

Minutes of CLLS Training Committee Meeting
Wednesday 19 June 2024 – 16:00 – 17:30
at Sullivan & Cromwell, 1 New Fetter Lane, EC4A 1AN and by Teams/Zoom

Present (Committee members):

Patrick McCann (Chair) (PM)	Kathryn Smith (KS)
Charlotte Wanendeya (vice Chair) (CW)	Nigel Spencer (NS)
Colin Shaw (vice Chair) (CS)	Rosie Warren-Cafferty (RWC)
Grace Best (GB)	Rachel Wevill (RW)
Peter Carrick (PC)	Kirsty Wilkins (KW)
Katie Dyer (KD)	
Lindsay Gerrard (LG)	Camilla Brignall (clerk to the committee) (CB)
James Harvey (JH)	
Greg Lascelles (GL)	
Charlie Moore (CM)	

Apologies: Joanna Hughes (**JHu**), Victoria Cromwell (**VC**), Dominic Sedghi, Julia Robinson (**JR**), Richard Album (**RA**), Louisa Mendes da Costa (**LMdC**)

Guests: Colin Passmore (CLLS), Jonathan Watmough (Helping Lawyers Thrive) (**JW**)

The chairman opened the meeting.

1. Minutes of 7 March 2024

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. CLLS Procedure Guide and periodic returns – CB

CB provided a quick summary on the updated membership rules and alerted the Committee members to the new Procedure Guide

3. Workshops

NS provided a report back on the AI and Legal Education workshop. Chris Walsh hosted it at Law Society which worked well. There were 4 conversations in the morning (4 panels): what is going on in current practice; what is happening to early career roles; what is the regulatory landscape and legal education (with BPP, Barbri and Kings); and what is changing and what needs to change. The feedback from speakers was great – well organised event.

CB read a note from JR re the online session in September (re supporting external coaches)

PM spoke about the Partner Learning and Development Workshop. In essence, we are planning to run, in October, a partner development workshop.

Actions: Rosie to ask the Alexander Partnership to ask firms what is going on and to report back. There will be 3 partners on a panel to be interviewed; people who are managed by partners will speak about what it is like. JW will run a panel of partners – how to succeed in a law firm. PM would like a big and mid-level law firm to talk about their partner programme. PM is keen to have coaches in. Law firm associates should talk about the leadership that they need. PM was keen that Colin Passmore interview someone like Liz Rimmer from Law Care on “partners under pressure”. The session will involve table discussions and Learning in Law would like to collaborate on this. PM up for doing a joint event.

4. 2024 Year Planner – CS

CS touched on some of the key things coming up:

- Going back to May – noticing an uptick of organisations wanting us to do things with them or for them (incl. Black Lawyers), Legal Cheek, Law Society letter re Jonny Hurst
- The LLP been advertising programme LGBTQAI – have about 30 signed up, taking place in a month, 21 firms taking place, 2 full days with a dinner. No negative responses so far and money coming in.
- Letter been sent to Law Society re levy. Law Society acknowledged receipt

5. Report back from Learning in Law Conference - GB

GB reported back from the Learning in Law conference. GB is now chair of Learning in Law. The conference took place on Thursday 25 April at 1 Moorgate Place. GL appeared on the panel and was thanked for his contribution. It was an amazing attendance. GL said it was very useful.

PM Grateful to KD, JH and GL for their contribution as partners in practice.

RWC – reported back on a couple of things from Learning in Law

6. Report back from LegalEdCon – PM and CB and KW

PM and CB reported back from LegalEdCon. Patrick spoke on solicitor apprentices, Kirsty on skills and knowledge gaps and CB on SQE

7. Report back from Law Society webinar on “Essential Compliance around Continuing Competence” – PM

PM reported back on the session he chaired for Law Society.

8. City Century Update PM and RW

PM stated we are now into the second year of CC – think we have made about 130 offers (as a collective). Some won't accept. Think there will be 45/46 firms recruiting next year – about 150 places. CC have been doing lots of events and been nominated for 9 awards (and won a Lawyer award). There are lots of nice things happening next year including a CLLS posh tea in a Livery Hall and a conference for years 1s during National Apprenticeship Week.

Blockers to people joining as apprentices: cost of housing, prestige of university and lack of understanding.

JH stated that his firm had been totally stunned at the quality of candidates – they had to create extra jobs for them!

