



BIRMINGHAM
LAW SOCIETY

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024**



It has been an honour and a privilege to have been President of the Birmingham Law Society this year.

When I began my legal journey ten years ago, I never imagined that at the age of 31, I would take office as the youngest President of the Birmingham Law Society in its 205-year history. As someone who started out with no understanding of higher education, no legal work experience, and no connections, it was not a given that I would be able to navigate the legal profession, let alone be in a position to fulfil this role.

It is safe to say that getting to this point has by no means been easy. In a sector known for its tradition and established practices, it never is going to be easy to show that something new or different can be achieved. However, progress requires the courage to initiate change. I hope to leave a legacy that shows every person's goal is achievable.

For more than 200 years, Birmingham Law Society has provided a forum for the local legal profession to connect and collaborate. It has been an integral part of my development and has opened doors for me that would have otherwise been closed. We now have 9,000 members representing every facet of legal life and a range of specialist committees who play an important role in advocating for our interests. As the Society has supported me, it has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of the people

that it serves, and as we move forward, we must continue to embrace this evolution. We must support new ideas, promote innovation and inclusion, and expand our horizons. Continuity is important, but so are fresh plans, and it is through our collective efforts and commitments that we can make the greatest impact.

At the start of my presidency last September, I set out to focus on two themes – community and opportunity. Community reflects my desire to foster connections and contribute to a stronger and more integrated city. Opportunity represents my unwavering dedication to ensuring that everyone has the chance to achieve their aspirations, both within the legal profession and within Birmingham Law Society. Throughout the past year, these themes have remained my priority.

Our focus on community has led to positive steps to enable our members to strengthen relationships with each other and within a wider business context, and to raise the profile of the legal profession in our city. We have organised many highly successful networking events, including our Christmas and Summer Socials, which have allowed members old and new to interact and spend time together. We have brought our networking events to the suburbs of Birmingham so that those who are unable to travel to the city centre can still get involved. We have reignited our Lunch Clubs to provide a smaller and more intimate setting for connections to develop and grow. In July, we hosted the first Birmingham Law Society Sports Day at Harborne Cricket Club to bring members together for an afternoon of relaxed games and friendly competition, and to promote the importance of maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing.

I am delighted that this year, we have nurtured our relationship with the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and taken part in events alongside the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce and Future Faces. We have collaborated with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, the Chartered Institute of Building, and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to host the West Midlands Mayoral Hustings and discuss the core issues that influence the delivery of professional services in Birmingham. We have strengthened our longstanding relationships with the Bars of Paris and Lyon and built a new relationship with the Bar of Luxembourg, which I hope will grow into a valuable connection to be developed further in the years to come.

The Legal Awards in March provided a fantastic opportunity to gather in style to celebrate the achievements of the

individuals and firms that make up our membership. I am pleased that we were able to introduce three brand new award categories for Outstanding Student Contribution of the Year, Legal PA of the Year, and Junior Barrister of the Year, to recognise and celebrate the diverse range of talent amongst us. I was also delighted to hand this year's Lifetime Achievement Award to Sarah Ramsey, Dean of the University of Law Birmingham, in honour of her outstanding and sustained contribution to the development of our local profession.

Perhaps one of my personal highlights came in June, when I hosted my President's Dinner at the University of Birmingham Great Hall, the very place that I graduated from a decade ago. The evening was marked by an inspiring speech from Jess Phillips MP and a renewed sense of purpose and unity. The Great Hall, steeped in memories and history for many of our members, provided the perfect backdrop to honour our shared journey and set our sights on future endeavours.

The theme of opportunity has inspired numerous new initiatives aimed at creating pathways for our members to pursue their aspirations and become more involved in the Society. I am proud that in October, we celebrated the launch of our Social Mobility Pledge to call on individuals and organisations across the city to make a firm commitment to fostering meaningful change in this area. In November, we commenced the new Birmingham Law Society Vacation Scheme for students in our member universities, to provide a means for aspiring lawyers from all backgrounds to gain useful experience to support them with their applications and develop soft skills. The first cohort completed the scheme in April at an inspiring mock assessment centre delivered collaboratively by Higgs LLP and Browne Jacobson. I am delighted that the scheme will continue next year with the support of the Social Mobility Sub-Committee.

In January, we hosted our first "Path to Partnership and Beyond" discussion in conjunction with 3PB Barristers and IDEX Legal Recruitment. The aim was to provide our mid-level members with practical education about what it takes to become a partner in a law firm and the career options that are available in law firm ownership, consultancy, academia and the judiciary. The feedback from attendees was very positive and I hope the event can be repeated.

In March and April, we ran a project to allow our junior members the chance to learn more about the workings of the Society and to contribute to our future strategy. This culminated in a group of

junior lawyers delivering a presentation to Council on the topic of artificial intelligence. I hope that many of this group will consider standing for election to Council in the future. This month, we hosted our second Alternative Dinner at Villa Park, to give an opportunity for all lawyers to attend a formal dinner and gain confidence in building their networks. At the senior end of the profession, we have hosted two Legal Leaders Roundtables, to ensure that we hear and consider the views of senior leaders in different organisations.

I am proud that the Society has continued to promote the importance of equal opportunities within our profession. In March, we hosted a panel discussion at Shoosmiths to mark International Women's Day with a focus on intersectionality. We also took our place for the first time in the city's annual St Patrick's Day Parade for a celebration of culture and heritage. In May, our newly launched LGBTQ+ Sub-Committee collaborated with the Solicitors Regulation Authority and Eversheds Sutherland to march in Birmingham Pride. In June, we hosted our biannual Social Mobility Conference at Squire Patton Boggs to discuss the practical steps that can be taken to accelerate social mobility in organisations.

Our many committees and sub-committees continue to work hard on behalf of the Society in their respective areas. They have produced some excellent responses to the numerous consultations that have taken place throughout the year and have put on a plethora of exciting and interesting events. We have, over the last year, held meetings with our Committee Chairs and invited them on regular occasions to present at our Council meetings. I would like to thank all of those who have volunteered their time to contribute to our committees for their dedication and commitment.

Following the work undertaken to review the governance of the Society post-pandemic, I am pleased that our newly established Council and Board continue to remain effective in their operations. In January, we were delighted to welcome our first permanent CEO Nigel Hollett, who has taken responsibility for reviewing the Society's future strategy and leads a team of four members of staff. We have also continued to collaborate with the Joint V and the Law Society of England and Wales.

Charity fundraising continues to take place alongside our activities, and this year, my chosen charity has been the Social Mobility Foundation. Whilst someone's background should never determine what they can achieve, I have learned from my own experiences that it can and it does, and throughout my professional career, I have made it my mission to do something about that. The work of the Social Mobility Foundation aims to ensure that talent from all backgrounds is rewarded, and that employers can understand and break down barriers. In April, I ran the Manchester Marathon to raise money and awareness for the charity, and I am pleased that we have raised many thousands of pounds to support them in their endeavours.

I have been grateful this year for the support of my fellow Officers, Board and Council members. I would also like to thank Stephanie Perraton, Tony McDaid and Ian Shovlin, who have mentored and guided me throughout. However, it is safe to say that none of the Society's achievements over the past 12 months would be possible without the enthusiasm of our members, the support of our office team and the provision from our sponsors. Each of you has played a part in shaping the Society into the dynamic and progressive organisation that it is today, and together, we have created a community that is not only resilient and resourceful but compassionate and inclusive. I am proud to have been President and confident that we can look forward to a future filled with promise, prosperity and possibility.

