



Hudgell

SOLICITORS

2018/19 | Review



An introduction from Amanda and Neil

This is our second annual review since launching a three-year strategy and as such is an ideal time to reflect on the objectives and goals we initially set, consider what has been achieved, and what is still to be done.

Overall, the achievements of the past 12 months have been very pleasing. We're honest enough to admit it has not all been from plain sailing, as there have been changes in the way we work, changes in personnel, and changes in processes. All members of staff have faced change we fully appreciated that.

Decisions have been taken with a long-term view for the business as we have faced increased competition from those trying to get into our lucrative work areas, with the final pre-LAPSO big success fees coming to an end and further restrictions on costs ahead in 2020.

However, a solid and improved financial performance has been achieved as we have gone through a transitional year, and that is really rewarding.

Importantly, we now have three new major work areas which are firmly established in Travel, Abuse and Actions against the Police. These departments are now bringing in cases of significant value to the business.

We have also relaunched our 'We Buy Any Files' initiative, something which has already brought good quality lead generation and new cases to the firm.

A new office has been opened in Manchester, and is already expanding, and we have made key appointments in finance, as Head of Costs,



Head of HR, alongside our recently formed Legal and Operational Management Teams.

This structure gives us confidence that we are well placed to further improve performance over the coming 12 months.

As always, we remain determined that we never lose focus on what made the business what it is today.

We must keep a focus on driving cash and clients into the business, and always delivering the exceptional client care that has established our excellent reputation.

The strength of a business is its people and we feel our staff have gone that extra mile this past year, both for our business and pleasingly for the many community causes we support.

officers. These included the death of Jacqueline Oakes who was murdered by her former partner and the deaths of Christine and Lucy Lee who were shot dead by Christine's former partner after the police wrongfully returned his shotguns to him.

Significant progress has also been made with the Stephen Port Murders inquest, at which Neil and Andy represented the families of the victims of the serial killer. The original inquest verdicts have now been quashed and the first Pre-Inquest Review Hearings have been held at the Old Bailey.

We have also been instructed by a number of families of victims of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack to represent them at a Public Inquiry.

New faces have been added to the team in experienced solicitor Terry Wilcox, who represented at the Hillsborough Inquest and Chelsea Taylor as a New Claims Advisor. Alexandra Eldon has moved into a role assisting fee earners on their cases, with Eliza Hudgell also joining the department in the same role.

Growing new areas of business

We have been delighted with rapid development of three new teams over the past 12 months.

A particular focus and area of growth this year for our Civil Liberties department has been Inquest work. This follows us being granted a Legal Aid Franchise for Actions against Public Authorities work for all our offices.

Andy Petherbridge has represented families at a number of high-profile inquests which looked into the conduct of police forces and individual

Judicial review, inquest and possible inquiry following death of sacked politician

Significant media coverage has followed our representation of the family of former Welsh Cabinet Secretary Carl Sargeant, who was found dead days after being sacked from the Labour party.

Carl committed suicide in November 2017 after being sacked from his cabinet post as Secretary for Communities and Children. Allegations had been made against him, but he was never told what they were, and his impending removal from Government was leaked to the media before he knew.

Neil Hudgell and Vicky Richardson were successful with a judicial review of the Welsh Government's decision to exclude the family from participating effectively in the Independent Inquiry into how Mr Sargeant was sacked by the (now former) First Minister Carwyn Jones.

They also represented the family at inquest, when the coroner recorded a conclusion of 'suicide' and said he believed there was 'a real risk that future deaths will occur in the event of political sackings unless action is taken by the Welsh Government.



Travel

Although the travel litigation team is less than two-years-old, the last financial year has been a year of steady growth with four people joining the team and a great influx of new cases.

New faces added over the past year have included solicitors Anne Thomson and Tracy Stansfield and Litigation Executives Lucy Bevis and Dan MacMillan. Trainee Solicitor Michelle Nurse has also joined the team as it has taken on increased work volumes, receiving over 1,110 enquiries in the last financial year, converting to almost 400 new cases.

Somewhat ironically, the team has been one of the few benefactors of "Brexit" with a large increase in litigation arising out of the possibility of a no-deal scenario. The team's focus remains on accident (rather than illness) cases and has taken on some excellent multi track and catastrophic injury work.

The team continues to be recognised and ranked in both Chambers & Partners and the Legal 500 and Head of Travel Litigation Paul McClorry has also been appointed as the Vice Chair of the International Practice Section of the American Association for Justice. He was also invited to speak at APIL's annual Accidents Abroad Conference.

The profile of the firm and the team has also been increased with numerous national and local media stories ranging from group actions, package holiday claims and travel insurance advice, to all-things-Brexit-related.

Abuse

It has been a year of rapid development within the abuse team, which now handles two group actions, one involving some 40 clients against a private school from the 1970's and 1980, and the other involving some 70 clients who make claims to the Lambeth Children's Homes Redress Scheme. The department has also taken on other child abuse claims over the past year.

Malcolm Johnson now heads our department, with two associates also working full time.

In July 2019, the department launched its own Windrush claims microsite www.windrushcases.co.uk to help victims of the scandal obtain compensation.

