

**WOMEN  
WHO  
will  
2026**



**STILL RISING**  
**Women Leaders in Law**

**Baker  
McKenzie.**

NEXT  
HUNDRED  
YEARS **100**

**Obelisk**



**I am honoured to receive this award and recognition. Advocating for women in leadership is something I feel extremely passionate about, alongside supporting those that may not have had the same access to opportunities as others. Different people start from different circumstances and, for me, inclusive support means recognising and breaking barriers for all.**

**Ashleigh Hegarty**  
*Chief Legal Officer,  
Charlotte Tilbury*

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# Foreword

I am thrilled to celebrate the achievements of women in legal leadership in 2026, especially as I have just reached a crossroad in my own professional journey. I have recently stepped down as Treasury Solicitor and Permanent Secretary of the Government Legal Department.

Over recent years, as we have marked the progress made by women across the legal profession since being permitted to qualify - as recently as 1919 - we have celebrated many firsts: intersectional firsts, Law Society Presidents, Bar Chairs, Court of Appeal Judges, Supreme Court Justices and, of course, our Lady Chief Justice. And that is important. But I am pleased to see that the focus of this year's Women Who Will is on sustaining and expanding the number of women in senior roles across the profession. We need to be more than a series of one-offs.

As I reflect on my time as a member of the Government Legal Profession - all 33 years of it - I am proud of our track record as an environment where women can thrive and have great careers. As only the second female Treasury Solicitor, I was thrilled that my three deputies were women. I look forward to the day when that is unremarkable - but that is some way off and we cannot be complacent.

Across the profession there remain challenges that inhibit the progression and retention of great women lawyers. Whether that is the sadly increasing gender pay gap at the Bar or the worrying signs that commitment to diversity and inclusion is somehow seen as no longer a priority, or worse, as anti-meritocratic political correctness - all the more important that we collectively continue to tackle these challenges by seeing more senior women rising to the top and ensuring that we create the conditions for success.

There are practical things we can promote - equitable briefing of counsel, more diverse clerks' rooms, support for returners, and intentional job design to enable genuine part-time work. Visibility is vital too: it inspires people to believe in themselves and their ability to progress. That is where Next 100 Years can and does add real value - by celebrating and eventually normalising women in senior roles. Here's to another year of celebrating and supporting more women to achieve leadership roles through our Next 100 Years events.

## **Dame Susanna McGibbon KC (Hon)**

*Former permanent secretary, Government  
Legal Department, Patron, Next 100 Years*



# Introduction

Each year, putting together the Women Who Will report is a reminder of how far we have come and how much further we have to go. This year marks our 7th edition of this report, started during the pandemic to ensure visibility continued in the midst of a global emergency. The women in these pages do not let you rest on either thought for long. The Class of 2026 is another impressive roll call of role models for our generation of women in law.

Look at what this cohort has built. In-house leaders who joined organisations as their first ever lawyer and have since constructed global legal functions spanning multiple continents. General Counsel who have led complex legal strategy across some of the world's most demanding infrastructure and technology environments. Fractional leaders redefining what modern legal expertise looks like. Every one of them built something where nothing existed before, and every one of them did it without waiting for permission.

What strikes me about this year's class is its breadth. We have women leading sustainability and compliance functions in FTSE-listed businesses. Senior counsel working part-time whilst driving landmark policy change on fertility and workplace inclusion, taking their work all the way to Parliament. Risk specialists who arrived through unconventional routes and became among the most authoritative voices in their field. Barristers reshaping how the law treats trauma and accountability. Coaches and educators who are keeping women in the profession who might otherwise have left it. The range is extraordinary as is the consistency of their commitment to lead.

Progress for women in the legal profession has rarely been linear, and it has rarely been easy. But what the Class of 2026 shows is that it continues, and that the women driving it are doing so with a generosity of spirit that deserves recognition. Almost every woman in these pages is not only excelling in her own right but actively creating conditions for others to follow: mentoring, sponsoring, building networks, speaking in schools, changing policies from within. That is what the next hundred years looks like.

Still Rising is more than a title - it shows us what these women leaders are doing, every day, in every part of the profession. We are honoured to celebrate them. Read on and be inspired.

**Dana Denis-Smith OBE**

*FOUNDER, NEXT 100 YEARS | CEO, OBELISK SUPPORT*

# Our Partner - Clio

*Clio is the global leader in legal AI technology, empowering legal professionals and law firms of every size to work smarter, faster, and more securely. Purpose-built for the legal industry, Clio's Intelligent Legal Work Platform streamlines workflows, improves decision-making, and combines powerful technology with industry-leading security. Trusted by hundreds of thousands of legal professionals in more than 130 countries, and approved by over 100 bar associations and law societies worldwide, Clio sets the standard for innovation and client success across the legal profession. Backed by world-class investors and a mission to transform the legal experience for all, Clio is defining the future of legal work through AI.*

The legal profession we know today was shaped by women who refused to wait for permission to belong in it. They pushed the industry forward through decades that offered little recognition and even less support, and they kept building anyway.

Today, the women leading firms, mentoring the next generation, and influencing how technology is used in practice are redefining the profession once again.

At Clio, our mission is to transform the legal experience for all. Working alongside firms across the UK, we see the influence of women's leadership every day -in how they build client relationships, how they approach technology adoption, and how they design working models that recognise the realities of modern legal life.

Supporting Women Who Will is embedded in how Clio operates. It is reflected in the partnerships we invest in, the customers we champion, and the technology we build. We believe firms are stronger when women lead -more innovative, more inclusive, and more prepared for what's ahead. We are proud to stand with the women defining the future of law. They are building the profession's next chapter, and Clio is honoured to be a partner in that journey.

Still Rising is more than a title - it shows us what these women leaders are doing, every day, in every part of the profession. We are honoured to celebrate them. Read on and be inspired.





# The State of the Profession



## Diversity statistics, 2026

The data below represents the most current available figures for women and ethnic minority representation at senior levels across the legal profession. Sources are listed in full at the end of this report.

### UK Supreme Court

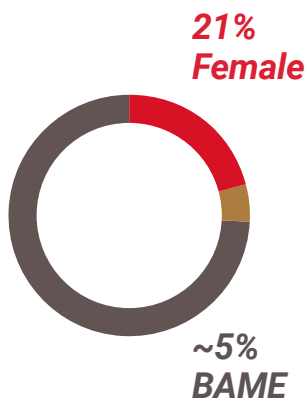
(Source: Supreme Court, 2026)



**2 in 12**  
Justices are women  
+ None are BAME

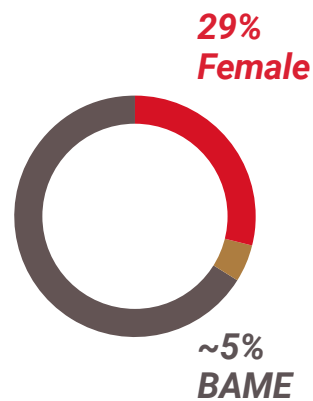
### Court of Appeal

(Source: Judiciary.uk, May 2026)  
(Source: MoJ Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025)



### High Court

(Source: Judiciary.uk, May 2026)  
(Source: MoJ Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025)





## Wellbeing

**85%** Of women in law have experienced health and wellbeing issues affecting their work in the past five years. (Source: Next 100 Years / Obelisk Support Wellbeing Survey, 2026)

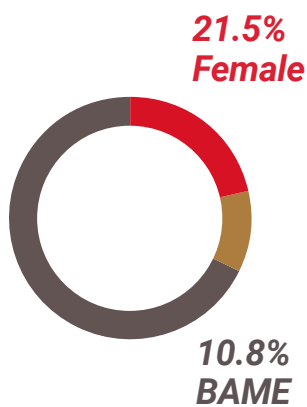
**67%** Have considered moving job or taking a career break due to health and wellbeing issues. (Source: Next 100 Years Wellbeing Survey 2026)

**70%** Experience ongoing exhaustion or low energy frequently or almost constantly. (Source: Next 100 Years Wellbeing Survey 2026)

**50%** Do not believe their current working pattern is sustainable for their long-term health. (Source: Next 100 Years Wellbeing Survey 2026)

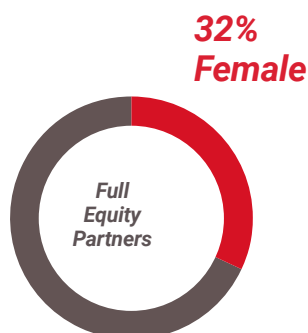
## The Bar - King's Council

(Source: BSB Diversity at the Bar 2025, published April 2026)(Source: BSB Diversity at the Bar 2025)



## Law Firms - Partners

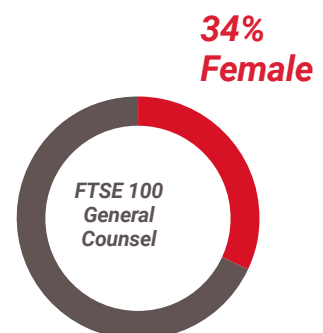
(Source: SRA Diversity in Law Firms 2023; TheCityUK / Barclays Legal Services Report 2025)



In the Top 10 firms, women account for 61% of trainees and 59% of newly qualified lawyers -but representation falls sharply at senior levels. By nine or more years post-qualification, female representation stands at 52%; at partner level it declines further. (Source: PwC Law Firms' Survey 2025)

## In House - General Counsel

(Source: FTSE Women Leaders Report 2026)



FTSE 250: 52%. FTSE 350: 44%.