Alice Kinder
President of Birmingham Law Society
September 2024

Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 27 September 2023

Officers

At the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 27th September, Alice Kinder was installed as President of the Society, Richard Port as Vice President and Matt O'Brien as Deputy Vice President.

James Farmer and Samantha Ross were installed as Joint Honorary Secretaries.

Council

The retiring ordinary members of the Council were: Guy Barnett; Axiom DWFM, Amrik Singh; Ward & Rider Solicitors and Zoe Tranter; Tranter Mills Solicitors.

The ex officio members retiring were Stephanie Perraton; Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP

The following members of the Society were duly nominated for election to the Council: Catherine Edwards; Keele University, Sabina Kauser; Axiom DWFM and Pardeep Lagha; Gateley.



I have had the privilege and honour of being Chair of the Board for Birmingham Law Society for 12 months, having attended my first meeting in this capacity in October

2023. It was then that I took over from our previous Chair, Ben Henry. I would like to thank Ben for his hard work and dedication, he has been so very helpful and supportive whilst I was becoming acquainted with the role. It has been a very busy first year indeed, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge.

My strategy and goals up to now, were always the recruitment and retention of a CEO, and to endeavour to preserve, and where possible, strengthen the financial standing of the Society. I wanted to strive towards providing a solid foundation from which to continue to provide an excellent service to our members, and value for money for our Sponsors. In furtherance of this, and as well as having been Chair, I have been working with Ben who is also our Finance Director. Ben has worked incredibly hard in ensuring that the finances are in order, keeping a close eye on cashflow, reporting upon any developments in his monthly reports. It is on that basis, that I am delighted to report that the year ending 31 March 2024, the reported profit for the Society was £141,066. An excellent result, and demonstrative of the effectiveness and efficiency of Board in monitoring such matters, and implementing proposals as made by our advisors where the need arises.

One such financial challenge which arose this year, was the management of the premises in the ownership of the Society, being 8 Temple Street, occupied pursuant to a lease granted to the Bar chain Revolution De Cuba. There were issues previously in connection with this occupation in terms of cash flow for the tenant following on from closure, due to implications arising from Covid 19. A great deal of discussion took place at Board followed by reaching a mutually beneficial position with the tenant, and so the Board have strengthened the Society's financial standing on that basis. The Board have also sought independent external legal advice as to the risks in the event of a default by the tenant under the current arrangement, thus having a plan in place should any further issues arise in connection with the lease.

As to other financial matters, we have now established a finance sub-committee to support Board. This is to enable further scrutiny of investment

returns and management of the Society assets - from commercial property to works of art.

Following on from property and assets, and in furtherance of strengthening the Society's financial standing, Board met with our investment managers, Quilter and it was then that a further strategy for the monitoring and growth of Society investments was agreed upon and implemented by Board. The finance sub-committee will monitor the investments more closely seeking regular updates from Quilter on a bi-annual basis, and then providing an update to Board.

After a rigorous recruitment campaign towards the end of 2023, I am delighted to announce that we have appointed a new CEO, Nigel Hollett from January 2024, to assist in the implementation of the strategy of Board, and manage the operations team. Nigel has proved to be an excellent addition to the operations team, and has been instrumental in providing a strong link between Board, Council and the office. The various functions within the Society are now becoming more clearly defined, setting out which responsibilities lie with whom. The benefits of this are twofold, it avoids "creep" by one function into the remit of the another, and aids the effectiveness and efficiency of the Society for governance purposes. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Nigel and all of the BLS Operations Team in the office for their commitment and dedication to the Society, and for their support in helping me get to grips with my new role.

We are lucky to have such a strong Board, and I am so grateful to my fellow Directors for their help, guidance and support. Now that we have our new CEO, I have had more time to formulate my strategy for the coming two years, building upon the strong foundations already established during my first year. Following on from that, as well as the other financial matters previously mentioned, we are looking at sponsorship packages and membership fee reviews, hoping to improve our offering in these areas. Nigel will be working with Board in the review of membership, and membership fee structures, as well as a review of the current sponsorship regime. Two further sub-committees will be established in order to facilitate this process by Board.

The implementation of these measures is important in ensuring that we are endeavouring to maximise income streams, so that the Society is not purely reliant upon the property revenue income stream, should the position of the tenant change.

As well as our current Directors, this year for the first time, Board invited 7 individuals to become Observers at our

Board meetings, with a view to their expressing an interest in the ongoing function of the Society by eventually being invited to become Directors. The Observers were invited on the basis of their interesting and diverse backgrounds. It has proved invaluable to receive input from Observers some of whom are not members of the legal profession. Financial matters in particular, have benefitted from this.

Accordingly, I am delighted to confirm and welcome the appointment of the following former Observers to the role of Directors of Birmingham Law Society from September 2024: Peter Brewer, Ian Jones, Sana Saddique, Will Lodder.

I thank you for your continued commitment, and look forward to working with you all. I am also delighted to announce the appointment of Peter Brewer as Vice Chair. We are so grateful to him for putting himself forward, he will be a real an asset to Board.

Board has also had an away day this year, where all Board members in attendance had the opportunity to have their say in the future of the Society, and share ideas in an informal, relaxed atmosphere. It is from the away day, that a further strategy was developed and agreed upon for the coming three years, building upon the successes already achieved.

The strategy included:

1. The continued implementation of our governance report in the effective running of the Society;
2. To offer more services to members, and to improve upon the services already offered - we want to maintain our high retention rate, and increase our membership and retention rate;
3. To continue in our role of providing updates on matters affecting our members, and to make representations via the Society Committees to industry regulators amongst others;
4. To maintain and build upon our relationship with the Joint V;
5. To continue to engage with our sponsors and stakeholders to improve our offering, and;
6. To continue to maintain and build upon the strong financial position of the Society, ensuring that we adopt a sensible and balanced approach to risk over the medium to long term.

I am sure you will agree that the future of the Society is secure, and that we have a lot to be optimistic about.

**Zoe Tranter,
Chair 05 September 2024**

President

Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont

Vice President

Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP Solicitors

Deputy Vice President

Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Joint Honorary Secretaries

James Farmer, Gent Legal Services

Samantha Ross, Bevan Brittan LLP

Board

Zoe Tranter, Tranter Mills Solicitors, Chair

Guy Barnett, Board Director

Peter Brewer, Clarke Willmott LLP (Birmingham), Observer

Andy Dawson, Curium Solutions LTD, Observer

James Farmer, Gent Legal Services Limited, Board Director

Ben Henry, Jonas Roy Bloom, Finance Director

Nigel Hollett, Birmingham Law Society, Board Director

Ian Jones, Spencer Shaw Solicitors, Observer

Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont Limited, President

Karine Kirlaw, Browne Jacobson LLP (Birmingham), Observer,

Will Lodder, Observer

Tony McDaid, No5 Barristers' Chambers (Birmingham), Board Director

Dipika Mistry, Shakespeare Martineau (Solihull), Observer

Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom, Deputy Vice President

Stephanie Perraton, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP (Birmingham), Board Director

Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP (Cradley Heath), Vice President

Sana Saddique, Collective Law Solicitors LTD, Observer

Joe Wilson, St Philips Chambers (Birmingham), Board Director

Council

Warren Barr, The University of Birmingham Law School

Catherine Edwards, Keele University

James Farmer, Gent Legal Services Limited

Simon Harris, DWF LLP (Birmingham)