In July of last year, Malcolm had his book "Complaints for Advocates in England and Wales" published by Pavilion launched at a party in London. This is part of Malcolm's support work for Coram Voice, a children's and care leavers' charity to whom the firm donated £5,000 in this past year.

Malcolm has given a number of seminars to various charities, including Barnardos and the National Advocacy Conference on the subject of care leavers' right. He also gave evidence in January 2019 to the Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse on the issue of group compensation claims.

Strengthening and improving our Core Services

Clinical Negligence

In a difficult market we achieved our most efficient cost per case to date over the past financial year with a quarter of all settlements achieved involving damages figures of £100,000 or greater.

Notable settlements included damages of £2.1m, £1.05m, with many attracting significant media attention.

These included Josie Robinson's support of clients affected by Vaginal Mesh Implants, with media articles helping to secure new business in the form of a group action.

Rachel O'Connor's case of a patient who was awarded £125,000 damages after a negligent circumcision operation, leaving him with significant dysfunction, secured widespread national media coverage, as did Jodi Newton's case involving an amateur footballer who died of undiagnosed DVT, with Jodi interviewed for television.

Successful cases led by Sarah Scully, Sam Thompson, Michelle Tebbutt and Tasmin White continued to help bring exposure with media coverage.

We were also delighted to add highly-experienced specialist Sharon Lam to our team in London in October 2019.

Personal Injury

The personal injury team has been taking on cases in keeping with figures from previous years, despite increased market challenges.

Reforms affecting personal injury work, in particular RTA claims, which were initially due to be implemented in April 2019, then October 2019, are now postponed to April 2020, and will again present further hurdles to overcome.

However, our reputation as a firm which puts rehabilitation of clients at the heart of our work continues to spread, with a number of seriously injured clients being referred to us because of this, which is very pleasing.

The team has welcomed a new member in Alex Garven, who has hit the ground running in Leeds. Significant settlements have included a £7.5m lump sum damages settlement secured by Samuel McFadyen for a man left in need of lifelong care after suffering a serious brain injury.

Sarah Kidd secured damages of £650,000 and £500,000 in cases involving an accident at work and a fatality, Leanne Stephenson settled a fatal accident claim for £263,000 and an accident at work claim for £100,000, and Jane Woodcock settled a non-admitted fatal case for £200,000.

Karen Smith also settled a case for £32,000 after a Leeds bus driver failed to help a passenger who fell and broke her leg on the bus. The bus company admitted a breach of its duty of care, the driver was sacked, and the case was featured in the press.

Criminal Injuries

The Criminal Injuries team continues to win good reviews from satisfied clients and our cases have again demonstrated the benefits to our clients of choosing our expert services, rather than submitting cases to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CIAA) themselves.

Our team have continued to demonstrate their commitment to representing clients personally at Appeal hearings, with some significant results, including

- A case involving an issue relating to the definition of a 'Crime of Violence' and 'apprehension of violence' that found in our client's favour.
- An appeal case where our team successfully persuaded the Tribunal that a prolapsed disc was directly attributable to a crime of violence, rather than a pre-existing condition.
- A case being taken on which was technically out of time but our challenge to a decision to refuse the application was successfully appealed and taken through a review process where the original offer of £13,500 was increased to £58,755
- Securing a final damages award of £129,000 at Appeal for a client initially offered £1,500 by CICA.

Our work and success has continued to bring local and national press coverage with team members appearing on BBC 24, with cases covered by The BBC Victoria Derbyshire Show in relation to the Victim Commissioner's report on the CICA and the impact of the Same Roof Rule change that was introduced this year.



The
**LEGAL
500**
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Continued Industry Recognition across all departments

Our continued growth and success was again recognised in the 2020 Legal 500 guide.

Our Personal Injury department in London climbed the rankings, with the guide saying we 'put the rehabilitation needs of clients first, while demonstrating an excellent anticipation of the other side's strategy during litigation.'

Senior solicitor Kent Pattinson was described as having 'a proven track record of securing multi-million-pound damages' in personal injury cases and abuse claims specialist Malcolm Johnson referenced as 'always completely calm and unflappable' and the 'go-to claimant solicitor' for such cases.

London's clinical negligence team was also hailed for its 'specialist knowledge in claims involving brain and spinal cord injury, fatalities, missed diagnosis of medical conditions, avoidable amputations, as well as birth negligence leading to conditions such as cerebral palsy.'

Solicitor Jodi Newton was referenced as having 'a huge track record of successful clinical negligence work' and being 'forensic in her attention to detail' whilst seeing a 'broad sweep of strategic considerations,' whilst Josie Robinson was also recommended.

Chief executive Amanda Stevens received yet more industry acclaim as she was named Catastrophic Personal Injury Claims Lawyer of the Year, with Legal 500 describing her as being 'in a class of her own' and 'exceptional, bright, knowledgeable, energetic and sympathetic with a wide list of contacts and the ability to mentor other practitioners to strive for the best client care.'

