Upholding the rule of law
Contents

Foreword 4
How our profession has changed in the last 10 years 5
What we achieved in 2017-2018 6
How we promoted our profession 8
How we influenced for impact 10
How we kept our members up to date 15
How we supported practice excellence 16
We were members’ career companion 18
Operational improvements 20
Summary 21
What next? Delivering our five year plan 21
Our plans for 2018-2019 22
Foreword

This Business Review sets out our achievements during the 2017-2018 financial year. This publication is one of the ways we report on our progress and sets out what we have delivered for our members.

We are the professional body for solicitors, run by, and for, our members. Our work influencing governments and regulators and promoting our profession is at the heart of what we do. We aim to be members’ source of legal news, support practice excellence and be their career companion at all stages of their career.

The past year has been one of significant change for the legal profession. The UK’s upcoming exit from the EU has been a key focus for us as we seek to ensure our future relationship with the EU allows legal services to thrive and consumers, families and businesses are able to access justice across borders.

The legal sector continues to evolve, and we are committed to supporting solicitors to make the most of these opportunities, meeting the needs of our membership and responding to challenges. We remain dedicated to putting solicitors at the heart of everything we do.

We have also been preparing to celebrate 100 years of women being able to enter the solicitor profession. We have spearheaded a women in leadership in law programme which has sought to understand the barriers for women reaching the top of the legal profession both domestically and internationally. We have also identified and mobilised male champions for change.

We will continue to listen to our members to help us to improve our support for you. As your Law Society, we are determined to make the most of our resources and deliver products and services you value. And we are working to do this as efficiently and effectively as we can. We will make sure you always get value for money.

We are always open to hearing your views and hope you enjoy this review.

Christina Blacklaws
Law Society president

The international standing of the law of England and Wales and the jurisdiction as a centre of legal excellence remains strong and facilitates global business.

We also fulfil, on behalf of the solicitor profession, an important public interest role supporting access to justice, protecting individual rights and freedoms, promoting public legal education and upholding the rule of law.

www.lawsociety.org.uk
Our profession has changed in the last 10 years

- Growth of the profession – Up 30% since 2007
- More solicitors outside private practice – up from 18% to 22% in 10 years
- Greatest growth in business to business
- Less in conveyancing, welfare, personal injury and consumer
- Growth in in-house

More change is coming for the profession

- Increased use of tech, especially in process driven areas
- Outsourcing to technologically adept suppliers
- Tech putting the role of solicitors at risk in facilitating transactions and reducing employment in the sector
- Competition and regulation – market reform such as price transparency, technology and new ownership models will increase competition

And for the wider economy

- Uncertainty over Brexit
- Changes to London’s position as a global financial centre
- Political agenda driving down funding for the justice system and increasing technology use

How the profession needs to change

- Anticipating and planning for the change that is coming
- Developing future leaders with communication, change management, influencing and people management skills
- Focusing on work that cannot be outsourced or automated
- Staying resilient
What we achieved in 2017-2018

230

Our women in leadership in law programme held 230 roundtables, with 15 internationally, seeing approximately 4,000 attendees

105

We expressed the views of our members in broadcast media 105 times, 383 times in national and regional print outlets, and 2,116 times online across national, regional and trade press

76,900,000

Our new solicitor brand campaign was seen over 76.9m times by passengers* with London Tube advertising and 29.7m times with in-carriage adverts across the country

16,914,596

The Gazette website received 16,914,596 page views and had a 7% increase in visitors

22,987

The Practice Advice Service handled 22,987 enquiries from members and employees of law firms

638

The Excellence Awards received a record number of 638 nominations with 870 attendees on the night

* this refers to the number of opportunities passengers had to view the adverts. A passenger refers to one journey, so the same person could see the adverts multiple times.
Our anti-money laundering conference attracted 420 delegates, and our Legal Sector AML Guidance, approved by HM Treasury has been viewed over 26,000 times.

The number of intervention letters we sent on behalf of lawyers around the world, promoting human rights and the independence of the legal profession.

We were mentioned positively 338 times in Parliament, invited 13 times to give oral evidence and had over 45 parliamentary questions tabled.

Our Professional Development Centre produced 94 webinars and podcasts, viewed by over 9,500 people to keep members informed and up to date.

The number of members the Law Society library has helped with legal research enquiries during 2017-2018.
How we promoted our profession

We raised the profile of the profession through our Solicitor Brand and Global Legal Centre campaigns, celebrating the best work in the profession.

At home

**Solicitor brand campaign**
Our Solicitor Brand Campaign promotes the profession to consumers and businesses, improving the understanding of the vital role solicitors play and helping consumers understand their legal needs. We advertised on public transport in England and Wales, with our London tube adverts being seen 76.9m times and in-carriage adverts across the country being seen 29.7m times. We advertised on large roadside and shopping centre digital screens, on ITV and in regional newspapers. We also promoted the profession across social media on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, achieving 9.5m impressions.

