Government's discrimination helpline and conducted his own Employment Tribunal advocacy, giving him valuable insight into tribunal proceedings and workplace disputes.



Walton & Co invests in new city centre office and apprentice hire



Leeds-based planning law firm Walton & Co has expanded its team and relocated to a new city centre office, marking a significant investment to support future

growth and collaboration.

After 17 years at its previous premises, the firm has moved to a modern 1,500 sq ft office at 4 York Place, Leeds. The new space brings the entire team onto one floor, creating a more collaborative working environment while providing capacity for future expansion. The location keeps Walton & Co firmly in the heart of Leeds' business district, close to key transport links.

The move coincides with continued team growth, with headcount increasing from seven to nine over the past year following the appointment of a senior associate and a new legal apprentice. The firm now comprises three directors, three fee earners, one apprentice and two support staff.

Joining the team is 19-year-old Rukayya Kara from Dewsbury, who has been appointed as Walton & Co's newest legal apprentice. She will combine hands-on experience at the firm with study at BPP University Law School, supporting the firm's long-standing commitment to developing talent internally within its specialist practice.

Director James Cook said the investment in the new office and technology underlined the firm's commitment to Leeds and reflected strong demand for its niche planning and highways law expertise. Walton & Co continues to attract new instructions nationwide and remains highly ranked for planning law in the 2025 Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners.

Schofield Sweeney Continues Growth and Service Expansion with new Appointments

Award-winning Yorkshire law firm Schofield Sweeney has strengthened its teams with a series of senior appointments and the recruitment of four new solicitor apprentices, taking total headcount to 178.

The firm has welcomed six senior hires across key practice areas including private wealth, insolvency, contentious probate, debt recovery and property litigation, reflecting growing demand for its commercial legal services.

New appointments include Gillian Kaufman as director in restructuring and insolvency, Kim Hammond as associate in private wealth and succession, and Dale Fawcett as head of debt recovery. The property litigation team has been bolstered by the arrival of director Claire James and solicitor Kimberly Tao Le, while Julia Fenton joins the contentious probate team as a solicitor.

Managing partner Graham Sweeney said the

appointments represent significant investment in talent and service capability, enabling the firm to continue delivering

high-quality advice across a broad client base. He also highlighted Schofield Sweeney's long-standing commitment to developing young talent through its solicitor apprenticeship programme.

The latest recruitment supports the firm's continued expansion in both size and service offering, strengthening its position as a leading regional law firm.



Yorkshire solicitors unveils triple boost as it bolsters Commercial Property team



Milners has strengthened its commercial property offering with a series of appointments and promotions across its expanding Yorkshire and North East office network.

The firm has appointed Andrew Little as Head of Commercial Property, leading an eight-strong department spanning offices in Leeds, Harrogate, Pontefract and Darlington. Andrew brings more than 11 years' experience in commercial and agricultural property law, having previously held senior roles at regional Yorkshire firms. His expertise covers sales and purchases, commercial leases, farm business tenancies, development land agreements, renewables

projects and complex refinancing transactions.

Alongside the senior appointment, James Webb has been promoted to Associate Solicitor, five years after joining Milners and completing his training contract at the firm. He has since developed a strong client base advising on commercial leases, business sales and acquisitions, and property refinancing.

In a further milestone, Hannah Buck has become the first Milners employee to qualify in-house as a solicitor via the Solicitors Qualifying Examination route. A University of Leeds graduate, she successfully completed both stages of the SQE while working at the firm.

Managing Partner Simon Bass said the developments reflect Milners' commitment to investing in people and building specialist expertise, combining senior experience with the progression of home-grown talent to meet growing client demand.

Fletchers Group appoints two to new director roles in its serious injury division

Fletchers Group has promoted two experienced legal professionals, Michelle Heyes and Gillian Lakes, to Directors within its Serious Injury division, Serious Injury Law.

The promotions recognise the significant contribution both have made to the business and underline the Group's commitment to developing homegrown talent and strengthening leadership across the North West.

