



BIRMINGHAM
LAW SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD



So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye...

This past year has been one of the most unforgettable of my life. It's had its highs and its challenges—but above all, it's been an honour to serve as your President. I step away from the role proud of what's been achieved and confident that I've stayed true to my purpose.

As you'll know—because I haven't exactly kept quiet about it—my focus this year has been on you, the membership. You haven't had to endure lengthy monologues about my personal journey into law or the obstacles I've faced along the way (and believe me, there are many—if I started, we'd be here all week). Instead, I've chosen to shine a light on those who don't often get the chance to be heard. In a profession increasingly dominated by social media noise and expertly curated hashtags, I wanted to redirect the spotlight to the unsung heroes—the

individuals and organisations doing incredible work behind the scenes for our profession and our communities.

Whether welcomed or not, this year I've changed the narrative—and in my view, it couldn't come soon enough.

I didn't just want to talk about change—I wanted to be it. Not gestures, not buzzwords, but real, visible action that left our Law Society and our community better than I found it. It's easy to write a lofty vision statement; it's harder to live it. But I hope, in some small way, I've shown that change doesn't always have to be seismic to matter. Sometimes, it's about showing up differently. Speaking up. Stepping aside when needed—and stepping forward when it counts.

The Legal Awards in February were a particular highlight—and my goodness, do you lot know how to celebrate. My number-one priority

for the night? Fun. We were there to party, and I wanted every single member to feel seen, valued, and appreciated. We had the amazing PJ Ellis keeping things moving, and the brilliant Dominic Holland—better known (at least by me) as Spider-Man's dad. He still doesn't like being called that, by the way... but oh well. If the spandex suit fits.

A quick (and heartfelt) apology to our Family Committee Chair—and Lifetime Achievement Award winner—Claire Darley of FBC Manby Bowdler. Those who attended the Awards may recall the surprise appearance of a brass band on stage. Claire, however, had no such warning. They emerged dramatically behind her and launched into their performance, much to her astonishment. Claire, if that moment left you with ringing ears or mild tinnitus, please consider this an apology—but most definitely not an admission of liability in any legal sense whatsoever.

Now, I couldn't possibly write this without mentioning the Converse. And before we go any further—no, I'm not sponsored by Converse (although, if they're interested... I wouldn't say no. Only joking. Kind of). Other trainers are, of course, available at all good retailers.

What began as a fashion choice was, in truth, something more personal. Let me share a little secret with you, dear reader: I'm a geek. There—it's out. Not that it's been particularly well hidden, especially if you ask my family. I grew up watching David Tennant as the Doctor and thought, "You know what? The Legal Awards might be the one night I can get away with wearing a pair of Converse." It felt like the perfect chance to channel my inner (and, let's be honest, not-so-inner) nerd.

But, alas—someone fed back that it was "inappropriate" for the President to wear Converse. And, well... I love a challenge. So, in response to that outdated view, I doubled down. I wore them to every event. I even wore a gold pair to the President's Dinner. Heaven knows what I'm supposed to do with a pair of gold Converse now—probably frame them as a reminder that self-expression is worth defending.

What started as a playful fashion statement turned into a quiet stand against the more outdated corners of our profession. Yes, tradition has its place—but not when it stifles individuality or discourages harmless self-expression.

What we must remember is that in a society over 200 years old, things evolve. What was once considered "appropriate" may no longer reflect who we are—or who we want to be. Thankfully, times have changed. And I'm proud to say that this year, I quite literally walked that evolution in every step I took.

Speaking of evolving—who would have guessed we'd have Bagga Chipz entertaining us at the Alternative Dinner?

Before the event, Bagga spoke to me to clarify what she could and couldn't say.

"So... you're saying I can't be crude, offensive or disrespectful?"

"Yes, Bagga."

"Right. I'll just stand there and not move, then."

Thankfully, we found a compromise.

Now, I'm all for shaking things up—but I also didn't want to go down in history as that President. You know, the one whose entertainment sent half the room fleeing to the toilets in tears. Change? Yes. Complete chaos? Maybe not just yet. Let's call it evolution... with boundaries.

But on a serious note—Bagga didn't just bring sparkle and sass to the evening. I want to say she brought diversity, but even that doesn't feel quite right. To call a drag performer "diverse" suggests that people like her are rare, unseen, or somehow out of place. And in the legal world, perhaps they are—which is a shame. But in the real world? They're not.

So, no—Bagga Chipz MBE didn't bring diversity. She brought realism. And I think our legal events could use a lot more of that.

As much as I have tried to portray this selfless image of using the presidency to elevate the voices of others, I'll admit—I've been a bit selfish too. For those who know me, you'll know I'm a passionate advocate for victims of domestic abuse. I've used this role to push one clear, uncompromising message: victims need your help. That message has underpinned everything—from how I shaped events to what I chose to amplify in our communications.

To those who've read my pieces in the bulletin—I hope you've enjoyed them as much as I've enjoyed writing them (often in a panic, often while ranting into the void, and occasionally while hiding in coffee shops pretending to work on "serious policy matters").

It has been my privilege to lead. My privilege to speak up. And most of all, my privilege to serve.

To every member who's shown support, sent kind words, offered feedback (even the brutal bits)—thank you. To the Birmingham Law Society team—you've been phenomenal. You've made this journey not only possible, but joyful.

And to the next President—good luck. The shoes might be big to fill, but they're comfy. Especially if they're Converse.

With gratitude, humour, and just a hint of sparkle—

Richard Port MBE
President, Birmingham Law Society.

Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 26th September 2025

Officers

At the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 26th September, Richard Port MBE was installed as President of the Society, Matt O'Brien as Vice President and Guy Barnett as Deputy Vice President.

Bernard Shepherd and Peter Wiseman were installed as Honorary Members.

The role of Company Secretary was created to replace the honorary secretaries and Andrew Beedham was installed.

Retiring Board Members:
James Farmer

Council

The retiring ordinary members of the Council were: Alice Kinder, Peter Wiseman and James Farmer.