**The Excellence Awards**
Our Excellence Awards are unique because they represent a cross-section of our diverse membership and help us share best practice from across the sector. They enable us to promote excellence across the profession, not just the City and the commercial practice areas that other national legal awards focus on. Last year we achieved a 49% increase in nominations to 638, and the highest ever attendance of 870 at the award ceremony.

> I think the Excellence Awards are a brilliant initiative. To receive some recognition from the Law Society means a great deal, it certainly does mean a great deal to us, and I have no doubt that it means a great deal to the other award winners and people that were shortlisted.

Rachel Roche, Founder, Roche Legal
Accreditation

Our accreditations support solicitors’ education and development, recognising expertise in different areas of law and helping us drive practice excellence. We delivered 6,223 accreditations (4,454 organisational and 1,769 individual accreditations) to our members, supporting their education and development.

6,223 accreditations delivered

4,454 organisational accreditations

1,769 individual accreditations

We launched Lexcel v6.1 to support our members with their compliance with GDPR and the Fourth Money Laundering Directive. We ran a full-day conference and two webinars for accredited members and provided training for approximately 100 Lexcel assessors and consultants. Our conveyancing quality scheme training was re-launched in August 2018 to support our members’ professional development in residential conveyancing. After review, we decided to close some activities that were no longer valued by members, including the Occupational Injury and Catastrophic Injury accreditations. This decision was taken in order to ensure our resources could be spent on activities and services our members value more.

Abroad

Opening new markets for English and Welsh solicitors to practise

We work to reduce barriers facing English and Welsh solicitors entering and working in overseas markets by establishing and maintaining links with international counterparts. We provide practical support, training, information and advice to law firms and legal professionals working abroad, or exploring international opportunities.

English Law Week in Moscow and St Petersburg promoted English and Welsh law as a jurisdiction and as a global legal centre. The event was attended by more than 450 delegates from the UK, Russia, and the wider CIS region. As part of our role promoting human rights and the independence of the legal profession, in Turkey we worked to raise awareness of the obstacles faced by the legal profession by issuing joint oral statements. We also gave a written submission before UN special procedures, trained Turkish lawyers, attended a UN side event and sent letters to Turkish authorities.

We successfully launched the Legal Services Are Great campaign in Kazakhstan. Over 400 delegates registered, with 150 attending in Astana and 101 in Almaty, alongside 50 UK delegates. Simon Davis, our Vice President, participated in a press conference which was attended by journalists from 10 different media outlets and was interviewed by KazTV and Astana TV.

We hosted a delegation of 10 Malaysian commercial lawyers from the Malaysian Bar Council (MBC). We discussed the rule of law, the ability of foreign law firms to open offices in Malaysia and greater collaboration between our organisations. This was an opportunity to advise the MBC on opening their professional entry exams to foreign lawyers.

We organised the fifth edition of the Latin America Young Lawyers Exchange Programme, which hosted 14 lawyers from Brazil, Mexico and Colombia for a four-week intensive programme based in London. The aim of the programme was to improve their understanding of the English and Welsh legal system in Latin America and strengthen commercial ties between our jurisdictions.
How we influenced for impact

Working to reform the law
Last year the challenging political environment continued and shaping the implications of Brexit remained a priority for us and our members. We continued our work on reducing the barriers to access to justice, which presented further challenges. We were mentioned positively 338 times in Parliament, were invited 13 times to give oral evidence and had over 45 parliamentary questions tabled. Government requested our input, and after listening to the views of our members we have been able to influence and contribute to how the law is reformed.

Influencing on Brexit
Our work on Brexit achieved some key outcomes for our members. Across the year we focused on five key areas:

• Mutual market access for legal services, including rights of audience and LPP
• Civil and family judicial co-operation
• Criminal justice
• Maintaining legal certainty
• Working with Government to promote England and Wales as a global legal centre.

Our successes included the Government publishing its white paper on the future deal, which supported our calls to action on mutual recognition of qualifications, civil judicial co-operation, intellectual property and the labour mobility framework. Our calls were also seen on the Withdrawal Agreement. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) also consulted us on the Brexit technical notice on civil judicial co-operation ahead of publication.

The UK Government White Paper recognised some of the major issues we raised, including the importance of civil judicial co-operation and joining the Lugano Convention. Through our membership and work with the Professional and Business Services Council (PBSC), we joined with several of our leading firms and other organisations to write to the Prime Minister. We also work closely with officials in the MoJ and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy through this group.

Consultations
We develop responses to proposals for changes in the law, which come from a variety of sources, including government departments and non-governmental organisations. We contributed to the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) consultation proposing a broadening of the requirement that duty solicitors undertake at least 14 hours per week for the firm to retain a duty slot in that solicitor’s name. Almost all our proposals were accepted, and the LAA agreed to widen the scope considerably.

We issued judicial review proceedings against the MoJ to challenge a cut to the litigator fees in Crown Court cases. The MoJ estimated the cut will be between £26m and £36m overall. The review judgement found in our favour, and the regulations we were challenging were quashed. This means the cut to litigators Crown Court fees introduced by those regulations will need to be reversed. Our members can now request redeterminations of claims paid while the regulations were in force.

