resolution

The Review

ISSUE 240 JAN/FEB 2026



Supporting family law practitioners

at the start of their careers

The YRES TAKEOVER edition

Reflections from YRes National Conference 2025

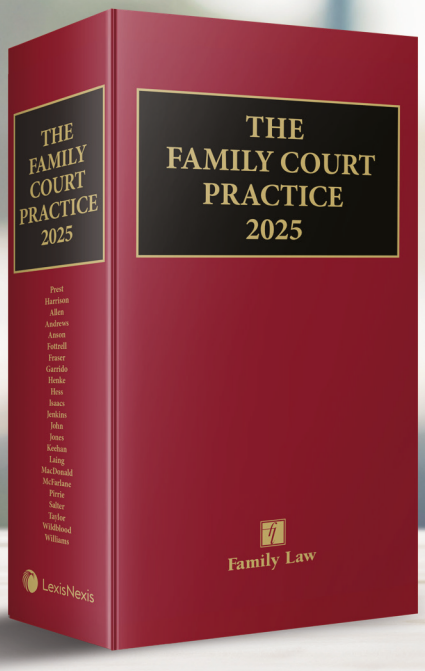
Ask us anything! Q&A with YRes Committee members

Step-by-step guide to becoming a mediator

Sponsored by LexisNexis, publishers of Family Law

Family Law LexisNexis®

Your one-stop-shop to the family courts



The Family Court Practice 2025 (Red Book)

The new edition of The Family Court Practice continues to cover the entire range of family business and contains all the essential materials you need to practice in the Family Court.

What's New

The Family Court Practice 2025 will include:

- Up-to-date legislation, rules and other documents essential to practice in family proceedings plus updated commentary and case law.
- 17 additional Essentials (now 42 in total), including topics such as recognition of foreign marriages, forced marriage, valuing business interests, interim care orders, human rights and the vital pre-action protocols in both children and financial cases.
- Continuing the development of the new Part VIII by moving the main evidence legislation into this Part and expanding it to address Proof of Facts in Family Proceedings.

ORDER NOW

lexisnexis.co.uk/redbook2025

LexisNexis®

RELX (UK) Limited, trading as LexisNexis®. Registered office 1-3 Strand London WC2N 5JR. Registered in England number 2746621. VAT Registered No. GB 730 8595 20. LexisNexis and the Knowledge Burst logo are registered trademarks of RELX Inc. © 2025 LexisNexis SA-0425-2126. The information in this document is current as of April 2025 and is subject to change without notice.



Editors' letter

@ResFamilyLaw
www.resolution.org.uk

Issue 240 January/February 2026

We're thrilled to kick off the new year with a truly special edition of *The Review* dedicated to YRes. This issue celebrates everything that makes our community of early-career family law professionals so dynamic, while looking ahead to an ambitious and inspiring 2026. It's packed with insight, practical guidance and fresh perspectives designed to support you in your practice and spark meaningful conversations.

As we draw the curtain on 2025, it's impossible not to reflect on what has been an extraordinary year for YRes nationally and regionally. Serving on the national YRes committee has given us a privileged vantage point from which to witness the energy, momentum, creativity and resilience that define our community of family law practitioners under 10 years' PQE.

We ended the year on an undeniable high with the National YRes Conference, held in November at the London Hilton. The event brought together practitioners from every corner of the country and showcased not only the breadth of talent within our network but also our commitment to learning, collaboration and future-focused practice. The atmosphere in the room affirmed, to us, why YRes matters and why our community continues to strengthen. YRes is not simply a network: it is a source of stability, support and shared learning during what can be some of the most formative and challenging years of practice.

Much of what made 2025 a standout year is the ongoing work between the national YRes committee and our brilliant regional YRes committees. The national YRes committee have been determined to ensure that YRes members, wherever they are based, feel supported, represented and connected. Regional YRes committees remain the beating heart of YRes, and our collaboration with them continues to build a more consistent national identity while still championing local needs and initiatives.

Another exciting development in 2025 has been the launch of the National YRes LinkedIn page, which has quickly become a vibrant hub for ideas, discussions and updates. It allows members to see, in real time, the scale of activity happening across the country and provides an easy place to share experiences, seek guidance and celebrate successes.

Our latest Resolution survey revealed something truly exciting: YRes membership numbers are rising sharply. This growth reinforces the importance of fostering a dedicated community for early-career family law professionals. Seeing more practitioners join our ranks demonstrates just how valued this space is.

Before closing, we want to extend heartfelt thanks to Zhenja Cann, who has now reached the end of her term as co-chair of the national YRes committee. Zhenja's dedication, vision and hard work have left a positive and lasting impact on the committee and on YRes nationally. We are all deeply grateful for her contribution.

As always, if you ever need anything or want to share ideas, please don't hesitate to get in touch – we would love to hear from you. Here's to 2026!

Felicia Munde *fmunde@stewartslaw.com*
Abigail Whelan *Abigail.Whelan@TLT.com*

Scan our **QR code** to get all the details on writing for *The Review* and our deadlines

Cover image shows members of the national YRes committee – see page 44 for full member details. Cover image © John Furlong.