# Introducing Women Who Will: The Class of 2026



I see technological advances as the greatest opportunity the legal profession has had in decades. We have a real responsibility to embrace and understand both the challenges and opportunities presented to us.

**Elizabeth Barrett**  
General Counsel,  
Howden Group

# i Women Who Will IN-HOUSE

*The women recognised in the in-house category are redefining what it means to be a modern legal leader. They lead functions that operate as genuine strategic partners to their organisations, while championing inclusion, wellbeing and innovation from within.*

## **Elizabeth Barrett**

*UK & Ireland General Counsel,  
Howden Group*

Elizabeth Barrett is UK & Ireland General Counsel at Howden Group, where she has earned a reputation as one of the most innovative and forward-thinking legal leaders in the industry. Her work has fundamentally changed how an in-house legal function operates – not as a reactive support unit, but as a proactive, technology-enabled strategic partner embedded in the business.

Elizabeth has been central to the development of Howden's Legal Target Operating Model for the UK & Ireland, bringing structured, research-driven thinking to team design, sourcing strategy, automation, and legal technology. Her benchmarking, automation maturity analysis and CLM vendor evaluation work has been recognised as among the most sophisticated produced by any in-house legal function – notable not just for its quality, but for its practical ambition. Elizabeth does not treat transformation as an abstract goal: she builds repeatable, scalable systems that reduce friction for the business while keeping rigorous risk oversight in place. This has enabled the business to make considerable savings and most importantly free up hours of legal counsel's time, enabling the team to focus on more complex areas where they can add value.

Beyond her professional achievements, Elizabeth's sense of service extends far beyond the office. She is a proud FANY, volunteering with the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry – one of the UK's oldest and most respected voluntary organisations – where she is trained as a Trauma Risk Incident Manager (TRiM), a specialist peer support role helping individuals process traumatic experiences. It is a role that reflects the depth of care and responsibility she brings to everything she does.

Elizabeth is also a passionate classic car enthusiast and gives her time to the Sporting Bears Motor Club, which raises money for children's charities by offering young people rides in dream cars.

And as the founder of the Alcohol Free Employee Resource Group, she has created a vital space for those who choose not to drink, championing genuine inclusion and wellbeing in the workplace. In an industry where drinking seems to be the norm, Elizabeth has worked tirelessly to increase awareness and create safe spaces for anyone who chooses not to drink – for whatever reason.

A compassionate, values-driven leader who combines commercial pragmatism with authentic care and kindness for the people around her, Elizabeth represents exactly what the legal profession needs more of: a woman who does not just talk about change, she quietly and consistently builds it.



**Gillie Abbots-Jones**  
*Senior Legal Director,  
Diageo*

Gillie is Senior Legal Director, Digital, AI and Data Privacy at Diageo. She is a dual-qualified lawyer with more than 15 years' experience advising businesses on AI governance, data privacy, intellectual property, regulatory compliance, commercial law and emerging technologies.

Before joining Diageo, Gillie held senior legal leadership roles at WPP, including General Counsel at both T&Pm Group and Kantar. She advised boards and executive teams on AI, data privacy and cyber security, IP, digital transformation and commercial risk. Her work included leading generative AI product counselling, building a global legal team of 40 lawyers and supporting WPP's £3.2 billion sale of Kantar to Bain Capital.

Earlier in her career, Gillie held senior private practice roles focused on IP litigation, media, data protection, commercial disputes and cross-border matters.



**I'm grateful for this recognition. I believe that progress in our profession is built through both excellence and generosity. My advice to women coming through is to back your judgement, keep learning, and look for the people who will challenge, support and open doors for you. Then do the same for others. The more we make space for different voices and experiences, the stronger our advice, our teams and our profession become.**

She also completed an LLM in Intellectual Property Law and Human Rights. She has consistently supported greater representation and career development within the legal and technology sectors, using both structured mentoring and day-to-day sponsorship to help colleagues build confidence, capability and visibility. Her sense of professional responsibility also extends beyond her commercial roles, including voluntary legal work with access-to-justice organisations and community advice services, as well as serving as a Non-Executive Director for community-focused projects.

Gillie brings practical commercial judgement and a people-focused leadership style. She is known for supporting responsible innovation, developing others and helping organisations make confident decisions in fast-moving, technology-led environments.



## **Sarah Bains**

*Senior Employment Lawyer,  
Government Legal Department*

Sarah Bains works as a Senior Employment Lawyer at the Government Legal Department, a job she started in July 2019 in London, United Kingdom. She is a skilled lawyer with a focus on employment and discrimination law, handling both legal disputes and other legal tasks. Before this job, she spent nearly seven years at Pattinson and Brewer, where she was an Employment and Discrimination Solicitor from November 2014 to June 2019, and a Trainee Solicitor from October 2012 to October 2014. Earlier in her career, she was a Case Studies Officer at the TUC, a Communications and Stakeholder Manager (Consultant) at the Department for Communities and Local Government, and a Parliamentary Researcher for a Member of Parliament at the House of Commons. Her professional abilities include negotiation, legal proceedings, dealing with employers, and managing labor relations.



**Jennifer Bowers**  
*Deputy General Counsel,  
The Francis Crick Institute*

Jennifer Bowers works as the Deputy General Counsel at The Francis Crick Institute, a position she has held since January 2025. She is a qualified solicitor and experienced business leader with extensive UK and international business experience gained across magic circle private practice, FTSE100 and FTSE250 companies, and early-stage businesses. Throughout her career she has held roles at Allen & Overy and Linklaters, senior positions at Tesco and Ascential plc, and most recently served as General Counsel and Company Secretary at Koa Health. She is recognised for her pragmatic, risk-sensitive approach, and brings a consistently positive outlook to all she does. She effectively balances providing immediate legal support for business needs with strategic planning, leading and nurturing talent, and project implementation. Dedicated to making a difference for the organisations, colleagues, and communities she serves, she thrives in generous, kind, and intellectually stimulating environments.





### **Kate Chandley**

*Chief Compliance and Sustainability Officer, Hays PLC*

Kate Chandley is a senior legal, compliance and sustainability leader with extensive experience advising boards and executive teams in global organisations. She is currently Chief Compliance and Sustainability Officer at Hays PLC, a FTSE 250 professional services business, where she leads a global team responsible for ethics, compliance, and sustainability.

Kate began her career in private practice at Linklaters LLP and RPC before transitioning into senior in house roles across a diverse range of sectors, including construction, luxury hospitality, aviation and global people sourcing and recruitment, where she built and led enterprise wide compliance frameworks and advised on governance, culture and ethical decision making.

At Hays, Kate is responsible for the design and delivery of the Group's global compliance and ESG programme. She is passionate about embedding integrity not only through policies and controls, but through leadership



**I'm delighted to have been recognised as part of the 2026 *Women Who Will* cohort. I believe integrity is built in the moments when doing the right thing is hard, inconvenient, or unpopular. Creating cultures where people feel safe to speak up, and leaders take responsibility for the outcomes, is how trust, resilience and long term success are truly achieved.**

behaviours, psychological safety and everyday decision making, ensuring ethics and sustainability are seen as opportunities for differentiation and growth.

Kate's career has been shaped by a strong belief that integrity is a leadership discipline. She is driven by the conviction that doing the right thing, particularly when it is difficult or uncomfortable, is essential to building trust with colleagues, customers, shareholders, and wider society. Her work focuses on creating environments where people feel safe to speak up, leaders are accountable for outcomes, and organisations grow sustainably over the long term.

A committed advocate for inclusive leadership and modern governance, Kate is recognised for translating regulatory expectations into practical, human centred solutions that deliver real impact. She is proud to lead teams that challenge the status quo, champion transparency, and help organisations navigate complexity with confidence and fairness.