The following members of the Society were duly nominated for election / re election to the Council: Warren Barr, University of Birmingham Law School, Catherine Edwards, Arden University, James Farmer, Gent Legal Services Limited, Simon Harris, DWF LLP, Nigel Hollett, Birmingham Law Society, Samantha Ingram, Davisons Law, Neena Janda, Zappi, Sabina Kauser, Ward Hadaway, Mary Kaye, Rayden Solicitors, Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont, Pardeep Lagha, Grace Mullis, Irwin Mitchell LLP, Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP, Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom, Guy Barnett, Janai Parker, Gateley Legal, Sarah Ramsey, Bernard Shepherd, BES Shepherds, Lubna Shuja, Legal Swan Solicitors, Daniel Skermer, PA Forum, Dee Smythe, Clerksroom, Peter Wiseman, Victoria Zinzan, Irwin Mitchell LLP.



**BIRMINGHAM
LAW SOCIETY**

BOARD REPORT



Along with this report, a copy of the financial statements for the Society covering the financial year ending March 2025 is attached.

(It may be recalled that the Society extended its year end in 2023, and so the comparative figures for 2024 are necessarily higher as they relate to a wider period of 15 months.)

The key points to note are as follows:

- Total income for the year was £509,575 (2024: £737,139). (Notably the comparison period ending 2024 was a 15 month period, and included the substantial rent review arrears which were paid within that period);
- The overall operating surplus for 2025 was £36,751 (2024: £144,810);
- Subscription income was £129,426 (2023: £132,000 – but again, this was for a 15 month period, pro rata, so does not afford a true comparison);
- Wages and salary costs were £184,868 (2024: £209,819);
- The investment portfolio stands at £239,428 (2024: £234,826); and
- Due to increased available funds, the Society repaid in full the bounceback loan obtained in 2020 to assist with cash flow.

Other Matters

1. The Board has a dedicated Finance Sub-Committee ("FSC") which is now responsible for monitoring and managing the finances of the Society, and reporting to the Board on financial issues.
2. The FSC works closely with the CEO at an operational level to ensure scrutiny and review of finances.

3. The Society moved into new, cheaper, office premises in the serviced offices at The Lewis Building on Bull Street, Birmingham in the last year, as part of a review of operating costs in the office. These offices are well located in the heart of the city's legal community.

4. We continue to manage the former society building on Temple Row, Birmingham which is let to a large restaurant chain and operates as a Cuban bar and restaurant. Our healthy rental income continues, and provides a good steady income stream, which will ensure the Society continues to maintain a surplus which can and will be invested into initiatives to benefit members.

5. The Society put on a wide range of events in the course of the year, with good attendances at our key events, the awards dinner in February and the President's dinner in September. These key events act as both significant revenue generators and profile raising events for the Society.

6. Subscriptions and income continue to rise. The figures provided in the financial statements are not fully illustrative because of differing accounting periods, but for the 2025 renewals, subscription income was £130,512 (2022: £122,847; 2023: £124,746; 2024: £127,088).

7. The Society has recently recruited a Head of Membership Engagement, and she has been tasked with liaising with and obtaining feedback from our diverse membership base. The Society is keen to maximise its value proposition for its members, and constructive feedback is welcomed.

8. The Society is in a strong position for the forthcoming year with a good cash reserve, a significant asset and a stable income stream from the rental generated from the property asset and from its activities.

Peter Brewer - Chair of the Board
Ben Henry - Finance Director

CEO REPORT



It is a pleasure to be writing this for the Annual Report as Chief Executive and for me a chance to reflect on a number of things in what is now my second year at the Society and my second Annual General Meeting.

There have been a number of changes in the office team since last year and our revised structure reflects a strong emphasis on membership engagement while building on our existing strengths and the services we offer. These include high-quality events that are well attended by members and non-members which focus in the main on technical issues, networking and social, learning and development as well as our high-profile events the President's Dinner and Legal Awards that celebrate the best of the legal sector in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

I am keen to get out and about as much as I can in the forthcoming year to hear your views, to discuss your membership and for those of you who want to get more involved with the Society, how we can make this happen.

I am also keen to meet with new potential members, reaching across Birmingham and the West Midlands to establish if we can draw in additional expertise and experience. The Society is open to everyone in our legal community, and I am keen to make it as relevant as possible to all those who choose to join us.

We are in a positive position financially and further details are provided above. However, we are continuing to look at how we can diversify our income through new services that are relevant to members. I am extremely grateful to our partners and sponsors who support our events and activities and without their support we would struggle to do what we do.

Finally, can I thank my team for all their support. We are optimistic about the future of the Society and look forward to working with the new President and Officers in the coming year, alongside our close engagement with our Board, Committees and Council.

Thank you.

Nigel Hollett- CEO

President

Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP Solicitors

Vice President

Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Deputy Vice President

Guy Barnett,

Joint Honorary Secretaries

James Farmer, Gent Legal Services

Samantha Ross, Bevan Brittan LLP

Board

Chair: Peter Brewer, Harrison Clark Rickerbys (2024)

Chair: Zoe Tranter (2023)

Finance Director: Ben Henry, Jonas Roy Bloom

Director: Nigel Hollett, Birmingham Law Society

President: Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP

Vice President: Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Deputy Vice-President: Guy Barnett

Director: Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont

Director: Tony McDaid, No5 Barristers' Chambers

Director: Stephanie Perraton, Squire Patton Boggs

Director: Andrew Beedham, Company Secretary for Birmingham Law Society

Observer: Andy Dawson, Curium Solutions

Director: James Farmer, Gent Legal Services Limited

Director: Ian Jones, Spencer Shaw Solicitors

Director: Will Lodder, Lodder Solicitors

Director: Dipika Mistry, Weightmans LLP

Director: Sana Saddique, Collective Law Solicitors LTD

Director: Joe Wilson, St Philips Chambers

Council

Guy Barnett

Warren Barr, The University of Birmingham Law School

Mel Bates, Eliteea

Catherine Edwards, Keele University

James Farmer, Gent Legal Services Limited

Simon Harris, DWF LLP (Birmingham)

