

Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

 Leeds
Law Society

June 2024
Issue 188

The mental health issue

The Yorkshire legal community on
speaking up, self-care, and supporting
your mental wellbeing



Leeds Law Society

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Annual Dinner

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making (and handling)
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Last Word

Featuring mental health
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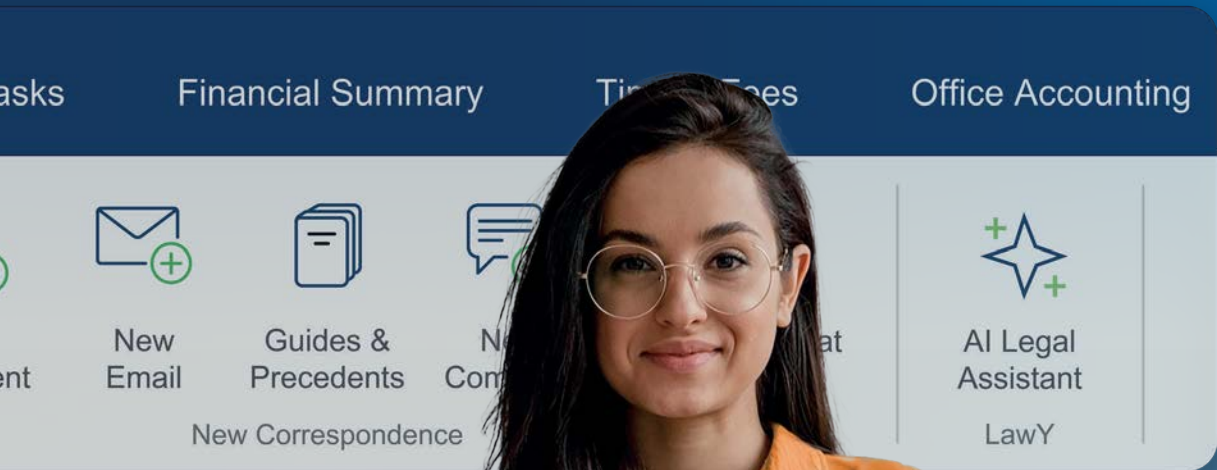


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www.barkerbrooks.co.uk
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The opportunity to engage with your local legal community



New president of Leeds Law Society, Nigel Brook, in his first article.

Welcome to the 188th edition of the Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer, official journal of Leeds Law Society. This is my first opportunity to write to you in the president's column, hot on the heels of my election at the Society's AGM on 21 May 2024.

About me

I have been involved with the Society's work since 2020. I have been working as one of your vice presidents for the last two years. I am a commercial litigator at Tyr, a law firm which I helped to establish in 2019. I hail from West Yorkshire but spent the early part of my career in London. I'm a dad with a young family. I have been working in Leeds very happily for approaching ten years.

It is a real privilege to have been elected as your president and I am looking forward to working with you, and for you, during the next year.

The purpose of Leeds Law Society

As I look to the year ahead, I am forced to engage with the questions of what purpose the Society serves, how it delivers value for its membership, and what I can do to better achieve these ends. The Society's objectives are to "represent, support and help solicitors in Leeds". These provide – unsurprisingly – a

broad mandate. What support do solicitors in Leeds need that is best served by their local law society? I will be focused on three broad objectives which I hope will deliver for you.

Your local legal community

The first thing that I want us to achieve this year is to provide opportunity to engage with your local legal community. To me, that is of value in and of itself. Our modern world deprives us of many of the sources of community engagement from which we would historically have benefited. There is much to be said for stepping away from our screens, slowing down, and enjoying the company of our peers.

I do not need to rehearse the more mercenary rationale – that the network which can be grown through that engagement will be a valuable source of future work and support to you throughout your career.

Practice-focused events

Second, I aim for our calendar of events to include a renewed focus on training and know-how events which are relevant to your area of practice. In particular, we want these events to include more 'black-letter law' training, and for these to have sufficient depth to them that you find them valuable to attend.

Accordingly, we are in the process of establishing a series of expanded specialist committees, focused on particular areas of law (employment law, family law, and so on). Whilst our efforts in organising events will continue to be led by our directors, you do not need to be a director to contribute.

I hope that these events will be of an additional benefit to you in providing opportunity to connect you with others working in the same practice area.

Championing Leeds and our legal sector

Third, I want to take the opportunity of my role to champion and celebrate everything that Leeds and our legal sector has to offer. This is a great place to work as a lawyer, and a great place to turn if you are a client in need of legal support.

The work that solicitors do is of incredible value to society. The legal sector in Leeds is a substantial industry in and of itself, generating economic value and serving as an employer for lawyers and others. We also provide a vital service; we help clients to understand where they stand and what they should prudently do. We advocate for their interests, whether in negotiation or before the courts.

I cannot better the words of Lord Burnett, who described the administration of justice in the following terms:

"It is not just another service, but something that underpins everything that goes on in society. Without a functioning judiciary and administration of justice, and without a strong commitment to the rule of law, business will not flourish; society will not flourish."

Get involved

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



Annual Legal Dinner

Leeds Law Society's annual dinner was held at the Queens Hotel in Leeds on 2 May 2024

Shanika Haynes celebrated the diversity of the society's membership during her tenure as president, and the annual dinner reflected this: guests had been encouraged to wear the traditional dress of their culture and were led into the main ballroom by dhol drummers.

Reflecting on her year, Shanika noted, "I have tried to speak openly and honestly about the parts of me that I previously hid, create spaces where people are comfortable being their authentic selves, and made it my mission to improve the visibility of diverse role models in Leeds."



L-R: Barbara Mills KC, Shanika Haynes, Jason Pitter KC, Aneeka Muneer Sarwar and councillor Abigail Katung



L-R: Mr Justice Poole, Jason Pitter KC, Barbara Mills KC, Mr Paul D. Lawrence DL, Shanika Haynes, Nigel Brook, Helen Oldham, Mr Nick Emmerson, Mr Justice Fancourt

This was echoed by Jason Pitter KC, who said in his speech, "The first thing to strike me is how wonderfully the legal community has developed and become more diverse [in the last 30 years], but not at the expense of excellence.

"Some of those old timers now gone would turn in their graves if they could see how we have become more diverse and flourished together... well, let's keep them turning."

Other speakers included Mr Justice Fancourt and David Barraclough. Shanika's baton has now been passed to the newly instated president of Leeds Law Society, Nigel Brook.

Sheffield solicitors assist in garden centre sale



The new owners of a popular garden, nursery and aquatics centre in Sheffield are set to grow the site into a community hub with help from Wake Smith Solicitors.

