

BIRMINGHAM POST

CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

LEGAL PUBLISHERS

CHAMBERS UK

SOLICITORS
a Client's Guide

AN OVERVIEW OF LEADING WEST MIDLANDS SOLICITORS

Sponsored by



2012

www.chambersandpartners.com



BDO
5TH LARGEST ACCOUNTING FIRM, GLOBALLY.
EXPERT-LED, AGILE TEAMS.
INNOVATIVE FEE STRUCTURES.

**A LAWYER'S
PERFECT MIX.**

BDO has a global Forensic Accounting team who works in partnership with lawyers. Our technical knowledge and sector expertise has seen us work with regional, national and international law firms, and regulatory bodies, on professional negligence claims, fraud investigations, commercial disputes and acting as expert witnesses.

We operate on a local and global basis to deliver complex engagements, and our knowledge bank and critical mass can address market challenges where ever they may be. Our market position gives us agility and flexibility to create bespoke teams to meet our client needs and our expert-led approach allows our clients to access the right people, quickly.

To find out more about BDO's Forensic Services in the Midlands, please contact: **Sat Plaha** on **0121 352 6210** or email sat.plaha@bdo.co.uk

www.bdo.co.uk

BDO LLP is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority to conduct investment business.

BDO

In-depth and respected

Joe Mosby, Editor, Chambers UK

The practice areas we cover in *Chambers UK: A Client's Guide to the UK Legal Profession* are determined by what clients tell us would be most useful to them. To this end, our researchers seek to identify the prevailing trends affecting clients in the legal market across the UK. This in-depth knowledge is reflected in our rankings.

West Midlands

2011 has been a tough year for the economy in general, and the legal industry in particular. The challenge facing law firms across the country is reflected in the key indices of turnover and profit per equity partner (PEP), with the vast majority of firms posting figures significantly below pre-credit crunch levels. Birmingham giant Wragge & Co. has adapted better than most, with turnover growing 17.6 per cent over 2010-11.

The firm has also recently posted half-year turnover figures that showed a 5 per cent increase on this time last year. Nevertheless, last year's figures were still short

of the heights of 2008-09, when its turnover reached £125.6 million.

The broader industry trend towards mergers aimed at strengthening a position within an increasingly competitive market has also been evident in the West Midlands.

Shakespeares has made a number of significant tie-ups over the past 18 months as part of a concerted effort to boost its presence in the region and nationwide. Its most recent merger, with Solihull's Wood Glaister, will go live on December 1.

However, market observers warn that mergers should not be seen as a panacea and in some cases present their own difficulties. In short, there is no simple solution to the pressures facing the industry. Nevertheless, the feedback we have received from the market reflects a willingness to adapt. Those firms that have distinct fields of expertise and excel at providing top-notch client service will continue to thrive.

The Birmingham Bar meanwhile continues to do well in challenging economic times, and its sustained strength is reflected in the increased coverage afforded to it in the current edition of Chambers UK. A greater

number of individuals on circuit have been included this time round.

By way of illustration, its two main leading lights, St Philips Chambers and No 5 Chambers have both posted healthy increases in the number of rankings they receive. St Philips Chambers has increased its total by 15 per cent and more, while No 5 Chambers has notched up around a third more rankings than in the 2011 edition.

At Chambers UK, it is our aim to highlight those law firms, barristers' sets and individual lawyers who are recognised as exceptional within their market. In order to identify the market leaders, we undertake a research process that involves an unrivalled number of interviews with key industry figures – over 40,000 last year.

These in-depth interviews with lawyers, their clients and other informed observers gives us great insight into developments in the market. Consequently, clients across the globe respect our rankings, and recognise our independence.

I hope you find our rankings useful. To learn more, please visit our website at www.chambersandpartners.com or email me: JoeM@chambersandpartners.co.uk.



Joe Mosby

A team widely known for strength in serious crime

Crime

West Midlands

Leading firms

Band 1

Challinors Solicitors

Jonas Roy Bloom

Tuckers Solicitors

Band 2

Cartwright King

Glaisyers

Higgs & Sons

Kangs Solicitors

Purcell Parker Solicitors

Russell Jones & Walker

Leading Individuals

Senior Statesmen

Roy, Nicholas Jonas Roy Bloom

Band 1

Jonas, Steven Jonas Roy Bloom

Sohail, Ghulam Challinors Solicitors

Turner, James Tuckers Solicitors

Band 2

Coolican, Tim Russell Jones & Walker

Junor, Catherine A Higgs & Sons

Kang, Hamraj Kangs Solicitors

Purcell, Michael Purcell Parker Solicitors

Roy, David Cartwright King

Up-and-coming individuals

Henry, Ben Jonas Roy Bloom

Associates to watch

Swan, Susan Russell Jones & Walker

Band 1

Challinors Solicitors

Market sources agree that serious crime is one of this firm's key strengths. It has offices throughout the West and East Midlands, and peers are "happy to refer it high-level work." Recent highlights include advising on R v JT, a Court of Appeal case concerning a murder conviction.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Ghulam Sohail practises out of the West Bromwich head office. He wins considerable acclaim for being "conscientious and very reassuring with clients, but not in a forced way."

Jonas Roy Bloom

This is a well-known criminal and commercial firm in Birmingham city centre and sources agree that it retains considerable bench strength. Sources admire it as a "highly respected" group with "strong in-house advocacy."

KEY INDIVIDUALS "An outstanding name on the Birmingham scene," Steven Jonas is a higher courts advocate whose practice is characterised by high-end work including Court of Appeal and Crown Court matters. Senior statesman Nicholas Roy continues to command considerable respect for his high-profile criminal work, including murder and road traffic matters. Ben Henry is a trained barrister who re-qualified as a solicitor in 2008. He focuses more on business and fraud-related matters, although sources agree that his general crime expertise also warrants recognition.

Tuckers Solicitors

This large firm has offices throughout London and Manchester, as well as a "huge presence in the Birmingham criminal market." It is one of the

largest legal aid providers in England, and is accordingly an extremely high-profile name.

KEY INDIVIDUALS James Turner is a duty solicitor and solicitor advocate who heads up the group and enjoys a "good reputation" in the market. He recently acted for the defence in an armed robbery prosecution.

Band 2

Cartwright King

This firm is traditionally known for its strength in the East Midlands although it recently made some prominent lateral hires, giving its new Birmingham-based criminal practice a good start in establishing a regional profile.

KEY INDIVIDUALS David Roy is known mainly for his fraud and regulatory expertise, but also regularly handles general crime. One impressed source comments that "I am very impressed; he gets stuck in and cares about the job." His recent highlights include advising on a conspiracy to defraud a major primary care trust.

Glaisyers

This central Birmingham firm handles business crime, personal injury and family law as well as general criminal defence and duty solicitor work. Market sources agree that "it gets a good share of quality instructions."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Neil Ross is the main contact.

Higgs & Sons

The firm operates from offices in Brierley Hill and Kingswinford.

Its motoring and criminal practice is exclusively privately funded, and clients praise its "great com-

munication." Key matters include advising high-profile sports personalities on road traffic issues.

KEY INDIVIDUALS The well-regarded Catherine Junor heads up the group and she is regularly retained by high-level company directors and sports celebrities.

Kangs Solicitors

This team is located in south Birmingham and although its reputation traditionally lies in fraud work, it has also been developing a significant general crime practice of late. Work has included significant drugs cases.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Punjabi speaker Hamraj Kang is lauded for the strength of his client care.

Purcell Parker Solicitors

This Birmingham high-street firm attracts praise for its ability to "pull in lots of general crime." It skilfully handles a high volume of work including burglary and robberies.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Michael Purcell handles family work and general crime, and sources continue to be impressed by his market profile.

Russell Jones & Walker

The Birmingham-based team benefits from this firm's national profile, and its criminal work often involves aspects of professional discipline and police law.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Team chair Tim Coolican is a well-regarded practitioner who is "extremely patient with lay clients." The Police Federation continues to be a major client. Susan Swan is an associate with a rising profile in police and disciplinary matters, and also handles sex offences.

Dispute Resolution

West Midlands
Leading Firms
Band 1

Pinsent Masons
Wragge & Co LLP

Band 2
DLA Piper UK LLP

Band 3
Eversheds LLP
Gateley
Shoosmiths

Band 4
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Bevan Brittan LLP
Cobbetts LLP
Freeth Cartwright LLP
George Green LLP
Hill Hofstetter LLP
Martineau
Mills & Reeve LLP
Moran & Co
Squire Sanders Hammonds

Band 5
Challinors Solicitors
Harvey Ingram LLP
Higgs & Sons
Shakespeares

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Leading Individuals

Band 1
Barker, Stephen Hill Hofstetter LLP
Goodrham, Stephen Gateley
Lowson, Greg Pinsent Masons
Manning Cox, Andrew Wragge & Co LLP

Band 2
Bennett, Diane Eversheds LLP
Bishop, Alexandra Shoosmiths
Busby, Christopher N Eversheds LLP
Ellis, Tom Wragge & Co LLP
Fortnam, Jonathan Pinsent Masons
Gordon, James Wragge & Co LLP
Hofstetter, Jonathan Hill Hofstetter LLP
Moran, Patrick Moran & Co S
Smith, Andrew Wragge & Co LLP

Band 3
Adams, Andrew Martineau
Allen, Steve Mills & Reeve LLP
Bamford, Nicholas A DLA Piper UK LLP
Bowker, Neil DLA Piper UK LLP
Garbett, Simon Squire Sanders Hammonds
Joyce, Raymond Freeth Cartwright LLP
Kendall, Adam J Bevan Brittan LLP
Lancaster, Andrew Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Lowe, Julia Higgs & Sons
Spooner, Andrew Wright Hassall LLP
Whittingham, Richard Cobbetts LLP
Williams, Neil George Green LLP

Associates to watch

Speed, Timothy Martineau
Surguy, Mark Eversheds LLP

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Recommended for Commercial Awareness

West Midlands
Cobbetts LLP
Eversheds LLP
Freeth Cartwright LLP
Moran & Co
Pinsent Masons

Recommended for Client Service

West Midlands
Eversheds LLP
Higgs & Sons
Martineau
Shakespeares

A leading force

Band 1 Pinsent Masons

This firm's dispute resolution group is a commanding presence in the market and acts for an impressive array of national and international clients. The practice possesses a wide range of expertise in the commercial and corporate spheres, including major contractual, shareholder, fraud and M&A disputes.

Clients include HSBC, Siemens and Britannia Building Society.