RW presented slides (attached) on proposals. CM to be target-audience checker!

9. SWSQF update – PM/CW

PM confirmed that £1,048,000 had been raised and the fund could potentially fund 102 candidates.

Cohort 1: 13 people sat exams and passed. 3 have failed SQE2 – they will resit at their own cost, but the fund will possibly reimburse if they pass.

Cohort 2: 3 or 4 have gone through and passed (only had to do SQE2) one third failed SQE1 – if the candidate failed badly they will resit at their own cost and be reimbursed if they subsequently pass, otherwise the fund will fund minor fails.

Cohort 3: have started SQE. It is fair to say they are less compliant with their personal study plan than previous cohorts. Some of them have big “life” issues going on which is impacting them. The team need to think about that for cohort 4 – will they commit? Victoria is going to take over the funding going forward. Kirsty is taking on a bigger role opposite candidates

10. Essay Prize Update – CW

CW has been doing this with Sarah de Gay. Twenty 20 essays were submitted on the question which related to the Rule of Law. It was difficult to distinguish between them, but ultimately, they picked five finalists and got a joint winner. The prize is to be presented at the CLSC AGM (at Apothecary Hall).

11. LinkedIn Update

RWC and KS had the following update: as of now, we have 1,165 followers. The target is 2,000 by the end of year. We have published 21 items this year and there is a pipeline of things coming through. The ones that have done really well include:

- Charlie's piece on Gen Z with 5,400 views!!
- the reposts on SQE1;
- tips on Spring forum (summary by Richard); and
- Caroline Lister's piece on "feeling failure".

Of the people who engage, 30% have a legal title, 16% HR and 14% BD. The team was going to have a break over August but there will probably be posts that go up. 1,357 is the average number of views.

Learning in Law collaboration – were going to ask if they wanted to add any thought leadership pieces – general enthusiasm but no specific volunteers.

Podcast list for the summer – top podcasts (committee to recommend any).

12. Matthew Fuller - PM

PM mentioned that Matthew Fuller, former head of BD at a number of firms, has gone freelance and has written a brilliant book. He is now with PSFI and is highly recommended by PM

13. Be the Business – Inspiring Leaders Programme - PM

PM – Laura at HSF, match lawyers with non-exec directorships at small/med size enterprises – going to a breakfast next week where it is being discussed (at John Lewis)

14. SQE impact/indirect discrimination – campaign by Legal Neurodiversity Network on SQE1 and the impact it has on neurodiverse students – PM

PM – keen for us to work with them. Looking for reps to SRA and Kaplan, on the running of SQE1. If anyone is interested, please let PM know

15. Black Lawyers in the City – CP

CP and CW have been doing work around recruitment, progression and retention of Black lawyers.

The CLLS are taking seriously the paucity of Black partners in our member firms. The renewed focus got kickstarted when the former chief exec of LSD made a speech about the complete absence of Black partners in Magic Circle firms and described it as an absolute disgrace.

CP and Matthew Rous spoke to him. He was entirely focussed on Black lawyers and what he was saying was correct, it is a major problem. CP referenced the 1% Study and the recently commissioned SRA report (which doesn't tell us a great deal other than it is challenging).

CP was fascinated and horrified by issue and the latest City Solicitor magazine addresses the issue (PM to share with everyone). This is not a "one-off" edition, a Black lawyer at Farrers has been interviewed for the next edition and whilst there are some success stories, there is a way to go. CP is looking to recruit Julian Richard from extense (behind the 1% study) to help City Firms. They are

working with Julian to present to the CLLS at a strategic away day next month. What will the CLLS do about this? The views of the sub-groups and the training committee will be very important.

CP was interested in hearing the committee's views on Exeter Uni report and how this should be taken forward.

PM says that they need to look at SQE (not covered by the Exeter report) as the format of the exam seems to compound the disadvantages that people have had in their life. The SQE1 requires quite a lot of "confidence".

Will circulate report after the meeting.

Committee agreed to canvass their firms for data which would help CP. DE&I expertise is required to talk to the Committee and Colin and the Committee will do a response on the Exeter report

16. Jonathan Watmough – Introduction

PW introduced JW, an ex-Manging partner at RPC. He has written a book – "How to thrive in a law firm".

The book is designed to help people at junior to mid-level.