Nigel Hollett, Birmingham Law Society

Marissa Jacquet-Smoothy, Grove Tompkins Bosworth

Neena Janda, Zappi

Sabina Kauser, Acuity Law (Birmingham)

Mary Kaye, Rayden Solicitors

Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont Limited

Pardeep Lagha, Liverpool FC

Rebecca Lynch, Birmingham Law Society

Tony McDaid, No5 Barristers' Chambers (Birmingham)

Grace Mullis, Irwin Mitchell LLP (Birmingham)

Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Janaï Parker, Gateley Legal (Birmingham)

Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP (Cradley Heath)

Samantha Ross, Bevan Brittan LLP (Birmingham)

Bernard Shepherd, BES Legal Solicitors

Lubna Shuja, Legal Swan Solicitors

Dee Smythe, The Barrister Group

Peter Wiseman

Victoria Zinzan, Irwin Mitchell LLP (Birmingham)

Birmingham Law Society Staff

Chief Executive Nigel Hollett

Director of Operations Rebecca Lynch 0121 227 8704

Marketing and Events Manager Jessica Uppal 0121 227 8703

Society Administrator Shona Matson-Betts 0121 227 8702

Membership Coordinator Ashlee Traill 0121 227 8701

PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY

THOMAS LEE	1818
JOHN MEREDITH	1825
JOHN SIMCOX	1832
ROGER WILLIAM GEM	1833
THOMAS EYRE LEE	1848
CLEMENT INGLEBY	1852
JOHN WELCHMAN WHATELEY	1855
ARTHUR RYLAND	1873
GEORGE JAMES JOHNSON	1874
ARTHUR RYLAND	1876
WILLIAM EVANS	1877
JAMES MARIGOLD	1879
THOMAS HORTON	1882
CHARLES EDWARD MATTHEWS	1885
CORNELIUS THOMAS SAUNDERS	1888
SIR THOMAS MARTINEAU	1888
LAURISTON WINTERBOTHAM LEWIS	1891
JOSEPH BENNETT CLARKE	1893
ARTHUR GODLEE	1895
THOMAS HAWKES RUSSELL	1897
JOSEPH ANSELL	1899
RICHARD ALFRED PINSENT	1901
JOHN BARHAM CARSLAKE	1903
ALFRED POINTON	1906
WALTER BARROW	1908
JOHN GILBERT BRADBURY	1910
ALFRED HENRY COLEY	1912
JAMES HARGREAVE	1914
ARTHUR LABRON LOWE	1916
FRANCIS AUGUST CHATWIN	1918
ARCHIBALD SOMERVILLE BENNETT	1919
JAMES ARTHUR MARIGOLD	1920
EDWARD EVERSHED	1921
THOMAS COOKSEY	1922
CHARLES EKIN	1923
JOSEPH JAMES	1924
FRANCIS HENRY PEPPER	1925
RICHARD ALFRED PINSENT	1926
CORNELIUS HALE SAUNDERS	1927
HUGH BARHAM CARSLAKE	1928
GEORGE HUGGINS	1929
GEORGE ARTHUR CHARLES PETTITT	1930
LESLIE ARTHUR SMITH	1931
SYDNEY VERNON	1932
GEORGE ARTHUR CHARLES PETTITT	1933
WILFRED CLARKSON MATTHEWS	1934
FRANK HENRY CUFUADE WILTSHIRE	1935
LESLIE ARTHUR SMITH	1937
HERBERT WILLIAM LYDE	1938
JOSEPH THOMAS HIGGS	1939
GEORGE HAROLD WILLCOX	1941
ARTHUR JOHN GATELEY	1943
JOHN FREDERICK WEST	1945
WILLIAM CHARLES COLEMAN GELL	1946
CHARLES ADRIAN ASHFORD ELTON	1947
JOHN FAIRFAX CROWDER	1948
JOHN HENRY SQUIRE ADDISON	1949
GEORGE ARTHUR LYON HATTON	1950
CYRIL HIGHWAY	1950
GEORGE CORBYN BARROW	1952
CECIL HAMMOND COX	1953
THOMAS BERNARD SMITH	1954
JOHN ALBERT CALTHROP TAYLOR	1955
PHILIP HORTON VERNON	1956
GEOFFREY MARTEN KING	1957
GEORGE MANNING BUTTS	1958
JOSEPH KENNETH WALKER	1959
RODERICK SYDNEY KING-FARLOW	1960

WILLIAM HENRY TILLEY	1960
JOHN SHUFFLEBOTHAM	1962
FREDERICK WILLIAM WHITALL OAKLEY	1963
CHARLES THOMAS WINTERTON	1964
RICHARD LAURENCE EKIN	1965
GEOFFREY HORACE PIDDOCK	1966
HAROLD FREDERICK ROGERS	1967
CHRISTOPHER HEDLEY HARMER	1968
THOMAS HARRY PARKINSON	1969
CHARLES HERBERT LEA	1970
JOHN ATKINSON RUTLEDGE	1970
SYDNEY SOLOMON JACOBS	1972
JOHN TIMOTHY ARTHUR SMITH	1973
JOHN ANTONY ALDERSON	1974
DAVID LIDDELL	1975
WALTER WOOD	1976
DAVID STANLEY ADAMS	1977
ROBERT JOSEPH GARRATT	1978
GEORGE SIEGFRIED JONAS	1979
DENYS ERIC FORDHAM	1980
ROGER HORTON VERNON	1980
ARNOLD MAURICE PUTSMAN	1982
CHRISTOPHER JOHN JAMES	1983
FREDERICK HAROLD TURNER	1984
PETER LESLIE TAYLOR	1985
BRIAN EDWARD GLYNN WILLIAMS	1986
JOHN RICHARD BETTINSON	1987
DAVID HOWARD HIGGS	1988
CHRISTOPHER WYNDHAM HUGHES	1989
PHILIP EDWARD RICHARDSON	1990
CHARLES RODERICK KING-FARLOW	1991
JOHN ADRIAN JAMES AUCOTT	1992
STANLEY BERNARD SHORTT	1993
JOHN MICHAEL BUCKINGHAM	1994
ALBERT WILLIAM HEASELGRAVE	1995
RICHARD DUDLEY CHAPMAN	1996
MICHAEL DAVID HUMPHREY SHEPHERD	1997
MALCOLM GASKELL FOWLER	1998
TREVOR ARTHUR LEE	1999
JAYNE BELINDA WILLETTS	2000
MICHAEL JAMES WARD	2001
ANTHONY RALPH COLLINS	2002
DIANE PATRICIA BENUSSI	2003
STEVEN MICHAEL JONAS	2004
RICHARD THOMAS FOLLIS	2005
PHILIP DUNKLEY STEEL	2006
SUKHDEV SINGH BHOMRA	2007
CAROLINE AMANDA COATES	2008
BERNARD ROBERT MCWALTER SHEPHERD	2009
DEAN CURTIS PARNELL	2010
ANDREW JOHN LANCASTER	2011
MARY DYMPHNA KAYE	2012
EDWARD THOMAS MARTIN ALLSOPP	2013
EILEEN FRANCES MARY SCHOFIELD	2014
MUSHTAQ AHMED KHAN	2015
JOHN BAILEY HUGHES	2016
ANDREW JOHN BEEDHAM	2017
JAMES ALAN TURNER	2018
LINDEN JAYNE THOMAS	2019
INEZ MAY BROWN	2020
STEPHANIE LOUISE PERRATON	2021
TONY McDAID	2022
ALICE ELIZABETH KINDER	2023