Contact Resolution

Resolution
91-95 Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 0AX

Tel: 020 3841 0300

Email: *info@resolution.org.uk*

resolution

Resolution Officers & Staff *Contact [first name].[second name]@resolution.org.uk*

National Chair: Melanie Bataillard-Samuel, MBS Family Law
chair@resolution.org.uk

Vice Chair: Lucy Loizou, The International Family Law Group LLP
vicechair@resolution.org.uk

Chief Executive: Colin Jones
colin.jones@resolution.org.uk

Director of operations: Claire Easterman

Deputy director of operations: Alison Bradley

Head of editorial: Esther Pilger

Head of professional development: Sophina Khan

Director of communications: Matt Bryant

Communications manager: Anthony Kendrick

Head of policy: Rachel Rogers

Head of membership marketing: Rachel Carlyon

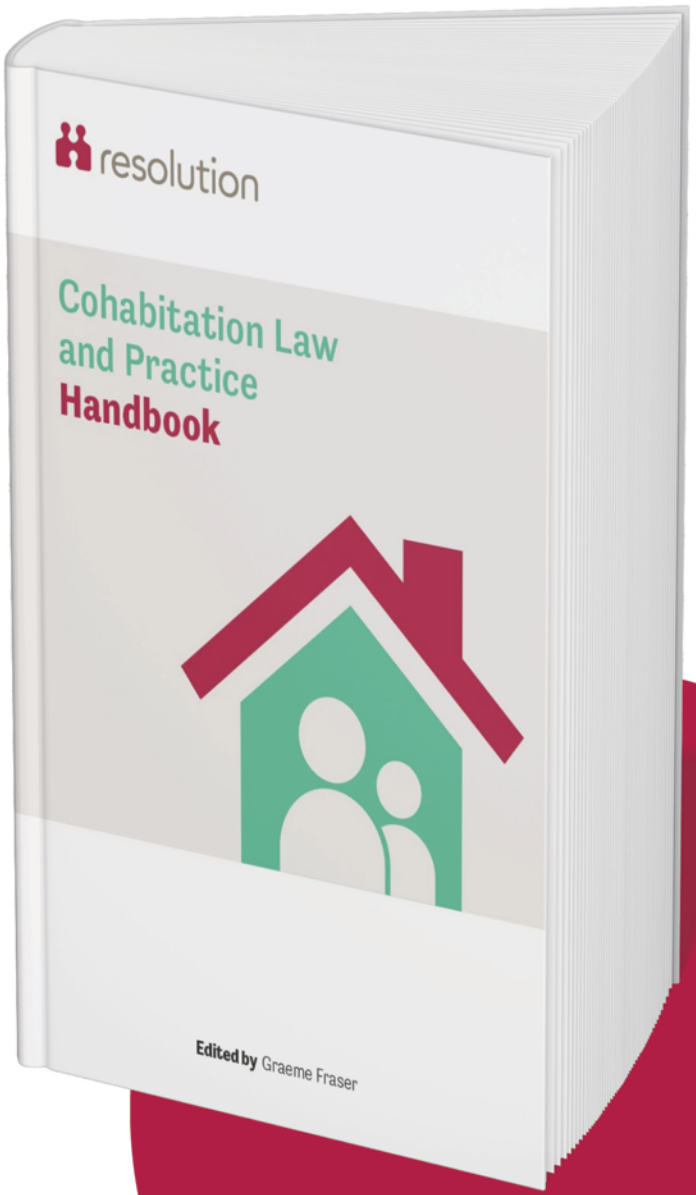
Marketing manager: Kimberley Carvalho

resolution

Cohabitation Law and Practice Handbook

An authoritative yet practical guide to cohabitation law and practice written by an expert team of practitioners. This new edition has been fully revised and expanded to support family justice professionals advising unmarried couples on complex property and trust law principles and related matters.

Available to order in print, as a PDF, or as a print/PDF bundle



Scan QR code to order today

Contents

Issue 240 January/February 2026

Chair's view *by Melanie Bataillard-Samuel* 4

News from the CEO *by Colin Jones* 5

Reflections from YRes National Conference 2025 6
Abigail Whelan

In pictures: YRes National Conference 2025 8

Ask us anything! *Abigail Whelan and Natalie Dunn* 10

Step-by-step guide to becoming a mediator 14
Holly Covington, Polly Dallyn and Mariam Cassamoali

FINANCE COLUMN Financial wellbeing: a foundational step for sustainable practice 18
Daniel Gornall

Understanding the Pathfinder Pilot Scheme 20
Felicia Munde

Pro bono costs orders in children proceedings 22
Lily Jeffree

EDI

- Unapologetically me (with ADHD) *Lauren Guiler* 24
- In conversation with FLANC 26
  Jenny Beck KC (Hon) and Caroline Croft

LEGAL AID Complexity and intrigue: the case for Legal Aid and Public Law *Bethany Burnard* 29

Looking back: a year of the Talking Family Law podcast 30
Zhenja Cann

Get to know Lucy Loizou, our vice chair of Resolution! 32
Rosa Schofield and Georgie Huse

The role of a divorce coach 34
Catherine Cooke

Supervision and reflective practice in family law 36
Vanessa Gardiner

***West End Girl*: analysing an album**

- Perspectives from a Northwest Boy *Joe Ferguson* 38
- A psychotherapist's view *Lesley Edelstein* 39

Spotlight on the Regions 41

Meet the National YRes Committee 44

WORLD LAND TRUST™
www.carbonbalancedprint.com
CBP2250

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper | Supporting responsible forestry FSC® C020438

Talking Resolution

Have you seen something online that we should all hear about?

Tag @ResFamilyLaw to let us know!



Lucy Phipps Partner, family law, Weightmans LLP

It was a privilege to chair the first Resolution West & North Yorkshire committee meeting of 2026! What do we have in store...

Our focus for this year is on wellbeing and inclusion. This year we will have more events in more places, aimed at improving our wellbeing as well as essential training so that everyone benefits.

Angela Killa Director and deputy team leader, JCP Solicitors

Llongyfarchiadau enfawr!! A huge congratulations to my fellow Resolution Children Committee members Chris Barnes and Andrew Powell on becoming KCs. Their success is so deserved as they are both exceptional Counsel. More importantly, in my view, they are sincere and good people who deserve very good things. I am over the moon for you both.

