

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.