## **Gifty Okonkwo**

*Senior Legal Counsel,  
Xero*

Gifty Okonkwo is a Senior Legal Counsel at Xero, a global cloud accounting software company, where she provides legal advice and support. She is passionate about commercial law and pro bono work and has received awards for her excellence and leadership in both fields.

In her current role, she has worked with various teams and stakeholders across the organisation, delivering high-quality legal solutions and guidance for complex and diverse matters. She has contributed to the negotiation and drafting of contracts, policies, and compliance documents, as well as the resolution of disputes and litigation.

She has also leveraged her skills and expertise to support the East Greenwich Legal Advice Clinic, where she serves as a board member and a pro bono adviser. She enjoys bringing her diverse perspectives and experiences to the team.

In addition to her legal expertise, Gifty is a skilled and experienced speaker. She enjoys facilitating workshops, hosting events, and delivering impactful keynote speeches. She has received excellent feedback for engaging diverse audiences, conveying complex topics with clarity, and inspiring action. She brings energy, professionalism, and adaptability to every speaking engagement, ensuring that the message resonates and leaves a lasting impression.



**Ashleigh Hegarty**  
*Chief Legal Officer,  
 Charlotte Tilbury*

Ashleigh is Chief Legal Officer at Charlotte Tilbury, a leading global luxury beauty brand founded in 2013 by renowned celebrity makeup artist Charlotte Tilbury MBE. Ashleigh sits on the Global Executive Leadership Team at Charlotte Tilbury and leads and is responsible for its Global Legal, Compliance, Risk and Insurance functions.

She joined the brand as General Counsel & Company Secretary in 2016 and as its first in-house lawyer. Over the last ten years, Ashleigh has built a global Legal & Compliance function from the ground up, with teams in London, New York and China.

Ashleigh has seen Charlotte Tilbury through two fundraises and a majority sale to Puig Brands SA in 2020. Leading through change and transformation is never easy but it is clear Ashleigh thrives when embracing a challenge and this is something she has excelled at throughout her career.

Before joining Charlotte Tilbury, Ashleigh held senior in-house legal positions at Selfridges Group and Domino's Pizza UK & IRL plc. She started her career in private practice, at Shoosmiths, where she trained and qualified into Corporate M&A and having spent four years at the firm, Ashleigh went on client secondment to Volkswagen Group in the UK where she got her first taste for in-house life. She has never looked back and spent the past 14 years in various in-house legal roles supporting and scaling both global FMCG and retail brands.



**I am honoured to receive this award and recognition. Advocating for women in leadership is something I feel extremely passionate about, alongside supporting those that may not have had the same access to opportunities as others. Different people start from different circumstances and, for me, inclusive support means recognising and breaking barriers for all. Thank you to Obelisk Support for championing this important initiative of “Women Who Will” and the Next 100 Years project.**

Ashleigh makes it her goal in all businesses that she has worked in to ensure the Legal department is seen as an invaluable strategic business partner that is brought into the loop, and on the journey with the business, from day one. She coaches her teams to engineer a “yes” to any potential business opportunity or challenge, rather than to respond with a “no”. Ashleigh’s objective has always been to ensure Legal are shaping business decisions not stopping them.

Outside of the office, Ashleigh acts as a coach and mentor for other inspiring future leaders and also spends time in schools speaking to aspirational students about their future - sharing her personal journey and experience in the hope it will help and support others.

Ashleigh also sits on the advisory board of the Luxury Law Alliance and has won various awards over the years, both personally and on behalf of the team she has developed and grown.

Ashleigh is passionate about diverse workplaces and pushes boundaries to ensure there are no glass ceilings. She is a strong advocate for women in leadership and is extremely passionate about supporting those that may have not had the same access to opportunities as others. Ensuring people from all socioeconomic backgrounds have equal access to opportunities. Different people start from different circumstances and, for Ashleigh, inclusive support means recognising and breaking barriers for all.



**Lisa Jones**

*Former Chief Counsel EMEA,  
Cushman & Wakefield*

Lisa is a General Counsel with 17 years experience in-house and in private practice. Most recently as former Chief Counsel EMEA for Cushman & Wakefield, a NYSE listed global commercial real estate brokerage and consultant professional services company. As a member of the Executive Leadership team she drove legal strategy for the EMEA region, aligning governance and compliance with global business objectives. Here she was selected for the Cushman & Wakefield Executive Leadership Program 2024-2026 alongside leaders from across the global business. Lisa is known for providing commercial solutions which mitigate enterprise risk and enable transformative organisational change.

Prior to this Lisa specialised in Professional Disputes and Regulatory at international law firms Clyde & Co and RPC. She focused on complex commercial disputes, defendant professional and regulatory liability, insurance policy coverage and defence issues. During her time at RPC she spent 12 months on secondment to the global insurers QBE. Here she joined the IFA/Brokers Claims



**I am honoured to be a part of the Women Who Will 2026 cohort. I am grateful for every leader and colleague who has led the way and supported me as I have progressed in my career, especially during the early years of motherhood. As a leader I endeavour to be open about the challenges, and enable the possibilities, to women starting on their own journeys.**

Team and reviewed and assessed claims against professional indemnity policies.

Lisa is committed to inclusion and mentorship in her work and leadership roles. She has benefitted from many female role models ahead of her who showed her, through their day-to-day actions, how to blend career with motherhood and family life. She now endeavours to always be open about the challenges, and enable the possibilities, to women starting out on their own journeys.

Outside of work Lisa enjoys spending time with her husband and two children. They love to travel as a family - maximising school holidays as much as possible! Most recently she has spent a lot of time facilitating her childrens' love of Arsenal football club!

It is an honour for Lisa to be included as a "Women Who Will" which she considers to be an important movement, recognising the pioneers of women in law as well as inspiring future generations of female legal leaders.



## **Electra Japonas**

*Chief Product Officer, SimpleDocs,  
Founder, oneNDA*

Electra Japonas is the Chief Product Officer at SimpleDocs where she leads the product vision behind the company's AI-powered contract tools. She works at the intersection of legal expertise and product design, helping shape how AI can be applied to real-world legal workflows like contract review, clause drafting, and playbook automation.

As the Founder of oneNDA, the global standard for NDAs, Electra brings a deep focus on standardization and usability to her work, pushing for tools that are not just smart, but genuinely adoptable.

Before joining the organisation in 2024 following its acquisition of oneNDA, she was CEO and Founder of legal operations firm TLB, and held senior legal roles at the European Space Agency, Disney, BAT, and EY. She is a dual-qualified Solicitor (England & Wales) and Cyprus Attorney.



## **Belén Llamas**

*General Counsel and Company Secretary, Gatwick Airport*

Born in Spain and shaped by an international career, Belén Llamas is a senior legal leader with over a decade of experience leading legal functions in complex, highly regulated infrastructure environments. She is currently General Counsel and Company Secretary at Gatwick Airport, where she oversees the legal, ethics and data protection functions for the UK's second busiest airport. A member of Gatwick's Executive Committee, she works closely with the board, shareholders and executive leadership team to support the airport's long term strategy and future growth.

Belén has been part of the VINCI Airports network for 14 years, beginning her career at its Paris headquarters as an in house lawyer working on the structuring and delivery of complex infrastructure and concession projects across multiple jurisdictions. She later progressed into senior leadership roles within the portfolio, developing deep expertise in regulated environments and large scale airport project delivery.

Prior to joining Gatwick, Belén served as General Counsel in Chile at the launch of the Santiago de Chile International Airport concession, playing a key role in establishing the concession and supporting the construction and delivery of a new international terminal during a period of major expansion. She subsequently led legal strategy in Cambodia during a pivotal phase for the business, advising on corporate development, regulatory engagement and key strategic decision



**I believe legal leadership is at its best when it is agile and strategic - driving impact through collaboration and creating space for people to grow with confidence.**

making. These experiences underpin a pragmatic leadership style grounded in adaptability, collaboration and strong commercial judgement.

Qualified as a lawyer in Spain and France, Belén recently passed the Solicitors Qualifying Examination in England and Wales. With a background in Economics, a Master's in Economic Regulation and fluency in English, French and Spanish, she brings a truly international and outward looking perspective to legal leadership.

Beyond her professional role, Belén is deeply committed to promoting diversity, inclusion and women's leadership. She is the executive sponsor of Gatwick Pride, Gatwick Airport's business group supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion, and actively champions inclusive leadership across the organisation. She is a strong advocate for building diverse, modern and agile legal teams, believing that representation and inclusion are essential to better decision making and performance. Passionate about mentorship and women's empowerment, Belén is committed to supporting emerging talent and enabling others to progress with confidence. She leads with empathy, pragmatism and high standards, fostering environments where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive.

As a Women Who Will, Belén is part of a new generation of leaders driving a more inclusive, influential and impactful legal profession.