Law and Disorder
@LawDisorderShow

This week, we partnered with @ResFamilyLaw to talk to barrister and podcast co-host Anita Mehta from @4PBFamilyLaw about misconduct and domestic abuse, and how it is reflected in financial judgements.



YRes makes Resolution stronger, braver and more exciting



Melanie Bataillard-Samuel *National Chair*

Their curiosity and confidence brings so much energy to the room

I'm slightly amazed (and frankly delighted) that the editorial team have once again trusted me to write this column without wrapping me in layers of supervision, disclaimers, or emergency Comms intervention.

After the success of my last column (or, at least, the fact that no one has staged a polite intervention), I've been let loose again. Bold move. Let's see how this goes...

And what better moment for a little editorial bravery than a YRes-powered takeover of *The Review*? If ever there were a group ready to bring fresh energy, sharp insight and the occasional well-aimed challenge to the profession, it's YRes.

Over the past year, travelling across the regions and meeting members at every stage of their careers, I've been struck, again and again, by the energy YRes brings to every room. It's there in the thoughtful questions at 9am (before the coffee has decided to work), the fearless contributions in workshops, and the generous way people share knowledge without making anyone feel daft for asking. There's a particular YRes blend of curiosity and confidence that lifts the whole conversation.

I often think back to my own early years and how different they might have felt if YRes had been as prominent and active in my regions at the time. It did exist, technically, but not everywhere, and not with the visibility it enjoys today. Many of us learned by a combination of determination, guesswork and strong tea. We quietly hoped that if we kept moving no one would notice how new we were. YRes offers today's practitioners the very thing many of us longed for: a supportive network where you can ask real questions, compare notes on the knotty bits, and build confidence in good company, without the need for a poker face.

"YRes offers today's practitioners the very thing many of us longed for: a supportive network where you can ask real questions, compare notes and build confidence in good company."

Last November's National YRes Conference in London was a brilliant example of that energy in action. It was a successful day, full of thoughtful discussion, practical insights and the kind of exchanges that stay with you. Everywhere you turned, there were conversations happening: people comparing experiences, sharing ideas and challenging each other in all the right ways. It captured the very best of what YRes brings to our community, and left everyone who attended feeling inspired about the future of our profession.

What has delighted me over recent months is the number of YRes members stepping up to propose workshops and lead training across Resolution's wider programme. Whether guiding colleagues through advocacy skills, demystifying international child law, or championing wellbeing, they're not just attending, they are shaping the agenda. That takes courage. Standing up in front of peers is no small thing. The fact that so many are doing it – and doing it brilliantly – tells you everything about the calibre and kindness of this community.

Recognition matters too, which is why the YRes category in the Resolution Awards remains one of my favourites. Every year we see outstanding, inspirational professionals being recognised, people whose talent, empathy and commitment shine through, even at this early stage of their careers. Celebrating them isn't just a lovely moment, it's a reminder of the extraordinary future ahead of our organisation.

And since this is a takeover edition, it feels like the right moment to say this to employers, practice leads and managers: please keep supporting your early career professionals. Family law can be overwhelming at times.

The emotional weight, the procedural complexity, the pace, the responsibility; none of it gets easier simply by pretending it's fine.

What does make a difference is guidance, mentoring and partnership. Creating room for development; encouraging curiosity; offering reassurance when everything feels new; and yes, making sure they're part of Resolution.

If your newer practitioners aren't signed up yet, sign them up. If they are members, make sure they have time to attend YRes events, take part in committees and build their networks. It's an investment in them, certainly, but it's just as much an investment in the future strength of your practice.

I hope you enjoy this special edition. YRes members, this one is yours. Thank you for all you do, all you bring, and all you're becoming. Resolution is stronger, braver and more exciting because of you.

And as ever, if anything in this column has gone a little off piste, you know exactly who wrote it.

chair@resolution.org.uk

Shaping our future



Colin Jones *Chief Executive*

It is a genuine pleasure to introduce this special YRes takeover of *The Review*. As I am sure you all know, YRes is Resolution's network of family law professionals at the start of their careers. It exists to ensure that there is an opportunity for those members to share their experiences, concerns and ideas, and develop their skills and knowledge in a friendly and supportive environment.

Over the years, I have seen that YRes is far more than just a network. It is a community. A place where early-career professionals thrive, find their voice, build confidence and develop relationships that will last throughout their professional lives.

Most importantly, YRes members are not simply the future of Resolution and the family justice profession; they are a vital part of our present. Today, YRes represents a significant and growing proportion of our overall membership, but their importance goes far beyond numbers. The community brings energy, challenge, innovation and fresh perspectives to everything we do.

YRes is also where many members first discover that Resolution is not something you simply belong to, but something you actively shape. Getting involved, whether through committees, regional groups, training, policy discussions or events, is one of the most valuable investments you can make in your development, your confidence and your career.

"YRes is far more than just a network. It is a community. A place where early-career professionals thrive."

I know that the leaders of our profession will emerge from YRes, and I have no doubt that a future chair of Resolution is reading this magazine right now. But leadership does not only happen at the top, or at some distant point in the future. I see it happening each and every day across YRes: in working parties, through mentoring relationships, during National Conferences, and the everyday ways you support your clients and your colleagues.

For Resolution as an organisation, YRes is essential to our sustainability, relevance and credibility. You keep us connected to the realities of entering and building a career in family justice. You help ensure that Resolution remains an organisation shaped by its members, not one that simply speaks to them.