HONORARY SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

CLEMENT INGLEBY	1818
WILLIAM REDFERN	1829
ARTHUR RYLAND	1832
THOMAS SMITH JAMES	1835
WILLIAM HARE	1852
CLEMENT MANSFIELD INGLEBY	1853
EDWARD SARGANT	1857
GEORGE JAMES JOHNSON	1865
THOMAS HORTON	1872
ARTHUR GODLEE	1882
THOMAS HAWKES RUSSELL	1889
WALTER BARROW	1897
EDWARD EVERSHED	1903
CHARLES EKIN	1909
LESLIE ARTHUR SMITH	1913
ARTHUR MUSGROVE	1916
WILFRED CLARKSON MATTHEWS	1921
WILLIAM CHARLES COLEMAN GELL	1927
JOHN FAIRFAX CROWDER	1932
JOHN FAIRFAX CROWDER	JOINT 1936
GEORGE CORBYN BARROW	
GEORGE CORBYN BARROW	1945
GEORGE CORBYN BARROW	JOINT 1946
PHILIP HORTON VERNON	
PHILIP HORTON VERNON	1947
PHILIP HORTON VERNON	JOINT 1949
GEORGE MANNING BUTTS	
GEORGE MANNING BUTTS	1955
GEORGE MANNING BUTTS	JOINT 1955
HAROLD FREDERICK ROGERS	
HAROLD FREDERICK ROGERS	JOINT 1956
DAVID CHARLES STEVENS	
DAVID CHARLES STEVENS	JOINT 1958
MICHAEL PAUL CHETWYND HAYES	
MICHAEL PAUL CHETWYND HAYES	1961
MICHAEL PAUL CHETWYND HAYES	JOINT 1967
JOHN RICHARD BETTINSON	
JOHN RICHARD BETTINSON	1968

HONORARY TREASURERS

JOHN FRANK LESTER	1970
JAMES EDWARD ROWLEY	1973
KENNETH JOHN WERRING	1977
CHARLES RODERICK KING-FARLOW	1979
CHARLES JAMES BRAGG FLINT	1985
GRAHAM RUSSELL RITCHIE	1986
MICHAEL JAMES WARD	1992
MILTON NICHOLAS PSYLLIDES	1999
ANDREW JEFFREY STILTON	2004
RICHARD STEER	2008
EDWARD THOMAS MARTIN ALLSOPP	2009
JOHN BAILEY HUGHES	2010

HONORARY SECRETARIES

JOHN RICHARD BETTINSON	JOINT 1970
JOHN MICHAEL JENNINGS	
JOHN MICHAEL JENNINGS	JOINT 1971
ANTONY DERBYSHIRE	
ANTONY DERBYSHIRE	JOINT 1972
ROGER HORTON VERNON	
ROGER HORTON VERNON	1976
ROGER HORTON VERNON	JOINT 1977
CHRISTOPHER WYNDHAM HUGHES	
CHRISTOPHER WYNDHAM HUGHES	JOINT 1978

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

CHRISTOPHER JOHN JAMES	
CHRISTOPHER WYNDHAM HUGHES	JOINT 1980
PHILIP EDWARD RICHARDSON	
PHILIP EDWARD RICHARDSON	JOINT 1983
PAUL GRENVILLE PHARAOH	
PAUL GRENVILLE PHARAOH	JOINT 1987
JOHN ANTHONY JAMES	
JOHN ANTHONY JAMES	JOINT 1988
JOHN MICHAEL BUCKINGHAM	
JOHN MICHAEL BUCKINGHAM	JOINT 1991
RICHARD DUDLEY CHAPMAN	
RICHARD DUDLEY CHAPMAN	JOINT 1992
MALCOLM GASKELL FOWLER	
JUDITH MARGARET BONEGAL	JOINT 1994
PETER DAVID WISEMAN	
PETER DAVID WISEMAN	JOINT 2002
STEVEN MICHAEL JONAS	
PETER DAVID WISEMAN	JOINT 2002
MARK JONATHAN BEESLEY	
PETER DAVID WISEMAN	JOINT 2004
ANDREW RICHARD LEWIS BOND	
ANDREW JOHN LANCASTER	JOINT 2008
HELEN JANE ARNOLD	2008
JONATHAN STUART LLOYD	JOINT 2009
KEITH BROWNE	JOINT 2010
BERNARDETTE GRIFFIN	JOINT 2010
ANN MARY HOUGHTON	JOINT 2011
INEZ MAY BROWN	JOINT 2016
CHAITALI DESAI	JOINT 2016
SOPHIE MARGARET LOUISE SAMANI	JOINT 2018
STEPHANIE MAY BROWNLEES	JOINT 2020
PARDEEP LAGHA	2020
MARIYAM BANDEBA HARUNAH	2020
CLARE KATHRYN MURPHY	JOINT 2021
PETER WISEMAN	2022
JAMES FARMER	2023
SAMANTHA ROSS	2023

CHAIRS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JONATHAN STUART LLOYD	2010
BERNARD ROBERT MCWALTER SHEPHERD	2011
CHRISTOPHER OWEN	2012
EILEEN FRANCES MARY SCHOFIELD	2016
REGAN PEGGS	2019
DEE HARJIT KAUR KUNDI	2020
BEN HENRY	2022

Criminal Law Committee

Committee Chair - Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom
Andrew Rourke, St Ives Chambers Ltd
Catherine Ravenscroft, St Philips Chambers
Charmaine Robinson, Purcell Parker
Christopher Grainger, Gateley Legal
Daniel Wayne, Crown Prosecution Service
Dee Smythe, The Barrister Group
Dolores Barrett, Crown Prosecution Service
Gemma Tibbatts, Regan Peggs Solicitors
Inderdeep Singh Bhomra, Tuckers Solicitors LLP
James Turner, Tuckers Solicitors LLP
Keith Astbury, Glaisyers LLP
Matthew Cullen, St Philips Chambers
Rhydian James, Crown Prosecution Service
Steven Jonas, Jonas Roy Bloom
Sukhdev Bhomra, Mandla Bhomra & Co

Dispute Resolution Committee

Committee Chair - Simon Bradshaw, Cornwall Street Barristers
Deputy Chair - Lydia Pemberton, 3PB Barristers
Amy Callahan-Page, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Andrew Herring, Pinsent Masons LLP
Anthony Rich, Judiciary
Gurmeet Jakhu, Excello Law Limited
Jonathan Pyke, Starling Bank
Kirsty White, St Philips Chambers
Mariyam Harunah, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP
Paul Nicholls, Nicholls Brimble Bhol (Bearwood)
Priya Tromans, St Ives Chambers Ltd
Simon Thomas, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Sophie Samani, Henderson & Jones
Steven Reed, XXIV Old Buildings
Sundeep Bilkhu, Sydney Mitchell LLP
Tobias Haynes, Bell Lax Solicitors