Commercial Awareness: "They focus their approach on a strategy that is tailored to the client's business aims."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of department Greg Lowson is widely recognised as a leading figure in the market. He is a solicitor advocate and accredited mediator, with extensive experience of complex high value disputes. Sources say Jonathan Fortnam is "an excellent strategist who grasps the key issues in a dispute quickly." His corporate expertise is matched by his know-how in the professional negligence and procurement

Wragge & Co LLP

This team is hailed by sources as a leading force in the West Midlands, with one interviewee enthusing: "They are extremely highly rated." The team's sterling reputation is well earned, thanks to its experience of frequently acting in high-profile trials. In a recent case in point, the firm acted for CPC Group in its high value breach of contract claim against Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company over the proposed redevelopment of the Chelsea Barracks in London.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Andrew Manning Cox is firmly established as a leading presence in the market and possesses considerable expertise in complex corporate and commercial disputes. Clients highlight Tom Ellis for his "excellent academic approach and business acumen." His impressive client list includes Sotheby's Auction House. Head of department James Gordon recently acted for Russian property developer Synergy in its dispute with RGI International. Andrew Smith wins praise as "one of the best litigators in the region."

He demonstrated his abilities acting in the CPC Group litigation.

Band 2 DLA Piper UK LLP

This disputes practice continues to be a significant presence in the West Midlands market, acting for a range of national and international clients. High-profile clients include HSBC, DSG International and Kodak. The team enjoys a well-deserved reputation for the breadth of its expertise in commercial and corporate disputes, along with a growing presence in domestic and cross-border arbitration.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Department head Nicholas Bamford is commended by sources for his expertise in a broad range of commercial disputes and for his specialisation in civil fraud issues and directors duties. Department head Neil



Alexandra Bishop

Bowker has been active recently defending Compass Group against high value claims arising from an alleged introductory-fee arrangement.

Band 3 Eversheds LLP

This team is highly popular with clients, who praise its ability to "work well with in-house teams." The Birmingham office of this national firm acts for an impressive array of clients, including Santander UK, Severn Trent Water and National Grid. The group's diverse expertise sees it act in financial services and banking, utilities and fraud-related disputes.

Client Service: "They always seek to deliver for the client and are always willing to put themselves out in terms of availability and turnaround."

Commercial Awareness: "They're very quick to grasp the salient business issues of a difficult case."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of practice Diane Bennett is highly popular with clients, who enthuse that she "listens to your concerns and excels at suggesting a strategy for moving forward." Christopher Busby enjoys a highly re-

garded practice encompassing commercial disputes, professional negligence and banking issues. Mark Surguy recently joined the firm from Pinsent Masons. He has a strong reputation in the region.

Gateley

This compact team continues to impress market sources with its range of capabilities in corporate and commercial disputes. The firm's expertise includes professional negligence, contractual and real estate disputes, and banking and financial issues.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources are full of praise for Stephen Goodrham, who is hailed as "an assured and top-quality litigator." He possesses experience in a wide variety of commercial matters, with a particular knowledge of injunctions, professional negligence and partnership disputes.

Shoosmiths

The disputes team at Shoosmiths acts in concert across its Birmingham and Milton Keynes offices and enjoys a well-deserved reputation for the high calibre of its work. The team acts in an impressive range of disputes spanning the re-

in the West Midlands



Greg Lowson

tail, automotive and IT sectors.

Its high-profile roster includes Jaguar Cars and Land Rover, Next and Calor Gas.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Experienced commercial litigator Alexandra Bishop is hugely popular with clients, who say "she combines fantastic experience and legal knowledge with outstanding client communication."

She divides her time between the firm's Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Northampton offices.

Band 4

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

This firm enjoys a well-deserved reputation in the market for the quality of its commercial disputes practice. The two-partner team possesses wide-ranging expertise including professional negligence, property, contractual and breach of warranty disputes.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Andrew Lancaster is highly regarded by market sources for his abilities in dealing with commercial disputes. He brings an outstanding knowledge of the construction industry to his practice and is a CEDR-accredited mediator.

Bevan Brittan LLP

Clients praise this team for its "efficient and realistic billing structures." The team acts across a range of disputes, including contractual, insolvency and public sector disputes as well as professional negligence. It acts for clients such as Motorola, Lloyds Banking Group and the Wincanton Group.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of the Birmingham team Adam Kendall wins glowing praise from clients: "He is incredibly diligent and always ensured we were happy with how matters progressed."

Cobbetts LLP

Clients are full of praise for this team, which acts in a variety of domestic and international cases. The team's wide-ranging expertise of corporate and commercial disputes includes competition law, professional negligence and breach of warranty issues.

Commercial Awareness: "They were very commercially aware."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Richard Whittingham frequently acts in cross-border disputes, with a particular specialisation in commercial agency and professional negligence-related matters.



Julia Lowe



Andrew Manning Cox

Freeth Cartwright LLP

This firm's disputes team continues to impress market observers. The practice continues to cement its position in the local market, acting in a variety of corporate and commercial matters encompassing contractual, shareholder disputes and fraud.

Commercial Awareness: "A very commercially minded team."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of department Raymond Joyce is praised as "a highly tenacious litigator with outstanding commercial acumen." As a former civil engineer he brings formidable experience of the construction law sector to his practice.

George Green LLP

This Cradley Heath-based team is a strong presence in the local dispute resolution market. The practice handles a wide variety of commercial and corporate disputes spanning partnership, shareholder and contractual disputes, as well as banking-related matters.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources praise Neil Williams for his "very commercial" approach to litigation.

He leads the team and has particular

expertise in professional negligence disputes.

Hill Hofstetter LLP

This firm enjoys a strong reputation for the quality of its work in both domestic and cross-border commercial and corporate disputes. The team demonstrated its capacity for high-end litigation recently in acting for Siemens before the Competition Appeals Tribunal in a major case against National Grid.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of practice Stephen Barker continues to be one of the leading practitioners in the local market. He has a broad expertise in commercial and corporate disputes and is a CEDR accredited mediator. Jonathan Hofstetter is admired by market sources for his commercial disputes practice and led the team acting for Siemens. He adds expertise in the technology and IP sectors to his cross border disputes experience.

Martineau

The team at Martineau wins glowing praise from clients, who say "they fine-tune their approach to achieve the best results for your business." The firm recently demonstrated its capability when it represented British company YouTravel.com and its Greek subsidiary against claims in the Florida Bankruptcy Courts.

Client Service: "The practice is highly efficient and always available to meet your needs."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of department Andrew Adams receives high praise from clients for being "a very pragmatic and solutions-focused lawyer." He adds expertise in corporate recovery and debt recovery to his practice. Timothy Speed continues to impress sources, who say he is "approachable and friendly, but firm with the other side when necessary."

Mills & Reeve LLP

Sources say this is "an extremely professional outfit with fantastic legal knowledge." The practice advises on a number of domestic and cross-border corporate and commercial disputes. Its impressive client roster includes BUPA, The Law Society and Toyota Tsusho.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of practice Steve Allen is praised by sources for his "commercial approach and outstanding client relations." He adds particular expertise in shareholder issues and breach of warranties to his general corporate and commercial disputes practice.

Moran & Co

This team acts in commercial disputes across a range of sectors, with a particular focus on contractual issues. It has won significant clients such as GM UK and Saab Great Britain.

Commercial Awareness: "They are very commercial and take pains to understand how your business operates."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Senior partner Patrick Moran elicits admiration from sources for his "diligent and pugnacious approach to litigation."

Squire Sanders Hammonds

The Birmingham-based disputes team of this national and international player enjoys a strong reputation for its work in the region. The practice boasts a wide range of expertise in contractual and shareholder disputes, financial services and professional negligence.

The team acts for high-profile clients such as AXA UK and Aston Villa FC.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of the Birmingham department, Simon Garbett is highly regarded for his broad commercial and corporate disputes practice.

Band 5

Challiners Solicitors

This team boasts excellent regional coverage with offices in Halesowen, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, West Bromwich and Nottingham. The team handles a variety of commercial and corporate disputes as well as professional negligence cases. The team is ably supported by the firm's strong fraud and asset recovery department.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Peter Lowe leads the disputes practice.

Harvey Ingram LLP

This team enjoys a strong presence in the market, acting in a wide variety of corporate and commercial disputes. The firm possesses expertise in partnership and shareholder disputes, IP, insolvency and professional negligence.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Chris Saul leads the team.

Higgs & Sons

This Brierley Hill-based team enters the rankings this year with the glowing praise of sources. The team handles a wide variety of corporate and commercial matters, including contractual, shareholder and partnership disputes, and IP and professional negligence matters.

Client Service: "They deliver pragmatic analysis and outstanding client service."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Head of department Julia Lowe is highly praised by clients for her "commercial and pragmatic approach, which is married to great strategic vision."

Shakespeareans

Sources say this firm "delivers a speedy service and provides effective alternative solutions for the client." The team handles a variety of commercial disputes, including contractual disputes, franchising and product liability issues.

Client Service: "Their excellent supportive approach reassures corporate clients that they are doing the right thing."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Mark Beesley is the head of department.

Other Notable Practitioners

Andrew Spooner of Wright Hassall LLP has a well-deserved reputation for his dispute resolution expertise. He acts in a broad range of commercial and corporate disputes, and is an accredited mediator.

It's a busy life at family law firm

So much is happening in the field of family law, and life at Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP in St Paul's Square has never been busier.

Founding partners Beverley Morris and Joan Price say it is an exciting time.

Beverley Morris comments: "Bedtime reading is never in short supply. There are reported decisions on a daily basis of which we need to keep abreast.

"The treatment of inherited/pre-acquired marital wealth is of increasing significance. Looking at the 'springboard effect' and the treatment of passive economic growth, when assessing the value of a company at the date of the marriage, is of growing importance".

Joan Price comments on the increase in enquiries into pre-nuptial agreements where, frequently, parties are marrying for a second time and are keen to ring fence/preserve wealth for the benefit of children from a first marriage, so they are not vulnerable to claims, in the event of a second marital breakdown.

Joan comments: "the court are going to give effect to a pre-nuptial agreement, freely entered into with full appreciation by the parties of the implications, unless in the circumstances prevailing it would not be fair to hold them to the agreement. That in itself brings about difficulties. What is the definition of fairness?"

Both partners are delighted at the recognition the firm has received in Chambers & Partners 2012, with the firm being described as "moving upwards quickly" and a recognition of the fact that the lights are rarely out in the office.

Beverley is the early bird and Joan burns the midnight oil.

Caroline Dresden is a recent addition to the firm and a most welcome one.

She has certainly strengthened the team and her expertise in high value Ancillary Relief work is recognised widely.

Work comes in on recommendation from fellow professionals and clients.

The practice covers the breadth of the country, and has also dealt with international cases involving Spain, France, Greece, Nigeria and even Armenia!