I am enormously proud of our wonderful YRes community and grateful to everyone who has contributed to this issue, it speaks volumes for your appetite to be involved in everything that Resolution does. From evolving family structures and new routes to resolution, to wellbeing, technology and access to justice, the challenges facing family professionals today are complex, and YRes members are at the forefront of grappling with them. Believe me when I say that Resolution – and the family justice profession – which you will one day lead, is already being shaped by you.

colin.jones@resolution.org.uk

Reflections from YRes National Conference 2025



Abigail Whelan TLT LLP

There's nothing quite like the hum of anticipation as family law practitioners from across the country gather, coffee in hand, ready for a day of learning. As a member of the national YRes committee, I always look forward to the flurry of ideas shared during meetings where we brainstorm topics for the next conference, considering feedback from attendees. Helping to shape the programme is a real privilege, and this year's event was no exception.

The YRes National Conference 2025 brought together family law practitioners from across the country for a day of learning, networking and professional development. Beyond the educational content, the conference provides a unique opportunity to connect with fellow junior practitioners, and to catch up with old friends and new faces alike, fostering relationships that strengthen our professional community.

"20,120 new private law children cases were lodged in the family court between April and September 2025, involving 30,311 children. This represents a 7.1% increase."

We kicked off with current national Resolution co-chair Lucy Loizou, who shared reflections on her time as a YRes member and her role in kickstarting YRes on a national level. We then heard from Zhenja Cann, who not only helped open the conference as the then co-chair of National YRes, but also participated in our Rising Star Q&A, having won Resolution's award in this category. Zhenja's clear enthusiasm and commitment to Resolution set the tone for the day.

One session that really stuck with me was Bibi Badejo's on "Your Voice, Your Brand". Not only is Bibi a barrister at 4PB, but she's also the powerhouse behind The Advocacy Coach, The Advocacy Members Club, and The Advocacy Podcast. Bibi's workshop focused not only on advocacy, but also how we can all start to build our personal brand from a junior level, with authenticity. She challenged us to jot down three words that describe how people see us now, and three we'd like them to use in future – a surprisingly tricky exercise! Even for those of us who do not routinely undertake our own advocacy, many of the skills Bibi discussed were incredibly useful, including how to successfully prepare the points you want to make and consider how your opponent might respond to that. If you haven't tuned in to her podcast yet, I highly recommend it for a dose of inspiration on your commute (available as "The Advocacy Podcast" on Spotify and Apple podcasts) – between episodes of Talking Family Law, of course.

Marcie Shaoul and Marc Etherington led a thought-provoking session on collaborative parenting after separation, focusing on reducing conflict and rebuilding trust. The data regarding private law proceedings is stark, with the latest indicating that 20,120 new private law children cases were lodged in the family court between April and September 2025, involving 30,311 children. This represents a 7.1% increase compared to the same period during the previous year.

Marcie and Marc both sit on Resolution's Parenting after Parting Committee, responsible for the brilliant *Parenting Through Separation Guide*. I have previously commented in *The Review* about how helpful the guide has been for me personally, and I would encourage others to share it with clients where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity, if not already doing so.

Additionally, Marcie highlighted how her book, *The Co-Parenting Method*, can help our clients, by adopting a six-step framework with an emphasis on emotional regulation, boundaries and steady communication.

Some other suggested reading around this topic members might find helpful includes...

- Christina McGhee's **Parenting Apart**
- Philippa Perry, **The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read (and Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did)**
- Emily Alison and Laurence Alison, **Rapport: The Four Ways to Read People**
- ... and of course, Resolution's **Parenting through Separation: Putting your children first**



The session titled "*Standish* – where are we now?" was another favourite highlighted in the feedback we received from attendees. We were joined by Ria Coles, financial planner at Brunel Wealth, Tom Harvey of 1HC, Oliver Woolley of 1GC and Lucy Stewart-Gould of Stewarts. It was truly special to hear insight from those actively involved with the case many of us waited on the judgment for with bated breath throughout last year – it certainly got the family law community talking. Lucy shared some useful insights and practical titbits, including that we should all carefully consider how to pitch a case from the outset, particularly regarding how we refer to matrimonial and non-matrimonial property on a Form E. Ria Coles also offered a fresh perspective on the judgment as a financial planner. The panel explored the concept of "matrimonialisation" – a word that still hasn't been added to the dictionary, as evidenced by the red underline appearing in Word as I type this!

During the afternoon we considered the practical benefits of arbitration, with Michelle Uppal of Lowry Legal, Lauren Guy of Edward Cooke and Tristan Harvey of QEB. The session featured a mock directions hearing to demonstrate how arbitration works in practice, providing a useful insight for attendees who haven't participated in the process before. Arbitration certainly seems to be on the up, used much more now than in previous years as parties grapple with the issues we are all too familiar with in the family courts, including hearings adjourned at the last minute and long delays waiting for listings. The benefits of arbitration are important for all of us to remember.

Whilst there is an additional fee for the tribunal, this is often outweighed by the time saved during the process when compared with contested court proceedings. Parties have more autonomy to decide the format of the hearing and its location – and will generally be more comfortable than in a court building with its limited access to amenities.

The penultimate session focused on child maintenance, with Gwynfor Evans of 36 Family, Rachel Spicer of 1HC and Jennifer Lee of Pump Court. The session provided some super-helpful insights regarding child maintenance which I'm sure would have been useful for many of the attendees – I know I find myself checking and double checking the regulations whenever a new query arises.

The session highlighted various useful points for us all to remember including:

- Keep in mind the enforcement mechanisms available within the CMS procedure, including deduction from earnings, and confiscation of passport and driving licence.
- A question that often arises – what happens when the parties share care of the child equally? The answer doesn't stop at how many overnights the child spends with each parent. The CMS can also look at who undertakes the bulk of the day-to-day care pursuant to Regulation 50.
- If day-to-day care is equal and the CMS therefore does not have jurisdiction, you can apply to the court for periodical payments.
- Don't overlook unearned income – consider whether an application for a variation is necessary to take into account unearned income such as dividends.