## Nicola Lucas

*General Counsel and  
Company Secretary, New Look*

Nicola Lucas is General Counsel and Company Secretary of New Look, one of the UK's leading womenswear retailers. An accomplished in-house lawyer with a decade of senior leadership experience, she leads the Group's legal, data privacy, and company secretarial functions providing strategic counsel at the highest levels of the business.

Throughout her career, Nicola has demonstrated leadership during periods of significant change and challenge. Joining New Look in 2020, she played a pivotal role in guiding the business through the unprecedented disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, navigating complex commercial, regulatory, and litigation matters while helping to safeguard the organisation's long-term success. Recent work with New Look includes supporting the business with its digital transformation program.

Prior to New Look, Nicola served as Head of Legal and Company Secretary at The Deltic Group (formerly Luminar Leisure plc), then the UK's largest nightclub operator. During the pandemic, she worked closely with the Board on the successful sale of the business, helping secure its future during one of the most challenging periods the hospitality sector has faced. Nicola was previously shortlisted for General Counsel of the Year at The Lawyer Awards in 2022 for her work in these roles.

A passionate advocate for diversity, inclusion, and social mobility, Nicola is dedicated to creating



**I am honoured to be included in this year's Women Who Will cohort, alongside an amazing group of inspiring women, as well as those who have come before us. We all have the ability to make change, no matter how small, and to help ensure that future generations are never limited by gender in any way.**

pathways for others to succeed. Nicola is the Director sponsor for New Look's ED&I agenda, providing visible leadership and oversight of the company's inclusion agenda, championing initiatives that foster a culture where colleagues from all backgrounds can thrive, feel represented, and reach their full potential while being themselves. She actively mentors junior lawyers and is particularly interested in modernising the social norms of the workplace for all working to create family-friendly working environments while balancing a career. Nicola believes that leadership is measured not by personal achievement, but by the opportunities created for others and the positive impact left behind.

Beyond her role at New Look, Nicola is committed to supporting organisations in the third sector. Over the past decade, she has held several trustee and non-executive director positions including Trustee of One YMCA, Independent Non-Executive Director of the Hertfordshire Football Association, and most recently, Non-Executive Director of Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (formerly known as IEMA). She currently serves as a Governor at a local primary school.

Throughout her career, Nicola has combined legal expertise with commercial judgement, strategic thinking and a collaborative leadership style. She has built a reputation for guiding organisations through complex challenges and periods of transformation, while remaining committed to creating opportunities for others to succeed.



**Mel Nebhrajani CB**  
*Director General,  
Government Legal Department*

Mel was called to the Bar in 1994, practising in Chancery chambers where she specialised in property, charity and trusts work. Since 1999 she has worked in what is now the Government Legal Department (GLD). She was appointed Director General in 2021 and now leads GLD's Litigation with Justice and Security Group. This includes the Litigation Directorate and the Statutory Instruments Hub, as well as the legal teams advising the Cabinet Office, Home Office, Northern Ireland Office, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Defence.

Over her career, Mel has worked on some of the leading issues of the day including the Human Rights Act, the Devolution settlements, the Freedom of Information Act and the legal response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mel is committed to improving Diversity and Inclusion in the profession and has led initiatives to widen access to the profession and support the progression of those from under-represented groups. She mentors and supports colleagues, particularly returners from maternity leave and career breaks, and those from minorities who face particular barriers in the workplace.

Mel has 4 children aged 16 to 23. She is a Non-Executive Director for a number of charities and educational institutions. She was highly commended in the Asian Women of Achievement Awards 2020, appointed Companion of the Bath in the 2021 New Year's Honours List and is on The 100 Women in Westminster list for 2026.



**It is such an honour to be included in the Women who Will Class of 2026 and to be in such impressive company. We have come a long way in the law but there is still so much more to do before we can say we have secured and embedded equality. Leadership means taking risks and not walking past what needs doing. I am proud to be in the company of Women who Will. We are not walking past and, together, we will do even more.**





### **Natalie Salunke**

*Fractional General Counsel,  
Salunke Solutions Ltd*

Natalie Salunke is a fractional General Counsel who has been leading legal teams since 2012. She works with high-growth, technology-led businesses to provide strategic legal leadership at critical moments, helping organisations scale with confidence while navigating complexity.

As the “Mary Poppins of law” Natalie is known for stepping into fast-moving environments and bringing clarity, structure and calm to both legal and commercial challenges. She partners closely with founders, executive teams and boards across fintech, SaaS, emerging technology and travel, advising on international expansion, regulatory strategy and complex commercial arrangements, as well as designing legal functions that are embedded, agile and aligned to the business.

Alongside her executive work, Natalie plays an active role in governance and the charitable sector. She is a board member of Middlesex County Cricket Club, Acting Chair of the Young Urban Arts Foundation, supporting young people through access to creative opportunities, and serves as Chair of the North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service.



**We don't need to fit the mould of what leadership in law has traditionally looked like. The real opportunity is to reshape it - to build environments where people feel seen, supported and able to thrive. When we do that, we don't just succeed individually, we lift others with us.**

Natalie is also a Visiting Lecturer at The University of Law and is deeply committed to supporting the next generation of lawyers. A founding member of O Shaped, Natalie is passionate about breaking down barriers within the legal profession and championing a more inclusive, human-centred approach to legal careers.

She mentors founders and other members of the profession both independently and through initiatives such as Lawtech UK and Digital Boost, helping others develop commercial acumen, build confidence and create the opportunities their deserve.

She is also the co-founder of Hera, a community built to create a safe space for women in law to connect, share experiences and uplift one another, grounded in the belief that “we rise together”.

Through her work, Natalie continues to challenge traditional models of leadership, advocating for a more accessible, commercially impactful and people-focused future for the profession.



**Mollie Stoker**

*Group General Counsel and Company Secretary, Ocado*

Mollie Stoker is Group General Counsel and Company Secretary at Ocado, where she leads the legal, governance, compliance, regulatory, insurance, data protection, intellectual property, sustainability, and health and safety functions across the Group. She supports a complex international technology business operating at the forefront of automation, robotics, software, and online retail innovation.

With a career spanning multiple senior in-house leadership, corporate development, and General Counsel roles, Mollie has built broad expertise across corporate governance, commercial strategy, corporate development, regulation, risk management, and business transformation. She is recognised for combining strong legal and commercial judgement with a collaborative and pragmatic leadership style, helping organisations navigate growth, innovation, and change in fast-moving environments.

At Ocado, Mollie works closely with executive leadership and cross-functional teams to support strategic decision-making and responsible business growth. She is passionate about building modern legal and governance functions that are embedded within the business, enabling innovation while maintaining strong ethical, regulatory, and organisational standards.



**I am delighted to be listed as a Woman Who Will 2026. One of the most rewarding parts of leadership is creating opportunities for others to grow in confidence and ambition. I believe strong leadership is about creating environments where people feel trusted to contribute openly, challenge constructively, and develop with confidence. Those cultures ultimately lead to better decisions, stronger teams, and more sustainable organisations.**

Alongside her executive responsibilities, Mollie is actively involved in initiatives focused on sustainability, wellbeing, and the future of the legal profession. She is involved with the GC Sustainability Forum, The General Counsel Wellbeing Network, and the Legal Charter 1.5 GC Forum, reflecting her belief that legal leaders have an important role to play not only in organisational governance and sustainability, but also in supporting healthier and more inclusive leadership cultures within the profession.

Mollie has also been a Trustee of Only A Pavement Away since 2021, the charity that supports people facing homelessness, prison leavers, and veterans into employment within the hospitality sector. The role is of particular personal importance to her and reflects her commitment to social mobility, inclusion, and creating meaningful opportunities for people to rebuild their lives through work.

She is a strong advocate for the progression of women within the legal profession and leadership more broadly and is passionate about creating environments where individuals feel empowered to contribute authentically, challenge constructively, and develop their careers with confidence.



## Laura Wattley

Senior Legal Counsel,  
E.ON UK

Laura Wattley is a Senior Legal Counsel at E.ON UK, where she leads a team of lawyers supporting the company's multi-million-pound district heating and generation business. Laura plays a key role in shaping and delivering strategic projects central to E.ON's transition to cleaner, more sustainable energy, with her contributions recognised through multiple internal awards for legal leadership and impact.

Laura began her career at international law firm Pinsent Masons before moving in-house. During her time at Carillion, she was selected for the company's prestigious Leadership Programme as the only lawyer in the cohort, completing MBA-accredited modules at distinction level and undertaking cross-functional secondments, including leading the implementation of an early payment facility. These experiences shaped her commercially focused and strategic approach to legal practice.