JW: why did I write this book? I had something to say and thought a year or 18 months ago that we were moving towards an inflection point.

Traditionally the primary driver has been to understand "how" the system works. How and why do you work your way through the system? In fact, the original title of the book was going to be "how to make it in a commercial law firm". I changed "make it" to "thrive" and it took 10 months to write.

The first 3 or 4 months of writing was on a "how to" guide. What changed was Vanessa Ford's death, when it became clear that something much bigger was going on. What has changed that we, as a profession, could find ourselves in this sort of state? It seemed to be a real moment in time and the whole thing set me thinking about going back to basics.

There are two "basics": client demand (1) versus people supply (2) and law firms exist to interact between these two markets. What is changing in these two markets? I looked back 30 years to see what has changed. One can go back to the Law Society's annual "state of the profession report", they have been doing it for 30-odd years and you can track the trajectory of all manner of statistics. You can see growth in the profession in terms of the number of solicitors and how those numbers have changed.

The number of practising solicitors has grown by 163% in 30 years (in the prior 30 years', growth was in single digits). Why is that? There are 4 key macro change factors:

1. Globalisation (one cannot underestimate English City lawyers being at the heart of globalisation – this is a hub for global transaction work);
2. Interest rates (near zero rates fuelling transaction activity)
3. the pandemic; and
4. (the biggest factor) a serious growth of regulation and blame culture.

There is an article in the telegraph today about how regulation is killing the City – killing the golden goose. Regulation has impacted on complexity and intensity, there is an unbelievable depth of specialisation – there are no "general" commercial lawyers left.

Inhouse has also grown tremendously – those lawyers have the same characteristics as the private practice lawyers. The profession is entirely reactive and lacking in control. The profession is also more adversarial. Transaction deals are more adversarial. Client pressure has been uneven and fragmented. Client pressure can be enormous – no concerted client pressure – private practice lawyers have been able to increase fees as routine work moves in-house.

Although the work has changed in 30 years, it will change even more in the next 10. The growth curve in English lawyers is flattening. In the ten years to 2002, the number of practising lawyers in E&W increased by 50% on the previous ten years, in the following 10 years by 45% and in the following ten years by 22%. We are now moving out of a natural growth market into a fight for global share. We are where the US was 20 years ago, when work started to move in-house. The number of English lawyers has grown exponentially faster than US lawyers. In the UK, inhouse has grown by 230% over the last 20 years. In private practice by 35% and this tracks what happened in the US. Inhouse lawyers in the US exceed those in private practice. We are tracking here, so in ten years inhouse lawyers are likely to overtake private practice lawyers.

On the people side, an extensive study, working with behavioural scientists, studying 450 commercial lawyers (a very significant psychometric study – top to bottom in all practice areas) showed that we still have the same type of person doing the law now than we did 30 years ago. City firms are specifically recruiting highly driven over-achievers. This type of person is a great lawyer but not necessarily a great businessperson, nor are they great at self-care or looking after others. They can be difficult people. We end up with constant short-termism, people who don't enjoy change and those that avoid difficult conversations. A difficult set of behavioural characteristics. Then the perfect storm of Covid and international issues arose. We have two markets pulling against each other – commitment, lack of engagement... hear these phrases – this is exacerbated by pay war – the market's way of exploiting the dissonance in people and culture. Markets have found weakness

What does it mean? I cannot imagine it is sustainable for very much longer. The pay war cannot go on for much longer and I get the impression that the markets will "sort it". As the "people market" starts to soften, things will come together a bit more. Some firms will step off the travelator and do things differently, which will take enormous leadership. I suspect that the "grass roots" will retreat from the "game". War on talent. Leadership of firms not in control. If people in firms start to demand change, it will come from below. I am starting to feel that partners are starting to want this as much as anyone. They are in the firing line. Partners at a recent partner conference were asked to divide into two groups – those who wanted to "open all the taps" and those who want to earn a bit less and change – the divide was about 50/50. It will come down to leadership to define what success looks like in the "New World".

Every firm look at [3] metrics: revenue per lawyer and profits per member. Every firm is, broadly speaking, tracking 2018 numbers. So, in real terms we have stepped back to 2018. Change must come regardless of a slowdown.

17. AOB

Congrats to Grace who is due to have a baby in August.

Last Monday Colin got married to Grant! Congratulations to them.

The chairman closed the meeting.