The final session was a particularly interesting one, focusing on international child law proceedings with James Netto (IFLG), Forum Shah (Dawson Cornwell) and Mani Singh Basi (4PB). The panel provided a helpful reminder that this is one of the few areas where legal aid is available. It is not means-tested for applicants, although it is for respondents. The session was packed with helpful practical pointers, including guidance regarding tipstaff orders and freestanding port alerts.

The day concluded with a round-up by the current chair of Resolution, Melanie Batalliard-Samuel, and YRes co-chair Felicia Munde, followed by a drinks reception and networking – and for many a train journey home hopefully feeling energised and inspired.

Whether you're a conference regular or thinking of joining us for the first time, I hope to see many of you at the next YRes conference later this year. It is truly an invaluable opportunity both in terms of legal knowledge and meeting other like-minded family law professionals.

Abigail.Whelan@TLT.com

NATIONAL YRes CONFERENCE

resolution



FRIDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2025
HILTON LONDON TOWER BRIDGE

Our annual National YRes Conference at Hilton London Tower Bridge brought together over 100 junior practitioners for a day of high-energy networking, technical learning, and inspiration



Jennifer Lee joined a panel exploring child maintenance, topping-up and using Schedule 1



James Netto (above) and Mani Singh Basi (below) provided pointers on international family law



HEADLINE SPONSOR
harcourt
FAMILY LAW

The day began with an opening address from former national YRes co-chair, Zhenja Cann, and national vice chair, Lucy Loizou, who shared the story of her pivotal role in the formation of YRes.

We then dived straight into an agenda packed with technical updates and practical workshops, from deep dives into *Standish* and international child law to a mock arbitration. Bibi Badejo's workshop on advocacy and personal branding was another highlight, offering plenty of practical tips for the room.

The conference concluded as always, with a chance to reflect on the day and catch up with new and old colleagues at a drinks reception.

Our thanks go to the national YRes committee for their input in shaping a fantastic programme, and to our Headline Sponsor, Harcourt Family Law, whose support made the day possible.



Marc Etherington (left) and Marcie Shaoul (right) gave an interesting presentation on how to better help children after separation

2025 YRes Conference images © John Furlong



National YRes committee current co-chairs Felicia Munde (front row, left) and Abigail Whelan (back row, third from right) with former co-chair Zhenja Cann (front row, second from right) and members of the committee

Our vice chair Lucy Loizou (left) gave the opening address with Zhenja Cann

Tristan Harvey (above) and Michelle Uppal (right) examined the practicalities of arbitration

National YRes committee co-chair Felicia Munde (left) delivered the closing remarks with national chair Melanie Bataillard-Samuel (above)

Bibi Badejo (below) discussed advocacy skills

Committee members Natalie Dunn (above) and Lauren Guiler (right) share a lighter moment at the speaker's lectern

Q&A Ask us anything!





Being a junior lawyer in the family world can be daunting, and raise questions that people are not comfortable asking those around them

In this special 'Ask YRes' feature, Abigail Whelan, TLT, and Natalie Dunn, Moore Barlow, both members of the national YRes committee, have received your questions and have collaborated to provide their guidance based on their experiences below

1. What is/who are YRes? What are the benefits of joining YRes? How can they help me as a junior lawyer?

YRes is the junior arm of Resolution, aimed at family law professionals with up to 10 years' PQE. Resolution members who fall into this category are automatically YRes members – you do not need to do anything extra.

In terms of the benefits of getting involved with YRes at a local and national level, there is much to recommend it, including meeting new people and developing your network, sharing information amongst professionals from other firms, and developing knowledge and skills by attendance at YRes events.

2. What are the types of events that YRes organise?

The National YRes committee's main focus is our annual YRes conference, which takes place usually in early November in London. See Abigail's review on pages 6-7 and the spread of photos on pages 8-9 for a full run-down of what took place at our 2025 conference. This is a great opportunity to meet other junior lawyers from across England and Wales, and to hear from a wide range of speakers about all things family law.

Locally, our regional YRes committees host smaller-scale events throughout the year, including training days and workshops, as well as social events such as meet and greet drinks, pub quizzes, summer parties and winter balls. We recommend signing up to your region's mailing list via your Resolution account to keep up to date with what your local committee is planning for you, and joining our National YRes LinkedIn group, where all regional and national events will be promoted. The back pages of this very magazine usually have a fair sample of events too.

3. How can I join the national YRes or my local YRes committee?

To join the national YRes committee, keep an eye on emails from Resolution signposting the committees looking for new members. The national YRes committee generally recruits new members at least once per year, given the natural flow of committee members reaching 10 years' PQE and therefore moving on from the committee. The process is entirely anonymous.

Recruitment will look different at a local level depending on how your local YRes committee operates. In Bristol we will generally email round to YRes members and advertise on social media that we are looking for new members, for example. If you aren't sure, get in touch with your local YRes chair and they will be able to provide more information regarding how the process works in your particular region. If you aren't sure who your local YRes chair is, get in touch with Resolution and either the Resolution staff or your local national YRes liaison member will be able to put you in touch with them.