Michelle Heyes joined Fletchers in 1992 and has played a key role in building the firm's Serious Injury practice. She has led the department since 2022 and is widely respected for her calm, considered leadership while overseeing complex and high-value personal injury cases.

Gillian Lakes brings more than 25 years' experience in serious injury law. She joined Serious Injury Law in 2018 and became part of Fletchers following its acquisition in 2024.

Gillian leads the Bolton office and was promoted to Associate and then Partner earlier this year.

In their new roles, Michelle and Gillian will take on greater strategic responsibility for the growth and development of the Serious Injury division, supporting legal excellence and shaping its long-term direction both regionally and nationally.

Caroline Morris, Managing Director of Serious Injury Law, said the promotions reflected the firm's continued investment in people and future leadership.



Blacks Solicitors strengthens its commitment to developing future legal professionals



Yorkshire law firm Blacks Solicitors has retained three newly qualified solicitors and awarded new training opportunities, continuing its focus on growth and supporting diverse routes into the legal profession.

Rosie Rudolph, Lana Bamforth and Sophie Spencer have all completed their training at the firm and taken up permanent roles. Rosie joins the Real Estate team after qualifying through the Solicitor Apprenticeship route, Lana joins the Employment team following her Graduate Apprenticeship, and Sophie has qualified into the Corporate team after completing a

traditional training contract.

In addition, Blacks has awarded a training contract and two new apprenticeships to existing employees. Eve Pearson will begin a two-year training contract, rotating through different practice areas, while Dev Matharu and Chloe Kershaw will start as Graduate Apprentice Solicitors under the firm's 2.5-year apprenticeship scheme.

Partner and Learning & Development Manager Emma Garfitt said investing in people is central to the firm's long-term strategy, adding that Blacks has been an early adopter of the Solicitor Apprenticeship and remains committed to making a legal career more accessible.

Blacks Solicitors is a 32-partner firm providing legal services to commercial and private clients across Yorkshire and the UK and was recently named Legal Employer of the Year 2025.

New cohort joins Fletchers' 12-month legal training programme



National law firm Fletchers Group has launched the latest intake of its Fletchers Academy, a 12-month structured training programme designed to support people at the start of their legal

careers. Now in its fourth year, the Academy aims to widen access to the legal profession by offering practical experience, structured learning and mentoring to individuals who may not have followed traditional routes into law. This year, seven new trainees have joined the programme and will spend the next 12 months developing their legal and professional skills.

The Academy combines on-the-job experience with virtual learning modules covering civil litigation, personal injury and clinical negligence law, alongside core legal business skills.

Trainees also benefit from mentoring and opportunities to shadow experienced legal teams across the firm.

Andrew Clark, Director of Learning and Development at Fletchers, said the Academy is one of the most rewarding initiatives the firm delivers, helping aspiring lawyers overcome barriers to entering the profession and showing that a legal career is achievable regardless of background.

On completion, trainees can progress onto a range of development pathways, including solicitor apprenticeships, graduate qualification routes, or CILEX and costs lawyer training programmes.

One of the new trainees, Shannen Millar, said the Academy offered a rare opportunity to gain legal experience in a supportive environment and begin building a long-term career in law.

The programme forms part of Fletchers' wider commitment to early careers development and improving access to the legal profession.

Schofield Sweeney Focuses on Emerging Talent

Leading commercial law firm Schofield Sweeney has reinforced its commitment to developing and retaining emerging talent with a series of appointments spanning newly qualified solicitors, trainees and four new apprentices.

The latest intake follows a period of senior recruitment at the firm and supports its strategic growth by strengthening client relationships and expanding service delivery. Newly qualified solicitors include Abi Miskimmon in the Real Estate team, Victoria Boothby in Corporate, and Zoe Halliday in Contentious Probate. All have progressed within the firm.

Three former paralegals – Andrada Frates, Jessica Dolan and Chloe Lamont – have also been retained as trainee solicitors, highlighting the firm's strong focus on internal progression.

In addition, four new solicitor apprentices – Libby Daniels, Emily Garner, Aimee Firth and Esme Ghafoor – have joined the business to begin their legal careers. Schofield Sweeney's six-year

apprenticeship programme combines academic study with practical experience, including seat rotations across multiple practice areas, offering an alternative route into the profession.