Reverend Dave Walker and his son William bought Birley Moor Garden Centre and Aquatics from its previous owners. Subject to planning approval, the Mosborough-based duo want to add an onsite café, educational centre, and community garden with help from local colleges.

Rebecca Robinson, director and head of the corporate team

at Wake Smith negotiated the purchase with solicitor Joe Creosor. Commercial property director Paul Gibbon dealt with the property elements. Lydia Sadler from DLP Planning Ltd led on engagement with the local planning authority.

Rev Walker commented, "The centre has always had a sentimental place in my heart since I first went there as a six year old, with my dad. He used to buy his tomato plants and compost from there.

"Former owner Chris has done a great job and has kept the spirit of community alive at the centre. Now he has retired, he says he has passed the baton onto me.

"This is only a small project, but I want to bring people together and make a difference to their lives."

Further plans for the centre include sustainable drainage, eco roofs, renewable energy and a water course project to reuse water and prevent flooding.

Rebecca Robinson said, "We look forward to continuing to advise and support [Dave and William] in delivering their vision for the community."

Holden Smith opens new office in Queensbury

Holden Smith has opened a new office in Queensbury as the firm continues to execute growth plans.

The office is the firm's fifth location to open since it was launched in 2019 by co-founders James Smith and David Bancroft.

The new office will help the firm grow its reach in and around the city of Bradford and will be headed up by head of new build property, Jess McKenzie.

David Bancroft, co-founder and director at Holden Smith, said: "We are delighted to be growing our reach into Bradford and the surrounding areas with the opening of our fifth office, in Queensbury.

"We are well connected in this area, and we see many opportunities for continued growth. Opening an office here was always on our radar, and now is the right time to do it."

Jess McKenzie added: "Queensbury has a very personal

connection for me and David as we both attended Queensbury School, so it's exciting to be back in the area to oversee the development of the team at our latest office.

"We are looking forward to working closely with other local businesses and getting involved with the local community, which is something that is important to us as a firm"

Holden Smith marked its fifth anniversary in February, announcing it had recorded a turnover of £7million for its financial year ending October 2023.



Torque Law recognised for outstanding client service

Following a year of unprecedented staff and financial growth and a recent office expansion, York-based Torque Law has been recognised by The Legal 500.

The firm has garnered recognition for delivering consistent results for its clients, achieving a new '5-star client satisfaction excellence' rating.

Researchers identified only a handful of outstanding firms in the UK, including Torque Law, using data collated from client feedback over six years. All aspects of law firm practice were analysed, from responsiveness, efficiency, communications,

and billing transparency, through to lawyer quality, industry profile and technical expertise.

Emma Whiting, partner at Torque Law, commented, "We strive to build truly excellent relationships with our clients and invest significant time and effort in ensuring that all our clients receive exceptional service from across the team. We are delighted that this accolade recognises our concerted efforts over a considerable period, and our growing reputation as a standout 'challenger brand'.

This industry acknowledgement comes at the end of a year of growth for the employment practice. Torque Law recently closed the financial year posting a 28% increase in turnover, having grown their team and their market share over the preceding 12 months.

"We get out of bed in the mornings to help our employer and executive clients get clarity on complex employment law issues and guide them towards the best outcome. To know that our whole team is hitting the mark in the way we work means a huge amount," Tiggy Clifford, partner, added.



Gordons appointed to advise two key clients

May was a busy month for Bradford-based firm Gordons. The firm has been appointed by Houseful, the parent company of Zoopla, Alto, and Hometrack, to support its in-house legal team. Gordons will handle commercial contracts, data protection compliance, disputes, and corporate transactions. Houseful, a leader in residential property software and data, has integrated Gordons as an extension of its legal team.

Commenting on the appointment, Houseful general counsel Amelia Guilfoyle commented, "Gordons are an extension of the in-house legal team at Houseful. It's great having a partner that is responsive and collaborative in their approach. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Gordons team."

May also saw Gordons appointed to advise Northern Trust Company Ltd on the lettings of its 1.2 million sq ft Yorkshire industrial and office portfolio. Northern Trust, with a property portfolio of around 9 million sq ft, has over 500 units in

Yorkshire. Gordons' commercial property partner, James Kimberley (pictured), leads the team, which has already secured four deals in the county, including a significant letting to Migatronic Welding Equipment.

Dan Hodge, Northern Trust's Yorkshire regional property director, said, "James and the team at Gordons understand what's important to us and our occupiers, and how we want to work. They act quickly and decisively to secure lettings and provide us with the practical commercial advice which we need."



Clarion reports double digit growth for ninth year in a row



Leeds-based firm Clarion has reported growth with a turnover of over £30 million in the 2022/2023 financial year, achieving

double-digit growth for the ninth year in a row.

Recently recognised for being one of the fastest-growing law firms in Europe, the corporate practice grew by 23%, capitalising on a year of strong liquidity with a surge in both international and national investments.

The corporate team worked across a total of 55 deals. The real estate team achieved growth of 21%, driven by strong development across the region. Elsewhere, the private wealth team achieved impressive growth of 24%.

The firm has a growing national portfolio, and strengthened its international footing, doubling the number of countries it facilitates clients into 75 worldwide, including Australia, France and Germany.

Roger Hutton, joint managing partner at Clarion, commented: "We're incredibly proud to have achieved our goal of hitting double-digit growth in the recent financial year. It's all down to the hard work of our team, and the expertise and entrepreneurial spirit they bring to every client interaction.

"We're proud to be a Leeds firm with a national reach, and with Leeds having firmly established itself as a major legal hub, we look forward to welcoming even more top tier talent as we plan further growth.

"As we look forward, we're optimistic that we can keep up the momentum of year-on-year growth and continue to drive the business forward, hitting additional growth for next year."

Turnover tops £10 million at LCF Law

LCF Law is reporting a successful financial year, with turnover hitting £10.1 million on the back of double-digit growth over the past 12 months.

For the year ending 31 March 2024, LCF Law's total group revenue grew by more than 10%, from £9.1 million the previous year. Nearly all of its specialist divisions, which span both commercial and personal law, experienced an increase in turnover.

In addition, LCF Law has facilitated the planting of hundreds of trees through its work with Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust (YDMT) and raised more than £10,000 for the Bone Cancer Trust over the past 12 months.

Managing partner Ragan Montgomery said, "We pride ourselves on employing the best people who always strive to provide clients with a superb service at the right price.

"Clients are benefitting from our continued investment in technology, which continually keeps them updated on

progress and provides easy access to information, which is all part of our aim of being the best law firm to work with.

Ragan added, "Our significant revenue growth over the past 12 months is testament to this and these latest results will act as a springboard for further growth, with several new high-profile partner appointments due to be made this spring, which all makes it a very exciting time for LCF Law."