The HMCTS published five consultations regarding the closure of eight courts throughout England and relocating the work to existing courts. We strongly argued the court closure programme should be paused. As a result, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, David Gauke MP, announced that Cambridge Magistrates Court would remain open.

338 mentioned positively in Parliament
13 invitations to give oral evidence
45 parliamentary questions tabled
The HMCTS were intending to run a number of flexible operating hours (FOH) pilots. These gave rise to the potential for discrimination and increased pressure on legal aid practitioners. We argued the pilot should be paused and wrote officially to chief executive Susan Acland-Hood. We also testified at a Public Accounts Committee hearing, raising the issues surrounding the FOH pilot and again asked for it to be paused. As a result, the pilot has since been delayed several times while the HMCTS consider their plans.

The LAA required firms awarded with civil aid contracts between March and July 2018 to verify their bids by providing supporting documentation. This gave rise to compliance issues, particularly around supervision. In the week before the contract commencement date, hundreds of firms had still not been issued contracts. We advised a number of firms about the verification process and worked with the Legal Aid Practitioners Group to put pressure on the LAA to introduce a contingency arrangement. This enabled firms to continue providing legal aid services after 1 September until their new contracts were issued.

**Human rights**
The Joint Committee on Human Rights sought evidence on the effectiveness of human rights enforcement. We worked with our members to draft a response. As a result, we were asked to submit oral evidence and our suggestions were included in the Committee’s final report.

**Legal aid**
We identified that the removal of legal aid for early advice was having a negative impact on the public and had resulted in some legal problems escalating unnecessarily. In response, we developed a campaign to specifically target bringing back legal aid for early advice housing and family law. The key achievement to date has been convincing the Labour frontbench to endorse our campaign recommendations for legal aid for early advice to be reintroduced in both these areas.

The campaign is ongoing, and as part of a Government review of its legal aid legislation, we continue to work on achieving our overarching objective of persuading Government to back our recommendations. Our key achievements so far include 584 of our members writing to their local MP about the campaign, with a further 352 of our members also writing to the Lord Chancellor. We held an event in Parliament to promote our early advice campaign, with 25 MPs and researchers attending including five members of the Justice Select Committee.

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**Employment law**
Our work on employment law and enforcement aspects of Matthew Taylor’s Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy sponsored review into the future of work was influential. Major changes we had been working to achieve over the last two years were included. The Government will bring in new legislation to give workers in the gig economy the right to request a temporary or fixed-hours contract after 12 months and to tackle the challenges in building up continuous service. They will legislate to clarify the criteria that determines whether people are workers or self-employed by bringing tax and employment laws into alignment.

The Government will name employers that fail to pay out after employment tribunals as a deterrent to those that are considering flouting the law. They will also consult on setting up a single labour market enforcement agency, which would bring together the relevant parts of HMRC, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate. We saw 9 of our 11 recommendations either fully or partially adopted in Taylor’s final report.

**Domestic violence gateway**
We worked with the MoJ to influence their changes to the legal aid regulations for the domestic violence gateway, where victims of domestic abuse access legal aid. We actively engaged in and hosted the stakeholder group meetings and the evidence gathering. We positively influenced the proposals and they agreed to drop the time limit on evidence of abuse, which was a major problem with the regulations, and they now accept evidence from front-line support agencies. We also influenced the LAA’s interpretation of the guidance and produced pro forma letters for the LAA to use.

The regulations came into force in January 2018. In the first quarter of 2017 there were 2,586 applications for legal aid through the domestic violence gateway. This increased to 3,175 in just the first quarter of 2018 after the changes to the regulations were introduced.
Influencing in Wales

In Wales, powers were devolved to pass the first new Welsh taxes in 800 years. The first two were the Land Transaction Tax (LTT) to replace stamp duty land tax and a Landfill Disposal Tax. We had a unique opportunity to co-develop the tax collection system and close engagement means we are viewed by the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) as a partner organisation.

We had a member on the WRA Implementation Programme Board and worked with the WRA to deliver seminars and webinars and to create user groups to test and refine the online systems. The WRA service report for February 2018 showed an increase in web activity as a direct consequence of our communications.

Influencing in Brussels

We have been at the forefront of Brexit discussions, drafting key policies, including those focusing on CETA, dispute settlement and alternatives to the Court of Justice. These papers enabled us to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders to discuss specific issues relating to legal services, as well as more general issues relating to the Brexit negotiations.

We have had meetings with Permanent Representations from the member states and non-UK members of the European Parliament. Our expertise on legal matters relating to Brexit is well-recognised, with our team in Brussels regularly contributing as speakers or participants in related events and roundtables. We have also worked with media outlets, including being interviewed by the BBC, Politico, the Financial Times, Economist, MLex and the Guardian.