Nigel Hollett, Birmingham Law Society

Samantha Ingram, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)

Neena Janda, Zappi

Sabina Kauser, Acuity Law (Birmingham)

Mary Kaye, Rayden Solicitors

Alice Kinder, Bexley Beaumont Limited

Pardeep Lagha

Grace Mullis, Irwin Mitchell LLP (Birmingham)

Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Janai Parker, Gateley Legal (Birmingham)

Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP (Cradley Heath)

Sarah Ramsey, The University of Law (Birmingham)

Bernard Shepherd, BES Legal Solicitors

Lubna Shuja, Legal Swan Solicitors

Daniel Skermer, PA Forum

Dee Smythe, The Barrister Group

Peter Wiseman

Victoria Zinzan, Irwin Mitchell LLP (Birmingham)

Birmingham Law Society Staff

Chief Executive Officer: Nigel Hollett

Head of Membership Engagement: Sara Lehtonen

Head of Marketing and Events: Jessica Uppal

Society Administrator: Shona Matson-Betts

PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY

THOMAS LEE	1818	WILLIAM HENRY TILLEY	1960
JOHN MEREDITH	1825	JOHN SHUFFLEBOTHAM	1962
JOHN SIMCOX	1832	FREDERICK WILLIAM WHITALL OAKLEY	1963
ROGER WILLIAM GEM	1833	CHARLES THOMAS WINTERTON	1964
THOMAS EYRE LEE	1848	RICHARD LAURENCE EKIN	1965
CLEMENT INGLEBY	1852	GEOFFREY HORACE PIDDOCK	1966
JOHN WELCHMAN WHATELEY	1855	HAROLD FREDERICK ROGERS	1967
ARTHUR RYLAND	1873	CHRISTOPHER HEDLEY HARMER	1968
GEORGE JAMES JOHNSON	1874	THOMAS HARRY PARKINSON	1969
ARTHUR RYLAND	1876	CHARLES HERBERT LEA	1970
WILLIAM EVANS	1877	JOHN ATKINSON RUTLEDGE	1970
JAMES MARIGOLD	1879	SYDNEY SOLOMON JACOBS	1972
THOMAS HORTON	1882	JOHN TIMOTHY ARTHUR SMITH	1973
CHARLES EDWARD MATTHEWS	1885	JOHN ANTONY ALDERSON	1974
CORNELIUS THOMAS SAUNDERS	1888	DAVID LIDDELL	1975
SIR THOMAS MARTINEAU	1888	WALTER WOOD	1976
LAURISTON WINTERBOTHAM LEWIS	1891	DAVID STANLEY ADAMS	1977
JOSEPH BENNETT CLARKE	1893	ROBERT JOSEPH GARRATT	1978
ARTHUR GODLEE	1895	GEORGE SIEGFRIED JONAS	1979
THOMAS HAWKES RUSSELL	1897	DENYS ERIC FORDHAM	1980
JOSEPH ANSELL	1899	ROGER HORTON VERNON	1980
RICHARD ALFRED PINSENT	1901	ARNOLD MAURICE PUTSMAN	1982
JOHN BARHAM CARSLAKE	1903	CHRISTOPHER JOHN JAMES	1983
ALFRED POINTON	1906	FREDERICK HAROLD TURNER	1984
WALTER BARROW	1908	PETER LESLIE TAYLOR	1985
JOHN GILBERT BRADBURY	1910	BRIAN EDWARD GLYNN WILLIAMS	1986
ALFRED HENRY COLEY	1912	JOHN RICHARD BETTINSON	1987
JAMES HARGREAVE	1914	DAVID HOWARD HIGGS	1988
ARTHUR LABRON LOWE	1916	CHRISTOPHER WYNDHAM HUGHES	1989
FRANCIS AUGUST CHATWIN	1918	PHILIP EDWARD RICHARDSON	1990
ARCHIBALD SOMERVILLE BENNETT	1919	CHARLES RODERICK KING-FARLOW	1991
JAMES ARTHUR MARIGOLD	1920	JOHN ADRIAN JAMES AUCOTT	1992
EDWARD EVERSLED	1921	STANLEY BERNARD SHORTT	1993
THOMAS COOKSEY	1922	JOHN MICHAEL BUCKINGHAM	1994
CHARLES EKIN	1923	ALBERT WILLIAM HEASELGRAVE	1995
JOSEPH JAMES	1924	RICHARD DUDLEY CHAPMAN	1996
FRANCIS HENRY PEPPER	1925	MICHAEL DAVID HUMPHREY SHEPHERD	1997
RICHARD ALFRED PINSENT	1926	MALCOLM GASKELL FOWLER	1998
CORNELIUS HALE SAUNDERS	1927	TREVOR ARTHUR LEE	1999
HUGH BARHAM CARSLAKE	1928	JAYNE BELINDA WILLETTS	2000
GEORGE HUGGINS	1929	MICHAEL JAMES WARD	2001
GEORGE ARTHUR CHARLES PETTITT	1930	ANTHONY RALPH COLLINS	2002
LESLIE ARTHUR SMITH	1931	DIANE PATRICIA BENUSSI	2003
SYDNEY VERNON	1932	STEVEN MICHAEL JONAS	2004
GEORGE ARTHUR CHARLES PETTITT	1933	RICHARD THOMAS FOLLIS	2005
WILFRED CLARKSON MATTHEWS	1934	PHILIP DUNKLEY STEEL	2006
FRANK HENRY CUFAUDE WILTSHIRE	1935	SUKHDEV SINGH BHOMRA	2007
LESLIE ARTHUR SMITH	1937	CAROLINE AMANDA COATES	2008
HERBERT WILLIAM LYDE	1938	BERNARD ROBERT MCWALTER SHEPHERD	2009
JOSEPH THOMAS HIGGS	1939	DEAN CURTIS PARNELL	2010
GEORGE HAROLD WILLCOX	1941	ANDREW JOHN LANCASTER	2011
ARTHUR JOHN GATELEY	1943	MARY DYMHPNA KAYE	2012
JOHN FREDERICK WEST	1945	EDWARD THOMAS MARTIN ALLSOPP	2013
WILLIAM CHARLES COLEMAN GELL	1946	EILEEN FRANCES MARY SCHOFIELD	2014
CHARLES ADRIAN ASHFORD ELTON	1947	MUSHTAQ AHMED KHAN	2015
JOHN FAIRFAX CROWDER	1948	JOHN BAILEY HUGHES	2016
JOHN HENRY SQUIRE ADDISON	1949	ANDREW JOHN BEEDHAM	2017
GEORGE ARTHUR LYON HATTON	1950	JAMES ALAN TURNER	2018
CYRIL HIGHWAY	1950	LINDEN JAYNE THOMAS	2019
GEORGE CORBYN BARROW	1952	INEZ MAY BROWN	2020
CECIL HAMMOND COX	1953	STEPHANIE LOUISE PERRATON	2021
THOMAS BERNARD SMITH	1954	TONY McDAID	2022
JOHN ALBERT CALTHROP TAYLOR	1955	ALICE ELIZABETH KINDER	2023
PHILIP HORTON VERNON	1956	RICHARD DAVID PORT MBE	2024
GEOFFREY MARTEN KING	1957		
GEORGE MANNING BUTTS	1958		
JOSEPH KENNETH WALKER	1959		
RODERICK SYDNEY KING-FARLOW	1960		