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Oh, it's a shame

Columnist **Natalie Cosgrove**, a partner at Ashtons Legal, on handling mistakes, shame, and the necessity of a supportive work environment.

You are going to mess up on a case. You might not see it coming. The client is going to complain.

You are going to feel worse about it than you care to tell people, because you are embarrassed. Whatever punishment that ensues is not going to be a patch on how you feel about yourself and the mistake you made.

What to do next?

You should apologise, but you should also speak up. Holding things in and hoping they go away when things go wrong is literally the worst thing you can do in this situation, because not speaking up makes things worse all round.

You should tell your colleagues and it should be shared in an open way so that no one else makes the same errors. No one should place blame on you; the client and you will have done the heavy lifting where that is concerned. Accept what you have done and work to move on.

Shame is a huge barrier to lawyers who are often striving to reach an unachievable standard. The profession is held in high esteem and huge disregard all at once, which is hard to navigate at the best of times. Huge workloads, targets and stakeholder factors add to an increasing sense of unattainable pressure. The industry thrives off the ability to be efficient, proficient, cost effective, profitable and often, as a result, your wants and needs as a lawyer are insignificant.

Add into the mix making a simple mistake as above? That's when the house of cards can catastrophically collapse. You collapse. Unable to bring yourself back from this, you spend your time hypervigilant, and it slows you down. You're not hitting your time target. You're not billing. You think everyone's perception of you is that you failed. Or you're stupid. Or worse, what if they're glad it happened to you and not them?

Handling mistakes

I'm afraid mistakes do happen - big and small - and we are measured not by them, but how we (and I mean you, your team, department, and firm) deal with them. How we reflect and how we move on. It's not about brushing them off as though they don't matter. There is learning to be done with all good, bad and the bits in between. A practice of reflection is vital as a lawyer. It's how you improve. You just need understanding and support to get there.

What if I don't have that?

I'm afraid, I don't think you're in the right place.

If your employer fails to acknowledge that you are little more than the time recording you can produce - there's a problem. Often, the problem isn't actually you. The problem might be the system you are in, the firm you are in, or, at micro level,

your department is toxic. You can spend all the time in the world looking for self-help guides, therapy and coping strategies, but perhaps you're just a square peg in a round hole.

A hole that's on fire. With no fire extinguisher nearby.

But the fire door is open - run! Run and save yourself!

You are not going to be any help to that firm. You are going to make mistakes and you are going to feel that shame. Your productivity may suffer and if it doesn't, some other aspect of your life will.

Having a properly supported work life isn't a panacea, but it helps.

Researcher and author Brené Brown speaks a lot of shame: "Shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we are capable of change." If you've not read any of her books, buy one (any of them will do) and get out your pencil, notebook and highlighter - trust me. She talks about balanced ecosystems, but you can't achieve any of that when you're living in a pressure cooker.

Being vulnerable is the ultimate act of courage and leaving a workplace that doesn't serve you can often be as much help to the firm as it is to you.

You will move, and, with any luck, you will now find yourself sliding into that square hole, where you belong. The shocking bit: you will still mess up. Because it happens. But this time when you punish yourself, and feel shame, you will also be supported, and you will reflect, and you will learn, and your colleagues won't make that mistake either because you will all discuss it, and you will all move on.

'The Law' is a hard sector to work in. Let's not forget that. If any of this article resonates with you, please think carefully about your mental health. Often as we juggle all the responsibilities that life gives us, we can suffer. In fact, we all have our own private struggles, all the time.

Find a firm to call home and working doesn't have to feel so hard. Demanding? Yes. Long hours? Yes. But supportive, understood, appreciated and welcomed? Also, yes. Every time we let the worry monster in, we're more likely to make mistakes. And then you're building that house of cards again.

Often the easiest thing you can do for your mental health is to ask yourself, am I the square or the round peg? Then what comes next, well, that's the exciting future.



Adeeba Malik becomes West Yorkshire's first ethnic minority female high sheriff



Professor Adeeba Malik CBE DL has made history as the first ethnic minority female to be declared high sheriff for West Yorkshire.

Professor Malik has now made her oath of declaration in the formal declarations ceremony, presided by high court judge Sir Nicholas Hilliard at Leeds High Court on Monday 25 March.

The year-long royal appointment, which is non-political and unpaid, continues a tradition which stretches back over 1,000 years.

Malik has a 27-year track record working across Whitehall. In 2004, she received an MBE, and in 2015, a CBE for her contribution to mainstream public bodies.

Malik said: "It is an enormous honour to take on this important role. I look forward to serving my home county and meeting the many different people who do so much good for West Yorkshire."

Rollits hosts free discussion on employment law changes

Rollits LLP, with offices in Hull and York, hosted a free discussion on employment law changes as a recent survey revealed a lack of awareness of some significant developments.

A survey published by ACAS in March reported that 43% of employers and 70% of employees were in the dark about changes which took effect this month to the statutory flexible working regime.

Ed Heppel, partner and head of employment at Rollits, led the event on 23 April at their Hull office. The event also featured contributions from Lucy Trynka, whose specialist areas include

complex discrimination matters, and James Peel, whose expertise includes advising on data protection.

Heppel said: "April is always a month of change in employment law and this year was busier than normal, with significant evolution in family friendly rights. In particular the implementation of the carers leave act 2023 is likely to have a huge impact on employers up and down the country."



LegalTech in Leeds conference returns

The UK's largest legal tech event outside London returned to the University of Leeds focusing on the themes of inclusion, innovation and inspiration.

The third annual conference was held on 16 April at the University of Leeds and consisted of keynote talks and panel discussions. Speakers included Beth Fellner, director of Legal Geek, Gary Gallen, CEO of rradar and Patrick Grant, senior lecturer and project director at the University of Law.

Experts, unsurprisingly, dissected AI, but also emphasised the importance of maintaining the human side of law. The



overriding opinion was that technology can help lawyers - not replace them - and improve the client experience. While adopting tech will continue to be important, the focus is on making processes work better for people, not robots.

Top legal firms to connect with students at Yorkshire Legal Careers Fair

The inaugural Yorkshire Legal Careers Fair will take place on 23 October at the Leeds Marriott Hotel. The career fair is a prime opportunity for firms to meet law students at all stages of their academic journey.

A spokesperson for the event said, "This is really a chance for firms to meet the next generation of legal superstars.

"We know university students are ambitious and looking for their first opportunities after graduating. We want to keep this talent in Yorkshire and make sure Yorkshire is at the front of their minds when they're choosing their next pathways."