4. What advice would you give to a junior lawyer who is nervous about networking?

The YRes community is very friendly and approachable. If you are nervous about not knowing anyone when attending your first event, you can contact your local YRes chair to let them know you will be attending, and they will arrange to meet you and introduce you to others attending. You can also arrange to go with a friend or another member of your team so that you aren't turning up alone. Before going you could prepare a short introduction about yourself, so you don't feel put on the spot, and when speaking to people, listen and ask questions. In terms of events, be selective in those that you choose to go to initially; often an activity or seminar provides a great talking point when speaking to people at those events. Finally, go for it! Once you have attended your first event, you are likely to recognise people at future events, and over time you will build strong connections with other local family lawyers and professionals.

5. How do we encourage cross-region events?

If you are a member of your local YRes committee, reach out to other regional chairs to advertise which events are coming up and make it clear that members from other regions are welcome to attend. Making sure you have other local regional chairs on your list to receive email communications regarding your upcoming events can help with this, so they can in turn circulate invites with members from their region. If you aren't sure how to go about getting in contact with other regional chairs, your YRes national committee representative will be able to help.

Examples of where cross-region events have worked particularly well recently include the Devon, Cornwall and Somerset ball, which was organised between the three Resolution committees and members from all three regions attended. Online events also lend themselves well to cross-region collaboration.

6. How do we find the best experts for business valuations?

The expert that you require will likely depend on the nature and size of the business and the type of valuation required for your specific case. There is unfortunately no central Resolution list of recommended business valuation experts as there are so many across the regions. If your firm does not have a list of recommended experts, we suggest speaking to other lawyers in your region to see who they use and recommend. This is another benefit of getting involved in your local Resolution groups, to expand your network and build connections with people that you then feel comfortable to reach out to for recommendations. As your career progresses you will also build experience of working with different experts who you are then able to recommend to others (or not!).

7. What are the latest trends in dispute resolution for family law matters?

We have noticed a push towards arbitration in matters that cannot be resolved outside of the court process (eg via mediation or solicitor correspondence), in part due to concerns we are all familiar with within the court process, such as final hearings being listed as a second fixture and hearings being pulled at the last minute. Where arbitration is agreed, parties value the certainty that their hearing will go ahead as planned and have more flexibility throughout the process in terms of timings and format. If you are due to attend a final hearing or in-court FDR, it is worth keeping in mind that you might need to flip to arbitration, private FDR or round table meeting at the last minute if your case is pulled.

"You do not need to be available to your clients 24/7 and you should ensure that you are clear as to when you are 'on' and 'off'."

Child inclusive mediation also seems to be popular, and for good reason. Whilst it won't be appropriate in every case, where it is, the benefit to parents of hearing their child's views and concerns via a neutral third party is invaluable, and the children involved are more likely to come away from the process feeling heard, even if the outcome isn't what they would have chosen.

8. What advice would you give to a newly qualified solicitor who is struggling to balance their practice?

This is a very common feeling for junior solicitors; when you are starting out as a newly qualified solicitor, you are likely to be asked to do anything and everything. Family law is a very emotional area of law, so it is important to create and maintain clear boundaries with your work and clients. You do not need to be available to your clients 24/7 and you should ensure that you are clear as to when you are "on" and "off". Remember that you are not responsible for helping your clients through the emotional impact of what they are going through, you should acknowledge this but consider referring your clients to other professionals, including counsellors, therapists and divorce coaches, who are specially trained to deal with that element.

Seek supervision if you are struggling; as a junior lawyer you should reach out to the more senior lawyers in your team for help with balancing your work and to put in place steps to help you with this. You could also sign up to Resolution's brilliant 121 mentoring scheme if you would like support from someone outside of your team, you can find out more about this here *resolution.org.uk/professional-development/resolution-121-mentoring-programme*

If you are struggling to balance the type of work you do, our advice is to take all the experience you can get at the outset and, over time, you will learn what type of work you enjoy doing the most and want to do more of, and the work that you enjoy less, which can then help you focus on the areas in which you would like to specialise in within the family law remit. If, for example, you are primarily doing financial remedy work and would like more experience with children work, you should express this to your supervisor. You could also sign up to some of Resolution's training sessions and produce articles/blogs showcasing your knowledge, with the aim of receiving more enquiries for that type of work.

9. Do you have any advice on wellbeing for professionals when dealing with emotionally charged or significant domestic abuse cases?

Maintaining your wellbeing when handling emotionally charged domestic abuse cases is essential for both your professional effectiveness and personal health. First and foremost, it is crucial to look after yourself – you cannot pour from a cup that isn't full. Prioritising your own mental and emotional health enables you to provide better support to your clients.

Resolution's 121 mentoring scheme is mentioned above, and/or you may want to explore family law supervision. Many firms are now funding the cost of supervision, and this may be something to raise within your firm if they aren't already. These professional relationships can provide valuable guidance and perspective when navigating difficult cases.

Therapy is another important resource to consider. It may be offered as part of your firm's benefits package, but if not, it is a worthwhile investment in your long-term wellbeing and career sustainability.

Don't underestimate the value of speaking to your colleagues about challenging cases. Sharing the emotional load with trusted peers can be incredibly helpful and serves as a reminder that you aren't dealing with these difficult situations alone. The collective experience and support of your team can provide both practical advice and emotional relief.

On a practical level, make sure to step away from your desk for regular breaks during the working day. Going for a short walk on your lunch break can help clear your mind and provide necessary distance from emotionally demanding work. Away from the office, engage in activities that help you to unwind and decompress. What works best will look different for everyone – whether that's exercise, creative pursuits, time with loved ones, or quiet relaxation – so find what genuinely helps you recharge.

10. I am interested in doing my own advocacy, where do I start and can people share their experiences of solicitor advocacy?

Resolution offer an Advocacy for Family Lawyers training course; the next one is on 13-14 April 2026 in London. This course equips family lawyers with essential skills for every stage of a case. It covers everything from thorough preparation, drafting clear, persuasive documents and learning to address judges with confidence, through to building practical skills in examination-in-chief, cross-examination, and delivering closing submissions.