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

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

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
ANDREW BEEDHAM		2024

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
ZOE TRANTER	2023
PETER BREWER	2024

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Criminal Law Committee

Committee Chair - Matt O'Brien, Jonas Roy Bloom

Dolores Barrett, Crown Prosecution Service
Inderdeep Singh Bhomra, Tuckers Solicitors LLP
Sukhdev Bhomra, Mandla Bhomra & Co
Matthew Cullen, St Philips Chambers
Christopher Grainger, Gateley Legal
Rhydian James, Crown Prosecution Service
Steven Jonas, Jonas Roy Bloom
Catherine Ravenscroft, St Philips Chambers
Charmaine Robinson, Purcell Parker
Andrew Rourke, St Ives Chambers Ltd
Dee Smythe, The Barrister Group
Daniel Wayne, Crown Prosecution Service

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
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
Jayne Holliday, Higgs LLP
Jennifer Wright, The University of Law
Jogvinder Kaur Hundle Mills & Reeve LLP
Jon Coley, Pinsent Masons LLP
Martin Chitty, Averta Employment Lawyers 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
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, SABZ Solicitors
Dee Smythe, The Barrister Group
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, Mills & Reeve LLP (Birmingham)
Monica Ghai, Shakespeare Martineau
Richard Port MBE, George Green LLP (Cradley Heath)
Sabrina Powell, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Tom Gregory, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

In House Committee

Committee Chair - Baljinder Singh Atwal, West Midlands Police

Deputy Chair - Heidi Salter, Housing 21

Afsarah Haque-Hassan, National Highways
Allia Khan
Christopher Simmonds, Wolverhampton City Council
Gurdeep Plahe, Irwin Mitchell LLP (Birmingham)
Hahna Akhtar, Buckingham University
Neena Janda, Zappi
Soffia Farmer, Islamic Relief Worldwide
Waseem Ahmed, Lloyds Banking Group

International Law Committee

Committee Co Chairs - Tony McDaid, No5 Barristers' Chambers, Eileen Schofield, Schofield & Associates

Bernard Shepherd, BES Legal Solicitors
Hamraj Kang, Kangs Solicitors
Jonathan Coutts, John Venn and Sons Scrivener Notaries
Kiran Munawar, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Mandy Haque, BAE Systems
Paul McConnell, The University of Birmingham Law School
Raj Padhiar, Carltons Solicitors Limited
Reccy Midigo, The University of Birmingham Law School

Legal Tech Committee

Committee Chair - Alan Ma

Vice Committee Chair - Kiera Cox, Pinsent Masons LLP

Amy Moore, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Edina Harbinja, Aston University
Guy Barnett
Karamjit Singh, St Ives Chambers Ltd
Mark Sellers, Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP
Riya Mathur, Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP
Savhan Lyall, TLT Solicitors
Shaïd Parveen, Aston University

Siu Yung Alan Ma, Birmingham City University
Wajid Hussain, The Barrister Group

Private Client Committee

Committee Chair - Jessica Beddows, Irwin Mitchell LLP

Amanda Elwell, The University of Law
Bernard Shepherd, BES Legal Solicitors
Gavin Faber, Roythornes Solicitors
Hannah Turner, Freeths LLP

Michelle Chapman, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Rachael Armstrong, Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP
Richard Neea, Enoch Evans LLP

Pro Bono Committee

Committee Chair - Elena Goodfellow, Bevan Brittan

Vice Committee Chair - Amelia Bauer, Bevan Brittan

Alex Tolcher, DWF LLP
Amy Tabari, The University of Birmingham Law School
Anne-Marie Dhillon, LawWorks
Bronwen Webster, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Caroline Berry, The Project Birmingham
Catherine Henry, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Catherine Lucas, Arden University Limited
Cheryl Green, The University of Law
Claire Stern, Central England Law Centre
Edward Morris, Shoosmiths LLP
Ella Chambers, The University of Law
Georgina Houghton, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Hayley McGrath, Arden University Limited
Isha Kumar, Burley Law Limited
Jane Barrett, BPP University Ltd
John Glanville, Central England Law Centre
Katherine King, Central England Law Centre
Katie Fennell, Central England Law Centre
Louisa Soper, Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP
Manpreet Kaur Purewal, The University of Law
Marika Dorvlo, BPP University Ltd
Molly Thompson, Rayden Solicitors
Monica Puri, The University of Birmingham Law School
Oliver Lee, No5 Barristers' Chambers
Patrice Coughlin, Rayden Solicitors
Rebecca Craig, Tenet Compliance and Litigation
Rebecca Howell, LawWorks
Rebecca Wilkinson, LawWorks
Richard Hartigan, Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP
Samantha Gargaro, Birmingham City University
Samir Gulfraz, The University of Law
Sarah Askey, Keele University
Sophie Warren, Shoosmiths LLP
Victoria Dodge