This landmark event is held in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, the University of Huddersfield, Leeds Beckett University and Yorkshire Legal Jobs. It promises to be a key event for law students across the region.

Attendees will benefit from direct interaction with a wide

range of legal professionals, gaining top tips on how to stand out in applications and interviews. The event offers a valuable platform for students to start building their professional networks. It will encourage students to forge connections that will be instrumental as they transition from academic studies to their future careers.

A spokesperson for the University of Sheffield School of Law expressed their enthusiasm, stating, "The University of Sheffield School of Law is extremely excited to be an official partner of the Yorkshire Legal Careers Fair.

The Yorkshire Legal Careers Fair is a fantastic opportunity to connect our students with leading legal professionals in Yorkshire. It offers a unique chance to meet prospective employers, showcasing the range of firms, talent and career opportunities available in the north."

Survey reveals lack of support for menopausal women in the workplace

Halifax-based Han Law conducted a survey which found that three-quarters of menopausal women face daily challenges due to a lack of support from managers.

The study surveyed 3,000 women aged between 40 and 59 and found that just 23% of respondents feel that their employer takes menopause seriously, and 85% of respondents suffering from related symptoms didn't feel comfortable talking to their employers about it.

71% of those surveyed worked for businesses that did not have a menopause policy in place. Of those that did, a mere 12.5% felt that it had a positive impact.

"It's no wonder that menopausal women often feel invisible, overlooked, forgotten, and unsupported," said Hannah Strawbridge, CEO of Han Law.

In response to this, Han Law has developed a menopause advocacy service for businesses. Training will cover all aspects of menopause.

"Whilst the results of our study were eye-opening, they sadly weren't surprising," Strawbridge said, "Employers need to do more to create supportive work environments for women going through menopause."

Milners Solicitors opens free clinic in Wetherby

Milners Solicitors has announced the launch of a free legal clinic at Wetherby Library. The community-focused initiative aims to provide accessible legal advice and support to residents of Wetherby and the surrounding areas.

The free legal clinic will take place on the second Thursday of every month from 9.30am to 11.30am. The clinic is open to all members of the public with no appointment necessary.

Milners provide legal support on a range of matters

including family law, employment law, buying/selling your home, wills and probate, company law and more.

Simon Bass, managing partner at Milners Solicitors commented, "Our goal with this clinic is to bridge the gap between the community and legal support. We understand that legal matters can be daunting, and we want to offer guidance to those who might not know where to begin."

Gordons partners with Lifted Ventures



Gordons has been appointed as the legal partner of Leeds-based Lifted Ventures, a start-up investment network aimed

at supporting female founders.

As legal partner, Gordons will advise the network's investors and provide guidance to start-ups throughout the funding process, including early stage, growth and exit.

Lifted Ventures was founded in 2023 by Helen Oldham and

Jordan Dargue. The two women were joint leaders of the NorthInvest angel network and co-founders of both Fund Her North and Women Angels of the North.

Commenting on the appointment, Helen Oldham, co-founder at Lifted Ventures, said, "Lifted Ventures is an early-stage investment connector, existing to increase the flow of early-stage capital to female-founded businesses.

"It's critical that both our community of angel investors and our founders – especially those who may be going through this process for the first time – have access to reliable and experienced legal experts. The Lifted Ventures team are so pleased to be able to facilitate this for our network through our partnership with Gordons."

Judge dismisses £68m negligence claim against Lupton Fawcett

A high court judge dismissed a £68m negligence claim against Yorkshire law firm Lupton Fawcett, brought by companies in liquidation due to failed property development ventures. Justice Sheldon also denied most amendments to a separate £57m negligence claim against former Leeds law firm Metis Law.

The companies' losses stem from investments and secured lending tied to schemes associated with Gavin Woodhouse, under investigation for suspected fraud and money laundering since August 2021. The claimants, identifying as victims of a Ponzi scheme, alleged that Lupton Fawcett's proper advice could have prevented their losses.

Justice Sheldon noted the numerous revisions of the claim since its filing in April 2022, highlighting its complexity. Woodhouse and his partner Robin Forster promoted

investment schemes through the MBi Group starting in 2014. Lupton Fawcett was engaged to assess compliance with the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and continued advising into 2017. Metis Law later advised on investment transactions from July 2016, handling investor deposits. All schemes eventually failed, leading to the companies' administration and liquidation.

The claimants argued that Lupton Fawcett failed to provide comprehensive advice, leading to doomed investments. Lupton Fawcett contended their duty was limited to FSMA compliance, not business success. Justice Sheldon dismissed the claim against Lupton Fawcett and rejected most amendments against Metis Law for redundancy and lack of justification.

Managing stress, wellbeing in the workplace, and mental health issues

Eleonor Whitehead, solicitor at DAC Beachcroft LLP, is this year's sports representative for Leeds JLD.



The legal profession is notorious for its high levels of stress and burnout, with lawyers facing multiple stressors every day. One main stressor comes from the client-facing nature of the legal profession as it is incredibly difficult to navigate different client personalities. It is not unusual for clients to take their negative feelings

and stress from their legal situations out on their lawyers, which can add to the emotional and mental toll lawyers experience.

In addition to this, lawyers work very long hours. Most lawyers have deadlines to meet and targets to hit and often this along with other work obligations such as non-billable work, networking, charitable efforts, etc. means working the standard nine-to-five is an often-impossible task.

The rise of working from home means the separation between personal and professional life has significantly blurred. The Covid-19 pandemic saw the home become an office for many lawyers for the first time ever and whilst many may enjoy the flexibility of working from home it has become much more difficult to set boundaries on your time and 'switch off'.

While any career in law inevitably comes with some level of stress, an abundance of stress can negatively impact your health. Stress can manifest through physical symptoms like headaches, muscle pain, and digestive issues. Too much stress can result in mental health issues like insomnia, burnout, and anxiety.

There are social consequences of stress too as when you're stressed, your relationships with friends and family suffer. Stressed-out lawyers get into a cycle of working and having work on their minds constantly, even on the weekends or when spending time with loved ones.

Being a lawyer does not mean you're doomed to live with high stress. You cannot avoid it entirely, but the way you handle it can make a big difference. Some strategies to consider are:

- **Establishing boundaries between personal and professional.** It is crucial that lawyers maintain a healthy work-life balance. Lawyers should prioritise self-care and create time for relaxation, hobbies, and seeing loved ones outside work.
- **Effective time management and prioritisation.** Lawyers can implement strategies such as creating to-do

lists, breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps, and using tools to streamline workflows. It is also important to delegate tasks to others to ensure you are not taking on too much yourself.