Employment Law Committee

Committee Chair - Charlie Rae, Shoosmiths LLP
Deputy Chair - Victoria Duddles, Weightmans LLP
Alan Jones, Averta Employment Lawyers LLP
Ann-Marie Pugh, Neate & Pugh Solicitors Limited
Benedict Gomer, Gateley Legal
Charles Crow, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Christina Hutchinson, Fieldfisher LLP
David Sykes, Averta Employment Lawyers LLP
Edmund Beever, St Philips Chambers
Eileen Schofield, Schofield & Associates
Emma Neate, Neate & Pugh Solicitors Limited
Izzy Canbury, Averta Employment Lawyers LLP
James Tait, Browne Jacobson LLP
Jennifer Wright, The University of Law
Jogvinder Kaur Hundle Mills & Reeve LLP
Jon Coley, Pinsent Masons LLP
Martin Chitty, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Matt McDonald, Shakespeare Martineau
Mugni Islam-Choudhury, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Neelam Afzal, Wildings Solicitors LLP
Nia Stead, The University of Birmingham Law School
Richard Santy, Mills & Reeve LLP
Shazia Shah, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Sophie Garner, St Philips Chambers
Tim Jones, Higgs LLP
Tracy Worthington, FBC Manby Bowdler LLP

Family Law Committee

Committee Chair - Claire Darley, FBC Manby Bowdler LLP
Committee Vice Chair - Mark Hands, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Aasha Choudhary, Shakespeare Martineau
Adam Wadley, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Aimee Fox, 3PB Barristers
Aliya Yousaf, K J Conroy & Co Ltd
Deirdre Smythe, Clerksroom
Grant Bird
Ian Charlton, 3PB Barristers
Juliet Allen, St Philips Chambers
Karen Moores, Sydney Mitchell LLP (Sheldon)
Katie Langdon, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Kelly Perks, Talbots (Stourbridge)
Lauren Parton, Rayden Solicitors
Mark Mansell, St Philips Chambers
Mary Kaye, Rayden Solicitors
Marya Bibi, Keelys Solicitors
Matthew Saunderson, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Monica Ghai, Shakespeare Martineau
Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP (Cradley Heath)
Sabrina Powell, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Tom Gregory, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

Immigration Committee

Committee Chair - Sabina Kauser, Axiom DWFM
Adam Pipe, No.8 Chambers
Danai Papachristopoulou, Refugee Migrant Centre
Emma Rutherford, No. 8 Chambers
Nisha Leel, Cartwright King Solicitors
Punam Deepak, D & A Solicitors
Ramzan Sharif, Fountain Solicitors
Sonya Kalyan, Halcyon Chambers
Susana Ferrin, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Tom Brett, Veale Wasbrough Vizards

In House Committee

Committee Chair - Baljinder Singh Atwal, West Midlands Police
Deputy Chair - Heidi Salter, Housing 21
Allia Khan Hussain, DPD Group
Caroline Coates
Christopher Simmonds, Wolverhampton City Council
Cleo Stewart
Douglas Mackay, Crown Prosecution Service
Neena Janda, Zappi
Pardeep Lagha, Liverpool FC
Siobhan Blake, Crown Prosecution Service

International Law Committee

Committee Chair- Tony McDavid, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Covering Chair- Eileen Schofield, Schofield & Associates
Alexander Pritchard-Jones, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Bernard Shepherd, BES Shepherds
Derek Binns, Department for International Trade
Hamraj Khan, Kangs Solicitors
Ian Vesey, EP Legal incorporating Warwick Vesey
James Farmer, Cornwall Street Barristers
Jonathan Coutts, John Venn and Sons Scrivener Notaries
Kiran Munawar, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Mandy Haque, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

Nilay Shastry, Staple Inn Chambers
Paul McConnell, The University of Birmingham Law School
Raj Padhiar, Carltons Solicitors Limited
Reccy Midigo, Burley Law Limited

Pro Bono Committee

Committee Chair - Elena Goodfellow, Bevan Brittan
Vice Committee Chair - Amelia Bauer, Bevan Brittan
Abigail Macey, Mills and Reeve
Alexander Tolcher, DWF Law
Amy Tabari, University of Birmingham Law School
Anne-Marie Dhillon, LawWorks
Bronwen Webster, Irwin Mitchell
Catherine Henry, Anthony Collins
Catherine Lucas, Arden University Limited
Cheryl Green, The University of Law
Claire Stern, Central England Law Centre
Ed Morris, Shoosmiths
Fiona Farrell, Birmingham City University
Georgina Houghton, Gowling
Hayley McGrath, Arden University Limited
Isha Kumar, Burley Law Limited
John Glanville, Central England Law Centre
Katherine King, Central England Law Centre
Katie Fennell, Central England Law Centre
Louisa Soper, Squire Patton Boggs
Manpreet-Kaur Purewal, The University of Law
Marika Dorvlo, BPP University (Birmingham)
Mark Taylor, Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP
Molly Thompson, Rayden Solicitors
Patrice Coughlin, Rayden Solicitors
Rebecca Craig, Tenet Law
Rebecca Wilkinson, LawWorks
Richard Hartigan, Eversheds Sutherland
Samantha Gargaro, Birmingham City University
Sarah Askey, Keele University
Sophie Warren, Shoosmiths
Victoria Dodge, The University of Law

Professional Regulation Committee

Committee Chair - Jayne Willetts, Jayne Willetts & Co Solicitors Ltd
John Whitehouse, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Peter Wiseman
Philip Steel
Samantha Nicholson, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Tom Ellis, Loddors Solicitors LLP (Birmingham)

Property & Development Committee

Committee Chair - Denise Watkins, Gordon Jones & Co
Deputy Chair - Ben James, Bray & Bray
Amanda Holden, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Anthony Verduyn, St Philips Chambers
Bernard Shepherd, BES Shepherds
Clive Read, Shakespeare Martineau
Dan Stones, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)
Harriet Critchley, FBC Manby Bowdler LLP (Shrewsbury)
Leenamari Aantaa-Collier, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Samantha Ingram, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)
Sarah Dwight, Sarah Dwight Solicitor
Geoffrey Wood, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Samantha Ingram, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)
Sarah Dwight, Sarah Dwight Solicitor
Simon Hayden, Shakespeare Martineau

Health & Disability Sub Committee

Co Chair Ruth Duffy, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Co Chair Sana Saddique, Collective Law Solicitors
Sarah Hall, Squire Patton Boggs LLP
Iyanu Onalaja, Shoosmiths LLP
Samantha Watson, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

LGBTQ Sub Committee

Co Chair Shereen Johal, Shoosmiths LLP
Co Chair Marc Forrest-Thomas, No5 Barrister Chambers
Jamie Adams, Halcyon Chambers
Stephanie Atkins, Bevan Brittan LLP
Alex Lawrence, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Shannon Meehan, Irwin Mitchell
Joshua Purser, No5 Barrister Chambers
Lucy Williams, Mills & Reeve LLP

REACH Sub Committee

Chair Shaid Parveen, Aston University
Monika Bindal, Crown Prosecution Service
Shereen Chohan, Harrison Clark Rickerbys Limited
Mariyam Harunah, Squire Patton Boggs LLP
Marissa Jacquet-Smoothy, Grove Tompkins Bosworth
Zhuo Li, Gateley Legal
Bridget Tatham, Browne Jacobson LLP
Drew Wilson, Gateley Legal

Social Mobility Sub Committee

Chair Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont Limited
Secretary Aksa Mir, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Marissa Jacquet-Smoothy, Grove Tompkins Bosworth
Sharon Thandi, Devonshires Solicitors LLP
Mariyam Harunah, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP
Ollie Ward-Jones, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP
Elliott Clifton-Thompson, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Emily Rust, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Shaid Parveen, Aston University
Pardeep Lagha, Liverpool FC
Sana Saddique, Collective Law Solicitors LTD
Lizzy Przychodski
Sonya Smith, Birmingham City University





Criminal Law Committee

Matt O'Brien, Chair.