From Brussels we held 29 one-to-one meetings with EU stakeholders, including 20 MEPs, four Commission officials and six Permanent Representations. We were also invited to speak at 11 conferences or roundtables, participate in four Brexit Task Force meetings and give evidence on civil justice co-operation and Brexit in the House of Lords.

Last year we met approximately 120 solicitors and representatives of UK firms across the EU to talk about our work, the state of play and challenges of Brexit including the implications of a no-deal scenario. We visited our priority jurisdictions, including France, Greece, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Spain. We hosted a joint Law Society-Conseil National des Barreaux Seminar which was attended by 110 practitioners from both sides of the Channel. We established a good working relationship with the new leaderships of the French bars and raised awareness of the urgency to deal with the issues of UK LLP structures in Paris post-Brexit. As a result, the Paris Bar have started to look at the challenges in more detail. UK firms in Paris and other experts have set up a working group to lobby the Paris Bar for an immediate solution. We have also clarified that LLPs set up in Paris before 1991 will be grandparented.

We have provided members with valuable information on company structures in Germany and clarified that branches of UK LLPs in Germany that are headquartered in the UK will be able to remain LLPs and limited liability will be recognised in German courts.

We hosted an EU lawyers in the UK practice rights Q&A session where our representatives and the SRA answered European lawyers’ questions on their rights to practise in the UK post-Brexit. The seminar was attended by 124 members and other key external stakeholders. In the past year we have written three times to all European lawyers in the UK and our members across the EU/EFTA to explain to them what the outcome of the first round of negotiations and the political agreement on the transition period mean to them as citizens and practitioners.

Party political conferences

We attended the party political conferences of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and Conservatives. At the Conservative conference the Lord Chancellor and Justice Minister spoke at our events along with the Law Society president. At the Labour Conference we had the Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Attorney General at our events. At the Liberal Democrat conference, the Deputy Vice President shared a panel session with the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson on Brexit.

Influencing internationally

Our work internationally benefits our members through our relationships and work with Bars and Law Societies around the world, as we continue to advocate for open and flexible practice rights for foreign lawyers.

Achieving coverage for our members and spokespeople on high profile media outlets ensures the views of the profession are heard. Our spokespeople appeared on a diverse range of media outlets, including BBC Radio 4’s Today, You and Yours, Law in Action, Victoria Derbyshire, Sky News, Moneybox, and Channel 4 News. We doubled our broadcast coverage and have also significantly increased our print and online media presence, working regularly with the Financial Times,
Guardian, Economist, Times, Buzzfeed, regional press, and overseas publications such as Le Monde. We achieved coverage 105 times in broadcast media, 383 times in national and regional print outlets, and 2,116 times online across national, regional and trade press.

Legal technology
We have been at the forefront of influencing policy and further developing the Legal technology sector. The former Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, spoke at our conference on blockchain. He referenced us and our report on blockchain and the value of legal technology throughout his speech. We argued for the appointment of a legal technology envoy to work with Government to develop the sector. President Christina Blacklaws was appointed as chair of the LawTech Delivery Panel, a new sector-led and Government-backed group, with the backing of Lord Keen.

Our work on legal technology also focuses on the impact of technology and data use on human rights. As part of our Technology and the Law Policy Commission we will be holding four public sessions where our commissioners will take oral evidence from experts on the topic of algorithms in the justice system.

Technology and its impact on the profession has been a major area of focus. Part of our strategy is to help build and connect the law technology and innovation ecosystem. This includes connecting academia, government, large and small technology companies and our members. We launched a new partnership with Barclays called Eagle Labs which saw us open a new law technology incubator in London. The partnership with Barclays is backed by a consortium of law firms and universities and the lab itself is occupied by 17 LawTech start-ups. Day-to-day interaction and events at the lab give all these various stakeholders valuable opportunities to connect with and learn from each other.

Influencing regulation
Disclosure of unused evidence
High-profile criminal cases in which the mismanagement of the disclosure process resulted in near-miss miscarriages of justice led to a public debate and media coverage about the disclosure of unused material in criminal cases. We attended two seminars convened by the DPP which considered progress in the delivery of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)/Police Disclosure Action Plan. We have ongoing membership of a high-profile stakeholders’ Disclosure Forum, overseeing delivery of the plan. Then President Joe Egan was also invited to give oral evidence.

We are advocating a different system to be used in less evidence-heavy magistrates court cases, whereby all evidence is disclosed to the defence. We produced a webinar on the issue of disclosure, discussing the reasons for the crisis, the improvement plan and future work to improve disclosure. Both co-chairs participated, with the Legal Director of the CPS and the Chief Constable of Surrey Police, both of whom are responsible for the Improvement Plan.

Solicitors Regulation Authority’s (SRA) handbook reform
Since 2016, the SRA has embarked on a programme of handbook reform. This was conducted over a two-phase consultation, which concluded in June 2018. We lobbied to diminish the impact of the SRA’s deregulatory proposals on the profession and influenced the outcome to protect the profession and encourage its growth.