- **Building resilience.** Developing coping mechanisms, practicing mindfulness, relaxation techniques and engaging in regular exercise can enhance resilience and improve overall well-being.
- **Open and honest communication.** Lawyers should feel comfortable expressing their concerns, seeking support, and discussing workload or stress-related issues with colleagues, supervisors, or mentors. Creating a workplace culture of transparency and support can help alleviate stress and foster collaboration.
- **Regular breaks throughout the workday and utilising annual leave.** Stepping away from work allows mental and physical reset and rejuvenation, increasing productivity and overall wellbeing.
- **Seeking support from mental health professionals who specialise in working with legal professionals** can be invaluable. Therapy or counselling sessions can provide tools and strategies to navigate stress, build resilience, and address underlying issues contributing to stress.

Whilst the onus is often on the individual to address their own mental health issues, there is an ever-increasing need for businesses to focus on preventing issues from arising in the first place. Organisations need to prioritise wellbeing and create and maintain healthy workplaces.

I recently surveyed a number of junior lawyers about initiatives that their workplaces employ to do just this. Some highlights include:

- Flexi Fridays where you can take a half-day Friday to have some time back for yourself;
- Mental health first aiders to talk to;
- Health insurance benefits/allowance for different therapies;
- Free yoga classes;
- Tea and toast mornings once a month to get into right mindset before the day;
- Craft series including office origami, paint a partner competition, or knit and natter to get people away from their desks.

It is important to know what initiatives your business offers and take advantage of them; they are there for you!

It is no surprise that being a lawyer means that you will encounter stressful situations and whilst these stressors won't go away, the way that you respond to stress is within your control. The key is knowing how to handle stress and it is essential that lawyers explore ways to manage their stress more positively.

This is certainly an individual process, but it is also a collective one too. As a profession, we must look to the ways we can support one another every day of the year.

Property professional makes transition to legal career at Rollits LLP



Amber Deas, who made the switch from estate agent to legal career, has now completed her move to Rollits LLP's residential property team.

Amber began in personnel and training, then moved to Hunters Estate Agents as a sales progressor in 2019. She later became a legal secretary

at Cowling Swift & Kitchen in York, eventually progressing to a conveyancer role handling sales and purchases, transfer of equity, and remortgages.

At Rollits, Amber is based in the York office and will deal primarily with residential sales and purchases as well as providing support to the wider property team.

Partner and head of property Neil Franklin said: "We are delighted to welcome Amber to the property department, and I look forward to helping her progress as she continues to develop in her new role."

Yorkshire native returns to Sheffield to enhance MD Law

Sheffield's MD Law has expanded its insolvency and restructuring team with the appointment of a new solicitor.

Before his return to Yorkshire, Elliott worked for several international law firms, focusing on national and cross-border insolvency and restructuring matters, several of which were high-profile cases. Having spent time in London and a secondment in Dubai, Elliott has worked across numerous jurisdictions including Hong Kong, the British Virgin Islands, and several gulf states.

Elliott, who is from Dronfield, said, "I wanted to be more involved and have greater input into the cases I am dealing with, and this opportunity at MD Law, allows this.

"I'm looking forward to expanding my skills and working closely with clients and colleagues to deliver an exceptional restructuring and insolvency service for clients."



Gordons strengthens leadership team

Law firm Gordons has further enhanced its leadership team with the promotion of two lawyers to partner.

Commercial litigation lawyer and the firm's head of wellness and inclusion, Catherine Woodward, and head of regulatory, Simon Tingle, will play central roles in Gordons' ongoing growth and development.

Catherine joined the firm in 2011 and qualified as a solicitor in 2015. She is a past president of Leeds Law Society.

Recent joiner Simon is a regulatory, investigations and corporate defence lawyer with a particular focus in the retail,

consumer, transport and logistics sectors.

Commenting on their promotions, Gordons managing partner, Victoria Davey, said: "Catherine and Simon are excellent additions to our partnership. They are both progressive in their outlook and are outstanding lawyers who are able to build lasting client relationships."

New senior lawyer Mike Patterson also joins from firm Berwins where he worked for almost 12 years as head of employment. He has expertise in advising clients in the food manufacturing, digital and technology and professional services sectors.

Walton & Co welcomes new equity partners



Boutique planning law firm Walton & Co has welcomed new equity partners to join its original founder, David Walton. Alec Cropper and James Cook have

joined the firm, which was established in 2004, as new equity partners.

Alec has over 15 years of legal experience, having previously

worked at firms including Walker Morris and DWF. Alec joined Walton & Co in 2019, and specialises in planning appeals, application advice, high court proceedings, and negotiation of planning agreements.

James, who previously worked at Walton & Co from 2007 to 2019, returns to the firm from Blacks Solicitors. At Blacks, James held the position of head of planning after establishing a new planning law team within the firm in 2019. James brings with him over 20 years of experience.

Experienced restructuring lawyer joins Eversheds Sutherland



Eversheds Sutherland has strengthened its restructuring capabilities with the hire of expert restructuring lawyer, Barney Smedley.

Barney joins the global law firm's Leeds office from DLA Piper. He has a wealth of restructuring experience

and has gained recognition for advising financial institutions, investors, insolvency practitioners and boards of directors on high value and high stakes restructuring and insolvency assignments.

He has played a leading role in a number of restructurings in the retail and consumer goods sectors including the insolvencies of the Beales department store group, and various phases of the Mamas & Papas turnaround.

Hempsons LLP appoints eleven junior equity partners

Health and social care specialists Hempsons LLP, with offices in Harrogate, has appointed 11 new junior equity partners.

New junior partners are: Gautum Chawla; Martin Cheyne; Andrew Daly; James Down; Philippa Doyle; Richard Greensit; Liz Hackett; Stephen Maratos; Bryn Morgan; Richard Nolan; and Patricia Roe. They span a breadth of specialisms including healthcare litigation, procurement, clinical negligence, and real

estate.

Managing partner Graham Lea commented: "Our conversion to LLP status prompted a more progressive partnership structure. Promoting eleven salaried partners to junior equity partner will harness their talents to aid our development. Their contributions have been invaluable, and we are confident they will shape our firm's future."

Switalskis promotes Lesley Graves to board of directors



Switalskis has promoted personal injury and clinical negligence lawyer and risk management strategist, Lesley Graves, to director.

Graves has over 32 years' experience within the claimant clinical negligence and personal

injury sector. Before joining Switalskis in 2018, Lesley was a Legal 500-rated partner and head of catastrophic injury in three leading claimant law firms.

Lesley commented, "I'm privileged to support my fellow directors who head up teams in clinical negligence, personal injury and child abuse. I'm always learning and always looking to improve the outcomes for our clients and their families and supporting my colleagues whilst doing so."