Laura is passionate about driving continuous improvement and innovation within legal teams. She has led initiatives to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of legal advice, including developing an AI-enabled contract generation and review tool to enable business self-service and to free up legal capacity for higher-value work. Through this, she is helping to redefine the role of in-house legal teams as proactive, strategic partners.

Laura strongly believes in inclusive leadership and creating environments where women can thrive at every stage of their careers. She actively mentors emerging female talent and champions initiatives that support women to progress into senior roles.



**I'm deeply honoured to be part of the Women Who Will Class of 2026. I believe inclusive leadership is key to enabling women to thrive in the legal profession - by creating environments that support the different stages of women's lives, we can help more women not only remain in the profession, but progress to the most senior levels. I'm committed to championing authentic, inclusive leadership and helping to create those environments.**

Laura also co-founded E.ON's Fertility Forum, creating a safe and supportive space for colleagues navigating fertility challenges and played a leading role in developing a pioneering policy offering enhanced support, including unlimited paid leave for fertility treatment. The network has received external recognition, winning Fertility Friendly Employer of the Year 2025 (Fertility Matters at Work Awards) and Internal Support Network of the Year 2026 (Legal 500 ESG Awards). Laura has also spoken at the Houses of Parliament on the importance of fertility-friendly workplace policies, contributing to wider conversations on inclusion and employee wellbeing.

As a part-time working mother, Laura leads by example, demonstrating that career progression and flexible working can go hand in hand. She is passionate about supporting women to navigate the demands of a legal career alongside motherhood and other key stages of women's lives, offering practical guidance and empathetic support.

Outside of her professional role, Laura is Chair and trustee of her local musical theatre society, a registered charity with over 80 members. Under her leadership, the society has a £100,000 annual turnover and delivers four productions each year, including a youth division. It plays an important role in promoting the arts locally, developing talent and fostering a strong sense of community among its members, supporting their mental health and wellbeing. Through this work, she continues to champion inclusion, accessibility and community - values she also brings to her leadership within the legal profession.



**Iseult Whelan**

*Head of Legal, Europe,  
Primark*

Iseult Whelan is the Head of Legal for Europe at Primark, a role she has held since May 2021. She joined Primark in April 2018 as Legal Counsel, a position she held for just over three years before her promotion. Prior to that, she worked as a Solicitor at Vodafone Ireland Limited in Dublin from October 2015 to March 2018. Earlier in her career, she spent around six years at A&L Goodbody, one of Ireland’s leading corporate law firms, progressing from Trainee Solicitor (2009–2011), during which she gained experience across General Corporate, Banking and Financial Services, Commercial

Property, and Commercial Litigation and Dispute Resolution, through to Solicitor (2012–2015) and then Associate (May–October 2015), working across the firm’s Dublin and London offices throughout. She began her legal career as a Law Clerk at Skaletsky & Mannis, P.C. Attorneys at Law in Chicago from September 2006 to July 2007. Ms. Whelan holds a Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL International) from University College Dublin, which she earned with First Class Honours in 2008, and studied Law at DePaul University College of Law in Chicago during 2006–2007.





## Luisa Wright

*Group General Counsel and Company Secretary, Dunelm Group PLC*

Luisa Wright is the Group General Counsel & Company Secretary at Dunelm Group plc, a FTSE-listed homewares retailer, a role she has held since October 2022. She is an executive-level lawyer with significant experience and a proven track record in the gambling, sport, media and technology sectors, specialising in corporate, commercial and regulatory/compliance work. Her board-level corporate expertise has been developed within highly regulated, listed companies.

Prior to joining Dunelm, Luisa served as Group General Counsel & Company Secretary at The Rank Group plc (2018–2022) and at Sportech plc (2011–2017). At Sportech, a global pool betting organisation listed on the London Stock Exchange, she was a member of the Executive and responsible for legal and regulatory

advice to the Board, corporate governance, and stakeholder management. Key achievements included advising on the £83 million sale of the Football Pools business and the successful £97 million VAT reclaim from HMRC relating to the “Spot the Ball” game.

Earlier, she spent over a decade at the international law firm Olswang, where she focused on commercial and regulatory matters for clients across media, technology, sport and gambling, including the RFU, the NFL, Viacom, MTV, attheraces, Gamesys and Ladbrokes, and acted as sector champion for sport.

Luisa studied at the University of Leeds and was educated at Withington Girls’ School.

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To be recognised in this way is incredibly special, and a reminder that real success is not who you become, but who rises because of you.

**Amandeep Khasriya**  
Consultant Solicitor,  
Moore Barlow



## ii Women Who Will PRIVATE PRACTICE

*The women recognised in the private practice category are among the most accomplished and influential lawyers in their fields -leading teams, shaping the law, and opening doors for the generations coming behind them.*

**Amandeep Khasriya**  
*Consultant Solicitor,  
Moore Barlow*

Amandeep Khasriya is a Consultant Solicitor at Moore Barlow LLP and is a key member of the team instructed on some of London's most high-profile and sensitive cases, including the Wimbledon Study Prep crash and the central London Strand collision of 18 March. Legal 500 describes her as displaying "technical and tactical nous alongside genuinely caring attitudes towards her clients".

Alongside her legal practice, Amandeep is a recognised voice on women's leadership, gender equality and social mobility. As Chair of the Law Society's Women Solicitors Network, she helps shape conversations across the profession on leadership, progression, belonging and the realities of modern legal careers.

She is also a Law Advisory Board member at Roehampton University, where she contributes to conversations around legal education, employability and the development of future lawyers. In addition, she is a key contributor to the Be The Ladder Awards and Foundation, a social mobility initiative that celebrates and champions those who use their success to help others rise.

Through her speaking, writing and media commentary - including features in Brummell Magazine, the Law Society Gazette and wider legal media - Amandeep has become known for opening up honest conversations around confidence, ambition, progression, menopause, workplace barriers and the challenges facing women in professional life. She is also one of this year's judges for the Law Society Legal Heroes Awards. Amandeep was previously recognised by the Law Society as Highly Commended for Women Solicitor of the Year for her wider contribution to the profession.



**Tetyana Nesterchuk**  
*Barrister and Arbitrator,  
Fountain Court Chambers*

Tetyana Nesterchuk is a barrister and arbitrator at Fountain Court Chambers whose practice focuses on high-profile and complex disputes at the intersection of public and private law, both domestic and international. She is recognised for her work on matters involving international justice, human rights, state responsibility and civil fraud.

Before coming to the Bar, Tetyana practised as a corporate solicitor at Slaughter and May and served as a judicial assistant in the UK Supreme Court to the late Lords Rodger and Brown. Alongside her practice, she taught Roman Law, Trusts and Torts at Oxford University for ten years. She was named in The Lawyer Hot 100 in 2024, was The Lawyer's Barrister of the Week in 2021, and is recommended by the legal directories in public international law, civil fraud and professional discipline.

Beyond her practice, Tetyana advises parliamentarians in the UK, Ukraine, Canada and the European Union on



**I have been extraordinarily fortunate to learn from women who demonstrated what is possible for female lawyers: Baroness Brenda Hale, who redefined what leadership in the law could look like; Oleksandra Matviichuk, who courageously gave voice to victims of war; Baroness Victoria Prentis, whose resilience, integrity and commitment to justice and the rule of law exemplified public service at its best; and the late Victoria Amelina, who showed that truth-telling in search of justice is itself an act of courage. Their example taught me that the law is not simply a profession, but a responsibility to those whose voices might otherwise go unheard.**

public international law, particularly in relation to the seizure and transfer of state assets following serious violations of international law and human rights.

Tetyana grew up in a mining family in Eastern Ukraine and was the first lawyer in her family. Inspired by reading Ukraine's first Constitution in 1996, she decided to study law and, after receiving several scholarships, became the first Ukrainian undergraduate admitted to study Jurisprudence at Worcester College, Oxford, graduating with top marks in her year.

The granddaughter of a prisoner of war and the daughter and sister of refugees, Tetyana's personal history has shaped her professional mission. As a lawyer, academic, adviser and mother of two, she has dedicated her career to advancing accountability, protecting the rule of law, and ensuring that the pursuit of justice remains accessible to those who need it most.



### **Isabelle Mitchell**

*Partner, Public Inquiries and Investigations Eversheds Sutherland*

Isabelle Mitchell is a Partner in Eversheds Sutherland's Public Inquiries and Investigations team and one of the UK's leading lawyers advising on complex public inquiries and sensitive investigations.

Over the past decade, she has played a central role in some of the most high-profile inquiries in the UK, including the Angiolini Inquiry, as well as major investigations into systemic failures and institutional culture. Her work focuses not only on legal strategy, but on how inquiries are delivered in practice – from managing sensitive evidence and stakeholder relationships to supporting witnesses and bereaved families through often challenging processes.