Professional Regulation Committee

Committee Chair - Jayne Willets, Jayne Willets & Co Solicitors Ltd

Vice Committee Chair - Cary Whitmarsh, Trowers & Hamlins LLP

Bronwen Still, Jayne Willets & Co Solicitors Ltd
John Whitehouse, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP (Birmingham)
Peter Wiseman
Philip Steel

Rebecca, Atkinson, McArthur Atkinson Limited
Samantha Nicholson, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Tom Ellis, Ladders Solicitors LLP

Property & Development Committee

Committee Chair - Samantha Ingram, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)

Amanda Holden, The Wilkes Partnership LLP (Solihull)
Anthony Verduyn, St Philips Chambers (Birmingham)
Bernard Shepherd, BES Legal Solicitors
Clive Read, Shakespeare Martineau (Birmingham)
Dan Stones, Davisons Law (Edgbaston)
Denise Watkins, Gordon Jones & Co
Harriet Critchley, FBC Manby Bowdler LLP (Shrewsbury)
Leenamari Aantaa-Collier, The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Sarah Dwight, Sarah Dwight Solicitor

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
Emily Rust, Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
Shaid Parveen, Aston University
Pardeep Lagha, Liverpool FC
Sana Saddique, Collective Law Solicitors LTD
Lizzy Przychodzki
Sonya Smith, Birmingham City University



COMMITTEE UPDATE

Criminal Law Committee

Matt O'Brien, Chair.



As Chair of the Criminal Law Committee, I am pleased to present this report summarising the Committee's work during the 2024–2025 legal year.

Our Committee brings together practitioners from across the criminal justice system, including defence solicitors, prosecutors, the independent Bar and other stakeholders. This year, our work has continued to reflect the persistent pressures facing the sector—underfunding, resource shortages, and operational strain—while also highlighting the strength of our community in working together to meet these challenges.

We have responded actively to national consultations. The Committee submitted a detailed response to the Law Commission's consultation on criminal appeals, drawing on members' frontline experience and concerns around access to justice. We also contributed to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on Solicitors' Fees, setting out the case for long-overdue reform and sustainable remuneration for criminal defence work.

Locally, we have maintained strong engagement with partners across the justice system. We have remained in regular dialogue with HMCTS about access issues and ongoing repairs at Victoria Law Courts, and worked collaboratively with West Midlands Police and the CPS on detainee contact, file management, and disclosure protocols.

The Committee has continued to act as a representative voice for Birmingham practitioners. Together with other local law societies, we raised national concerns following the Legal Aid Agency data breach, pressing for accountability and clearer communication with those affected.

A personal highlight of the year was speaking on behalf of Birmingham solicitors at the Recorder of Birmingham's valedictory sitting. It was a privilege to pay tribute to the Recorder's long service and to reflect on the crucial role played by the criminal defence community in the life of the Crown Court.

Looking ahead, we hope to continue building on this work, contributing to consultations, welcoming new members, and strengthening our links across the system.

My thanks go to all Committee members for their time, insight, and dedication over the past year.

Dispute Resolution Committee

Simon Bradshaw, Chair.



The Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) seeks to represent and support all those involved in dispute resolution, both in court and outside it. Our committee membership includes solicitors and barristers involved not only in contentious court work but also in regulation, litigation funding and mediation/ADR.

The major development over the last year has been the establishment of the Birmingham Business and Property Courts Forum, a joint forum including the Business and Property Courts at Birmingham, the Birmingham Law Society DRC and the Midlands Chancery and Commercial

Bar Association. We are very grateful to His Honour Judge Williams who has taken the lead in setting up the Forum and it has proven a very successful way for the DRC to coordinate or jointly run events with the Courts and the MCCBA.

In particular, as a joint event we welcomed Mr Justice Foxton who gave a very well-received talk on 'Courtroom Ringcraft'. We look forward to continuing to develop the BBPC Forum, both through further joint events as well as our own events run under its umbrella.

As well as events the DRC also represents the dispute resolution community by circulating consultations and collating responses.

This year we have responded to the Civil Justice Council's consultation on contempt enforcement and are now reviewing a consultation on email service.

We are also working, with our BBPC Forum colleagues, to improve engagement between the courts and their users. There is a view, not least from the judiciary, that the traditional court user group process is not as effective as it could be and that bodies like the DRC may be a better way of communicating with court users.

Finally, I would like to thank all our hard-working DRC members for their support. I have just handed over as Chair to Andrew Herring and I know he is looking forward to building on the work we have been doing this year.

Employment Law Committee

Charlie Rae, Chair.



The Employment Law committee has, during 2024 and 2025, continued to be well supported by its membership, meeting monthly and with plenty for us to focus on, in terms of employment law developments. There will be much more of that to come in the weeks and months that follow, after the Government's Employment Rights Bill, which tables several wide-ranging reforms to employment laws and which the Government, with good reason, describes as the most extensive shake ups to employment laws in a generation.

Our committee business has recently been dominated by employment law consultation responses, as well as devising and delivering high profile and popular training events for the BLS membership.

In terms of consultation responses, of particular interest have been our responses about reform to various areas of employment law, including one on TUPE and employee status; whilst that was an interesting consultation that the committee considered and responded to, as the response was delivered shortly prior to the General Election, it turned out that it became overridden by the election of the new Labour Government. So, our carefully thought through and insightful response became a somewhat academic exercise!

New consultations from the Labour Government took a few months to get going, but recently the flow has increased, and that pace is only set to quicken. Consultations on Employment Tribunal rules and procedures, the duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, and disability and race pay gap reporting have all been recently considered and fully responded to by the committee. As I have become accustomed to doing, but with no less enthusiasm for repeating it, 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. It is very much appreciated.

Our committee has also been active in devising and delivering some informative and topical seminars which have generally been really well supported by the BLS membership. In March, we partnered with the Employment Tribunals Service in an online event about the pathway for employment practitioners to become an Employment Judge, an event led by the Regional Employment Judge for the West Midlands region.