Consilia Legal senior associates become directors

Consilia Legal has announced the promotion of two of its senior associates in their employment team, Victoria Horner and Andy Boyde, to legal director.

In addition, Kieran Conlon has accepted a position to stay with the firm following qualification. He will take on a newly qualified post in the employment team.

These appointments will bring Consilia's employment team

to five qualified solicitors. The team is set to grow further this year with the appointment of an apprentice paralegal.



Simon Stell steps down at LCF Law

LCF Law managing partner Simon Stell has stepped down from the role, which he has held for 30 years. Partner and disputes specialist, Ragan Montgomery, succeeds him.

Simon joined the firm in 1995, and in 2016 he was named Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year at the Yorkshire Legal Awards. Simon will continue to act as a mentor and support the wider team.

Ragan has worked at LCF Law since 2003 and is currently operational head of its dispute resolution department. In her new role, Ragan will be responsible for overseeing operations and leading the firm's client service, growth and development

strategies.

Ragan commented, "After joining the firm 21 years ago as an assistant solicitor, to be appointed managing partner is a huge honour. It's a challenge that I'm really looking forward to as we strive to build on our enviable reputation in Yorkshire and beyond."

Simon added, "There's no doubt [Ragan] is the perfect person to lead LCF Law going forward."



Thrive Law appoints new employment law trainer

Employment specialist Thrive Law is expanding its training and consultancy services, announcing the appointment of barrister Chelsea Brooke-Ward as a trainer. Chelsea, known for her expertise in employment law and serving as head of the employment team at Park Square Barristers, will integrate her

role at Thrive alongside her existing legal practice.

Founder and managing partner of Thrive, Jodie Hill, expressed her enthusiasm about Chelsea's appointment; "I'm delighted to be working with Chelsea. I've known her for many years, and her values are well aligned with my own and those of Thrive."

Lake Legal appoints litigation executive



Specialist family law firm Lake Legal has appointed Isabella O'Donoghue as a litigation executive.

Isabella will complete her chartered legal executive status at Lake Legal as she moves over from Barnes Clark

Family Law. The Leeds firm recently marked 15 years in business with a record turnover and an increased number of divorce

cases it managed for high-net-worth individuals.

Commenting on her new role, Isabella said, "Lake Legal has a fantastic reputation in the region, and a great track record at developing young lawyers. I look forward to working with the team and supporting clients."

Claire Glaister, managing partner of Lake Legal, said, "Isabella is a talented lawyer, and we're pleased to welcome her to Lake Legal."

Hudgell Solicitors promotes five in embrace of employee ownership

Hudgell Solicitors recently announced the appointment of five new members to the firm's executive management team.

The appointments follow the transformation of Hudgell Solicitors in 2023, when founder Neil Hudgell transferred the majority of shares to an employee ownership trust.

The newly appointed members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles. Vicky Richardson, who joined Hudgell in 1998, assumes the role of regional director of Hull, while Paul McClorry takes on the role of regional director of Manchester. Lauren Dale has been promoted to risk and compliance director,

and John Cuss moves to legal services director. Jeremy Smith, the firm's national head of costs, transitions to commercial director.



Rachel Di Clemente, chief executive, said, "We are extremely fortunate to have an incredible pool of talent within our firm and these recent appointments reflect that."

Deborah Myerson appointed director at Oakwood Property Solicitors

Oakwood Property Solicitors, based in Leeds, has appointed Deborah Myerson as a new director. Having specialised in conveyancing for 26 years, Deborah joins Oakwood from Raworths LLP in Harrogate, where she served as a lawyer in the residential property team. Before that, she was the head of property at Morrish Solicitors.

Managing director of Oakwood Solicitors, Abbie Keech, said, "We are so pleased to welcome Deborah to Oakwood Property. She will be working with a wonderful group of people, and we hope that she can take the team to the next level with her detailed experience."

Hanna Whitehead joins Ramsdens Solicitors

Ramsdens Solicitors continues to strengthen its court of protection practice with Hanna Whitehead as an associate.

Hanna, who has expertise in advising on health and welfare cases in the court of protection, has spent the last seven years working for Kirklees Council.

Originally passing the bar and qualifying as a barrister, Hanna now specialises in Section 21 objections, Section 16 applications, medical consent and capacity issues. With post-graduate degrees

in mental health law and biotechnology law, she is currently working on a PhD concerning the capacity to engage in sexual relations.

Natalie Lang, partner and head of Ramsdens' court of protection team, said, "As a specialist in health and welfare cases, Hanna adds further strength in depth to our team of court of protection experts."

Gary Lumby appointed CEO of Roche Legal



Gary Lumby MBE, former UK director of small business banking at Yorkshire and Clydesdale Banks, is now CEO of Roche Legal, a Yorkshire-based private client law firm.

Gary, a business mentor and former president of the Leeds Chamber of

Commerce, aims to help owner Rachel Roche expand, especially in cross-border probate work in the USA.

He said, "I am genuinely excited about working with Rachel and her team and accelerating the growth they have already seen."

Gary will continue to work as a portfolio non-executive director with his other clients across the UK.

Rachel Roche said: "Gary is an acknowledged growth expert and brings a wealth of business experience to his key role with Roche Legal. We are all thrilled to be working with him."

New Clarion partner heads up family law team

Clarion has announced the appointment of Rachel Spencer Robb as the new head of its family law team.

Rachel brings over 25 years of experience in family and matrimonial law, supporting families on various issues across Yorkshire and the UK. She held an associate role at Clarion in the past.

Rachel is a former accredited mediator and collaborative law practitioner, and an advanced member of the Law Society Family Law Panel.

"I've seen how [Clarion] has grown, while the culture has remained the heart of the firm," Rachel said, "I know how hard this is to do while delivering top-tier client work – this was one of the key reasons I decided to return."

Roger Hutton, joint managing partner at Clarion, commented: "We're really pleased to welcome Rachel back... we've no doubt Rachel will help the team grow from strength to strength, supporting Clarion's national growth strategy."

Ramsdens Solicitors welcomes new partners across Yorkshire

Ramsdens Solicitors has promoted Jennifer Slater, Katie Sharp, Jane Holroyd and Rosanna Drewery to the position of partner across its network of a dozen offices in the region. Jolene Briggs has been promoted to conveyancing manager for the Calderdale region.

Paul Joyce, managing partner of Ramsdens Solicitors, said: "As a firm, we are committed to bringing on board new talent and

giving them the support they need to develop their careers with us.

"It's fantastic to see these five knowledgeable and committed lawyers moving up in the firm, and these promotions are well-deserved recognition of their contribution to the continued growth of the firm."