Isabelle is widely recognised for advancing a more trauma informed approach to inquiry work, helping to reshape how legal teams interact with participants and institutions under intense public scrutiny. She has also



**I'm honoured to be included in this year's Women Who Will report alongside so many inspiring women across the profession. Public inquiries sit at the intersection of law, accountability and human experience, and I'm passionate about continuing to shape processes that are not only rigorous, but fair and humane for everyone involved.**

supported organisations through the full lifecycle of inquiries and investigations, from initial crisis response through to long-term reform and implementation.

Alongside her client work, Isabelle co-authored The Practical Guide to Public Inquiries, now considered a leading reference text for practitioners in this field. She has also contributed to wider professional reform, including pro bono work supporting complainants in a landmark regulatory case that prompted a sector-wide review of conduct and accountability at the Bar. She was recently named in The Lawyer Hot 100 2026, recognising her influence on the development of inquiry law and practice.

Through her work, Isabelle continues to influence how inquiry law is practised across the UK – combining technical excellence with a strong focus on fairness, accountability and lasting institutional change.



## **Victoria Morley-Jones**

*Partner and Head of Property, Bristol  
RWK Goodman*

Victoria Morley-Jones is a Partner and Head of Property in RWK Goodman's Bristol office, recognised for her standing in residential property, her influence in residential development and the leadership she brings to building and shaping a successful team.

She has built a reputation for technical excellence, commercial judgement and confident leadership, advising on matters that demand precision and strategic insight. Her practice is defined by ambition, quality, long-term client confidence and a genuine commitment to helping others succeed.

Victoria has built a strong profile in residential development, with notable expertise in acquisitions and plot sales, including work for affordable housing providers and corporate clients acquiring residential assets or securing bridging finance. This expansion has strengthened, rather than displaced, her leadership in mainstream residential property and marks her out as a versatile, commercially astute practitioner who can spot where the market is moving, recognise talent in the team and align people's development with strategic opportunity. In doing so, she has helped build a practice that is responsive to client demand and well placed for long-term growth.

What distinguishes Victoria is her ability to combine strategic thinking with visible, hands-on leadership. Clients value her as a trusted adviser and accomplished problem-solver who understands the commercial realities behind each instruction and responds with clarity, pace and purpose. Since joining RWK Goodman in February 2024, she has played a significant role in strengthening and expanding the firm's residential and residential development offering in Bristol. Central

to that has been her focus on growing the team in a deliberate, sustainable way: identifying strategic hires, nurturing emerging talent and helping shape a culture in which people can perform at a high level while continuing to develop.

Her approach goes beyond managing performance. She develops individuals, spots talent early and creates clear opportunities for progression. This has helped her build a strong, motivated and high-performing team with a culture rooted in trust, ambition and shared success. Her leadership shows that commercial growth is strongest when built on investment in people, succession planning and a clear vision for the future. In doing so, she has demonstrated the kind of modern legal leadership that drives commercial growth while maintaining a strong commitment to team development, collaboration and support.

Victoria is also a visible advocate for women in the legal profession. Through her leadership style, mentoring relationships and wider contributions to the firm, she actively encourages others to grow in confidence, capability and profile. She is committed to creating opportunities for the next generation of women, ensuring progress is shared and success is used to open doors for others.

Victoria's achievements reflect the qualities celebrated by Women Who Will: leadership, innovation, commercial excellence and a genuine commitment to lifting others as she progresses. She is not only an accomplished leader, but also a compelling example of the calibre, ambition and influence this award is designed to recognise.



I am honoured to be recognised within the Women Who Will Class of 2026, and within the Trailblazer category. The perspectives of previous winners underscore a shared responsibility, to lead in a way that meaningfully advances the visibility and progression of women.

This recognition reflects a culture within my firm that does not treat inclusion as aspirational, but as essential. I am proud to be part of an environment where women are actively supported, seen, and positioned to lead.

Leadership, to me, is measured not only by outcomes, but by the opportunities created for others. I remain committed to ensuring that women are given the visibility, platform, and confidence to progress because sustainable success depends on it.





**Sophie Wardell**

*People Director and Board Member,  
Higgs LLP*

Sophie Wardell is People Director and a Board member at Higgs LLP, where she leads the firm’s people and culture strategy with a focus on inclusive leadership, wellbeing and sustainable growth. Recognised as a leading voice on workplace culture and neurodiversity within the legal sector, Sophie is passionate about creating environments where people can succeed without having to hide who they are.

Born and raised in the Midlands, Sophie has built her career in the region and remains deeply committed to improving access to professional careers across the West Midlands. Alongside her role at Higgs, she serves as Chair of the Black Country Cornerstone Employer Group, bringing together employers, schools and education providers to improve social mobility, employability and career opportunities for young people.

Within Higgs, Sophie plays a key role in aligning people strategy with business strategy during a period of significant growth and transformation. Her work spans leadership development, organisational culture, wellbeing, employee engagement and inclusive recruitment, helping to ensure that commercial success and people experience remain intrinsically linked.

IMAGE OF SOPHIE: Edwin Ladd



**The world does not need more conformity, it needs difference. To me, leadership is about creating workplaces where people feel safe to contribute as themselves, not who they think they are expected to be.**

Sophie is particularly known for her advocacy around neurodiversity, psychological safety and mental health. Through both her professional work and public platform, she challenges traditional ideas of professionalism and encourages organisations to rethink how they recognise talent, potential and leadership. Her writing and speaking frequently explore the importance of creating workplaces where difference is valued rather than suppressed.

Through LinkedIn, where she has built a community of more than 19,000 followers and ranks amongst the top LinkedIn creators in the UK HR sector, Sophie shares practical and candid insight on leadership, inclusion, wellbeing and the future of work. Her work has been recognised externally through awards for workplace wellbeing and culture, including Higgs achieving Investors in People Gold accreditation and receiving the Employee Wellness Excellence Award at the Express & Star Business Awards.

Sophie believes leadership is ultimately about creating opportunities for others to thrive and helping to build a profession where talent and potential are recognised in all forms.



**Amy Clowrey**  
Solicitor and Director,  
Switalskis

Amy Clowrey, Solicitor and Director at Switalskis, specialises in child sexual abuse compensation claims, with a particular focus on cases involving child sexual exploitation and grooming. Amy has extensive experience representing survivors in some of the most high-profile and complex abuse cases in the UK, including those arising from the Rotherham and West Yorkshire grooming gang scandals. She has also acted for hundreds of survivors of abuse in South London, particularly in relation to systemic failings by the London Borough of Lambeth.

Amy also represented 28 survivors of abuse as Core Participants in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), contributing to the national examination of institutional failings and helping ensure survivors' voices were heard at the highest level. In addition, Amy has represented survivors of child grooming gangs across the UK, supporting individuals through complex and sensitive litigation involving multiple public bodies.

Alongside her casework, Amy has played an active role in raising public awareness of abuse and systemic



**I'm truly grateful to be included in the Women Who Will 2026 report. The work I do is inspired and shaped every single day by the remarkable courage of the survivors I represent – it's a privilege to stand beside them and support their journey. As lawyers, recognition is never the driving force; our motivation is to make a meaningful difference for those we serve. So, to be acknowledged alongside so many women who are working hard to drive real change within the legal profession is truly an honour.**

safeguarding failures. Last year she featured in the Channel 4 documentary *Groomed: A National Scandal* and has contributed to discussions within the House of Lords and national press coverage, including *The Sunday Times*, helping to bring greater visibility to survivor experiences and the ongoing need for reform.

Amy is also deeply involved in the wider legal profession. She is a Law Society Council Member for Yorkshire and Humberside, the joint Vice Chair of the Civil Justice Committee of The Law Society, and Education Representative for the Yorkshire Union for Lawyers. Alongside these roles, Amy serves as Switalskis' Training Principal, responsible for the development of Trainee Solicitors, Solicitor Apprentices and Graduate Solicitor Apprentices across the firm.

Known for a transparent and pragmatic approach, Amy places significant emphasis on building trust with survivors at their own pace, recognising the importance of sensitivity, patience, and clear communication in all aspects of her work.