We carried out large-scale engagement with members to inform them about the proposals and seek their views. We successfully convinced the SRA to make changes, including taking our advice to tighten rather than abolish the qualified to supervise rule. Self-employed solicitors will be required to maintain adequate and appropriate professional indemnity insurance (PII) for reserved and non-reserved work. Instead of the proposed removal of early assessments for students, the early decision on character and suitability will be retained.

Price and service transparency
The SRA consulted on new price and service transparency. This followed the Competition and Market Authority’s (CMA) legal services market study, which included an increase to price and service transparency within solicitors’ firms. On 7 August 2018, the Legal
Services Board announced that it had granted the SRA’s application to introduce the new transparency rules in full. The changes came into force on 6 December 2018.

We have been working to ensure members are prepared to adapt to the changes when they are implemented. We informed members of the SRA’s announcement through articles published on our communities’ pages. We also developed a detailed briefing for members which outlined the changes and delivered a webinar. We have published a comprehensive Price and Service Transparency practice note and we will continue to publish articles and blogs on what firms need to know.

The Legal Ombudsman
Solicitors providing services to the public must deal with clients’ complaints effectively. If a complaint remains unresolved, the Legal Ombudsman investigates. The Ombudsman published its 2018-19 business plan, following our response to their consultation. We wanted the Ombudsman to review their approach to imposing a case fee on solicitors as it was felt that it had a disproportionate effect on smaller firms and still applies when solicitors do pro bono work. We persuaded the Ombudsman to make specific changes to their plan and review how they apply case fees.

Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)
The SQE is a newly proposed system of centralised assessments for entering the profession introduced by the SRA. This aims to ensure that all those entering the profession possess the necessary skills and knowledge to work in legal services. To provide our membership with guidance in these early stages of the SQE, we updated our website with an overview that outlines what is currently known about the SRA’s plans to assist aspiring solicitors, employers, providers of legal education and other organisations offering training.

Ethics
Our 2015 ethics survey identified the need for us to be more proactive within the ethics field by running events, providing support and facilitating discussions. The events put us at the forefront of identifying issues that may affect solicitors and help them prepare for the future. We held events covering deregulation and the ethical obligations of solicitors acting after major incidents.

Interventions
We intervene in cases where we can provide the court with balanced, informative and useful submissions as the voice of the profession, advocating fundamental rights and freedoms and promoting the rule of law. A decision on whether to intervene in a case is informed by policy considerations. Last year’s interventions demonstrate our active role in supporting and representing solicitors and promoting access to justice in the public interest.

The Supreme Court handed down a favourable decision in *Gavin Edmondson v Haven Insurance Company Ltd* [2018] UKSC 21. We intervened, confirming that an equitable remedy is available to allow solicitors to recover their costs in circumstances where a road traffic insurer had tried to avoid paying solicitors’ fees by settling directly with claimants.

We intervened in the Court of Appeal case *ENRC v SFO*, where the decision protected the fundamental right to legal professional privilege. We represented the concerns of the profession about the erosion of clients’ rights to privilege, which are fundamental to a solicitors’ ability to act in their clients’ best interests, the administration of justice and the integrity of the rule of law. The Court restored the position on litigation privilege as widely understood prior to ENRC, applying the Three Rivers (No 6) test in a pragmatic, commercial way.

We remain committed to the promotion of access to justice and supported a number of initiatives and cases. This included the Law Centres Networks successful challenge against the Lord Chancellor’s decision to significantly reduce the number of housing court duty solicitor schemes. In addition to interventions, we successfully challenged the Lord Chancellor’s decision to amend the Litigators Graduated Fees Scheme, where there would effectively be a reduction to fees payable to firms involved in complex criminal cases.

We successfully intervened in the Court of Appeal hearing in *Dreamvar v Mishcon de Reya* and *P&P Property Limited v Owen White & Catlin LLP*. This involved the liability of solicitors in cases of identity fraud, an issue which has received increasing publicity. We worked closely with counsel to prepare arguments and ensured that our Strategic Litigation Group was kept up to date on the case’s progress. Our intervention focussed on the interpretation of our Code for Completion and helped to ensure that the legal position was clarified.
How we kept our members up to date

The Law Society Gazette
The Law Society Gazette is the best-read legal news and current affairs magazine, covering the latest sector news, features, analysis and commentary. Underpinned by the most significant piece of readership research in the Gazette’s history, a redesigned print magazine was launched. Improvements were made to enhance the member experience. Among these were better navigation, more commentary and new content, including a dedicated Law Society section promoting our member offer.

The Gazette website also saw almost 17m page views, an increase of 1% on the previous year, and visitors to the website also increased by 7%.

16,914,596 page views on The Gazette website

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
To help our members prepare for and comply with GDPR, we produced a guide for law firms including checklists based on ICO guidance. Our guide took practitioners through the steps they need to consider in complying with the regulation and received over 2,200 downloads within the first two days of publication.