Managing Partner

Graham Sweeney said the firm was proud of its high retention rate, which reflects a supportive culture and clear development pathways. He added that apprenticeships play a vital role in promoting social mobility and widening access to a career in law.

The firm said it looks forward to supporting its apprentices, trainees and newly qualified lawyers as they progress in their careers.



Flint Bishop names ex-Walker Morris partner head of North Division



Flint Bishop has appointed Malcolm Simpson as Managing Partner for the North, with responsibility for the firm's Leeds, Sheffield and York offices, strengthening its

leadership team as it continues rapid national growth.

The appointment follows Flint Bishop's acquisition of Lupton Fawcett LLP, which significantly expanded its northern footprint and created a strong platform for further regional and national expansion. Operating from six hubs across England and Wales, the firm has reported turnover of £32m,

with revenues projected to exceed £40m this financial year, and now employs around 420 people.

Malcolm joins Flint Bishop after serving as Managing Partner of Walker Morris LLP between 2018 and 2024, where he led a period of record financial performance, governance reform and operational efficiency. During his tenure, turnover increased from £42m to £74m without increasing headcount.

As Managing Partner for the North, Malcolm will lead Flint Bishop's newly established North Division, driving growth through organic expansion, lateral hires, team integration and further acquisitions.

Chief Executive Qamer Ghafoor said the appointment marked a defining moment for the firm's growth ambitions. Malcolm said Flint Bishop's momentum and client-focused ethos made it an exciting opportunity at a pivotal stage in the firm's development.

Medical Solicitors strengthens clinical negligence team with appointment of Esther Gaudoin



pecialist Yorkshire law firm Medical Solicitors has appointed grade A clinical negligence solicitor Esther Gaudoin to its growing team.

Based at the firm's Sheffield office, Esther brings more than a decade of experience, having specialised exclusively in clinical negligence since qualifying in 2013. She acts for clients who have suffered life-changing injuries as a result of medical errors, with particular expertise in catastrophic injury claims, including birth injury and spinal cases.

Esther is recognised for combining strong technical

expertise with a compassionate, client-focused approach and has recently been named an "Associate to Watch" in the Chambers and Partners 2026 rankings. Her career highlights include securing a settlement of more than £2.5m in a complex spinal abscess case involving cross-border elements.

After many years working at large city firms, Esther said she was attracted to Medical Solicitors' supportive and people-focused culture, which allows her to balance high-quality work with family life while continuing to make a meaningful difference for clients.

Caroline Moore, managing director of Medical Solicitors, said Esther's experience and dedication to client care make her a valuable addition as the firm continues to expand its specialist clinical negligence services.

Medical Solicitors supports clients across England and Wales from its three Yorkshire offices.

Wrigleys Solicitors Announces Key Promotion in Court of Protection Department

Wrigleys Solicitors has promoted partner Charlotte Dyson to joint head of its Court of Protection department, strengthening leadership within one of the firm's key specialist teams.

Charlotte is a partner in the Court of Protection department and a director of Wrigleys Trustees Limited, where she acts as trustee, attorney and court-appointed deputy. Her work involves managing complex property and affairs matters, often alongside personal injury litigation. She also acts as a professional litigation friend in catastrophic injury cases, working closely with specialist litigation firms and counsel.

Alongside her legal practice, Charlotte is a deputy member of the Professional Deputies Forum, a recommended adviser for SCOPE and MENCAP, and a Dementia Champion, reflecting her commitment to supporting vulnerable clients and their families.

The promotion coincides with Wrigleys' reappointment by the Office of the Public Guardian as an approved professional panel deputy, highlighting the department's continued reputation for delivering expert and compassionate support.

Jane Netting, partner and head of the Sheffield Probate, Tax and Estate Planning team, who also becomes joint head of Court of Protection, said Charlotte's promotion recognised her skill, dedication and leadership, and praised the team's continued recognition by the OPG.