As Chair of the Birmingham Law Society's Criminal Law Committee, it is my pleasure to present this year's report, highlighting the Committee's activities and achievements over the past legal year. Our Committee, composed of a diverse group of professionals from various sectors of the criminal justice system—including defence solicitors, prosecutors, and members of the independent Bar—has remained active and dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by our community.

The departure of long-standing law firms, solicitors, and barristers from the sector, coupled with the chronic underfunding of every aspect of the criminal justice system, continues to present significant challenges to achieving just outcomes in criminal proceedings. The Committee remains a pivotal source of support and information for our members, actively participating in relevant forums to voice their concerns and suggestions.

We have been steadfast in our efforts to advocate for our members regarding the new police custody contact protocols in the West Midlands. Our goal is to ensure these changes benefit both legal practitioners and their clients, maintaining high standards of legal representation and client care.

The Committee has been in continuous dialogue with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) concerning the limitations on access at the Victoria Law Courts and the various issues presented by the repairs to the court estate within this heritage building. Our efforts are focused on improving accessibility and operational efficiency at this crucial facility.

We have engaged in meaningful discussions with prison psychiatrists to address mental health issues among prisoners. This collaboration seeks to enhance the mental health support provided within the prison system, ensuring better outcomes for affected individuals.

On July 4th, we hosted the Talking Crime 2024 panel discussion, marking our first major event in several years. The event brought together senior legal leaders to share their insights on pressing issues in the criminal justice system, fostering a lively and informative exchange of ideas. Feedback from attendees confirmed that it provided a welcome forum to engage with senior colleagues in an informal setting.

Our Committee has also taken an active role in the working group dedicated to the Intensive Supervision Court for women offenders. This initiative aims to develop specialized supervision and support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of female offenders, promoting more effective rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. Those attending the panel discussion event were inspired to hear of the success of the pilot as reported by the judicial lead, District Judge Michelle Smith.

As we look ahead to the upcoming year, our priority remains to expand our Committee by welcoming new members who represent the diversity of our profession. This approach will ensure we continue to advocate effectively for Birmingham Law Society members and address the evolving challenges within the criminal justice system.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all Committee members for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions over the past year. Together, we will continue to strive for excellence and resilience in our ongoing work.



Dispute Resolution Committee

Simon Bradshaw, Chair.

The Dispute Resolution Committee meets regularly online to consider matters affecting civil litigation practice, procedure and ADR. Our members include representation from law firms, Chambers and organisations associated with the legal professions, together with a representative of the District Bench. Our remit covers the resolution of disputes outside as well as within the Court system.

Earlier this year, we arranged a very popular event, 'Getting It Right for the Judge', hosted at Birmingham Civil Justice Centre and featuring Mrs Justice Tipples, Her Honour Judge Kelly and District Judge Rich. It was clear from the full attendance and many questions that our membership is very interested in such events, and we are keen to run further such practice guides. The most significant development for us this year has been the creation of the Birmingham Business and Property Courts Forum, which is a joint events forum organised by the Birmingham BPC, the BLS Dispute Resolution Committee and the Midlands Chancery and Commercial Bar Association. We look forward to running a wide-ranging series of events through the BBPC Forum, addressing matters of interest to our members.

We are always open to interest from anyone involved in civil dispute resolution - if you would like to get involved, please contact us via the BLS.



Employment Law Committee

Charlie Rae, Chair.

The Employment Law committee has, during 2023 and 2024, continued its practice of meeting monthly, and our meetings have almost always been well (and enthusiastically) attended.

During this past year, we had a handful of employment law consultations to consider and respond to, such as proposed changes to the Transfer of Undertakings laws, consideration of the call for evidence on the principles of open justice, and the reintroduction of fees in the Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunals. All consultations were carefully considered by the Committee and, we believe, some insightful and worthwhile observations and comments were provided in our responses made on behalf of the Society. As previously I have done, I pass on grateful thanks to Jayne Willetts and her committee, who have always been prepared to review and comment upon our proposed consultation responses, usually with a tight turnaround time. We are most grateful for that continued support.

The new Labour government is likely to be introducing several fresh employment consultations for us to consider over this next year or so. We therefore expect to be a busy committee in the near future, considering and responding to what we expect will be a number of proposed changes to our employment laws.

We said goodbye to a some of our members during this past year. We pay tribute to Kamaljit Bains (Make UK), who passed away in July 2023. News of his passing deeply saddened our committee. Kam was a much-liked member of the committee and his valuable contributions to our work was always much appreciated.

We thank Sarah Bowen (3PB), who retired from our committee albeit we congratulate her on taking up a role as a part time Employment Judge. We also thank Mike Hibbs (Shakespeare Martineau), who retired from our committee after serving on it for 25 years. Mike's contribution to the work of our committee cannot be understated. He was an ever-present and enthusiastic member who was, almost certainly, our most regular attendee. He chaired the committee for 7 of those 25 years, always with great

professionalism and consistency. We all enjoyed the benefit of his wide experience and extensive knowledge of employment law.

Whilst we will undoubtedly miss our committee members to whom we have said goodbye, we were also pleased to welcome new members, in Shazia Shah (Irwin Mitchell) and Nia Stead (University of Birmingham).

One of our undoubted highlights of the past year was our recent (June 2024) in-person event, an evening with two Employment Appeal (EAT) Judges, Mrs Justice Eady (current EAT President) and Mr Justice Choudhury (past EAT President and now Presiding Judge for the Midlands Circuit). It was quite a coup that we managed to attract such high-profile guests to come to Birmingham, to present to to our local legal community about the workings of the EAT!

Those who attended the event, reported that the insights and information provided by our guests were invaluable. The event presented a unique opportunity for employment practitioners in the region to gain some truly unique insights. The event attracted over 50 attendees, and we were delighted at the support provided by BLS members. Special thanks go to our committee member, Mugni Islam-Choudhury (No 5 Chambers), whose preparations for and expert chairing of the event, ensured its success. Thanks also to 3PB Chambers, for hosting it.

All in all, 2023/2024 has been another productive and busy year for our committee. We fully expect this next year to be equally so!



Family Law Committee

Claire Darley, Chair.

We have furthered the aims of our mission statement this year by organising an L & D Event for the autumn 2024. This is a co-joined event with West Midlands Resolution Committee planned for October/November 2024. The keynote speaker is planned to be Mrs Justice Lieven Family Presiding Judge for the Midlands Circuit. Please look out for more details of the event and to book on from BLS's website.

The focus of committee meeting over the last year has been as follows: A Midlands Family Law Strategy was put in place across the Midlands Circuit from February 2024 and the Pathfinder Pilot for Birmingham and Solihull Courts for private child proceedings from May 2024. These initiatives are reducing delay in child law cases and provide much better outcomes therefore for children.

We have welcomed guest speakers to further our mission statement and L & D function and we are in close liaison with the judiciary and HMCTS in relation to receiving regular reports from the court, updates relating to the online portal being used for financial cases and the Birmingham Family Remedy Court User Group to ensure information is disseminated to local practitioners.



Immigration committee

Sabina Kauser, Chair.