Horizon scanning
Our members face a rapidly changing and often confusing market, with increasing pressure to engage with legal technology and evolve their business models in response to market and client needs. Members also face fundamental questions about what it will mean to be a solicitor and what legal practice will look like in the near-to-longer future.

Through our horizon scanning work, we helped members anticipate change and to think strategically about what opportunities and challenges these changes bring to their own practice and career aspirations. We created a series of materials to help members engage with key emerging trends. Our short reports presented detailed analysis around drivers and impacts and the likely implications for the legal profession. Alternatively, our snapshots presented an overview of a topic and the key questions members should be considering.

“...The Law Society Gazette offers a useful mirror for those in the profession. So, I am pleased to see that you have revamped your hard copy with a bright new look. This is a good thing as solicitors are often looking forward. We are also a profession of substance and see accountability as essential. That the content has been kept balanced and of high quality is to be praised.

Oliver Price, Partner, Wansbroughs Solicitors

The legal services sector forecast report
To plan their own activity, our members require information on how business conditions in the legal sector are likely to evolve over the next 5 to 10 years because of wider economic, technological and regulatory factors. Our forecasts of turnover, employment, net exports and prices for the UK legal services sector are based on our econometric model of the legal services sector.

Forecasts included estimates of the potential effects of Brexit on the legal sector based on multiple scenarios. We emphasised to Government on behalf of our members the scale of potential losses to the legal sector from a no-deal Brexit of £3 billion by 2025.

Annual Statistics Report
Our members often require detailed statistics on the legal profession to help plan business strategy and human resource needs, including meeting diversity goals. Our analysis and insights on the profile of the profession helps deliver effective strategy and policymaking.

These findings are made accessible to a broad audience through our Annual Statistics Report. This report and related outputs are used to promote the profession’s growth and success in progressing diversity. We will continue to gather evidence of trends within our sector to help our members plan for the future and we will use this intelligence to shape how we serve a changing profession.
Professional Development Centre

Our Professional Development Centre is our members’ home for legal learning, providing training to meet all their development needs. Our education and learning offering helps members stay current with best practice and support you in making optimal career pathway choices. We produced 94 webinars and podcasts, viewed by over 9,500 people. The new CQS courses launched in August were undertaken by 12,500 people.

Anti-Money Laundering (AML)

We worked closely with HM Treasury and other legal sector supervisors in the development of the Legal Sector AML Guidance. This guidance, approved by HM Treasury and published on our website, is an edited version of our earlier Practice Note on AML. It provides detailed information on how to comply with the Money Laundering Regulations. Since publication, the guidance has been viewed over 26,000 times. We created a new dedicated webpage on suspicious activity reporting (SARs) to help solicitors fill in their SARs correctly the first time around.

Our AML conference was our most successful to date, attracting 420 delegates, and we organised a successful new AML conference in Leeds to reach our regional members directly. Our Practice Advice Service continued to provide tailored, free and confidential AML advice, receiving over 2,100 calls on this subject.

Modern slavery

The Modern Slavery Act (MSA) is currently being reviewed by the Government. This follows our submissions to the Home Office regarding the MSA’s lack of effectiveness. We are a key stakeholder in the development and implementation of the MSA and used this to ensure reforms are undertaken. We organised an event with the review team so solicitors could add their views to the review team directly.

Our members also asked us what they should do when they come into contact with a victim of modern slavery. In response, we conducted wide stakeholder engagement on the issue, resulting in our practice note on the steps solicitors should take and guidance on finding and using an interpreter.
Practice Advice Service
Our Practice Advice Service offers practical advice and assistance to solicitors and employees of solicitors, enabling them to provide the best service to their clients. We are also able to direct members to the most appropriate support for any professional or personal problems they may be facing.

Last year we saw a 2% increase in the total number of enquiries handled by the service, reaching 22,978, with the number of calls answered going up by 7%. The most common issues our team helped members with included AML, GDPR, conveyancing, private client practice and costs.

2% increase in the total number of enquiries handled by the service
22,978 enquiries
7% increase in number of calls answered

Apprenticeships
Apprenticeships are full-time jobs which incorporate on and off the job training and it is now possible to qualify as a solicitor via an apprenticeship scheme. The Government has committed to delivering 3m apprenticeships by 2020. We are in favour of alternative routes into the profession, including apprenticeships, as long as they meet the same high standards as the current route. The apprenticeship levy has been a concern for many business, including city law firms. A major aspect of the apprenticeships work has focused upon gaining insight into how firms feel about the levy and what could be done to improve it and encourage more uptake.

We worked to improve the information available and give our members advice and guidance. This has included publishing a new brochure for our members and prospective apprentices called Apprenticeships in the Legal Sector. We have also published case studies from current apprentices to highlight the benefits and challenges of the apprenticeship route.

We have published numerous resources to assist firms, including a webinar, and during the last National Apprenticeship Week (NAW) we held events in London, Manchester and Leeds for members and training providers.