**Thrilled to be recognised in this year’s trailblazing cohort as a “Woman who will”. Pretty much sums up my approach to work and personal life! If I come across injustice in the legal system, particularly around gender inequality, I’ll do everything in my power to put it right.**

**Nikki Alderson**

International Talent Retention and Women’s Leadership Specialist,  
Nikki Alderson Coaching

## iii Women Who Will TRAILBLAZERS

*The Trailblazers category recognises women whose contribution to the profession extends beyond their individual practice - women who are building platforms, shifting culture and changing the structural conditions for those coming behind them.*

### **Nikki Alderson**

*International Talent Retention and Women's Leadership Specialist, Nikki Alderson Coaching*

Nikki Alderson is an international talent retention and women's leadership specialist, TEDx and keynote speaker, best-selling author, and former criminal barrister. For nine years, she has worked exclusively with lawyers, coaching and training individuals and in law firms and barristers' chambers, to retain and progress female talent.

More than 170 women who Nikki has coached since 2017 have been retained within the legal profession. Across her organisational programmes, 92% of career break returners remain in law and 93% of individual solicitor and barrister clients report increased confidence, resilience and motivation to progress their careers.

Before founding her coaching practice, Nikki spent 19 years as a criminal barrister, latterly as a senior RASSO prosecutor. Her career at the Bar shaped everything that followed. Voluntary work on Jamaican Death Row, featured in the Yorkshire Post, reflected her personal resilience and commitment to justice beyond the courtroom. Personal development work influenced her career transition. Ultimately, the combination inspired her best-selling book, *Raising the Bar: Empowering female lawyers through coaching*.

Nikki's leadership extends across the profession, from being a regular podcast guest and media commentator, for example on Sky News and featured in the Financial Times, to contributing to legal publications such as Counsel Magazine and the Law Society Gazette. She also speaks at national legal conferences, including Women in Costs and Women in the Law UK.

Nikki co-founded the Women Impact Network in London, now in its fourth year, convening law firm leaders to collaborate on gender initiatives.

In May 2025, Nikki launched a groundbreaking training programme for barristers' clerks, with support from the Institute of Barristers' Clerks, addressing a persistent gap in consistent career break returner support within chambers.

Nikki doesn't only talk about what the profession should do. She builds the tools, runs the programmes, and presents the evidence too.

Beyond law, Nikki has spoken openly about being a breast cancer thriver, using her platform to raise awareness and support others to advocate for themselves within the healthcare system, as she continues to do for herself.

Nikki is an avid gym-goer, a proud mum of 3, and happiest outdoors or on family holidays.



### **Eloise Butterworth**

*Head of Risk and Compliance,  
HiveRisk*

Eloise Butterworth is not your usual lawyer. She didn't take the conventional path to where she is now and is determined to embrace her authenticity, rather than sacrifice it for success. She now is Head of Risk & Compliance at HiveRisk, advising law firms (from sole practitioners to Top 20 Firms on how to meet their regulatory and ethical obligations without losing their commercial nerve. Outspoken, and not afraid to challenge the status quo, her people focussed approach to risk has been described as a breath of fresh air. She will stand up for what is right, challenge the outdated and push standards across the industry as a whole.

A school leaver with no university degree, Eloise commenced her legal career as an Office Junior. Preferring to describe her career pathway as "scenic", Eloise credits her journey for giving her the grit, determination and resilience she is now known for within her network. Her journey shapes everything she does.

She bridges agility, commercial awareness and a deep understanding of law firms as an ecosystem – leading her to be considered an influential voice within this ever-evolving landscape.

Eloise challenges a sector that still rewards the right school and the right university over the right judgement, and she brings the same instinct to her risk practice: where most compliance work treats culture as a tick-box, she treats it as the leading indicator, asking the difficult questions early and doing it in public as readily as in private. She will openly label herself as not "successful" in the traditional sense celebrated in the legal sector, and that is her superpower.



**Starting conversations on uncomfortable topics, asking the difficult questions many would rather avoid and speaking up are just a few of the many ways we, as women, can effect real change in the legal sector. I am committed to using my platform and owning my journey (mistakes and all!) to turn up the volume on these conversations.**

She hosts the What's The Buzz podcast for HiveRisk, recording 2-3 episodes a month covering all manner of themes from risk management, the role of the regulator, ethical standards in the profession, the rise of AI and everything in between. Joined by notable guests, and with a waitlist taking up most of 2026, the demand for her insights is clear.

On Linked-In she has built a following of over 5,000 by writing honestly about risk, regulation, career switches and the parts of the profession that most senior voices won't touch. Junior fee earners, risk professionals and women rethinking their specialism find her by name. Journalists approach her, because they know she won't sit on the fence.

In 2026 she became a leading voice in the Living Law Better initiative, a movement to make legal practice more sustainable for everyone in it. The aim is not gentler language around wellbeing and workplace attitudes, but rather a healthier profession, full stop.

What sets Eloise apart is her willingness to take a public position when others are still taking stock. She does it with evidence, with humour, and without performance. She calls herself the profession's ultimate hype girl, but the description undersells her: she is one of the clearest, most useful voices the legal risk world has, and a reminder that the people who change a profession are often the ones who arrived through the side door.

The sector is better for her being in it. It will be better still for what she does next.





**I am incredibly honoured to be included in the Women Who Will Class of 2026 alongside such an inspiring group of women. For me, this recognition is an opportunity to shine a light on gender inequality in legal academia, where women encounter many of the same stubborn, structural barriers that hold women back in other parts of the legal profession, including unequal access to progression and leadership opportunities, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid / hidden pastoral and emotional labour that women continue to shoulder both at home and at work.**

**Advance HE's 2024 UK report on equality in higher education found that women's representation drops sharply at senior levels in UK academia; women make up 48.6% of academic staff, but only 30.8% of professors, and 49.2% of male academics earn above £50,000, compared with just 39.3% of female academics.**

**Initiatives like Women Who Will matter because they help to dismantle those barriers by making them visible, celebrating the achievements and leadership of women in law, and pushing institutions to decisively address gender inequality in workplace culture, practice and policy.**



## Dr Louise Loder

*Senior Lecturer in Law and Director of Employability, University of Exeter*

Dr Louise Loder is Senior Lecturer in Law and Director of Employability at the University of Exeter Law School. In this role, she has fundamentally redesigned the legal skills curriculum across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to ensure that graduates leave with foundational future-of-work competencies, including AI literacy, legal project management and legal design thinking. She designed and leads the 'Exeter Employability' series of events co-created with law firms, practitioners and NGOs, that teach critical skills typically underexplored in the curriculum, such as strategy, storytelling, negotiation and public speaking.

Louise has convened and taught modules including Legal Foundations, Legal Research and Writing, Intellectual Property Law, Technology and Human Rights, Business and Human Rights, and Constitutional and Administrative Law. She is passionate about the future of legal education and skills for the future of law. Her scholarship focuses on the education, training, wellbeing and protection of human rights defenders, with particular interests in freedom of expression and information, open justice and academic freedom. She recently co-chaired the Association of Law Teachers Annual Conference 2026 at Exeter Law School, which welcomed Sir Geoffrey Vos and Kirsty Brimelow KC as keynote speakers, and in 2025, she was awarded a grant to research excellence in law teaching in the university law school.

Beyond the Law School, Louise is Vice-Chair of the Learning and Development Committee at the Devon and Somerset Law Society, Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Lawyers Association, and an Executive Committee member of the Association of Law Teachers. Since 2021, she has served as Education and Training Lead to the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales, advising and leading on virtual panel events,

biannual and thematic publications, and stakeholder engagement initiatives that spotlight global human rights and rule of law concerns.

Louise came to law teaching after a 20-year career in senior corporate communications, strategic project leadership and programme management. Early in her career, she worked with The Sydney Morning Herald, Dubai Media City, the Dubai International Film Festival and the Forbes CEO Middle East Forum before returning to the UK to establish her human rights and sustainability communications practice. While doing so, she studied law as a mature student, achieving First Class Honours, later completing an LLM with Merit in International Human Rights Law and her PhD at Exeter with a fully funded university scholarship.

Over the years, Louise has served as a subject matter expert on rule of law and legal education projects, reports and training platforms, and has held senior advisory roles for NGOs, supporting Board and Executive Committee communications, programmes, stakeholder engagement, working on behalf of clients with international advocacy partners such as the ILO, OECD, World Bank, UN Women, the FCDO as well as private sector, government and civil society partners worldwide. She regularly chairs, speaks at and supports human rights, sustainability and education events, and is a panel speaker at the Google Higher Education Summit in June 2026 on infusing the legal curriculum with AI literacy and employability skills.