Vivienne Middleton and Melanie Tubbs continue to expand their field of specialism, both primarily concentrating on children focussed issues – residence disputes, contact, leave to remove from the jurisdiction etc.

Beverley, Joan and Caroline pride themselves in the careful selection of key individuals to work with the Practice, supporting their clients' needs.

Accountants, tax advisers, and barristers are handpicked, all of which ensures the highest quality work, leading to proportionate and timely resolution for the client.



The team at Divorce and Family Law Practice LLP

**DIVORCE
& FAMILY
LAW PRACTICE LLP**

**LEGAL KNOWLEDGE
& EXPERTISE**

**DISCRETION
& SENSITIVITY**

**PERSONAL
& TAILORED**

Divorce and Family Law Practice is a modern law practice based at 14 St. Paul's Square, Birmingham concentrating solely on the areas of divorce and family law.

Established in 2002, Divorce and Family Law Practice immediately gained recognition as a leading family law practice, being recognised in the Legal 500 and Chambers UK. This is one of the Midlands' premier niche matrimonial firms. Sources say: "It's a good operation - efficient, knowledgeable and reasonable to deal with." Being equally adept at collaborative law and litigation, it provides a balanced service to clients. Chambers UK 2011

The practice is headed by the partners Joan Price and Beverley Morris

The firm offers a highly personal and tailored service is adept at dealing with complex and high net value cases and issues concerning divorce, co-habitation, civil partnership disputes and children issues.

14 ST PAUL'S SQUARE
BIRMINGHAM B3 1RB
T: 0121 200 0890
F: 0121 233 9623
Email: jp@dfllp.co.uk
bjm@dfllp.co.uk

Going from strength to strength

Family/Matrimonial

Midlands
Leading Firms
Band 1

Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP
Mills & Reeve LLP

Band 2
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Benussi & Co
Challinors Solicitors
Higgs & Sons
Martineau
Shakespeares

Band 3
Blair Allison
Brethertons LLP
Harrison Clark
Irwin Mitchell
John Hooper & Co
Langleys
Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors
Rupert Bear Murray Davies
Tyndallwoods

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Leading Individuals

Band 1
Davies, Murray Rupert Bear Murray Davies
Harris-James, Kevin Shakespeares
Morris, Beverley Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP
Saunderson, Marc Mills & Reeve LLP

Band 2
Barnsley, Philip Higgs & Sons
Brew, Jonathan Harrison Clark
Carter, Barbara L Barbara Carter
Dresden, Caroline Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP
Hooper, John John Hooper & Co
O'Sullivan, Fiona M Challinors Solicitors
Pabani, Zahra Martineau
Price, Joan Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP
Wyatt, Elizabeth Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

Band 3
Kaye, Mary D Martineau
Kerrigan, Joseph Kerrigans Family Law Limited
Meisel, Mari Blair Allison
Messenger, Mercy Mercy Messenger

Band 4
Baldwin, Peter Peter Baldwin Children's Lawyer
Flint, Peter Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors
Hobden, Neil Benussi & Co
Houston, Angela Challinors Solicitors
Jackson, Steven C Higgs & Sons
Jones, Linda Ann Brethertons LLP
Jones, Sally Tyndallwoods
McVay, Christine Shakespeares
Quincey, Tim John Hooper & Co
Saunders, Kate Langleys
Speed, Judith Freeth Cartwright LLP
Walker Nicola Irwin Mitchell

Up-and-coming individuals
Bowns, Helen Mills & Reeve LLP

Associates to watch
Perks, Kelly Higgs & Sons
Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Recommended for Client Service

Midlands
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Higgs & Sons
Irwin Mitchell
Langleys
Martineau

Band 1
Divorce & Family Law Practice LLP
This Birmingham-based boutique has gone from strength to strength and is "moving upwards quickly," say sources. It offers high-quality advice and representation in matters ranging from children issues and civil partnership disputes, to cohabitation and high net worth ancillary relief. Clients benefit from the team's dedication and provision of personal, partner-led advice.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Beverley Morris enjoys an excellent reputation for her litigation practice. She is applauded by sources as "an able practitioner who is driven by the desire to achieve the very best for her client. This can mean very late nights, early mornings and tireless research as well as insuring that anyone she instructs is similarly motivated." A lot of Morris' work contains international elements. Caroline Dresden recently joined the firm from Mills & Reeve, and sources agree that her arrival has "strengthened the team." Her forte lies in ancillary relief, where she represents clients with substantial assets. Joan Price also enjoys an excellent reputation for high net worth ancillary relief. Market observers describe her as an "excellent specialist, who looks after her clients."

Mills & Reeve LLP
Mills & Reeve maintains its top position despite recent departures. Clients are quick to commend its professional, friendly and non-confrontational approach that is upheld even in complex litigation. Its established international expertise allows it to represent foreign clients and handle matters containing cross-jurisdictional elements. One source reports: "I see it as being one of the top firms in Birmingham for matrimonial finance."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources agree that Marc Saunderson deserves his reputation as one of the best family lawyers in the region. He is very popular with clients as "a safe pair of hands who won't encourage an expensive fight if a matter can be resolved amicably."

Helen Bowns is commended as a very competent and good fighter on behalf of her clients. Her highly-regarded children practice regularly advises on international cases.

Band 2
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
This family team handles all aspects of private and publicly funded work. It is particularly praised for its fabulous handling of childcare matters, often involving non-accidental injury. It is also increasingly involved in matters relating to forced marriages.

Client Service: "The firm has a very humane approach to litigation. They always try to get a fair settlement, and that's why clients go to them."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Department head Elizabeth Wyatt is described as "very good and dependable – straightforward and no-nonsense." She also earns accolades for her impressive handling of difficult clients.

Benussi & Co
This seven-strong niche practice maintains its strong focus on complex and high net worth ancillary relief. A number of its instructions in the last year have involved significant inherited wealth, as well as hidden assets.



Kevin Harris James

KEY INDIVIDUALS Neil Hobden skillfully handles complex ancillary relief matters. He successfully represented the wife in *Kingdon v Kingdon*, a case involving a non-disclosure of assets in an earlier financial settlement.

Challinors Solicitors
This firm is praised for its high level of service, in particular when it comes to complex ancillary relief matters involving significant assets. It continues to expand its client base in this area, receiving a growing amount of instructions from international clients. It maintains a highly regarded childcare team and also provides advice and representation in private children matters. "They have always provided an excellent service," enthuse clients.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Fiona O'Sullivan handles ancillary relief matters for high net worth individuals. Clients praise her ability to clearly explain legal issues to those not legally trained, and also describe her as "helpful, efficient and willing to listen to different points of view." Sources note that with Angela Houston, one can be sure instructions are acted on promptly and all matters are dealt with professionally.

She enjoys a fantastic reputation for her children work.

Higgs & Sons
This strong and efficient team is acknowledged for its impressive handling of some of the region's most complex and high-value ancillary relief cases. It has been increasingly active advising on pre and postnuptial agreements, and has also handled a number of matters involving family trusts. Clients are quick to commend the team's friendly yet professional style.

Client Service "They provide a broad spread of people to speak with, in order to find the right personality for a client. They understand the client's needs."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Philip Barnsley is the group's leading light, and sources note that his profile continues to rise. He is described as "sensitive to the needs and wishes of clients, but strong and authoritative when dealing with their cases." Observers are particularly impressed with his expertise in prenuptial agreements. Steven Jackson is a consultant with the firm. He has over 30 years' experience in the field and regularly receives private instructions from high net worth individuals. Associate Kelly Perks receives plaudits for her "growing expertise in ancillary relief, attention to detail and sound grasp of procedure and law."



Caroline Dresden



Zahra Pabani

Martineau
This group is renowned for its impressive representation of affluent and high-profile clients such as sports personalities and international business professionals.

The firm has expanded in the last year and now also handles international child abduction cases. Children Act matters are also skillfully dealt with by the team.

Client Service: "They are experts at client relationships."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Zahra Pabani recently joined the firm from Shakespeares. She is held in high regard as "she gets straight to the chase and has a very personable approach." Sources agree that the team has been greatly strengthened by her arrival. For children matters, Mary Kaye comes highly recommended because of her high emotional intelligence and first-class communication skills.

Shakespeares
This group maintains its solid reputation, having increased in size and offering family services in Nottingham, Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Sources praise its high-profile private children work, as well as its ability to handle complex matrimonial cases with international finance elements. It has recently also experienced an increase in instructions from well-known sports personalities.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Kevin Harris-James recently joined the firm from Beswicks. Sources say: "Wherever he goes, clients follow him for his reputation as a no-nonsense lawyer who litigates at the highest level." Christine McVay also recently joined the firm from another prominent family law practice. Observers note her "incredibly thorough approach" and impressive presence.

Hot tubbing

Sat Plaha, partner and head of forensic services at BDO LLP in Birmingham, delves into the world of hot tubbing

There was a time when a reasonably competent professional could feel comfortable if called upon to give evidence to the courts, without further training or experience and without feeling out of their depth.

We could debate whether the passing of those more gentlemanly arrangements is a loss, but it is now clear that those days are long gone – expert testimony is now a professional activity in its own right and it seems there is no place for the amateur ‘gentleman players’.

The expert must now, with the risk of a negligence suit, be able to account for his experience and expertise, field cross examination questions from counsel and, with the recent development of hot tubbing, also contend with live exchanges with the opposing expert witness, spurred on by counsel or the presiding judges or tribunal members.

It is the introduction of hot tubbing – simultaneous expert testimony and questioning, including questions posed by the opposing expert – which is the biggest potential ‘game changer’.

80 in a tub

Earlier this month we showcased the art of hot tubbing in a mock trial that attracted 80 guests from the legal community across the West Midlands.

Participants included His Honour Judge Waksman QC, who is currently involved in the Manchester concurrent evidence pilot scheme, and His Honour Judge Grant from the Birmingham

Technology and Construction Court, as well as two leading barristers from St Phillips and No5 Chambers and forensic experts from BDO.

During the mock trial, hosted by the Birmingham Law Society, guests saw the expert witnesses come under cross examination from their opposing barrister in the conventional format of examining experts separately and individually.

But then, using the same case study, the experts gave evidence concurrently to demonstrate the method of ‘hot tubbing’. Judge Waksman took control of proceedings and questioned the experts directly and at the same time.

The evening was a great success, giving guests the opportunity to compare and contrast the two very different methods of giving evidence, and witness firsthand the intensity and sufficiency of the level of detail contained in the joint statement.