In June, we delivered a well-attended event, a panel discussion focussing on some of the headline changes proposed by the Employment Rights Bill. I was honoured to chair a panel of some of our leading employment barristers in the region, three of whom are long serving committee members in Mugni Islam-Choudhury (No 5 Chambers), Charles Crow (No 5 Chambers) and Sophie Garner (St Philips Chambers), also joined by Karen Moss of 3PB. It was a fascinating session with those who attended praising the insights and thought-provoking perspectives provided by our panel. The event was a unique opportunity for employment practitioners in the region to gain some 'inside track' and to discover key areas to watch out for. I pass on thanks to our President Richard Port MBE, for his support of the event and for delivering an opening address. Thanks also to No 5 Chambers for generously hosting it.

In an otherwise busy year, we had a relatively stable one in terms of the makeup of our membership. Though we were all saddened to hear of the passing of Employment Judge Veronica Dean who, prior to her appointment as a Judge, had practiced in the Midlands as an Employment Solicitor and she served as a member of our committee for several years.

All employment lawyers are expecting the coming year to be full of twists and turns, as the Employment Rights Bill develops and prepares to make sweeping changes to many of our employment laws. There will be a lot for the committee to get stuck into and I know we will do so with enthusiasm and an appetite to give voice to the wide-ranging views of the committee.

I pass on my thanks to the continued enthusiasm and support of all the committee, and of the team at BLS, all of which makes the role of chairing that much easier.

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 2025. This is a co-joined event with West Midlands Resolution Committee planned for November 2025. The keynote speaker is planned to be Mr Justice MacDonald. He is the Family Presiding Judge for London which means that

he has responsibility for the work of the family courts in London. He reports to the President of the Family Division. He is Deputy Head of International Justice for England and Wales. In practice he was a Barrister in Birmingham specialising in Child Law cases.

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.

- Twelve months on from its introduction the Pathfinder Pilot for Birmingham and Solihull Courts for private child proceedings which will be introduced into Wolverhampton, Worcester and Stoke on Trent Family Courts from the 11.11.25. There are training days for this on the 14 and 15.10.25. These initiatives are reducing the number of private child law cases relation to disputes between parents and third parties and therefore delay in dealing with these types of cases generally. A the last Family Law Committee Meeting on the 08.07.25 this was reported to be working and is a success because this is meaning that cases are being resolved much quicker for Children and to achieve therefore better outcomes for children generally.

- We have had guest speakers to further our mission statement and L & D function. For example, we had a presentation by Communicourt in January. They are intermediaries provided by a HMCTS funded scheme, who are booked for the Court by the Court, and they assist individuals with communication throughout proceedings. They are also impartial; they can assist all parties.

- We continue to liaise with the judiciary and HMCTS in relation to receiving regular reports from the court, to provide feedback to the court.

- We receive updates relating to the online portal being used for financial cases and the Birmingham Family Remedy Court User Group as well as the Pathfinder court user group meeting chaired by HHJ Picken and HHJ Hickman. The next meeting for Pathfinder is due to take place shortly before the training days planned for October.

Legal Tech Committee

Alan Ma, Chair.



The Legal Tech Committee was revived in early 2025, following a period of inactivity. Since then, the Committee has focused on rebuilding its membership, clarifying its strategic direction, and preparing for public-facing activities.

Membership and Committee Development: The Committee now includes representatives from across the

legal and technology ecosystem, including:

- Law firms: Pinsent Masons, Gowling WLG, Squire Patton Boggs, TLT, Penningtons Manches Cooper, Eversheds Sutherland

- Academia: Birmingham City University, Aston University, University of Birmingham

- Barristers and industry professionals

The Committee reflects a diverse range of backgrounds, including gender, ethnicity, age, and career stage. We believe this diversity is essential to developing forward-thinking and inclusive approaches to legal technology.

We continue to welcome expressions of interest and aim to ensure our membership remains open, representative, and forward-looking.

Committee Aims and Strategy: Our mission is to promote the understanding, development, and responsible adoption of legal technology across the legal profession in Birmingham and beyond.

COMMITTEE UPDATE

Our current strategic priorities include:

- Enhancing digital awareness and capability across the legal sector
- Supporting education and training for both current practitioners and aspiring lawyers
- Facilitating collaboration between legal professionals, regulators, academics, and tech providers
- Exploring the ethical, regulatory, and commercial dimensions of emerging technologies such as Generative AI

Activities and Engagement: The Committee has met monthly since its reformation. Notable activities include:

- Planning the Committee's inaugural public event, the "Legal Tech Big Bang Launch" in October 2025 (during Legal Tech Week), to be hosted at Aston University. This will serve as a high-profile reintroduction of the Committee to the wider BLS community.
- Ongoing work on event marketing, speaker invitations, and sponsorship. A funding request for £3,000 in sponsorship is planned.
- Sarah Hall is preparing a "Day in the Life" article on Legal Tech for the BLS Magazine, and members are encouraged to contribute additional pieces.

(Note: a short introductory piece about the Committee was also published earlier in the year to raise awareness and attract new members.)

- Committee members are actively promoting the October event through their professional networks. A consistent promotional blurb is being prepared for use in outreach.
- The Chair has represented the Committee at external engagements, including the SRA Panel (3 July 2025) and the upcoming IFLA Conference at London South Bank University, where key Legal Tech insights from the BLS region will be shared.
- Following a positive conversation with London Legal, the Committee is working toward a second standalone event on Generative AI and its practical applications in legal practice, to take place in October or November 2025. The session will focus on solutions and use cases in litigation and regulatory matters. London Legal has offered to sponsor the refreshments, and discussions are ongoing regarding format, content, and a suitable venue (to be sourced via our committee members' networks).

Looking Ahead to 2025/26: The Committee's focus for the coming year includes:

- Delivering the October launch event and building momentum from its feedback
- Organising thematic workshops and briefings on topics such as Generative AI, dispute resolution tech, and legal education innovation
- Continuing to liaise with BLS's marketing and communications team to raise the Committee's profile
- Collaborating with other BLS committees where Legal Tech intersects with broader legal practice
- Expanding membership

- Maintaining strong links with the regional education and innovation ecosystem, including SuperTech and the West Midlands LawTech Forum

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to all members of the Legal Tech Committee for their time, energy, and enthusiasm in helping to re-establish the Committee's role within the Society. Particular thanks also to BLS for its support and encouragement as we continue to grow.