Louise, a proud mother of five, received a 2024 Special Recognition Award for Exceptional Creativity in IP Teaching from the Global Women Innovators Network. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

**iv** Women Who Will  
**PREVIOUS  
COHORTS**



## 2020

**In House Community**

Dr. Laura Janes  
Caroline Halliday  
Danette Joslyn-Gaul  
Rebekah Martin

Ruth Murphy  
Deborah Stevens  
Carol Paton

Sarah Thomas  
Nilema Bhakta-Jones  
Caroline Brown

**Private Practice and the Bar**

Oxana Balayan  
Keily Blair  
Kirsty Brimelow KC  
Anita Jewitt

Alison Eddy  
Hilary Meredith  
Rachel Welch-Philips  
Priscilla Osoba

Claire Wills  
Rehana Popal

**Trailblazers**

Malvika Jaganmohan  
Tessa Khan  
Karlia Lykourgou  
Shanika Amarasekara MBE

Sabrina Mahtani  
Rebecca Perlman  
Louise Whitfield  
Natasha Rattu

Alexandra Wilson  
Jenifer Swallow

## 2021

**In House Community**

Emily Lilley  
Amy McConnell  
Christa Hotton

Kate Lowe  
Banke Odunaiké

Rebecca Mills  
Leeanne Whaley

**Private Practice and the Bar**

Samina Iqbal  
Ana Paula Telleria  
Maria Patsalos

Lucy Cole  
Sue McLean  
Emma Hughes

Kama Melly KC  
Tracey Dovaston  
Kerry O'Connell

**Trailblazers**

Yasmin Lambert  
Elisabet Hardy

Penelope Warne  
Anne Bodley

Susan Cooper

## 2022

### In House Community

Emma Haywood  
Clair Curran  
Kirstie Ross  
Dipika Aggarwal

Merley Okine  
Margot Day  
Holly Moore  
Rachel Ford

Sarah Hemsley  
Omolara (Lara) Lucas

### Private Practice and the Bar

Natalie Sutherland  
Jessica van der Meer

Anna Ashford  
Helen Burnell

Mandy Aulak  
Akima Paul Lambert

### Trailblazers

Martha Rolle  
Aleksandra Wawrzyszczuk

Catherine McGregor  
Claire Barnett

Harriet Johnson  
Paulette Mastin

## 2023

### In House Community

Stacey Quayle  
Patricia Ratnam  
Charlotte Hall

Fiona Mills  
Kendall Langford  
Rebecca Mayfield

Laura Leanca  
Kaori Toyama  
Jaishree Jaisinghani  
Vyavaharkar

### Private Practice and the Bar

Afsana Akhtar  
Iryna Kravtsova  
Orlagh Kelly

Barbara Mills KC  
Lisa Quinn O'Flaherty  
Jodie Hill

Simranjeet Kaur Mann  
Hannah Strawbridge  
Fiona Teague

### Trailblazers

Baroness Sue Carr  
Amanda Brock

Charlotte Smith  
Siobhan Taylor-Ward

Caroline Flanagan

## 2024

**In House Community**

Debra Coady  
Bridget Lambie  
Esi Eshun OBE  
Jenifer Swallow  
Maxine Finding

Veena Patel  
Emma Di Iorio  
Justinia Lewis  
Louise Dreadon  
Corina Painter

Kelly Stapleton  
Laura-Meg McGlone  
Cristina Costache  
May Winfield  
Mandy Kaur

**Private Practice and the Bar**

Yanthé Richardson  
Hilary Ross

Hetty Gleave  
Nthabiseng Serabele

Gemma Roberts  
Kathryn-Ann Stamm

**Trailblazers**

Shabana Mahmood MP

Sarah Sackman MP

Emelda Nomvula Khoza

## 2025

**In House Community**

Aimee Nisbet  
Catie Sheret  
Dina White  
Yinsey Wang

Lisa Ardley-Price  
Luisa Edwards  
Nanna Hepke

Natasha Ballantine  
Sara Geramipoor  
Sarah Rosser

**Private Practice and the Bar**

Chelsea Brooke-Ward  
Elizabeth Blair  
Kathleen Harris  
Misha Patel

Salma Maqsood  
Sharn Khaira  
Sobashni De Silva

Teresa Cullen  
Shruti Trivedi  
Phoebe Whitlock

**Trailblazers**

Amy Rose  
Catherine Dunmore

Claire Waxman  
Sharon Thomas

Helen Croft

# A brief review of other moments of achievements for women in law during 2026:

## 1 Jan

Kirsty Brimelow KC begins term as Chair of the Bar Council, leading its first all-female leadership team alongside Heidi Stonecliffe KC, Lucinda Orr, and Amelia Clegg.



## 26 Jan

Stacy Newnham-Payne appointed Circuit Judge (Midlands Circuit, Birmingham Crown Court).



## 2 Feb

Kirsty-Ann Gunn appointed Circuit Judge (Northern Circuit).



## 1 Mar

Emma McIlveen becomes the youngest employment judge in the UK at age 34, appointed to sit in Scotland.

## 27 Mar

Kirsty Churm and Olivia Stiles promoted to Partner at Kingsley Napley.



## 23 Jan

96 new KCs announced, including Felicia Davy, Serena Gates, Eleanor Mawrey, Jennie Gillies, Caroline Pounds, Gemma Morgan, Louise Oakley, and Lucy Colter. Prof. Sue Edwards named Honorary KC.



## 26 Jan

Irena Sabic KC appointed Master of the High Court (King's Bench Division).

## 13 Feb

Heather Platt appointed Judge of the First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber).

## 12 Mar

BWS Women in Law Awards held in Glasgow; Lady Elish Angiolini receives Lifetime Achievement award and Annsia Nabi wins Rising Star of the Year.



## 1 Apr

Birketts promotes five women to Partner: Charlotte Sloan, Claire Jones, Emma Bysouth, Jennifer Headon, and Jessica Godfrey-Withey.

**7 Apr**

Teresa Hay appointed District Judge, based at Brighton County Court.



**28 Apr**

Women & Diversity in Law Awards: Somaya Ouazzani named Woman of the Year; Amanda Meusz named Mentor of the Year.



**1 May**

Anna Flanagan promoted to partner at Pinsent Masons among a group of 23 new partners.



**11 May**

Julia Faure Walker appointed as a Recorder.

**27 Jul**

Debbie Fellows appointed salaried employment judge in Scotland.



**13 April**

Angela Hall appointed District Judge, deployed to the South Eastern Circuit.



**1 May**

Barbara Mills KC wins Bar Champion of the Year at the Legal 500 UK ESG Awards 2026.

**7 May**

Kirtan Prasad promoted to partner at RPC as part of a round of 10 new partners.



**10 June**

Susan George appointed District Judge.

**Aug**

Dame Caroline Wilson takes up her appointment as the UK's diplomat to the EU.

# About the Authors

## **i** Obelisk Support

Obelisk Support is a pioneering legal service provider that specialises in delivering flexible legal solutions for organisations and law firms worldwide. Founded in 2010 by, the company was established to create innovative working models that connect businesses with a diverse pool of pre-vetted legal professionals. With a commitment to promoting work-life balance and championing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, Obelisk Support's values closely align with the Women Who Will initiative.

## ii Next 100 Years

The Next 100 Years project is the successor to the First 100 Years and is dedicated to achieving equality for women in law. Both are powered by Spark21, the charity. Building on the First 100 Years project -which charted the journey of women in law in the century following the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 -Next 100 Years aims to accelerate the pace of change by encouraging collaboration across the legal profession, improving the visibility of women in law and supporting the women lawyers of the future.



# Methodology

In compiling this report and identifying the Class of 2026, the teams at Obelisk Support and Next 100 Years received nominations from senior General Counsel and other legal leaders, while also incorporating women recognised by the judges of the Next 100 Years Inspirational Women in Law Awards 2025. Additionally, they conducted independent research across published and social media platforms. The report highlights these exceptional women whilst acknowledging that this represents only a fraction of the talented female professionals in the legal industry. By showcasing these outstanding individuals, the report aims to inspire greater recognition and appreciation for the numerous Women Who Will making significant contributions to the legal profession.



**This is a deeply personal pursuit to me. I want my own daughter to grow up knowing she can be anything she wants to be, without barriers, and no door is closed to her, whatever career she chooses. I have many talented female leaders to thank for their guidance, support and advice over the years, and this recognition is a reminder that progress is rarely achieved alone. It reflects our collective journeys to drive change within the Legal profession and outside it, and the responsibility we all share to create opportunities for those who follow.**

**Nicola Lucas**

General Counsel and  
Company Secretary,  
New Look



**The world does not need more conformity, it needs difference. To me, leadership is about creating workplaces where people feel safe to contribute as themselves, not who they think they are expected to be.**

**Sophie Wardell**  
People Director and Board Member,  
Higgs LLP



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**I believe legal leadership is at its best when it is agile and strategic — driving impact through collaboration and creating space for people to grow with confidence.**

**Belén Llamas**  
General Counsel and  
Company Secretary,  
Gatwick Airport



# WOMEN WHO WILL 2026



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**Baker  
McKenzie.**

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