Prior to hot tubbing, an expert having strong courtroom skills might deflect a difficult question, relying upon the anxiety of Counsel who from many years of experience knows not to dig into areas where the witness can wobble. Consequently, it used to be difficult for the opposing expert or their assistants to provide sufficient ammunition to enable counsel to manoeuvre and respond to a talented expert.

No longer – during the simultaneous expert testimony of hot tubbing, points that might otherwise be lost or go un-



Sat Plaha

challenged can be almost immediately addressed.

Face off

This process places a greater premium on the intellectually agile expert who, fast on their feet, is familiar with the detail and who, from experience and personal expertise, can react quickly and faultlessly to changes in assumptions or in the assumed facts.

Those having insufficient expertise and experience face difficulty. On a direct comparison of testifying experts, side by side, like for like, question by question, any shortfall in knowledge, expertise or intellectual capacity is far more evident.

Hands-on expert

This seems to end the role of the expert

‘front-man’ who has little involvement during the case work and yet presents the evidence at trial. Whilst this is unlikely to mean the end of expert witness work involving the work of a team (many large projects cannot be delivered cost effectively without leveraging a team), it is likely to require the expert witness to commit greater resources to considering the assumed facts, the opposing opinion evidence and preparing in detail for trial.

For many these shifts represent a positive change, as it focuses the minds of the experts and the activity of the courts on the critical issues, therefore shortening trials and improving the quality of the process through which justice is delivered.

However, for those who offer other ad-

vice or have additional business activities, this extra pressure is likely to make them question whether expert testimony is worth the stress.

Going forward

In the long term, this will inevitably increase the price of expert testimony – the fact that expert witnesses bear increasing exposure in terms of personal embarrassment during testimony, combined with potential professional negligence claims and the burden of trial preparation, will drive up standards and cause weaker firms to leave the market.

It is destined to become better engineered, and ever more important to the higher value, more complex cases as the fate of such trials will more closely rest on the mettle of the expert.

Contentious insolvency – more than just number crunching

Helen Hancock, director of forensic services at BDO LLP, takes us through insolvency investigations with a fine toothed comb

In any insolvency situation, it’s a given that accountants need to be on the ball when they’re looking at financial data.

But they are only as good as the data they have to work with.

The data that can really unlock a complex case is often hidden in places some administrators would never even know existed.

Many insolvencies include complex issues for both accountants and IT specialists and it is important in terms of cost, efficiency and effectiveness that all teams are closely integrated. Just looking at last year’s ledgers is rarely adequate. To really understand what has happened, you need a broad picture of the company’s activities and often over a number of years.

In many cases, it is only when the

economy takes a downturn that the real nature of its dealings may become visible. All too often, during peak trading years, dubious payments can go completely undetected. It’s scary to think that these bogus activities only come to the surface when times are tough and creditors are putting the pressure on.

When you dig deep into what went on in the good years, you discover abuses that have taken place many years previous. We have witnessed cases where one director had paid for his mother’s house, another his grandfather’s. When the companies became insolvent, investigators looked into the detail of where the money for ‘land and buildings’ really went. And that’s where the fraud comes to light.

Insolvency and forensic specialists continue to uncover plenty of ‘traditional’ frauds, such as an employee making a number of payments over several years to fictitious suppliers, when in fact the cheques were going into their own bank accounts all along. One interesting case involved a director who channelled al-

most £1 million of company funds into his wife’s – cataclysmically unsuccessful – business.

Unearthing such fraud isn’t about the luck of the draw. In each case we were able to immediately secure the key data and work through it with a fine tooth comb. We aim to secure company data from a site within 48 hours; copying entire computer systems, back-ups and email archives, recreating servers and so on. With a proactive approach and improved technology, costs can be significantly reduced with administrators needing to spend less time on site.

It is our priority to get hold of all the relevant data we possible can at the very beginning of the process. It may not always be apparent as to why you might need it, but the priority is to get everything that’s there. And since in an insolvency situation, computer hardware is often quickly and cheaply sold on to appease creditors, there’s a real risk of losing material that is vital to your investigations, if you don’t act quickly.



Helen Hancock


Laurence Mills

Shareholder disputes

Laurence Mills, director of forensic services at BDO LLP, discusses the rise of boardroom fall outs

We have witnessed shareholder disputes rise by some 200 per cent over the past year. It's an arresting number. So what's going on?

Private company profits have been depressed for a long time now and many are struggling to see an end to the current downturn. People have been biding their time in the hope that things pick up, but with no obvious light in sight and with trading conditions continually difficult, increasing numbers of businesses are raising their grievances and seeking advice to bring them to a head.

Shareholder disputes are manifesting themselves in two main ways: unfair prejudice claims under s.994 of the Companies Act and post-deal disputes.

Post-deal disputes are perhaps easier to categorise. By general example, it could be something like a company being sold and then the buyer discovering that the vendor had misrepresented the status of a contract. They may have bought the business with the assurance that the contract was in place, only to later find it had been terminated prior to the completion of the sale.

Obviously having a detrimental effect on the value of the company, the buyer could seek to have the sale rescinded on the basis of fraudulent misrepresentation. Dealing with scenarios of this type has become increasingly common.

But it's the unfair prejudice claims that are perhaps more a symptom of economic conditions, and often more complicated and complex in their nature.

Big Brother

As markets slump and trading conditions become more difficult, boards and shareholders are taking a Big Brother approach, looking more closely at what everyone is contributing. For many, this can throw a bright light onto matters that have been lurking around under the radar.

Most companies have already been through cost-cutting exercises, making efficiencies, redundancies and so on. But what happens when conditions don't improve and there are no other cuts to make? People start pointing the finger and turning stones that had previously been left unturned, ultimately causing conflict and disputes to come to the fore.

There are many board-level people out there working incredibly hard, and it is

only natural that they'll look to their co-directors and shareholders to question whether they are contributing as much – and if not, why are they effectively being subsidised by the company in an environment that can't afford passengers?

Is one of the directors rewarding themselves a perceived unreasonable level of remuneration, reducing the profits and therefore dividends to the other shareholders? Is the sales director simply struggling in a difficult trading environment, or is he incompetent and not performing to expectations? You rarely get everyone to agree who is really worth their position and pay.

Given all the potential sources of disputes, it is not surprising that testing times are bringing more of them to the fore. Solid shareholders' agreements must be in place to help minimise the chances of fallouts. Management teams, their accountants and lawyers should discuss how certain events could manifest themselves under the agreements and understand the full range of possible outcomes before the disagreement even arises.

A good shareholder agreement doesn't mean that disputes won't still happen but at least it limits the scope of the disagreement and lays down the ground rules from the outset.

Value versus price


Paul McKeown

Is a company's listed share price a reliable indicator of value? BDO Valuations Director, **Paul McKeown**, investigates

sations of other companies in the sector. If these are lower than the reported net assets, it may be that negative sentiment rather than fundamentals is causing the difference.

Let's take a simple example where a listed company bought a business for £20 million two years ago, with the original price based on £10 million of physical assets and £10 million in goodwill and intangible assets. Now that business has been written down to £16 million in the books, but the market is valuing it at £12 million. Whilst it is true that the market can get it wrong, any over or under-pricing only becomes apparent with hindsight.

So what arguments might prevail when a conflict arises from a difference between the market view and a company's accounts?

Firstly, the higher value may appear correct based on an analysis of the underlying cash flows of the business and their inherent risk. If these have been adjusted to take account of market conditions, the discount rate might not change very much. To adjust both might result in a double-discounting of the value.

If you can demonstrate that customer demand, supplier and employee arrangements have largely been unaffected, it could go a long way to support the case that the market is undervaluing the business.

Also relevant are the market capitali-

Extremes of sentiment

There are many examples of large companies' share prices moving extravagantly within the last couple of years, where for example there is a 500 per cent increase followed by a 40 per cent reduction. The intrinsic value of a business might lie between two extremes of sentiment, and fair value can differ from market price.

If it was difficult to justify a valuation previously, it is even more so now - unless your technical arguments are sound. A whole host of issues can affect the price such as economic drivers of the business, inherent difficulty in forecasting cash flows, a discount rate, long-term growth rate, discounts and premiums that might be relevant to equity values, the business cycle or the relevance of market sentiment.

The value of private companies is often benchmarked against listed company share prices. Those prices can be highly volatile and do not always reflect business fundamentals, which tend to be more stable. Of course the value of private companies goes up and down but because they tend to be longer term investments, their value swings are far less pronounced than shares on febrile stock markets.



Given all the potential sources of disputes, it is not surprising that testing times are bringing more of them to the fore



Keith Dudley

Private Client

West Midlands
Leading Firms
Band 1

Browne Jacobson LLP
Higgs & Sons
Mills & Reeve LLP

Band 2

Hewitsons LLP S
Lodders Solicitors LLP
Martineau

Band 3

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Brethertons LLP
Freeth Cartwright LLP
Gateley
Nelsons
Shakespeares
Wright Hassall LLP

Recommended for Commercial Awareness

Browne Jacobson LLP
Martineau
Mills & Reeve LLP

Recommended for Client Service

Midlands
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Higgs & Sons
Lodders Solicitors LLP

Leading Individuals Senior Statesmen

Carslake, Hugh Martineau

Band 1

Barber, Gary Mills & Reeve LLP
Colacicchi, Clare Hewitsons LLP
Dudley, Keith Martineau
Green, Martin Lodders Solicitors LLP
Hansell, Matthew Mills & Reeve LLP
Leek, Robert E Higgs & Sons

Band 2

Brignull, Stephen Lodders Solicitors LLP
Colacicchi, William Browne Jacobson LLP
Cooper, Terry Cobbetts LLP
Cullen, Nigel Freeth Cartwright LLP
Elphinston, Alex Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Gosling, Peter G Higgs & Sons
Moxon, Nicholas Higgs & Sons
Obrey, Lucy Higgs & Sons
Steele, Grace Geldards LLP
Thompson, Wenna Browne Jacobson LLP

Associates to watch

Grundy, John Mills & Reeve LLP

Leading players

Band 1

Browne Jacobson LLP

Based mainly in Nottingham, and with offices in Birmingham and London, the team here is regarded as one of the leading players in the region. In addition to wills, trusts and probate work for UK-based clients, a significant tranche of the team's work consists of trust planning with an offshore or international dimension. The firm also devotes important resources to Court of Protection and deputyship work.

Commercial Awareness: "They are approachable, commercial and offer a broad range of expertise."

KEY INDIVIDUALS William Colacicchi specialises in high-value trust and estate planning. He initially practised as a corporate lawyer, "which is an excellent foundation when you have clients with complex business affairs," according to sources. The "impressive" and "client-friendly" Wenna Thompson advises clients on tax, estate and succession planning.