We remain committed to openness, innovation, and inclusion, and welcome all who share an interest in shaping the future of legal technology

In House Committee

Baljinder Singh Atwal, Chair



The In-House Committee and wider community has grown in the region in recent years. Over the last few years as a committee, we've seen a growth in attendance at our events but also more events regionally and nationally aimed specifically for in-house lawyers.

In 2024 we saw 3 new committee members join from new organisations/sectors and some existing committee members leave. We delivered 3 in person events which was an improvement from 2 in person events delivered the previous year. We delivered 3 networking socials, one with law firm Trowers & Hamlin and the other two with legal recruiter BCL Legal. Both organisations continue to work with us and have provided sponsorship support for wider BLS activities.

In 2025, the In-House Committee now consists of 10 lawyers all from different sectors and industries. We had 5 new committee members join at the beginning of the year which showed the strength of the growing community in the region. The sectors include: emergency services, local council, professional services, insurance, charities, financial services and education. Hence the committee represents a wide variety of views and backgrounds in the profession and is one of the largest committees we've had to date.

The committee will be delivering a minimum of 5 in person events throughout the year. This includes a networking social with Bevan Brittan (March), networking social with Trowers & Hamlin (May), seminar with Gateley (July), seminar with Weightmans (September) and seminar with Squire Patton Boggs (November). The events are used as the main way to build our community, we are diversifying our events with a mixture of networking events and seminar style events. This year will see the most amount of events held by the committee.

Outside of events we delivering online content, this includes articles by our committee members which are published on the BLS website and social media. This idea was to increase engagement when we did not have an event for any particular month. I am pleased that this has increased our engagement with our audience through social media but also provided in-house lawyers on the committee with a strong platform to build their profiles. A minimum of 5 pieces of online content will be published in 2025, ranging from online articles to short videos and podcasts. Alongside our events and online content we created platforms for in-house lawyers. This includes a private Whatsapp Group and LinkedIn group. Both have been very successful in sharing information/events/content for

in-house lawyers. The Whatsapp Group has approximately 100 members and the LinkedIn group has approximately 200 members.

A key addition was the inclusion of a training hub on our website section. This is a list of upcoming internal events we are hosting but also external events for in-house lawyers in the region. This is a unique platform that in-house lawyers have not previously had which is providing very useful for in-house lawyers that don't have the resources or time to check for relevant training events locally. We look forward to growing the in-house community in the region further.

International Committee

Tony McDaid & Eileen Schofield, Co Chairs.



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 Commonwealth Lawyers Association conference took place in Malta, BLS was represented Eileen Schofield.

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.

Private Client Committee

Jessica Beddows, Chair



The Private Client Committee reformed in October 2024, the Committee having disbanded in 2018.

In October 2024 Jessica Beddows was appointed as Chair of the Committee. The role of Vice Chair was carried out by Michelle Chapman.

The Committee's objectives are to:

- focus on the law and legislative process relating to private client practice;
- pro-actively represent private client practitioners in Birmingham and the surrounding areas;
- work with like-minded private client organisations on areas of common interest; and
- develop up to date professional advice on selected private client matters that may be of interest to practitioners in Birmingham and the surrounding areas.

In the last 8 months since its formation, the Committee has worked towards these objectives through:

- Creating a database of private client practitioners in Birmingham and the surrounding areas;
- Looking into initiatives to drive membership;
- Following formation of the Committee, meeting 4 times as a whole committee in order to update and share projects and ideas with other members;
- Looking into hosting an informal event in October 2025 and then a more focused seminar in February 2026 (see below).
- Supporting various Birmingham Law Society events.

We shall begin with a social event for private client practitioners at a venue in Birmingham, this is hoped to be in October 2025. We feel this is important as it will assist in driving up membership numbers and whilst some firms will sponsor membership of certain organisations (such as STEP, The Association of Lifetime Lawyers, ConTrA, ACTAPS etc) a number of firms will not. There are a number of private client practitioners who will not therefore have the support of a specialist professional organisation and the peer support this can bring.

We are then looking to hold a seminar in early 2026 with speakers on areas of interest to private client practitioners and updates in the private client area.

If you would like to know more about the Private Client Committee, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee Chair at: jessica.beddows@irwinmitchell.com

Pro Bono Committee

Elena Goodfellow, Chair.



In 2025 Elena Goodfellow continued as chair of the committee, with Fiona Farrell as the vice chair and Isha Kumar as the secretary.

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).
- Launched a Family Law Pathway guidance booklet for members of the public to use when navigating free family law advice.

COMMITTEE UPDATE

- 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.

In November 2024 the Committee hosted an event for Pro Bono Week at Gowling WLG. The aim of the event focussed on the subtheme 'Barred from Justice' with the aim of bridging the gap between pro bono services offered in the legal sector and the needs of the volunteer sector. Councillor Nicky Brennan, Birmingham's Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities was a guest speaker. The committee's Family Law Pathway was also launched at this event.

The committee is currently planning to create informational videos for Pro Bono Week 2025, as well as rounding off the week with a drop in Q&A session with the various pro bono clinics across Birmingham. This year's theme is 'Pro Bono in Action' and the committee will shoot three videos, each in line with one of the following sub-topics:

1. Pro bono: stories of impact
2. Pro bono: win-win for professional & business development
3. Pro bono: getting involved

If you would like to know more about pro bono opportunities in Birmingham, if you would like a copy of the Pro Bono Contacts Sheet maintained by the Committee, 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 has two roles. It is firstly responsible for responding directly to professional regulation consultations – from the SRA, LSB, Legal Ombudsman, SDT and, occasionally, the Ministry of Justice. The members of the Committee therefore 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 always the busiest of the specialist Committees has responded to four consultations on topics ranging from TUPE to changes to the Tribunal rules and the reintroduction of Tribunal fees. The Professional Regulation Committee responded robustly to the SRA's consultation on financial penalties – so much so that the Legal Futures headline read "Birmingham Law Society attacks SRA's "Robin Hood" fines plan"

The Professional Regulation Committee has also been working with the Joint V group of the largest local law societies (Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool & Manchester) in co-ordinating combined responses on major issues affecting the profession and securing coverage in the legal media.