Cyber security
Cyber security is one of the top threats that concerns law firms, with a clear need to focus on data security and protection from attacks. In response, we collaborated with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to launch the first cyber security legal sector threat assessment report. We fed in to the project by undertaking a survey with our members to gain a fuller picture of the current cybersecurity threats and the extent to which members are being targeted. The report also provides practical guidance on how they can protect their practice.

New practice notes
We published or updated 28 practice notes, providing our members with key information and guidance. These included our practice note Who owns the file?, providing guidance on which parts of the file are owned by the client and which are owned by their solicitor. We produced a practice note to help parties, and their legal advisers, who want to execute commercial contracts using an electronic signature. We also developed a practice note, file closure management, on establishing good processes for orderly file closure, managing risk and fulfilling client care obligations closure at the termination of a matter.

Excellent conference with very interesting topics covered and brilliant speakers.
Maria Udalova-Surkova, partner, McHale & Co
We were members’ career companion

We gave members the tools to develop their careers, expertise and businesses. We helped them plan for and take their next career step.

Work across our regions

We work with individual members and firms across England and Wales to represent their views and add value to our members’ businesses. We have helped more members contribute to our work. We set up events and meetings to keep our members informed of the latest developments on Brexit. We also worked with members to ensure they are making the most of apprenticeships in an ever-competitive market, organising events for firms and in-house organisations in London, Manchester and Leeds during National Apprenticeships week.

We held focus groups with legal aid solicitors in seven locations around the country to explore the impacts of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) on solicitors’ firms, their working lives, clients, and the broader justice system. This resulted in part of our response to the MoJ’s LASPO Part 1 Post Implementation Review, in which we included evidence of the impact that legal aid cuts are having. We also saw almost 100 attendees across 14 roundtables.

Diversity and inclusion

We have worked to support and celebrate our increasingly diverse membership and help firms consider their approach to equality and inclusion.

Our survey on women in leadership in law was the largest ever international survey with 7,781 responses. It found the top barrier to women’s progression is unconscious bias. This was followed by qualitative research to identify possible solutions. We held 230 roundtables with approximately 4,000 attendees, with domestic roundtables taking place across the country. Approximately 15 roundtables have been held internationally in Africa, North America, India and Europe. As a result, we produced two toolkits, one for men and one for women, detailing practical calls to action for individuals and organisations to implement best practice solutions for inclusion and gender balance.

As part of National Inclusion Week, and in collaboration with Inclusive Employers, we held a live-streamed debate with six panel members representing the legal profession to discuss inclusive leadership. We launched our new Recharger Pack, designed to boost skills and confidence of those wanting to return to, or progress in, a law career. During Pride season we marched with the Bar Council and CILEx as #LegalPride, with 83 marching in London, 60 in Leeds with the Leeds Law Society, and 30 in Manchester. We also had a joint presence in Cardiff and Birmingham with the SRA.

Books to support best practice

We published books that support members in their professional practice, including in the areas of private client, property and conveyancing, and regulation and compliance. We published 14 titles, including the 25th edition of the Conveyancing Handbook, our best seller. We also published the fourth edition of the Trust Practitioner’s Handbook and the eighth edition of the Probate Practitioner’s Handbook.
Member welcome pack
Every month we send out a welcome pack to all newly qualified solicitors, which includes the Law Society member handbook, a member benefit leaflet detailing everything members get from their membership, and a letter of welcome from the Law Society president. The pack also encourages members to connect with us via social media to be kept up to date.

Communities
Our communities, made up of divisions and sections, provide members with tailored support, advice and networking opportunities.

Support for junior lawyers
We produced a practical and best practice guide for junior lawyers to support resilience and wellbeing in the work place. This guide was the result of our Junior Lawyer Division resilience and wellbeing survey, which showed that more than 90% of junior lawyers who took the survey had experienced negative stress in the last month, with 26% of those experiencing severe or extreme levels of stress. It was clear that some form of guidance for employers was needed on how to identify and manage resilience and wellbeing among their workforce. This report also raises the profile of resilience and wellbeing in the workplace and highlights the need for employers to take them into account.

Career support
After identifying a need following enquiries from individuals seeking advice on the options available to them, a careers workshop was introduced to support trainees who were not being kept on by their employer following their period of training. Introduced as a pilot, the workshop was developed to support members at a vulnerable time in their career and to address the lack of widely available support. Members were provided with the opportunity to explore their post-training contract options and to gain insight into the newly qualified job markets. Following its success, further workshops will be held each year.
Shaping Our Future programme
We have set up a programme of work to modernise and become more relevant to our members. Our Future Law Society programme was established, setting out the how the organisation will look in 2022, including our purpose, vision, goals, member offer and culture code.

The Shaping Our Future programme was then developed to outline out what we must do to achieve this aspiration, focussing on two main goals. The first is to create a seamless, simple and personal experience for our members, no matter how, when or where they interact with us. To do that, we need to improve what we do for our members and how we do it, unlocking the potential of our business and the expertise of our people. The second is to create a vibrant, professional and efficient working environment that helps us to work flexibly, collaboratively and creatively.