You should also look into the Higher Rights of Audience qualification which is required to represent clients in the higher courts; there is a lot of information about this on the SRA website. You should speak to your supervisor about this in the first instance.

We also recommend reaching out to your local Resolution groups to find out if they can put you in touch with other lawyers in your region who do their own advocacy, so you can find out more about their experiences. You could also reach out to the wider network of lawyers on LinkedIn.

11. How does Resolution ensure its members act in a "Code compliant" way?

Resolution is a membership organisation and all members sign up to the Code of Practice upon joining. Members are expected to adhere to the Code and to encourage their peers to do likewise, where appropriate. This peer-led approach relies on the professional commitment of members to uphold the standards and values that Resolution promotes. We know from our recent member research that members see Resolution's role as promoting and supporting them to uphold the Code, rather than playing a regulatory or policing role.

As a result, last year was designated as the "Year of the Code", during which Resolution focused on training, campaigning, and awareness raising to reinforce the importance of adhering to the Code amongst members. These initiatives were designed to ensure that members understand their obligations and are equipped to

"We know from our recent member research that members see Resolution's role as promoting and supporting them to uphold the Code, rather than playing a regulatory or policing role."

meet them in their daily practice. However, there is a complaints process, so if you do have concerns about a particular member's conduct or compliance with the Code, do get in touch with Resolution.

We spoke to Resolution's Head of Standards, Angela Lake-Carroll, on this point and her answer was very clear:

> "Our aim is to maintain our standards through voluntary and positive commitment. Membership should represent our values in practice, achieved through adherence to our Code and ethical standards. We want our members to be proud of their membership of Resolution and of their Resolution community. Where a complaint or concern does arise, whether from the public or another member, we will address it fairly, transparently and robustly, and where necessary, require members to undertake appropriate action through training or in the most serious cases, suspending or terminating membership."

abigail.whelan@TLT.com
Natalie.Dunn@moorebarlow.com

12. What if my question hasn't been answered here?

We were so grateful to receive so many interesting questions via the Ask YRes function, so much so that there wasn't space to answer all of them here. Who knows – maybe Resolution HQ will let us have a regular spot in *The Review* to answer your questions?!

In the short term, however, we are hugely excited to be working on a special YRes takeover of Resolution's podcast, ordinarily run by Anita Mehta and Simon Blain. In this episode, we will discuss some of the more technical questions we received that haven't been answered above, with some very special guests. Please keep your eyes – and ears – peeled for this special episode, due to go live on 30 March 2026.



A round up of key books – as recommended by the YRes Committee

- **Staying Sane in Family Law**, *Annmarie Carvalho*: "very reassuring and like having a therapy session"
- **Rapport: The Four Ways to Read People**, *Emily Alison and Laurence Alison*
- **In Control**, *Jane Monckton Smith*
- **(Almost) Anything But Family Court**, *Jo O'Sullivan*
- **Vicarious Trauma in the Legal Profession – A practical guide to trauma, burnout and collective care**, *Joanna Fleck and Rachel Francis*
- **Why Love Matters**, *Sue Gerhardt*
- **The Secret Barrister** books, *anon*
- **The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read**, *Philippa Perry*: helpful in understanding family dynamics and communication, which can feed into how we explain issues to parents and encourage child-centred decision-making
- **Parenting Apart**, *Christina McGhee*: "provides a helpful understanding of co-parenting dynamics post-separation, helps form realistic, child-centred advice to separating parents"
- Resolution's **Cohabitation Law and Practice Handbook** 2025 edition: "or as my team like to call it, The Bible"
- Class Legal's **Dictionary of Financial Remedies/ Private Children**: "essential reading and bite-sized helpful information on every topic you could imagine"



- Resolution's **International Family Law Handbook**: "It's the first place I turn whenever a cross-border issue lands on my desk, and it never lets me down"
- **Girls Just Wanna Have Funds**, Anna-Sophie Hartvigsen. Not strictly "legal", but hugely valuable for junior lawyers thinking about long term financial confidence. It's an empowering, practical guide to getting started with investing, perfect if you want clarity without the jargon. Its sister book, **Girls Just Wanna Have Impact Funds**, takes it a step further by exploring impact investing: choosing funds that align with your values and genuinely create positive change.

Step-by-step guide to becoming a mediator

Holly Covington BBS Law,
Polly Dallyn Family Law Partners and
Mariam Cassamoali, ITN Solicitors



Mediation is a growing practice and one that could offer huge benefits in building your career

You may have considered whether being a family mediator is for you, and it can be daunting knowing where to start. This article will set out the key steps involved to become a mediator and then, hopefully (!), achieving accreditation.

Step One

You will first need to understand why you want to train as a mediator so that you can make your case to your firm. The demands of the course itself and subsequent ongoing training and development requirements mean that it is crucial to have the backing of your Head of Team and those in the firm who make the decisions about training and development.

You will therefore need to be able to explain the benefits to the firm of you becoming a mediator. This is especially important if you work in a multi-service firm where those signing off on the course may not understand family law work or family mediation. In those cases, you may even need to explain what family mediation is and how it is different to other family law services but is just as important!

We would also recommend that you speak to other family mediators in your network (or at your firm if there are mediators in your team already) and ask them what they find most rewarding and beneficial about their work as a mediator. They will also be honest with you about the work involved. If you don't know any mediators, then the authors of this article would be happy to hear from you!

"The growing demand for mediators in family law means you'll be in a better position to serve your clients and gain new ones."