Activities to date include Recruiting new members to the committee and reviewing and reshaping committee to allocate roles within the committee to make us more effective.

We have also held discussions in relation to the affect of Legal Aid changes affecting Immigration practitioners and are currently working on the introduction of an immigration newsletter for practitioners.

We also have a planned training session for immigration advisors scheduled for 01 August 2024.



International Committee

Tony McDaid, Chair.

The International Committee has continued to support legal practitioners to expand horizons and develop aspirations and opportunities for members to engage and provide services to international jurisdictions.

The success of the committee was marked by a series of relevant and inclusive events.

The BLS International Committee co-hosted an event sponsored by the Department for Business and Trade at the Grand Hotel in March 2023. The keynote speaker Julian Henwood provided a fantastic insight into growing legal markets in and around Europe which he led on behalf of Gowling WLG. The attendance at the event was excellent and as a result the committee expanded to welcome 2 new members.

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association conference took place in Goa, BLS was represented by Raj Padhiar and Eileen Schofield. Eileen presented to the conference on the subject of equality and diversity in the legal profession.

A number of introductions have been made over the year to include an introduction to the Secretary General and CEO of the Arab British Chamber, the President of the Dublin Bar and counterparts in Saudi.

The committee is hugely collaborative, and details of events are circulated regarding international events such as the Avocats Barreau conference in Paris and the Dublin Bar dinner.

The relationship with the DBT is ever increasing and relevant to support access to international markets. The DBT are instrumental in fostering relationships with key stakeholders to facilitate memoranda of understanding between participating countries to allow reciprocal services to be provided. One example is the MOU signed by the Indian Government following the CLA conference in Goa. Other opportunities will follow during the course of the next year.

The Committee Chair Tony Mc Daid has led the committee to support new opportunities and until recently facilitated and led the meeting for which BLS is very grateful.

In his absence, due to illness, Eileen Schofield has stepped in to Chair the committee and will continue to deputise for Tony until his return.



Health & Disability Sub Committee

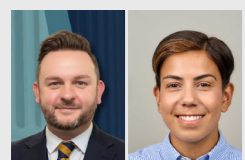
Ruth Duffy Chair.

January 2023 began with one of our co-chairs stepping down from their position and so recruitment began for another co-chair. Ruth Duffy was appointed in February 2023 a few months before co-chair Iyanu Onalaja was temporarily unavailable until September 2023 due to medical reasons. As a number of members stepped down from the sub-committee we began to gain traction again recruiting members throughout the rest of the year.

In October we collaborated with Birmingham Trainee Solicitors Society and hosted a panel event focusing on Neurodiversity. We invited four panellists to join us to speak about their neurodivergent health conditions, including Autism, Dyslexia & ADHD as we wanted to raise awareness of these conditions and what it is like working in the legal profession with these conditions. We had a good feedback and generated interest from colleagues, some of whom joined our sub-committee.

Our plan going forward is to produce pod-casts discussing various health conditions and a open invite for a social event

to encourage more engagement and education on the legal profession and Health Conditions/disabilities.



LGBTQ+ Sub-Committee

Marc Forrest Thomas, Shereen Johal
Chairs

The LGBTQ+ Sub-Committee meets monthly and features a diverse membership including paralegals, trainee solicitors, qualified solicitors at various PQE levels, clerks, practice managers, and barristers. This diversity extends across genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.

Since its official launch in February 2024 during LGBT+ History Month, the committee has grown from 6 to 8 members, with Marc Forrest-Thomas joining as co-Chair to support Shereen Johal, the founder and current Chair.

The Sub-Committee was founded with three key goals: visibility, guidance, and positive change. One of the most rewarding outcomes has been establishing a community where LGBTQ+ professionals in Birmingham's legal sector can connect, share their lived experiences, and create a supportive and safe environment where their voices are heard. Looking ahead to the latter part of 2024 and into 2025, the Sub-Committee plans to host a panel event during Trans Awareness Week in November 2024, organise quarterly LGBTQ+-focused socials, introduce guidance through a Pledge, and aim for the largest and most impactful Birmingham Pride participation ever.

These initiatives will further the Sub-Committee's commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion within BLS.



Pro Bono Committee

Elena Goodfellow, Chair.

In 2023 Elena Goodfellow continued as chair of the committee. The role of vice chair was carried out by Amelia Bauer, and the secretary was Bronwen

Webster.

The pro bono committee's objectives continue to be to: support; promote; signpost; and raise the profile of pro bono work amongst Birmingham Law Society members and the local community.

In the last 12 months, the committee has worked towards these objectives through:

- Maintaining and updating the database of local advice agencies and pro bono services, providing signposting for members of the public.
- Answering any enquiry emails sent by members of the public.
- Meeting 8 times as a whole committee in order to update and share projects and ideas with other members.
- Hosting an event for Pro Bono Week in November (more below).
- Sending a representative to two meetings of the Attorney General's Pro Bono Committee in Parliament, and the Attorney General's regional subcommittee, which aims to facilitate coordination between regional committees in the UK to share ideas and improve pro bono provision.

Our November 2023 Pro Bono Week was the most well attended since pre Covid-19 times. The event was a roundtable style discussion with participants from 14 different pro bono organisations, including non-committee members such as Advocate, Citizens Advice Bureau and The Project Birmingham.

Discussion points included the challenges of providing pro bono advice, case management, hybrid in person and virtual clinics and finding volunteers.

At the end of 2023, Fiona Farrell took over as vice chair and Isha Kumar took over as committee secretary.

If you would like to know more about pro bono opportunities in Birmingham, or if you have any pro bono good news stories that you would like to share on our pro bono notice board in the Birmingham Bulletin please do not hesitate to contact the committee at: probono@birminghamlawsociety.co.uk

Professional Regulation Committee

Jayne Willetts, Chair.



The Consultation Committee changed its name in 2023 from the Consultation Committee to the Professional Regulation Committee. The change was to better reflect the Committee's primary function in responding to professional regulation consultations from bodies such as the SRA, LSB, Legal Ombudsman, SDT and, occasionally, the Ministry of Justice. Also relevant is that the members of the Committee tend to be drawn from those with professional regulation expertise.

The second role, (and this usually falls to the Chair with considerable assistance from Peter Wiseman), is to assist the Society's specialist professional Committees with their responses to consultation papers. This involves standing back and checking the responses from the Society's viewpoint before they are submitted to the President for final approval. Copies of all responses are published on the BLS website and on social media with a short press release.

The work of the Professional Regulation Committee and the Society's professional committees has continued apace. The Employment Committee has responded to five consultations including misuse of non-disclosure agreements: working time holiday pay and panel composition in the Tribunals. The Property & Development Committee responded to the Law Society consultation on the new code for signing and exchanging contracts and the Professional Regulation Committee contributed to the SRA proposals for regulating CILEX members. The Personal Injury Committee also responded to a Ministry of Justice consultation on fixed recoverable costs.

The greatest effort of the year was down to a joint contribution by the Professional Regulation, Criminal, Employment and Dispute Resolution Committees in responding to the Ministry of Justice Consultation on Open Justice which covered all aspects of public access to hearings and judgments.

The Professional Regulation Committee has also been working with the Joint V group of major local law societies in co-ordinating combined responses on major issues affecting the profession.

A new initiative this year has been COLP/COFA Forum for compliance officers and money laundering officers with external speakers covering topics such as professional indemnity; the new well-being rules, AML requirements and reporting to the SRA. These have been well supported and will continue in 2024.