The COLP/COFA Forum for compliance officers and money laundering officers with external speakers continues to be popular covering topics such as professional indemnity, AML requirements and reporting to the SRA. These have been well supported and are now arranged on a quarterly basis.

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

Samantha Ingram, Chair.



The BLS Property and Development Committee have relished some changes during the last 12 months in terms of some long standing members leaving due to retirement but with some 'new blood' joining. We have some prospective visitors looking to come along in the forth coming months.

As with the previous years 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 proposed changes surround a Firm's Client Account. The Building Safety Act is ever changing, following the Grenfell Tower disaster, as well as the Leasehold Reform Act.

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.

We are looking forward to hosting a Property Conference in Birmingham ring early September in conjunction with The Law Society ; https://birminghamlawsociety.co.uk/members/book_event.php?event=706

It looks to be a fabulous and informative event for its Birmingham members.

There have been updates with Law Society forms including the TA6 Property Information form, which is still ongoing. 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 that covers a variety of Property issues.

The members who are experts 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 S.Ingram@davisons.law

Reach Sub Committee

Shaïd Parveen, Chair.



The REACH subcommittee was established in 2019.

Whilst the committee aims to meet every 2-3 months, due to the workload of members this has not always been possible. Despite this, it is reported that the subcommittee is one of the more active and present subcommittees from the EDI strand.

The members of the committee reflect the diversity of Birmingham and bring their lived experiences and insight of working in private practice, in-house, and Higher Education. In order to support and refine the committee's work, a REACH Advisory Group has been set up from junior members of the profession.

Committee Aims and Strategy

Our mission is to promote:

- Representation within the legal profession.
- Provide inclusive opportunities for networking.
- Inform policy and practice, where we can.

Activities and Engagement

The subcommittee activities have included the following:

- The committee were due to hold a SAHM event last year, but it was cancelled due to the riots which were fuelled by racism, islamophobia and xenophobia.
- It should also be noted that the REACH subcommittee has also advised BLS on elements of their EDI strategy and it was positive to see the BLS Legal Awards Ceremony were not scheduled during Ramadan this year.

- The Chair of the subcommittee is part of the SRA advisory group on the RACE gap in respect of the SQE.

- Held a "Cinematic Networking Event," on the 11th of November 2024 at the Birmingham Mac. This was a successful event with over 50 people attending. It provided an opportunity for the profession to get together and network in an alternative setting. The event was sponsored by a firm and the proceeds of sale from the tickets went to the Access to Justice Foundation.

- The Committee held the inaugural "Cultural Heritage Dinner," with over 70 people attending. The event was supported by Birmingham Solicitors Group and Birmingham Black Lawyers.

The feedback was extremely positive, with a call by participants and sponsors to hold another dinner next year. Details of the feedback was collated by BLS. The attendees commented on the food, venue, atmosphere and the fact that it was an inclusive non-alcoholic event.

One of the gold sponsors, Ann Houghton of Anthony Collins Solicitors has consented to her feedback outside of the survey being shared and stated:

"It's no slight on other BLS events but I've been to a few now... and this was genuinely the best. A clear purpose achieved, well thought through speakers in terms of who, when and the subject they spoke on. A wonderful warm, genuine and meaningful atmosphere throughout the whole event. We all commented on how positive it was to have a sober event- half of our group drink alcohol and half do not but we

all appreciated how not having alcohol served changed the atmosphere and dynamics for the better. It kept it more relaxed and better conversations (none of the loudest dominating the room as time passed!)"

Note: There was a notable lack of presence from the leadership team at BLS which was picked up by senior and junior members of the profession.

Looking Ahead to 2025/26 the Committee's focus for the coming year includes:

- Continuing to create inclusive networking opportunities for colleagues and students across the profession.
- Support BLS with an inclusive EDI strategy.
- Hold one national event which will include other Law Society's.

My thanks to Shona, Jess and the team for their support behind the scenes. I wish to also wish to highlight my sincere gratitude to the REACH sub-committee and advisory group for all their support on making a difference.

Social Mobility Sub Committee

Alice Kinder, Chair.



The Social Mobility Sub-Committee (SMSC) 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 SMSC has members from a range of professional backgrounds in legal practice and academia, and this year, has run several key initiatives.

The Birmingham Law Society Vacation Scheme has continued for a second year with the support of Higgs LLP and Browne Jacobson. Following its introduction during my presidency last year, the Vacation Scheme has provided a further opportunity for our member law students to gain meaningful work experience and develop their soft skills. Commencing with a series of online sessions for students to complete in their own time, the Vacation Scheme ended with a mock assessment centre in April 2025 hosted by our partner firms.

In June 2025, the SMSC hosted its third Social Mobility Conference at Squire Patton Boggs. This year, attendees heard from speakers at Irwin Mitchell, the Social Mobility Business Partnership, and Inspiration for All, and gained insights into improving social mobility in their own organisations.

The SMSC has also continued to support law graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups to pursue their career aspirations through the Birmingham Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Scheme. This year's successful candidates were Sanjana Dehar and Senyah Hussain, who have received fully funded scholarships to complete their SQE preparation at the College of Legal Practice and the University of Law respectively, as well as vacation scheme places and mentoring support at both Higgs LLP and Gateley Legal. I would like to thank the members of the SMSC 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. In particular, I would like to thank Sharon Thandi and Ollie Ward-Jones, for the time they have put into leading events and initiatives this year.

In the coming year, the SMSC will be seeking to recruit new members so that we can continue to broaden our impact. Further information about the opportunities for involvement will be circulated in due course.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Birmingham Law Society was established in 1818 and is now the largest regional 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 West 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