Higgs & Sons

The growing team at this Black Country firm has made a concerted effort to invest in its private client offering, with convincing results. The team is distinguished by having a flourishing care for the elderly practice and a family investment management service.

Further, the team's specialist knowledge of inheritance tax law gives it a commanding position in the marketplace.

Client Service: "They have the most incredible bedside manner, are confident with their advice and great listeners."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Robert Leek is a highly experienced and able lawyer focusing on wealth planning, probate and matters affecting older people's financial affairs. Nicholas Moxon looks after the owners of closely-held businesses and advises on the establishment of charitable trusts. Lucy

Obrey is described glowingly as being "forever at the forefront of what's going on in the market."

Peter Gosling is "reassuring, confident and highly discreet."

Mills & Reeve LLP

This East Anglian giant continues to make successful inroads into the Midlands market. The team engages in big-ticket work for landed clients, business owners and family/private investment companies. It advises wealthy individuals and families on tax planning, trust creation and administration, complex will drafting and winding up estates.

Commercial Awareness: "Absolutely first rate – a dream team."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Gary Barber handles wills, trusts and estates for clients who are impressed by his "down-to-earth, no-nonsense manner." Trusts expert Matthew Hansell makes a good impression for his "technical ability and lively demeanour." "Rising star" John Grundy advises entrepreneurs and international clients on complex trust and estate issues.

Band 2

Hewitsons LLP

This Northampton firm has a large and loyal agricultural client base, but is equally adept at meeting the needs of closely-held business owners. Core strengths of the practice include obtaining business property relief for farms, inheritance tax planning, estate planning and the creation, administration and restructuring of trusts.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Clare Colacicchi focuses on estate planning, alleviating capital taxation and charitable trusts.



Alex Elphinston



Hugh Carslake



Matthew Hansell

Lodders Solicitors LLP

This leading regional firm, based in Stratford-upon-Avon, offers a comprehensive private client practice geared to the needs of farmers, business owners and wealthy families. Areas of specialisation include capital gains tax planning, contentious trusts and the creation and maintenance of family investment companies as vehicles for asset protection. The team is also well known for its work before the Court of Protection and compensation trusts.

Client Service: "Good specialist and personal service."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Martin Green is head of the private client department. Commentators say of Green: "He's first class – I would recommend him to anyone." The "very pleasant and highly able"

Stephen Brignull advises on trust administration, tax, estate and succession planning.

Martineau

The team at this venerable Birmingham firm has a varied client roster of entrepreneurs, leading figures in business, high net worth individuals and farming families. The team engages in the full range of private client and wealth management work, from capital tax planning to contentious trusts and probates.

Commercial Awareness: "They are switched-on and technically excellent."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Keith Dudley is described as being "steeped in trusts," and expert in tax mitigation and matters relating to vulnerable people. Hugh Carslake has an admirable client following of landed estate and large rural property owners.

Band 3

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

The team at Anthony Collins is an acknowledged market leader in work involving the Court of Protection, mental capacity issues and personal injury trusts. The team also advises on the drafting of wills, tax planning, and contentious and non-contentious probate. It also has a niche in making Forced Marriage Protection applications.

Client Service: "Sympathetic, open and welcoming people."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Alex Elphinston heads the department. He impresses with his attention to detail and ability to understand client circumstances and objectives.

Brethertons LLP

This firm, with offices in Banbury and Rugby, has a strong foothold in the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire markets. The team takes client service very seriously, and has a client liaison officer to ensure clients' needs are met. The lawyers handle all manner of private client work, including contentious trusts and probate, complex will drafting and personal injury trusts.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Nadiya Virani-Bland leads the department.

Freeth Cartwright LLP

This East Midlands stalwart has an impressively broad private client offering. The department is divided into teams specialising in contentious trusts and probate, Court of Protection, trusts and wills.

The department also has a dedicated team of qualified financial advisers on hand.

KEY INDIVIDUALS The "patient, wise and fair" Nigel Cullen heads the department and leads the probate and wills team.

Gateley

The mainstay of this team's work lies in tax, trust and estate planning for wealthy individuals and their families.

Other areas of excellence include complex probate and trust disputes, advising foreign domiciliaries on tax planning for the UK, and handling offshore asset structures for trust companies.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Adrian Mabe is a key contact.

Nelsons

This firm, with offices in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, advises high and medium net worth business owners, individuals and families on virtually every facet of private client law. Capital and inheritance tax planning, mental capacity, trusts, wills and probates are handled with aplomb by the team.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Richard Grosberg heads the team.

Shakespeares

This leading Birmingham firm, enlarged by mergers in 2010 with Berryman in Nottingham and Warwickshire firm Needham and James, is now a serious player throughout the region. The combined entity has formidable resources to handle the full range of private client work.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Clare Laird heads the department.

Wright Hassall LLP

This full-service Stratford firm advises farmers, landed estate and family business owners on their tax, trust and estate affairs. The team also has well thought of business succession planning, charitable trusts and estate planning for the elderly practices.

The property and matrimonial teams collaborate closely with the private client team to ensure continuity of service.

KEY INDIVIDUALS John Rouse is a key contact.

Other Notable Practitioners

The "down-to-earth and straight-talking" Terry Cooper heads the department at Cobbetts LLP. Grace Steele of Geldards LLP handles trusts and estate planning, and is well liked by clients who consider her to be "sympathetic, knowledgeable and efficient."

A noted international firm

Intellectual Property

Midlands
Leading Firms
Band 1

Wragge & Co LLP

Band 2

Browne Jacobson LLP

DLA Piper UK LLP

Martineau

Shakespeares

Band 3

Eversheds LLP

Pinsent Masons

Band 4

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

Cobbetts LLP

Wright Hassall LLP

Recommended for Commercial Awareness

Midlands

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

Browne Jacobson LLP

Eversheds LLP

Wragge & Co LLP

Recommended for Client Service

Midlands

Browne Jacobson LLP

DLA Piper UK LLP

Martineau

Wragge & Co LLP

Leading Individuals

Band 1

Barron, David Wragge & Co LLP

Briggs, Nick Shakespeares

Cushley, Declan Browne Jacobson LLP

Harris, Gordon Wragge & Co LLP

Jones, Ceryg Wragge & Co LLP

McMorrow, Marie DLA Piper UK LLP

Band 2

Clay, Andrew Squire Sanders Hammonds

Driscoll, Helen Martineau

Duxbury, Patrick Wragge & Co LLP

Ellis, Peter Browne Jacobson LLP

Fry, James Eversheds LLP S

Paiano, Mauro Shakespeares

Talbot, Matthew Howes Percival LLP

Wyn, Davies Cerys Pinsent Masons

Band 3

Anderson, Frances Cobbetts LLP

Burley, Des Martineau

Cunningham, Nicholas Wragge & Co LLP

Kempton, Luke Wragge & Co LLP

Snelgrove, Mark Browne Jacobson LLP

Associates to watch

Dumbill, Paula Browne Jacobson LLP

Higton, Emma DLA Piper UK LLP

Lesniak, Rebecca Shakespeares

Noble, Martin Shakespeares

Roberts, Richard Browne Jacobson LLP

Robertson, Zoe Martineau

Swaine, Kate Wragge & Co LLP

Young, Emma Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest

Band 1

Wragge & Co LLP

This deeply impressive IP team is widely acknowledged as the strongest in the Midlands. The firm's distinctive structure, which sees its solicitors dividing their time between its London and Birmingham offices, allows it to provide a high-quality and seamless intellectual property service to national and international clients. It is active on a wide variety of issues, in terms of both transactions and litigation, and its list of clients includes such notable organisations as Dyson, the Rugby Football Union and GlaxoSmithKline.

Client Service "The team is a delight to work with, and provides proper assistance and support."

Commercial Awareness: "A strategically brilliant firm full of excellent individuals."

KEY INDIVIDUALS David Barron is an outstanding litigator who is roundly praised by commentators for his expertise in patent matters and his continued presence at the coalface of contentious IP. Gordon Harris is head of the firm's IP practice. He specialises in contentious work and is an experienced mediator who continues to provide high-quality service to his clients. Ceryg Jones heads the brands team and is regularly described as a class act.

As one of the firm's lawyers more frequently based in Birmingham, he is at the centre of its Midlands IP practice. Luke Kempton is known for his expertise in the life sciences arena. Commentators say he "is a real credit to the firm and always does a fantastic job for his clients."

Patrick Duxbury is "an eminently sensible and experienced lawyer," with an outstanding track record in transactional IP matters within the life sciences sector.

Nicholas Cunningham deals effectively with patent, design, copyright and trade mark litigation. Sources describe him as "personable, highly competent and very easy to deal with." Kate Swaine is a director within the team, and is an experienced and skilled brands and advertising specialist.

Band 2

Browne Jacobson LLP

This excellent group works across offices in Nottingham and Birmingham, with additional support in London, and is able to call on strength in both contentious and non-contentious intellectual property matters. Notable recent highlights include working with international construction company Mace on its global registration, opposition and infringement programme, and advising Streetwise Publications in relation to a copyright infringement claim. Clients are delighted with the firm's work, and say its solicitors "are approachable and commercial, and offer a broad range of expertise."

Client Service: "They are user-friendly and informal, and you really get the sense of working in a team."

Commercial Awareness: "They have a real grasp of our business, having taken the time to understand the market."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Declan Cushley is head of the firm's commercial group, and an experienced practitioner in intellectual property matters. He recently advised National Lottery operator Camelot on its IP policy and in relation to infringement of its trade marks. Clients say he is "practical, proactive and very responsive; he always responds and acts very quickly."



Mauro Paiano

Peter Ellis is an experienced and highly capable contentious IP specialist. Sources commend his excellent work and his "superbly commercially oriented" approach. Mark Snelgrove is known as "a fine, technically skilled lawyer who is able to cut through the issues without getting sidetracked." He recently advised long-term client Hookeage on a trade mark issue relating to its Patrick Cox brand. Paula Dumbill continues to impress with her work in strategic IP. Clients praise the high quality of her service as well as her commercial viewpoint. Richard Roberts is new to the rankings, and is highlighted for his burgeoning reputation in IP litigation. Commentators admire his approach, which "shows a commitment to detail and commercial issues that is beyond the norm."

DLA Piper UK LLP

The Birmingham office of this noted international firm provides a high-quality service to its intellectual property clients, and is plugged into the organisation's wider network in the UK and beyond. The team worked with colleagues in New York and China on the acquisition by Avon of Liz Earle Cosmetics, a globally significant transaction involving centrally important IP issues. It also recently advised Aga Rangemaster Group on a notable trade mark case, and defended Guidance Monitoring UK in patent infringement proceedings. Commentators admire the work of the team's solicitors, and note that "they've always been very strong on behalf of the client, and are



Helen Driscoll

precisely the kind of people you want fighting your corner."