LCF Law partner root for change



LCF Law will plant a tree for every client who makes or updates a will, partnering with Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT).

Neil Shaw from LCF Law stated, "New research from the Association of Lifetime Lawyers shows that almost half of UK adults don't have a will. Having a will reduces the burden on loved ones and minimises costly disputes.

"By working with YDMT to plant a tree for every will made or updated with us in 2024, we protect assets and create a sustainable legacy. We anticipate at least another 1,000 trees will be planted in 2024."

YDMT has delivered projects for 25 years to create wildlife habitats, tackle climate change, and connect marginalised groups with nature. Neil added, "Clients will receive details of their tree's location, allowing them to visit and see it grow."

Since September 2022, LCF Law has enabled the planting of 1,000 trees with YDMT.

Bevan Brittan assists cat charity with new premises

A cat rescue charity is expanding in a West Yorkshire town with larger shop premises, thanks to Bevan Brittan.

Yorkshire Cat Rescue will move to a new site in Brighouse, continuing its mission to save abandoned and unwanted cats in the county. Bevan Brittan's Leeds office provided pro bono support, advising on the lease of the 1,830 sq ft premises as part of their community engagement program.

The new Brighouse shop joins three other Yorkshire locations in Halifax, Keighley, and Skipton. The move follows the end of the lease on the charity's former shop, allowing for larger premises and better visibility.

Senior associate Matthew Walsh and trainee solicitor Jemina Gilbert advised on the lease.

Lynn Nicholls, CEO of Yorkshire Cat Rescue, said, "This is a fantastic move for everyone connected with our charity in Brighouse. It will give us bigger and better shop facilities and more presence in the town centre, hopefully attracting more people to come in and either buy something or donate.

"We couldn't have done this without the support of Matthew and Jemina." Walsh commented, "We are committed to supporting the communities in which we work, and this is just one way that we can give something back."

Gordons partner organises fundraising cycling event

The scenic Yorkshire countryside is set to host the eighth annual '100 miles in one day ride', in support of Marie Curie Cancer Hospice in Bradford. The Wharfedale Ton is due to start from Ilkley Rugby Club on 28 June.

Phillip Paget, a partner at Gordons LLP and the event's organiser, said, "Ever since the Tour de Yorkshire in 2014, cycling has grown immensely as an amateur sport.

"It's fantastic to witness so many cyclists from Yorkshire rallying

behind such a worthwhile cause. The support from local businesses has been instrumental in making the Wharfedale Ton a success."



University of Huddersfield smash Law School Challenge



A group of students at the University of Huddersfield have triumphed in the latest Law School Challenge fundraising

initiative, topping the leaderboard for the most money raised.

The team - Sophie Spowage-Hill, Melissa Cheshire, Jenny Mengistu, Ella Armstrong, Nicola Scott, James Hazell, Emily Guy and Ellie Wilson - raised £1,229 to support free legal advice.

A variety of fundraising activities – from bake sales to raffles - raised cash for charities Advocate and LawWorks as part of the annual challenge designed to promote a pro bono ethos.

Natalie Prowse, senior law lecturer at the University of Huddersfield, commented, "I'm so proud of our students, who won the LawWorks and Attorney General Award. We were presented with the award at a ceremony at the House of Lords.

"The Law School Challenge allows [students] to develop their enterprise skills to show off on their CV, as well as teaching them the importance of pro bono legal work."

Wake Smith staff raise thousands for PACES

Wake Smith Solicitors has raised £5,227 for PACES, a Sheffield charity supporting children and adults with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders. The firm's employees engaged in various fundraising activities, including a quiz night, wreath-making event, murder mystery evening, skydive, cake sales, sweepstakes, and seasonal competitions.

The biggest fundraisers of the year were the annual Christmas lunch, staff participation in a half marathon, the staff quiz and a wine-tasting evening.

PACES is a specialist centre for children with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders. It also offers support services to families and

carers through school and adult services.

David Hall, fundraising and communications manager at PACES, said: "The whole team here at PACES have loved working with Wake Smith and would like to say thank you for all you have done for us."



Bringing Yorkshire's legal community together: a new chapter

James Staton is a partner at Schofield Sweeney and the new president of the Yorkshire Union of Law Societies.



YORKSHIRE
UNION OF
LAW SOCIETIES

It was a great privilege to be elected to be the president of the Yorkshire Union of Law Societies at the Society's AGM which took place in Leeds on 2 May 2024. It was a pleasure to have at the meeting the national president of the Law Society, Nick Emmerson, who was able to give an interesting address to the Yorkshire Union members present at the meeting both in person and via remote links about what his year as president has entailed; the present state of the profession in England and Wales; and the challenges it faces.

I have to say that I take up the role with some trepidation following in the footsteps of Natalie Cosgrove who held the position of president for the last four years. Natalie fulfilled the role with energy and commitment during her time in office which included not only the Covid pandemic but also being on maternity leave! Natalie was able to maintain links with local Law Societies across Yorkshire and made sure that the voice of the profession in Yorkshire was heard in Chancery Lane. I very much want to continue with that work and build on what Natalie has been doing.

A lifelong commitment to local law societies

I have been involved in local law societies nearly all my professional life. I was articled in the early 1980s at what was then Lupton Fawcett Bell Cumming & Co, and was a committee member of what was then known as the Leeds Law Students Society, the forerunner of the current JLD. Subsequently, when practicing in Keighley with Wright & Wright/ Gordons Wright & Wright, I was treasurer of the now defunct Keighley & Craven Law Society. Whilst with Schofield Sweeney in Bradford, I was a

committee member of the Bradford Law Society for a number of years and was president in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014. Since my firm merged with Armitage Sykes in Huddersfield in 2016, I have been a member of the Huddersfield & Dewsbury Law Society. I joined the committee of that society in 2020 and was president in 2020/2021.

The Huddersfield & Dewsbury Law Society is an example of what I think a local law society should be. It has an active committee which meets every month and organises a range of activities. The committee includes solicitors, trainees and conveyancers from firms in the area. The activities which the society organises include training by external providers; a quiz evening; support for the Leeds Legal Walk; and the Great Legal Quiz to support the Access to Justice Foundation, holding the annual 'Round the Res' 5km running relay race and walking event and an annual 'giant games' evening. The events are open to other professionals and provide a great opportunity for getting to know professional colleagues in other firms and networking with other local professionals, such as accountants, surveyors and bankers. For my part, I think that local law societies play a very important role in serving members in their areas and in particular giving an opportunity for lawyers to meet and get to know their fellow lawyers at other firms, because the profession functions better when dealing with those that they know and trust.