Clarion launches tax law offering with appointment of specialist team



National law firm Clarion has expanded its service offering with the launch of a dedicated legal tax practice, following the appointment of a seven-strong specialist team.

The new team is led by legal tax partners Bernard

McIlroy and Fiona Sutherland, who join from MSA Law with extensive experience in corporate tax, structuring and planning, alongside additional corporate expertise. The appointments mark a significant milestone in Clarion's growth strategy and strengthen its ability to support national and international clients.

The addition enhances Clarion's existing corporate practice,

enabling the firm to deliver integrated legal and tax advice across corporate, real estate and private wealth matters. The team specialises in structuring transactions to meet commercial objectives in a tax-efficient way, providing clients with a broader, more joined-up service.

Senior Partner Richard Moran said the launch of a dedicated tax capability had been a strategic priority for the firm, adding that the new team's expertise and client-focused approach align closely with Clarion's values.

Bernard McIlroy said the move offers an opportunity to combine specialist tax and corporate expertise with Clarion's established practices, while Fiona Sutherland added that the firm's quality of work and clear vision for growth made it an ideal fit.

The appointments further reinforce Clarion's commitment to building a modern, full-service legal practice.

Torque Law makes senior appointment underscoring strategic growth



York-based specialist employment law firm Torque Law LLP has appointed experienced lawyer Tom Watkins, strengthening the firm as it continues its rapid growth.

Tom rejoins Torque Law after four years as a partner at Lupton Fawcett, now Flint Bishop, bringing more than 25 years' experience in employment law. His career includes senior roles at firms such as Shulmans, now Knights, and Bond Dickinson, now Womble Bond Dickinson. He advises a broad range of private and public sector employers, with particular expertise in the independent schools and wider education sector.

Partner Tiggy Clifford said Tom's return aligns closely with the firm's values and ambition to deliver trusted, commercially focused employment advice built on strong client relationships. Co-founder Emma Whiting added that the appointment strengthens the firm's ability to support clients navigating significant employment law reforms.

The appointment follows a year of strong growth for Torque Law, including high-profile client wins and continued recognition in leading legal directories. The firm has retained its Band 1 ranking in the Chambers & Partners UK Guide 2026 and the Legal 500 Client Satisfaction Excellence Award for 2026, reinforcing its reputation for pragmatic, responsive and client-focused advice.

Torque Law continues to build its national profile as a specialist boutique employment law firm delivering high-quality services outside London.

Switalskis appoints Bradie Pell to lead family law team in Sheffield

Switalskis has appointed experienced solicitor Bradie Pell as head of its family law team in Sheffield, strengthening the firm's senior leadership and specialist offering in the region.

In her new role, Bradie will lead the Sheffield office's family law practice while working closely with Switalskis' national family law directors to further develop the firm's services. A Sheffield native and University of Sheffield graduate, Bradie qualified as a solicitor in 2011 and has built her career across South Yorkshire, most recently as a partner and head of family law.

Bradie advises on all aspects of family law, including divorce and civil partnership dissolution, financial settlements, separation, cohabitation disputes and children matters. She is particularly well known for handling complex, high-value financial cases involving business interests and property portfolios, providing

clear and practical advice during often challenging circumstances.

She is also one of only two lawyers in South Yorkshire recognised as a Legal 500 Next Generation Partner, reflecting her technical expertise and professional standing.

Clare Peckett, director and head of family law at Switalskis, said Bradie's experience and strong local connections make her a valuable addition, reinforcing the firm's commitment to delivering high-quality family law advice in Sheffield.



BRM strengthens residential property team with 25-year conveyancing expert



A conveyancer with more than 25 years of experience has joined Sheffield and Chesterfield legal firm BRM's growing residential property team.

Madeline Sault has joined the firm at their Chesterfield office, adding her extensive experience to BRM's already

well-established residential conveyancing services.

Madeline previously spent five years at Jones and Co Solicitors, following an 18-year career at a regional firm, building particular expertise in leasehold matters and supporting resident management companies.

Her appointment strengthens BRM's capacity in what remains a busy housing market, as the firm builds on success in the Chesterfield and wider Derbyshire region, continues its growth in South Yorkshire, and supports a growing client base across the rest of the country.