Travel department included for first time

Our Travel team was included for the first time, with the guide highlighting how our work over the past year has included supporting a claimant who suffered multiple, severe orthopaedic injuries in a road traffic accident in Belgium and a man diagnosed with Legionnaires'

disease on his return home to England from holiday in Turkey. It described us as 'an up-and-coming entrant to the market led by a very experienced partner' in Senior Solicitor Paul McClorry, who is again featured as a 'Leading Individual' and described as 'an experienced and safe lawyer in the field'.

Yorkshire legal teams continue to win industry recognition

Our heartlands of Yorkshire and the Humber were again ranked for both clinical negligence and personal injury work, with Hull-based clinical negligence Team Supervisor and Chartered Legal Executive Helena Wood identified as a 'Rising Star', a section which highlights standout performers coming into their own at major companies.

Other solicitors highlighted for their expertise include department heads Chris Moore, Vince Shore and Paul Cain. Jane Woodcock was referenced as having 'expertise in coordinating and obtaining substantial rehabilitation packages', and Karen Smith in Leeds was also recommended.

Awards recognition for Sam's work supporting seriously injured clients

Sam McFadyen has been shortlisted in 'Catastrophic Injury Lawyer of the Year' category at 2019 Personal Injury Awards. Over the past 12 months Sam has secured a £7.5m lump sum damages settlement for a man left in need of lifelong care after suffering a serious brain injury and brachial plexus injury in a motorbike accident. He continues to support Angela Menzies, of West Yorkshire, who suffered extensive multiple orthopedic fractures, and injured many major internal organs, in a high speed head on car crash three years ago.

Other significant work completed by Sam has included ensuring complete rehabilitation support to 54-year-old Svilen Milhov, who was left paralysed after being injured as a mini bus passenger in a motorway crash in October 2018.

"I can't thank Hudgell Solicitors enough. I see so many people in hospital who have suffered similar serious injuries and they have had nowhere near the same level of support and help I have had through Hudgells. It has been tremendous."- Angela Menzies, who has bought a new bungalow with funds secured from her ongoing legal claim for an accident which saw her break almost every bone in her body. She continues to benefit from a full rehabilitation programme.



"What I never expected was the amount of support and help we have been given as a family. It has been amazing and I can't thank people enough. I am feeling positive again, and also very grateful for what has been done for me to help me get to the stage I am at today." - Svilen Milhov, who was left paralysed after a road accident, but was able to travel home to Bulgaria for his daughter's wedding thanks to rehabilitation support



"I can't thank Hudgell Solicitors enough. They have stepped up for me and pushed all the way for me to get the damages I have deserved. I'll put the money towards a new start again, and I feel the completion of the legal case has finally brought me some form of closure." - Woman awarded £22,000 compensation recognising she was a victim of repeated sexual abuse and rape by her father



"I had complete faith in my legal team to ensure they fought my corner and did the best by me, and I want to personally thank Samuel McFadyen of Hudgell Solicitors and my barrister for not only their legal expertise but also the advice and support they gave me throughout very difficult days. I could not have got through it all without them." - Robert Keane, who was left wheelchair bound after an accident at work



Hudgell in the Community

It has been another outstanding year for the Neil Hudgell Trust with staff engagement levels and fundraising reaching record levels.

From supporting community projects and organisations to staff giving their time to compete in corporate challenges, redecorate housing for the homeless and even sleep out on the streets, Hudgell Solicitors staff volunteered over 100 hours and gave back £150,000 to the communities the firm serves.

Three new charities were chosen for support in 2019. They were Special Stars, Candlelighters and Coram.

Each was voted for by staff to receive the firm's support and it has been wonderful to see such a positive response as the fundraising ideas and volunteers to get involved just keep on coming and coming.

In addition to the £5,000 donation made to each charity to launch the

partnership, staff have raised an additional £3,000 through corporate challenge events, with more to come.

The firm has sponsored Candlelighters' first ever mascot 'Champ' which is helping raise spirits and vital funds towards supporting families and treatment research.

CEO Amanda Stevens has delivered a Cerebral Palsy seminar for families of Hull's charity Special stars whilst Malcolm Johnson continues to visit Coram in London on a monthly basis to deliver his advocacy seminars.

In London, funds were donated to the charity's Money Champions programme, which aims to equip people with the skills and confidence they need to manage their money well and was used to create financial health packs for 100 people, containing essential tools, resources and guidance to help them manage their day to day finances.

Hudgell in the news



INDEPENDENT

More than 40 drug driving convictions overturned in probe over 'data manipulation' at forensics lab



PC failed woman killed by stalker ex-boyfriend

Evening Standard.

Woman abused by brother wins payout after 50 years as 'cruel' same-roof law is scrapped

The Guardian

Coroner raises concern over lack of help for sacked minister Carl Sargeant

Daily Mail

Husband wins £125,000 payout after botched circumcision

DAILY Mirror

Three Brit kids hospitalised after sickness bug outbreak at 5-star Menorca hotel

The Telegraph

Public inquiry to be held into Manchester terror attack to allow security services to give evidence

THE Sun

Woman, 21, flung from Hull Fair ride Airmaxx 360 'like a ragdoll' says 'everyone thought I was dead'

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