In the first year we have focussed on modernising the underlying technology that enables our staff to support our members, developing the Shaping Our Future programme, improving our ways of working and developing our plans to deliver our property strategy.

Commercial opportunities
The group of licensed providers of our copyrighted forms was successfully expanded last year through the approval of new licensees in conjunction with the development of a revised licensing approval process. This has contributed to us delivering higher revenue from licensing, enabling us to improve our profit generation, to reinvest in our services to members.

Building partnerships
We continue to develop partnerships to benefit members both personally and professionally. We made discounted rates on products and services available, and provided access to partners’ expertise to help develop your practice. This year personal benefits included car hire, personal loans and home insurance, alongside business services including cyber security and GDPR services.

Improving our governance
We previously had four Boards of equal status, all reporting into our Council. This created a risk of overlap and a lack of clarity about where responsibility lay on several matters. There was also a tendency for Council agendas to include more administrative and executive matters, at the expense of time for policy debate.

Council agreed to change this structure, setting up a single Board which has primary delegated responsibility for oversight of the implementation of our business strategy as set by Council. These changes, supported by the creation of two supporting committees of the Board, were implemented by a series of General Regulation amendments over several months, and the new Board held its first meeting in February 2018. It includes four external members, two of them non-solicitors, and has established itself as an effective decision-making body.
Summary

We are focused on influencing for impact, promoting our profession, supporting practice excellence, keeping our members up to date and being a career companion. This review is just brief a summary of the wide ranging work we did for members across England and Wales in response to those needs.

We are run by and for our members and we have been listening to them to ensure we provide a service tailored to their needs. Our annual survey has shown an increase in satisfaction over the last two years and we will continue changing to better meet our members needs and expectations.

Improvements next year will include two important developments, a new website to make it easier to access our wide range of support and a focus on new learning and development activities. You can see our full strategy and business plan on our website. We will report on our progress throughout the year and in our 2019-2020 business review.

What next?

Delivering our five year plan

• We will measure our impact through improved satisfaction and greater efficiency.
• We will achieve this by enhancing member value through organisational efficiencies, growth and developing our people.

In 2018-2019 we will:

Improve how we serve you

• Making the information you need easier to find. Improvements to our website are the continuation of a complete overhaul of the way we serve you digitally by 2022.
• Showing you more of what you need and less of what you don’t. More targeted communication is the continuation of our work to gather and use data to better serve our diverse membership year on year.
• Asking you the same questions less often. Starting to roll out a new long-term approach to managing and using your data will mean we will get smarter at anticipating and meeting your needs year on year.
Our plans for 2018-2019

Influencing the issues that matter most to our profession

- **Protect the profession and the public** by being an active voice as further changes to regulation are proposed.
- **Build our competitive position** as a global legal centre by influencing the government’s negotiating position on leaving the EU and our future trade deal.
- **Protect access to justice** by continuing to highlight the impact of LASPO on the most vulnerable in our society and the profession that serves them.
- **Ensure the core tenets of civil justice are maintained**, not eroded and protecting our members’ ability to serve their clients by influencing key reforms.
- **Highlight the importance of our courts system** in access to justice while changes are planned and made to the technological and physical infrastructure.
- **Increase gender equality in the profession** through our women in leadership in law programme, which includes round tables, reports and an international symposium.
- **Prepare for the future** with our programme to influence the use of legal technology to the benefit of the profession and the rule of law, including our public policy commission on technology and the law commission.
- **Support a positive outcome for Wales** and the profession from proposals for a separate jurisdiction for Wales (2021-2025) by being the voice of the profession as plans are developed.
- **Retain proportionate anti-money laundering regulations** by influencing any proposals for change.
- **Respond to threats to legal professional privilege as they arise** to protect the unique role of our profession.

Promoting our profession

- **Raise the profile of our profession** as honest and honourable, approachable and accessible, experts in our field, client focused, delivering value to clients and adding value to society. We’ll do this through our ongoing media, social media and advertising campaigns.
- **Protect and embrace the international reputation of England and Wales as a global legal centre.** We’ll do this through international work to protect and open up markets and by creating and disseminating promotional materials connecting to the government’s Britain is Great campaign.

Improving what we offer you

- **Help you develop personally and professionally** by offering more learning and development, including on line career coaching, face-to-face clinics for new members and peer mentoring for returners.
- **Ensure you can meet your legal obligations** and deal with changing requirements on issues like data protection, ethics, AML, equality and diversity and cyber security through in-depth and bite-sized training.
- **Help you improve and demonstrate your compliance and quality** by developing a compliance qualification and by implementing our quality assurance framework for our accreditations.
- **Support you to improve diversity** within your business and the profession by reviewing our Diversity and Inclusion charter.
- **Help you consider how to take advantage of technology** by developing partnerships and resources for members.
- **Equip you with tools to deal with change** by offering support as regulatory reforms are implemented through new practice notes and events.

Find out more..

http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-us/Law-Society-membership/
Upholding the rule of law