Looking to the future

I want to be a link between the local law societies across Yorkshire and I certainly intend to try to get to as many local law society events as I can. I also want to act as a connection between Yorkshire Chancery Lane, working with the Yorkshire representatives on the Law Society Council, such as David Barraclough, who is a mine of information and was instrumental in breathing life back into the Yorkshire Union.

Next year marks the bicentenary of the Law Society. The celebration – both of this milestone and the role of solicitors – which the Law Society is planning provides a great opportunity. The Yorkshire Union can work with local societies across Yorkshire to ensure that the efforts of past Yorkshire solicitors are recognised. Additionally, it allows for a focus on the future of the profession in both Yorkshire and the country as a whole.

I am pleased that Emma Permaine, senior partner of Ridley & Hall and a former president of Leeds Law Society will work with me as vice president and that Lisa Haythorne of the Derbyshire Law Centre (and former president of Sheffield) has become secretary. I must thank Diane Parker of Switalskis who has handed over the role of secretary to Lisa for her sterling work supporting Natalie.



Last Word

Katy Link is an associate and clinical negligence senior solicitor with Fletchers Solicitors and a mental health advocate. She talks us through client relationships, looking out for her colleagues' wellbeing, and switching off at the end of a long day.

With 19 years' PQE in medical negligence and personal injury work, what initially drew you to this field of law?

I started work in a solicitors in 1992 as an office junior. Within a year, I had secured a role as a legal secretary in the personal injury department, and I found it was really interesting work. I was fortunate that my firm encouraged me to qualify as a chartered legal executive.

How do you manage to maintain high-quality work in complex and emotionally charged cases?

I have come to learn through experience that you need to be sensible and realistic about the number of cases that you have within your caseload at any one time, which Fletchers strongly advocates. I also consider the position of the case: a litigated clinical negligence case is going to require more time due to the demands of court deadlines. I also have a bit of a tag team with a colleague who assists on the cases and, like me, works hard to develop strong relationships with our clients.

Client relationships are clearly important to you. How do you go about developing and maintaining those strong relationships with your clients?

These people are somebody's dads, daughters, grandparents. I treat them how I would like my family to be treated – they're not just a file number. It is important to understand that clinical negligence cases will involve something being missed or done improperly. Our clients' confidence and trust in professionals is already being questioned and I want to reassure them. I try to convey to my clients that whilst I am a professional, I am also a mum and daughter myself. I draw on my own experiences which I hope puts them at ease.

As a peer supporter with Lawcare, you provide advice and support to struggling lawyers. Can you tell us more about that and what it means to you?

When I was struggling in my last firm, Lawcare was the charity that I turned to for guidance. I would read their resources and it would give me such comfort to know that it was not just me, as a lawyer, who was feeling this way. Once I moved to my new firm, I applied to be a Peer Supporter with Lawcare as I wanted to give something back. I wanted lawyers to understand that it was OK not to be OK, and that asking for help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.

You actively promote mental health in the workplace. What has been effective in supporting mental wellbeing within the legal community?

Within Fletchers, we have a team of mental health champions who work to bring in external people for talks on wellbeing, meditation, and how to manage stress.

Every four months or so, we'll arrange a breakfast in our offices, which is served by the mental health champions. Besides the obvious benefits (who wouldn't want a free breakfast?), it allows people to meet the champions and know who they are. We also have 'desk drop' days where we'll leave positive affirmation cards, sweets, or packs of wildflower seeds to bring a smile to the teams. We want our colleagues to know that we're there if they need a listening ear, and we can signpost them to resources.

Your line of work can be very demanding. How do you unwind?

I really enjoy spending time with my family, and I have a young niece who loves horse-riding. Spending hours in the cold or sunshine watching her is so mentally refreshing. I also love gardening and have a greenhouse where I spend many hours. My crops are getting better every year, and it brings me so much joy to see what I can grow. Even in the wintertime, I will sit and read in the greenhouse – it's so calming listening to the rain on the glass.

What improvements have you seen in clinical negligence law over time?

The common denominator with my clients is that they felt they weren't being listened to. They felt they had little choice and turned to solicitors. This has improved as time has gone on because openness is now at the forefront. That makes my role with my clients easier - the difficult and frank conversation has already taken place, allowing us to concentrate on returning clients to the position that they would have been in, had that negligence not happened.

How has your role evolved over the years, and what will the next steps be in your career?

What I love about how my role has evolved is that I have had experience in various stages of the firm. This has put me in good stead, and I work on the basis that I would not ask someone to do something that I would not be prepared to do myself.

I am now a team leader of a brilliant team in Leeds. I hope to be able to pass on some of my experience and enable them to develop their own legal careers.

It is a very exciting time at Fletchers with the firm growing and recruiting some wonderful new starters who are just at the beginning of their legal career.





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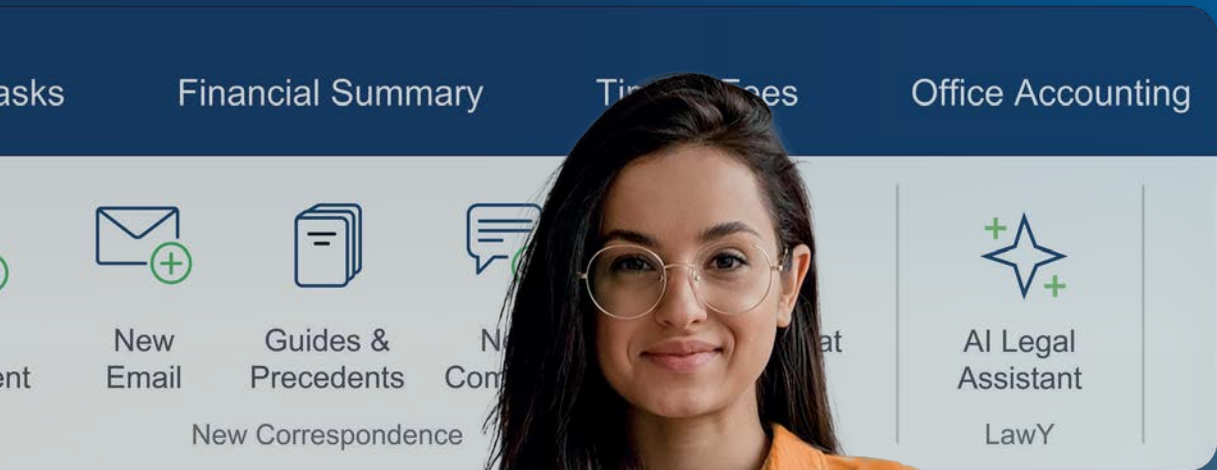
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