BRM's residential property conveyancing team offers services

for home buyers and sellers, as well as those transferring property, remortgaging, or registering land for the first time.

Madeline said: "I am excited to join BRM Solicitors and to be a part of their expansion in the residential sector. I know I'm joining a great team, with a shared vision and look forward to what this may bring.

"I'm also looking forward to completing my CLC (Council for Licensed Conveyancers) qualification soon, enabling me to become a licensed conveyancer, further adding to the comprehensive residential property services offered at BRM."

Stuart Taphouse, BRM's director and head of residential conveyancing, said: "Maddie brings a wealth of property experience to the team along with her calm and reassuring nature, which will ensure clients feel fully engaged with their transactions.

"Maddie's appointment comes as demand continues to grow for our friendly and responsive conveyancing services, from first-time buyers and home movers to clients remortgaging, transferring property or seeking support with leasehold matters."



Unlock the power of Legal AI

LEAP supports over 25,000 legal professionals across thousands of law firms across the United Kingdom.

LEAP provides legal practice management and document automation within a single cloud-based platform, for all practice areas of law. Enhanced by the power of award-winning AI, LEAP enables firms to practice law more efficiently.

Find out more at: leap.co.uk



Strategic Partner



The Law
Society

Last Word

We caught up with **Sarah Ratcliffe**, Commercial Property Partner at Gordons, to reflect on the firm's achievements and insights following an exceptional year.

2025 has been a dynamic year for the legal profession. From your perspective, what have been some of the key milestones or developments that have shaped the legal landscape in Yorkshire and beyond?

There have been significant shifts in the market in terms of attracting and retaining talent, against a backdrop of rising salaries and costs, as well as expectations of flexible working arrangements. Having said that, things seem to have settled. Recruitment is easier, and there is a greater desire for an office presence, recognising the benefits that can bring to personal development, teamwork and sharing knowledge. Leeds is a competitive legal market, and that is set to continue in 2026, with clients, as ever, focused on superior service levels and value-driven advice.

The firm was recognised as a finalist in two categories at the 2025 Yorkshire Legal Awards – Corporate & Commercial, and Rising Star of the Year for Lauren Barclay. What does this recognition mean to you and the wider Gordons team?

It means a lot to us to be recognised in these awards. We are very proud of our team and the contributions they make to our clients, the firm and beyond, including with our charity of the year CATCH Leeds. While we're disappointed not to have won, it was good to have been shortlisted, all the same.

Lauren's nomination as a Rising Star highlights the importance of nurturing emerging talent. How does Gordons support the development and progression of its next generation of lawyers?

Our junior lawyers are given a lot of responsibility early on in their careers. They have direct exposure to clients and client work and are expected to be proactive as they progress. If they show interest in an emerging area of the law, we are willing to support them in expanding their knowledge and advising

clients. Personally, I think it is important that people take responsibility for their own careers and are willing to step outside their comfort zone. My advice would always be to be open to opportunities, say 'yes' and worry about it later!

There's been ongoing discussion about the changing expectations of clients, especially around technology, ESG, and value-driven service. How is Gordons responding to these shifts?

Like any law firm, we need to embrace technology and AI, but we are doing that in a balanced way. AI solutions have developed significantly in the last year and whilst AI can't replace experience, insight and the human touch, it can no doubt improve efficiencies and speed of responses.

Finally, if you could summarise 2025 in one word for Gordons, what would it be?

Client relationships.
Ok, that's two but...





**YORKSHIRE
LEGAL**
AWARDS 2026

**ENTRIES
OPEN 6TH
JANUARY...**

DON'T MISS OUT

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT



Unlock the power of Legal AI

LEAP supports over 25,000 legal professionals across thousands of law firms across the United Kingdom.

LEAP provides legal practice management and document automation within a single cloud-based platform, for all practice areas of law. Enhanced by the power of award-winning AI, LEAP enables firms to practice law more efficiently.

Find out more at: leap.co.uk



Strategic Partner



The Law
Society