Client Service: "They are very responsive and tremendously organised, and queries are always dealt with extremely quickly."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Marie McMorrow heads the team and consistently demonstrates her excellence in heavyweight IP work. Clients say she is "incredibly gifted at presenting advice in the right way - she gauges the level of the people she's working with very well, which allows for openness and leads to genuine debate on strategy and how to manage negotiations." Emma Higton is a new addition to the rankings, with sources describing her as "one of the group's unsung heroes; she has real commercial nous and is incredibly professional in approach without being stuffy, which makes for a good working relationship."

Martineau

Martineau's IP group has a strong presence in the Midlands and a reputation for being an "extremely professional and knowledgeable" team. It has the capacity to handle contentious and non-contentious matters across a number of industries, and is as comfortable with technical patent work as it is with brand management and trade mark strategy. Notable recent clients include Aston University, Horstman Defence Systems and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health.

Client Service "Any time we engage with the firm, the advice provided always takes into account the type of organisation we are and makes the whole process incredibly simple and easy."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Helen Driscoll heads the team and is known for her expertise in both contentious and non-contentious IP. Des Burley has an excellent reputation for his work in the IP sector, particularly with regard to matters involving universities and the hi-tech industries. Clients describe him as "extremely personable and welcoming, with great knowledge of his practice area." Zoe Robertson is a talented and increasingly experienced associate. Her recent highlights include assisting low-voltage cabling manufacturer Lastar in protecting its IP rights in the EU.

Shakespeares

This strong Midlands firm is a standout participant in the intellectual property marketplace, and has worked on a string of substantial engagements of late. Its lawyers are experienced across the full spectrum of IP matters, but are known for their particular expertise in relation to patents. The team's high-profile client list includes Poundland, Candlelight Products and The Health People Group. Recent highlights saw the team advise PRECOS, a spin-off from Nottingham University, on the transfer of IP and related licensing issues.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Nick Briggs leads the department and is known to clients as a "prompt, personable and thorough" solicitor with experience across the full breadth of IP. Mauro Paiano handles an interesting variety of trade mark, design and patent-related issues. Sources describe him as "practical, very responsive and generally a likeable and easy person to work with." Rebecca Lesniak is a new addition to the firm's Birmingham office, and brings with her a fine reputation and a range of experience in the field.

Commentators praise Martin Noble for his "responsiveness, flexibility and technical knowledge." In the past year he has handled a range of matters, from branding advice to complex patent litigation.

One of the leading practices



Huw Dolphin

Leading Firms

Band 1

DLA Piper UK LLP
Eversheds LLP

Band 2

Gateley
Martineau
Squire Sanders Hammonds

Band 3

Irwin Mitchell
Pinsent Masons
Shakespeares
Shoosmiths The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Wragge & Co LLP

Band 4

Clarke Willmott LLP
Harrison Clark

Leading Individuals

Band 1

Dolphin, Huw DLA Piper UK LLP
McGeever, Brendan Gateley
Singh, Devinder Squire Sanders Hammonds

Band 2

Baker, Ian Martineau S
Conway, Vicki Wragge & Co LLP
Curtis, Gemma Eversheds LLP S
George, Stephen Squire Sanders Hammonds
Jordan, Andrew J Eversheds LLP S
Taylor, Andrew Shakespeares
Wilson, Mark Gateley

Band 3

Cleary, David The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Cooper, John The Wilkes Partnership LLP
Jeffreys, John DLA Piper UK LLP
Keates, James Shoosmiths
Lomax, Alastair Pinsent Masons
Payne, Sam Martineau
Rawlings, Brian Eversheds LLP S
Readett, Helen Martineau
Sullivan, John Christopher Philip DLA Piper UK LLP
Whitbread, Jonathan Harrison Clark

Up-and-coming individuals

French, Daniel Squire Sanders Hammonds
Slinn, Stephanie Clarke Willmott LLP

Band 1

DLA Piper UK LLP

Sources agree that DLA Piper is one of the region's outstanding practices and boasts "a good strong team."

The team enjoys an excellent relationship with the Big Four accountancy firms and has a place on most leading bank panels. The firm recently acted for PwC and the Bank of Scotland as administrators of a property holding company which holds bingo halls across the UK.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Practice head Huw Dolphin is highly regarded for his non-contentious restructuring and insolvency practice. He recently acted for HSBC and BDO in relation to the furniture retailer Soda Living. John Sullivan frequently acts in domestic and multi-jurisdictional contentious restructuring. John Jeffreys is a favourite with clients, who say: "He gets things done quickly and efficiently." He has a particular expertise in real estate restructuring and insolvency.

Eversheds LLP

Interviewees praise the team at Eversheds for its considerable experience in the restructuring and insolvency sector which makes it "one of the leading practices" in the West Midlands. The firm enjoys a strong domestic bank panel presence as well as carrying out multi-jurisdictional work. The firm acted for PwC on the administration and disposal of The British School of Motoring.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources say Gemma Curtis fosters "great client relations and really works hard to achieve their aims." Others say: "She is easy to deal with and sees the issues quickly." She led the firm's work in relation to The British School of Motoring.

Meanwhile clients enthuse that Andrew Jordan is "clearly a good lawyer who doesn't flap under pressure." They add that he "gets things done" and is "a pragmatic lawyer to deal with." Brian Rawlings enjoys a well-deserved reputation in the market for his technical abilities in the sector.

Band 2

Gateley

The team continues to impress market sources in the region, who say it is "an excellent outfit." As one of the largest teams in the region it caters to the full range of restructuring and insolvency matters. The firm also has a dedicated corporate recovery team which acts for an array of clearing banks. Interviewees say: "They are very commercial in the mould of being good lawyers who get business deals done."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Peers are quick to praise Brendan McGeever as "a great lawyer who really stands out." He is also a firm favourite with clients, who say he is a pleasure to work with. Meanwhile Mark Wilson is hailed as "a specialist on the litigation front." He recently acted for the administrators of an automotive manufacturer in a successful claim against its former administrators.

Martineau

The team at Martineau continues to impress clients, who say: "They are very good at applying expertise from different areas to get the job done." The firm caters to the full range of restructuring and insolvency matters and frequently acts for banks and financial institutions.

The team has recently been advising Deloitte in connection with the administration of the Wordsworth Group. "They are always approachable and commercial-minded. They go the extra mile for the client," say sources.



Alastair Lomax

KEY INDIVIDUALS Clients admire Ian Baker, saying he is "very cerebral and has a fantastic grasp of the law." His in-depth understanding of corporate and banking issues makes him much sought after. Clients say Sam Payne takes a "really commercial approach" and consequently "delivers pragmatic solutions."

He possesses expertise in the full range of contentious and non-contentious restructuring and insolvency matters. Meanwhile Helen Readett wins plaudits for her "responsive and commercial" practice.

Sources say she is lovely to work with but "can be tough when she needs to be."

Squire Sanders Hammonds

Peers and clients alike say that the firm has "a fantastic contentious and non-contentious team" that boasts "real strength in depth." The firm handles a broad range of corporate restructuring and insolvency matters and has a strong presence on clearing bank panels.

Recent high-profile highlights include acting for the administrators of Super Aguri F1, a motor racing team.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Clients say Devinder Singh is "very business-savvy and builds relationships well." Market sources are quick to say: "He is a standout insolvency lawyer." Stephen George is a firm favourite with clients who say he stands out thanks to his "considerable experience, excellent client service and commercial and pragmatic advice." He leads the team at the Birmingham office. Daniel French is well regarded for his particular specialism in real estate-related insolvency.

Band 3

Irwin Mitchell

Sources say the firm has "a very good team which is a pleasure to work with." The firm has a strong insolvency and liquidation practice which matches with expertise in property insolvency and Law of Property Act (LPA) receivership issues. It advised PwC as administrators of Williams & Son Limited and as LPA receivers for the relevant property assets.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Michael Bennett leads the insolvency team in Birmingham.

Pinsent Masons

The team frequently acts on behalf of banks and the Big Four accountancy firms in transactional restructuring and insolvency matters. The firm recently acted for KPMG as the administrators of the Western Corrugated group of companies. The team's clients include Barclays, HSBC, RBS and Lloyds TSB.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Market sources admire Alastair Lomax as a technically skilled insolvency lawyer. He led the way on the firm's advice on the administration of Western Corrugated.

Shakespeares

The team at Shakespeares is establishing itself as a firm favourite with clients, who say: "It's a fantastic team" with great "strength in depth." The team handles the full spectrum of restructuring and insolvency work with a particular strength in the contentious side of the sector.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources enthuse that Andrew Taylor is "very commercial and pragmatic" as well as "reliable and enjoyable to work with." He leads the team at the firm.

Shoosmiths

The team continues to enjoy extensive expertise in retail insolvency in addition to its general corporate restructuring and insolvency practice. Recent highlights include advising on the administration of department store chain Vergo Retail. Sources say: "It is a very commercial firm."

KEY INDIVIDUALS James Keates is admired as a "very good dynamic lawyer." He led the way on the Vergo Retail transaction.

The Wilkes Partnership LLP

Sources say the team here consists of very skilled lawyers who can always be relied on to "do a good job." The firm handles all aspects of restructuring and insolvency.

KEY INDIVIDUALS David Cleary is "an excellent insolvency practitioner." Meanwhile John Cooper "always delivers a fantastic personal service."

Wragge & Co LLP



James Keates

The firm is a well-established presence in the market with extensive experience of non-contentious restructuring and insolvency matters. Recent significant highlights include advising the administrators of Legion Group and Legion FM.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Vicki Conway is hailed by peers as a "very good insolvency lawyer." She led the way on the Legion Group work.

Band 4

Clarke Willmott LLP

Clients say the firm has an impressive and "very proactive team." The team handles the full range of restructuring and corporate and personal insolvency.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Clients say Stephanie Slinn has "a can-do attitude, moves things forward and she keeps you updated." She leads the team at the firm.

Harrison Clark

This Worcester-based practice handles a wide range of insolvency matters. The team has extensive experience in both corporate and personal insolvency.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Sources admire Jonathan Whitbread as a skilled and personable lawyer who is great to work with.