My thanks to the industrious members of the Professional Regulation Committee and to all the members of the specialist Committees. Responding to consultation papers is the most important work undertaken by the Society and ensures that the voice of the Birmingham legal community is heard in all the right places.

On a final note, we are always looking for new Committee members. The Professional Regulation Committee provides an ideal opportunity to develop your professional regulation knowledge so please volunteer if you are interested.

Property & Development Committee

Denise Watkins, Chair.



The BLS Property and Development Committee have had another busy year in 2023/24.

As with the previous year the Committee have been involved in discussions surrounding the proposed changes with many areas of law, in particular that surrounding the safety of Buildings and also in respect of Leasehold Reform. The Building Safety Act was introduced as a way forward following the Grenfell Tower disaster.

The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had put forward a General election for 4th July 2024 and several Bills were passed through Parliament before the closing down of the Commons. The Leasehold and Freehold Reform bill was one of the last pieces of legislation to make it through Parliament. The new law aims to make it cheaper and easier for more people to extend their lease, buy their freehold and take over management of their building.

The BLS Committee had been involved in discussions with many of the considerations of both of the Acts that have now been put in force.

There have been updates with Law Society forms including the TA6 Property Information form which has caused a lot of controversy. BLS Property Committee have discussed the pros and cons of the form and are still in discussions with The Law Society as to the way forward.

We have a very good cross section of Property Lawyers within the Committee including a Barrister who gives significant updates regarding action in Court whether it be the High Court or the Court of Appeal that cover a variety of Property issues and is a valuable source of information for all Property Lawyers.

There is an update from Members of the Committee regarding Construction, Commercial and Planning at each meeting, including what is to be built around Birmingham and the changes in the City landscape and what planning has been granted to regenerate areas with recent information regarding the area around Smithfield.

The members who are expert in Construction, Commercial and Planning keeps the Committee updated on changes in the Law, changes around our area as to Construction as well as any changes in Practice process. Whilst the committee is small, it is a friendly committee and certainly a busy Committee.

Anyone who is interested in the work of the Committee is welcome to attend one of bi monthly meetings by prior arrangement. We meet at 1.00pm on the second Tuesday of every other month and also try to have a social occasion at least once a year.

Please contact me for more information on attending or becoming a member at dwatkins@gordonjonessolicitors.co.uk



Reach Sub Committee

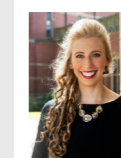
Shaid Parveen, Chair.

The REACH subcommittee endeavours to meet at least bi-monthly, however, due to the workload of members this has not always been possible. The members of the committee reflect the diversity of Birmingham and bring their lived experiences and insight of working in private practice, CPS, and Higher Education. In order to support and refine the committees work, a REACH Advisory Group has been set up from junior members of the profession.

Whilst in 2022-23, the committee received financial support from sponsors to deliver a cinematic event, this year there has been less of a commitment to support such initiatives from sponsors, as EDI (particularly in the area of RACE) has not received the support it should. Despite this, REACH members individually and/or collectively have:

1. Supported panel discussions in the social mobility and/or EDI sphere.
2. Delivered talks
3. Organised a SAHM event
4. Supported the BBL inaugural careers fair
5. Recruited three members to the advisory group
6. Brought significant issues to the attention of BLS, which could impact on the way it is perceived with a view to preserving its reputation e.g. holding of the award ceremonies during Ramadan on three consecutive occasions

The subcommittee is keen to continue the work it is undertaking strategically to ensure equity within the professional at all levels.



Social Mobility Sub Committee

Alice Kinder, Chair.

The Social Mobility Sub-Committee continues to work to promote the importance of social mobility amongst employers and to provide opportunities for aspiring lawyers from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access and progress in the legal profession. The Sub-Committee meets monthly and now has 14 members from a range of professional backgrounds in legal practice and academia.

The Sub-Committee currently runs three highly successful key initiatives:

- A biannual social mobility conference to support local legal employers in understanding best practice and to provide a forum for collaboration and the sharing of ideas.
- An annual speed networking event and panel discussion to enable local students to build their network and gain an awareness of the available career opportunities in law.
- An annual Diversity and Inclusion Scheme to provide financial support, mentoring, and a vacation scheme place to aspiring lawyers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Having grown up in a working-class family and encountered many challenges in my own legal journey, there was no doubt that social mobility would form a core part of the agenda for my year as President of the Birmingham Law Society. In October 2023, we launched a Social Mobility Pledge in partnership with my charity of the year, the Social Mobility Foundation, to encourage organisations and individuals to take proactive steps to drive change. In December 2023, we launched the Birmingham Law Society Vacation Scheme to provide an opportunity for our member law students to gain meaningful work experience and develop their soft skills. I am pleased that the Vacation Scheme will be continued through the Sub-Committee in the 2024/25 academic year.

I would like to thank the members of the Sub-Committee for giving up their time to make a difference in such an important area, and the law firms and universities who have supported us in achieving our goals. I hope that we can build on our work and continue our impact over the next year.



BIRMINGHAM
LAW SOCIETY

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Birmingham Law Society was established in 1818 and is now the largest local law society in the country, representing over 9000 solicitors, barristers, legal executives, trainee solicitors, paralegals and law students in 111 organisations including five universities in Birmingham and the Greater Midlands area.

1. WE ENCOURAGE CLOSER CONTACT BETWEEN MEMBERS THEREBY STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL LEGAL COMMUNITY

- by providing a programme for members including networking and activity based events;
 - by holding public debates/discussions which are important to members;
- by establishing and maintaining effective lines of communication with all members.

2. WE REPRESENT THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR MEMBERS

- by direct representations and lobbying to Government, the SRA, The Law Society and other organisations;
 - by engaging in consultations;
 - by making use of the media;
- by encouraging links between the Society and our local politicians.

3. WE PROMOTE THE SOCIETY, OUR MEMBERS AND THE REGION ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAGE

- by ensuring members are aware of the work which is undertaken by the Society;
- by ensuring all Officers, Board Members and Council Members promote the Society and its members when-ever speaking to national or international organisations, including during international visits;
 - by promoting the international relations the Society has and establishing links.

4. WE ENSURE OUR MEMBERS ARE KEPT UP TO DATE WITH ANY IMPORTANT ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

- by using any and all available means (electronic, seminars, newsletters, correspondence etc);
 - by engaging in public debates/discussions with people associated with such changes;
 - through training and other educational events.

5. WE RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF LEGAL ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE PROFESSION

- by promoting the rule of law and access to justice;
- by raising issues relevant to the provision of legal services such as Alternative Business Structures, cuts in legal aid, diversity issues in respect of access to the legal profession etc.

6. WE ARE REGARDED AS AN INTEGRAL AND IMPORTANT PART OF BIRMINGHAM AND SURROUNDING REGIONS BY ENSURING CLOSE LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS (BOTH LEGAL AND NON LEGAL) INCLUDING

- A. national organisations such as The Law Society;
- B. local organisations such as Universities, Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham Black Lawyers;
- C. local organisations involved in the administration of justice such as the Judiciary/Tribunals and the Police;
- D. Birmingham Trainee Solicitor Society and Birmingham Solicitors Group;
- E. Pro bono groups and charities.

7. WE CONTINUOUSLY CONSIDER PROVIDING SERVICES THAT BENEFIT OUR MEMBERS.



BIRMINGHAM LAW SOCIETY