Outstanding team

Corporate/M&A

 West Midlands
 Leading Firms
 Band 1

DLA Piper UK LLP
Eversheds LLP
Wragge & Co LLP
Band 2
Gateley
Pinsent Masons
Band 3
Browne Jacobson LLP
Martineau
Squire Sanders Hammonds
Band 4
Cobbetts LLP
George Green LLP
Harvey Ingram LLP
Hill Hofstetter LLP
Shakespeares
Shoosmiths

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Leading Individuals
Band 1
Lavery, James DLA Piper UK LLP
Lewis, Susan Eversheds LLP
Seary, Peter Hill Hofstetter LLP

Band 2
Birchall, Roger Browne Jacobson LLP
Bligh, Joanne Browne Jacobson LLP
Dawes, Edward Squire Sanders Hammonds
Harkin, Paul Pinsent Masons
Hayward, Paul Gateley
Hornigold, Andrew Pinsent Masons
Kitts, Stephen Eversheds LLP
Millington, Jeremy Wragge & Co LLP

Band 3
Beardmore, Mark H DLA Piper UK LLP
Bennett, Paul George Green LLP
Cliff, Paul Gateley
Haywood, Noel DLA Piper UK LLP
Hill, Chris Hill Hofstetter LLP
McLintock, Peter Squire Sanders Hammonds
Muth, Graham Cobbetts LLP
Orme, Russell DLA Piper UK LLP
Perry, Geoff Squire Sanders Hammonds
Smith, Julian Mills & Reeve LLP
Stilton, Andrew Martineau
Vaughan, David Wragge & Co LLP
Wakefield, Paul Irwin Mitchell
Wrigley, Richard Martineau

Band 4
Green, Guy George Green LLP
Henwood, Julian Wragge & Co LLP
Lee, Robert Wright Hassall LLP
Letza, Martin Shoosmiths
Peet, Alistair Shoosmiths
Silvester, Katie Gateley
Taylor, Nicholas A Higgs & Sons
Thomas, Jane Hill Hofstetter LLP
Ward, Michael Gateley
Up-and-coming individuals
McGivernon, Adam Martineau
Rees, Keri Eversheds LLP

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Recommended for Commercial Awareness
West Midlands
DLA Piper UK LLP
Eversheds LLP
Wragge & Co LLP
Recommended for Client Service
West Midlands
Browne Jacobson LLP
Eversheds LLP
Shoosmiths
Wragge & Co LLP
Band 1
DLA Piper UK LLP

This outstanding team handles all aspects of corporate law from sales and purchases to private equity deals and admissions to both the AIM exchange and the Official List. It advises such clients as Barclays Ventures, Dechra Pharmaceuticals and Intertek.

Highlights include advising Compass Group UK & Ireland on its acquisition of the entire issued share capital of VSG Group.

Commercial Awareness: "They are strong operators that have built up a strong client base."

KEY INDIVIDUALS James Lavery is praised for his expertise in representing clients such as Barclays Private Equity, Lloyds Development Capital and

Sovereign Capital in M&A and private equity transactions. Mark Beardmore focuses on MBOs, secondary buyouts, development capital investments and exits. Noel Haywood acts for large domestic and international clients. He has recently assisted Finning International in connection with the sale of Hewden Stuart UK. Birmingham-based head of team Russell Orme represented Avon Cosmetics on the acquisition of Liz Earle Cosmetics.

Eversheds LLP

This first-rate firm attracts praise for its "in-depth understanding of the nuances of clients' businesses." It benefits from relationships with numerous private equity houses and a strong portfolio of blue-chip clients from sectors including energy and renewables,

healthcare and food. Leading highlights include a role in one of the region's largest transactions, advising the Tejani family on the sale of the LPC Group to Sofidel Spa.

Client Service: "They show a can-do attitude and commitment to delivering results. We particularly appreciated their willingness to manage issues and not always wait to be instructed."

Commercial Awareness: "I was very impressed by the pragmatic and commercial realism displayed by the team, which combined with tact, diplomacy and sensitivity has become a hallmark of Eversheds."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Susan Lewis continues to act for the firm's high profile national and international clients. "She fully deserves her great reputation," sources say. Stephen Kitts is "good at holding his client's hand through the process and explaining complicated concepts in layman's terms."

Keri Rees is "brilliant for corporate matters – prompt, responsive and commercial."

Wragge & Co LLP

Clients and peers alike praise this team for its commerciality and superb client service. Its client base ranges from owner-managed private companies to FTSE-listed major corporates that include the likes of Premier Foods, Harvard International, Dubai World Ports and Phones4U. In the past year it advised NYSE-listed Cambrex on the USD20 million acquisition of a 51 per cent stake in Indian pharmaceutical company Zenara.

Client Service: "You feel they are very much part of your team and generally they give clear, concise advice."

Commercial Awareness: "Their advice has been excellently commercial. We really enjoy working with them."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Jeremy Millington specialises in private equity and M&A work. In the past year he advised Automatic Data Processing on the £16.2 million public takeover of OneClickHR. Julian Henwood provides advice on IPOs, secondary fundraisings, public takeovers and regulatory compliance for publicly-listed companies, financial ad-


Mark Beardmore

Katie Silvester

Andrew Stilton

visers and brokers. He has experience of acting on international deals and for Scandinavian-based companies. M&A specialist David Vaughan is described as sensible, clear headed and "extremely dedicated to his work." He has a track record of advising on transactions with a German element.

Band 2 Gateley

The team has recently been strengthened by the arrival of a significant number of lawyers from the now defunct law firm Halliwells. Clients praise the firm for the quality of its corporate practice as well as its proactive approach. Recent highlights include advising on the £10 million AIM-placement of Real Estate Investors and acting on the £42 million return of capital by Dunelm Group.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Paul Hayward focuses on advising private equity funds on a wide range of corporate matters. He recently represented Kimberly ccess on the acquisition of 1st Access Rentals and subsidiaries Pinnacle Platforms and Scotia Plant & Tool Hire. Paul Cliff handles a range of transactional concerns, in particular those involving public companies on corporate and capital markets matters.


Russell Orme

Stephen Kitts

James Lavery

Katie Silvester recently advised on the acquisition of Primetake by way of reverse takeover. Michael Ward oversees the work of the team. He continues to advise owner-managed businesses and large corporate clients on a variety of matters.

Pinsent Masons

This nine-partner team is felt to have weathered the tough economic climate in a robust fashion. In recent times it has been particularly active in the technology, energy and healthcare sectors.

The firm also provides advice on private equity matters to funds including Better Capital, MML Capital, Apax Partners and Barclays Private Equity. Clients enjoy working with this "innovative and easy-to-deal-with" practice.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Leading partner Paul Harkin recently advised Halfords Group on the £73 million acquisition of Nationwide Autocentres. Andrew Hornigold is singled out for his "tremendous experience" on technology-led deals. In the past year he advised Syntex on the £75 million sale of the business to Capita Group.

Real Estate

West Midlands
Leading Firms
Band 1

Eversheds LLP
Wragge & Co LLP

Band 2

Gateley
Pinsent Masons

Band 3

Cobbetts LLP
DLA Piper UK LLP
Martineau
Shoosmiths
Squire Sanders Hammonds
Wright Hassall LLP

Band 4

Clarke Willmott LLP
George Green LLP
Higgs & Sons
Mills & Reeve LLP
Shakespeares

Band 5

Ansons LLP
Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
Band Hatton LLP
Bevan Brittan LLP
Browne Jacobson LLP
Hill Hofstetter LLP
The Wilkes Partnership LLP

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest

Leading Individuals

Band 1

Bate, Richard Wragge & Co LLP
Dakeyne, Mark Bridgehouse Partners LLP
Jackson, Jason Shoosmiths
Medford, Phil Eversheds LLP
Nuttall, Callum Gateley
O'Meara, Anne Squire Sanders Hammonds

Band 2

Ahmed, Iftkhar Eversheds LLP
Atwal, Gurjit Eversheds LLP
Chester, Mark Wragge & Co LLP
Deady, Eleanor Wright Hassall LLP
Jones, Alex Gateley
Kordan, Joel Shoosmiths
Toon, Kathy Martineau
Watson, Adrian Cobbetts LLP

Band 3

Austin, Jon Higgs & Sons
Boss, Simon Shoosmiths
Calverley, Mark Bevan Brittan LLP
Camfield, Victoria Browne Jacobson LLP
Coleman, Peter J Higgs & Sons
Johnson, Tom Pinsent Masons
Khangura, Kultar Pinsent Masons
Lawson-King, Joanna Pinsent Masons
Ledger, Tim Gateley
Mort, Ceri George Green LLP
Shepherd, Sara Higgs & Sons
Simpson, Ray Gateley
Sutherland, Monique Squire Sanders Hammonds
Vernon, Clive Buller Jeffries
Whatley, Michael Mills & Reeve LLP

Associates to watch

Bradley, Fiona Squire Sanders Hammonds
Elliot, Cherry Shoosmiths
Jones, David Eversheds LLP
Munroe, Sandy Bevan Brittan LLP

Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is the highest.

Recommended for Commercial Awareness

DLA Piper UK LLP
Pinsent Masons

Recommended for Client Service

Gateley
Higgs & Sons
Shakespeares

A fantastic team

Band 1 Eversheds LLP

Interviewees universally agree that this group deserves its Band 1 ranking, commenting on its "excellent reputation and capability." Clients describe it as "an enthusiastic, committed and knowledgeable team" that "always makes you feel that it is 100% focused on your instructions." Its extensive network of domestic and international offices allows the Birmingham team to offer assistance on a national and global basis, and it continues to expand its client roster with new names including Blacks, Phones 4u and Cordatus Partners. Major highlights include representing Wolseley UK in its transfer of 177 properties to Legacy - this was the UK's first significant outsource of a pure lease liability portfolio. It also handled the region's largest real estate transaction of the last year, acting for Mitchells & Butlers in its £373 million sale of 333 properties to TDR Capital. Other key clients include HSBC, Unipart, Taylor Wimpey and Land Securities.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Gurjit Atwal leads the team's work on development and investment, covering mixed-use development projects, town centre regeneration and joint ventures. He represented Land Securities in its £130 million acquisition of the O2 Centre. Phil Medford is "an excellent lawyer who has his finger on the pulse and the client's job at the forefront of his mind." He focuses on large scale residential development schemes, and has recently handled Centex's disposition of Fairclough Homes and David Wilson Homes' acquisition of Roland Bardsley Homes. The "very knowledgeable and



Kathy Toon, Martineau

hard-working" Iftkhar Ahmed takes a key role in corporate real estate work for clients such as Goodyear Dunlop, Unipart and Mitchells & Butlers, and he was involved in Safestore Holdings' £350 million refinancing. David Jones impresses with his fast turnaround times and expertise across the range of real estate work. Birmingham Mailbox, Hammerson and Urban Splash are a few of his clients.

Wragge & Co LLP

This group offers "first-class practitioners" and a superlative reputation for its varied work across the breadth of real estate issues; it is split into 15 sub-departments of specialists to cover all facets of real estate. It regularly works in close conjunction with colleagues

from the London office, and its newly-opened Paris office gives it an extra dimension of international capability. It played a key role in Birmingham's largest ever office investment deal, advising Argent as property adviser to The Brindleyplace Limited Partnership on the £190 million sale of eight buildings in the Brindleyplace mixed-use development. It has also been advising Warwickshire County Cricket Club on its £30 million redevelopment of its Edgbaston home ground and Covanta Energy on the UK's largest industrial eco-park.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Richard Bate is unanimously acknowledged as "a leader in his field." He chairs the residential development team and recently took the lead acting for The Miller Group in its successful bid for management contracts worth £120 million.

Market sources recognise Mark Chester for the strength of his work in development and regeneration projects, particularly those that involve the education and technology sectors.

Band 2

Gateley

Clients highlight this as "a professional and friendly" team that "shows great attention to detail." Its heavy sector involvement means that "it is always in touch with the market," and it is "very responsive to problems which need to be dealt with immediately."

Over the last year the firm has opened a Manchester office populated by the former Halliwells real estate team to provide clients with greater regional coverage. The team has been assisting Wolverhampton City Council in its mixed-use redevelopment of the area



Jason Jackson and Alex Bishop

with real strength and depth



Anne O'Meara, Squire Sanders Hammonds

immediately surrounding Wolverhampton's main rail station, as well as advising Morris Homes and Gentwo Housing Association on their development of Britain's largest zero carbon centre, which will consist of 344 new homes. Opus Land, HSBC, British Telecom and Alfred McAlpine Developments are more names that feature prominently on its client roster.

Client Service "It provides an excellent service with no shortcomings."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Callum Nuttall is extremely highly regarded for his expertise in regeneration, house building and affordable housing. He is frequently retained in large-scale schemes, such as advising Bovis, Persimmon Homes and Keepmoat on the £350 million regeneration of north-east Coventry.

Ray Simpson handles commercial property development, with a particular focus on assisting Midlands-based developers in their industrial, retail, office and leisure projects. Clients appreciate Tim Ledger's "good knowledge of working with and against local authorities," adding that he is "strong at drafting development agreements," and is able to quickly grasp the pertinent points. Alex Jones recently joined the firm from LL Law, and he handles the full range of commercial real estate law, specialising in mixed-use development and regeneration schemes and funding structures.

Pinsent Masons

Sources identify this as "a flexible team that is good to work with and provides great advice." It handles the full array of real estate law, covering corporate deals, tax structuring, regeneration and public sector projects

and investment work. Big-ticket work includes assisting Waitrose in its new national stores programme, and acting for the Homes & Communities Agency in the sale of its Isle of Wight site to a private sector house builder for residential development. Commercial Awareness "It has outstanding awareness; it constantly gives clients confidence that it has its finger on the pulse of what's going on in the property world."

KEY INDIVIDUALS Birmingham property team head Tom Johnson is lead partner for a number of the group's largest clients, including John Lewis Partnership/Waitrose and ASDA. Joanna Lawson-King specialises in property investment, major portfolio transactions and tax-driven property finance deals. Kultar Khangura impresses with a "commercial approach" and "an all-round understanding of what makes transactions work." He has led on numerous major regeneration schemes, including the £650 million Edgar Street project in Hereford.

**Band 3
Cobbetts LLP**

This team continues to advise on a significant amount of investment property transactions. The last year has seen numerous new investor, developer, housing association and local authority client wins, such as County Properties, which it advised on the purchase, refurbishment and subsequent £8.8 million sale of a former Boots store. It has also assisted Jaguar Cars and Land Rover in a number of asset management matters and acted for both Calthorpe Estates and Birmingham Property Group across their

Commercial Awareness "It displays a good understanding of our business and is very commercially astute."

KEY INDIVIDUALS David Hayes leads the Birmingham office's real estate team.

Martineau

Clients recognise this as "a solid team that meets deadlines and is good at handling negotiations." It provides expertise across the range of real estate issues, with particular sector specialism in banking, education and energy-related transactions. It has been assisting the University of Worcester in its proposed joint venture to develop ten acres of a 40-acre site. Other clients include Yorkshire Bank, West Midlands Police Authority and University of Cumbria.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Kathy Toon is highly regarded for her work on behalf of retail clients, as well as investors and developers. She recently joined the firm from Clarke Willmott.

Shoosmiths

This 26-lawyer team regularly handles work spanning all areas of real estate law. Of late it has been especially occupied with retail and leisure-related matters, acting for business such as Midlands Co-operative Society, Poundland and the Jessop Group. In terms of specific highlights, it is sole property adviser to One Stop Stores, which is currently working to a total of 50 new store developments and acquisitions per year. It also continues to attract a healthy amount of developer clients including Birmingham Property Group, Shepherd Developments and new client Berwick Hill.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Interviewees highlight Jason Jackson as a strong lawyer with the ability to oversee projects to the best possible results. He handles a combination of commercial development, investment and property finance matters, and he led the team

advising Stoford Developments on a £75 million regeneration scheme in West Bromwich. Office head Joel Kordan is highly regarded for his expertise in residential and commercial developments. Langtree Group is one of his major clients, and recent instructions include a public sector partner agreement for Daresbury Science Park also involving Holton Borough Council and NWDA. Simon Boss is "clear, practical and gets to the required result with the least fuss." He chairs the real estate group in Birmingham and has spent a significant amount of time advising Poundland and One Stop Stores. Clients identify associate Cherry Elliot as "a rising star who is very good on investment."

Squire Sanders Hammonds

This "fantastic team" has "real strength in depth."

Regeneration and public sector work are key areas of focus, and it has been assisting Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council in its multimillion-pound Bluebell development. Advantage West Midlands is another major client, and recent work undertaken includes advising it on Moog's proposed £15 million relocation from Wolverhampton to South Staffordshire.

The group has also received a steady stream of instructions from the energy and utilities sector; National Grid, Fulcrum Pipelines and Express Energy have all recently received assistance.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Interviewees laud Anne O'Meara's "ability to grasp the bigger picture and fit it together with the details." She commands significant market respect for her extensive development and regeneration experience, assisting clients such as Wolverhampton City Council, Birmingham City Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Fellow regeneration specialist Monique Sutherland advises a range of public and private sector clients on projects across the retail, leisure, sports, industrial and residential sectors. Clients appreciate Fiona Bradley as an associate who provides "an efficient outcome." She is particularly well versed in retail and charity-related matters.

Wright Hassall LLP

Interviewees agree that this is a robust team of experienced practitioners who are capable of deftly handling the full range of real estate law. It sits on numerous panels for high-profile companies, including Myers La Roche, TUI and new client Orbit Homes. Of late, it has handled Butchers Pet Care's £38 million acquisition of a new headquarters and manufacturing facility. Other major clients include BMW, JCDecaux and Wigleys Contracts.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Eleanor Deady recently joined the firm from Cobbetts. She impresses with the depth of her expertise in commercial real estate, particularly where it involves complex regeneration projects and property development.

commercial portfolios. Inviron, Wall-sall MBC and Folkes Holdings are clients of note.

KEY INDIVIDUALS Adrian Watson is a well-known figure for his property development work on behalf of both public and private sector clients.

DLA Piper UK LLP

Over the last year, this team has kept busy advising numerous banks on financing transactions, and its global network of offices allows it to act for international clients such as US company DST Realty. Other work includes representing Finning (UK) in its sale of Hewden UK to Sun European Partners.



Jon Austin and Peter Coleman, Higgs and Sons

We're leading the field

National law firm Mills & Reeve has more teams ranked as leaders in their field than any other top UK law firm, according to the latest edition of Chambers UK. **Guy Hinchley**, managing partner at the firm, gives his view on the impressive result

Almost 60 per cent of Mills & Reeve's 45 rankings were in the top tier of this year's Chambers UK guide – the highest percentage of any top UK firm. This impressive showing also meant we were ranked among the top five law firms in the UK based on the total number of top tier rankings – a truly fantastic achievement.

The rankings were split among various teams across the firm's six UK offices, including Birmingham, which put in a strong performance by having four teams – charities, family and matrimonial, private client and professional negligence – named in the top band.

For the family and matrimonial team, headed by partner Marc Saunderson, it

is the third consecutive year it has been ranked in Band 1 of the legal directory, firmly cementing its position as a leading team within its field. Earlier this year, the family team broke new ground with the launch of its very own smartphone app, Divorce UK, which offers free guidance and advice on the legal, practical and emotional issues faced by those considering divorce or separation.

A dedicated YouTube channel to complement the app has also been launched. Together they support the firm's established Divorce.co.uk website.

As well as the team successes, a number of partners from the Birmingham office also ranked highly this year. Gary Barber, Matthew Hansell, Marc Saunderson and Angus Turner were all named as leading lawyers in their respective fields.

While not quite ranked in the top tier, the corporate team, headed by partner Julian Smith, has had a buoyant year, advising on a number of major deals, including the £73 million takeover of satnav business Trafficmaster by US private equity house Vector Capital.

The corporate team also completed a number of acquisitions for Allied Healthcare Group, is advising NASDAQ health

company AmSurg Corp on UK investments, and advised CPC Foods on its acquisition of Beckett's Foods. Fast expanding US training company TTY Global also turned to Julian and his team when they made their first acquisition on UK soil.

The year also brought new instructions for the real estate and construction teams. Birmingham-based property developer Gallan appointed Mills & Reeve to advise on its retail park development in Canning Town, while the team has successfully secured more than 30 academy conversion projects, including ten projects based in the Midlands.

There was also a good showing in Chambers UK for the Birmingham employment team, with partners Nick Abbott, Martin Brewer and Jog Hundle all ranked in the guide.

Overall this is a fantastic result for the firm and the Birmingham office, in what remains a tough economic climate.

It's always reassuring to be recognised by our industry in this way. Mills & Reeve's philosophy of infectious ambition is about getting the best results for our clients and these fantastic directory rankings are proof that we are achieving this.



Guy Hinchley

approachable
innovative
first-rate
one step ahead

Thanks to some kind words from the most important people in our lives, that's our clients in case you're wondering, a higher percentage of our teams are ranked number 1 in their field than any other top UK law firm.

According to *Chambers UK*, Mills & Reeve is one of the top five firms in the UK based on the 26 top tier rankings our legal teams achieved.

To find out more, contact Guy Hinchley on 0121 456 8337 or guy.hinchley@mills-reeve.com

Offices: Birmingham, Cambridge, Leeds, London, Manchester, Norwich

www.mills-reeve.com

MILLS & REEVE