Some key points to raise when pitching your case to train as a family mediator could be:

- **Expansion of services:** It allows you, and therefore your team, to offer non-court dispute resolution (NCDR) to clients. This is vital for your team to show that it is in touch with what the law and clients expect. Explain to the decisionmaker/s how the FPR changes in April 2024 mean that all couples must properly consider using NCDR before issuing and before each hearing. This means that demand is high from both clients and other solicitors for mediation services. As a newly trained mediator or a mediator working towards accreditation, you can set your rates competitively as you build your experience and caseload.
- **Increased marketability:** The growing demand for mediators in family law means you'll be in a better position to serve your clients and gain new ones. Your network will immediately open right up as you will bond with those on your course and then join a POD (more about this below) of local solicitors and professionals who do NCDR work. This is a great opportunity to expose yourself and the firm to a much wider network and generate more business in your roles as both a solicitor and a mediator.
- **Personal satisfaction and career development:** Mediating family disputes allows you to play a part in reducing conflict and helping people come to amicable resolutions which work for their family. We will already be doing this to some extent but doing this as a mediator is a unique and challenging job as you will now be in the room with both spouses or parents. You will learn so many skills in managing conflict, maintaining impartiality, problem solving and having difficult conversations, all of which will enhance your solicitor practice enormously and make you a better solicitor.

Step Two

As part of making your case, you will need to set out which family mediation training course you wish to attend, the training dates and course fees.

Family mediation is a regulated profession in the UK, with specific training and accreditation requirements set by professional bodies. To practice as a qualified family mediator, you must complete the necessary training and meet the standards set by these organisations.

The first set of training required to become a family mediator is to complete a Family Mediation Council (FMC) accredited training program. The course will provide you with the theoretical and practical skills needed to mediate family disputes. You'll cover topics such as:

- the mediation process and stages
- managing high-conflict situations
- understanding the legal framework surrounding family disputes (though mediators don't give legal advice, understanding the law is important for facilitating resolutions)
- safeguarding and ethical considerations in mediation

Many training providers offer flexible courses, including in-person and online modules. Some programs are tailored for solicitors or legal professionals. Resolution offers an FMC-accredited foundation course, which comes highly recommended by the authors of this article.

Providing that your firm has agreed to you training as a mediator, you then need to get booked onto your course and look out for the pre-course reading and preparation materials.

Step Three

Complete the foundation course! The exact schedule will depend on which course you attend but usually the course will be held over eight or so days (Resolution breaks these up into two- or three-day blocks over about three to four months).

There will also be coursework and reading to do in between sessions and as part of your assessment. The training itself will usually involve role plays with the others on your course. These can be daunting and awkward at first, but you soon realise that you are all in this together and everyone wants each other to do well.

Step Four

Once you have completed the training (well done!) you can now mediate! But before you get started you must also:

1. **Join an FMC Member Organisation:** There are four: Resolution; the Family Mediators Association (FMA); National Family Mediation (NFM) and the College of Mediators. (In the September/October 2025 issue of *The Review* Alison Bull set out more detail on these organisations.)

"Family mediation is a regulated profession in the UK, with specific training and accreditation requirements set by professional bodies."

2. **Find a Professional Practice Consultant (PPC):** A PPC is an experienced mediator who has full accreditation and has fulfilled a number of requirements set by the FMSB (Family Mediation Standards Board). Your trainers and colleagues on your training course can assist with this if you have trouble finding one, although there are also resources on the FMC website. Your PPC will be on hand to help you work towards your accreditation and help you with any queries or issues you may have when you first begin mediating. Your PPC plays a central role in getting you started, as you meet with them for a post-training review, and a pre-meeting discussion before your first mediation. It's really important that you establish a good working relationship with your PPC, so finding the right fit is well worth taking the time over
3. **Observe a mediation session** conducted by your PPC or another accredited PPC.
4. **Register with the FMC** as working towards your accreditation.

You should also join a POD in your local area. This is a network of other NCDR professionals. Together you will run meetings to discuss developments and best practice, and you can run training events which support the FMC requirements when working towards accreditation. Your POD will provide invaluable support as you embark on your new role as a mediator.

Once you have done all of the above, you can then start mediating and working on your accreditation portfolio. This can feel like a really daunting stage in becoming a mediator. Compared to our legal training, the training period for a mediator is relatively short and as you can see above there are limited steps for you to take before you can get started. It is something that you can tailor to what feels right for you though, and I know many mediators started their practice by observing numerous sessions run by other mediators or even co-mediating to build up their confidence.

"Accreditation is a mountain to climb, and our best advice would be to get started on it early on, and tick things off little and often as you build your practice."

Once you have completed your foundation training you have three years within which to apply for your mediation accreditation. As a word of warning, the FMC is becoming more stringent on enforcing this three-year deadline and there is talk of changing rules and regulations around mediation so that becoming accredited is more essential than it is now, so it is important to diarise your three-year end and make sure you are working towards your portfolio well in advance.

It is a good idea once you have completed your foundation training to have a look at the accreditation process and note what steps you need to take to complete an accreditation portfolio. You can apply for accreditation either through the FMC directly or through The Law Society, and whilst the applications are slightly different, the steps required are broadly the same. There is also talk of an alternative route to accreditation being piloted shortly, but at the time of writing the "portfolio" route is the primary avenue.

Both The Law Society and the FMC have helpful guidance documents on what is required for accreditation and what you will need to include in your portfolio. It is a mountain to climb, and our best advice would be to get started on it early on, and tick things off little and often as you build your practice. The main elements that you will need to include in your accreditation portfolio are:

1. **a record of the time you have spent with your PPC** – you will need to spend direct time with them for at least four hours per year, plus an additional ten hours working specifically on your accreditation portfolio

2. **a record of your learning and development** – for each year that you are a mediator you must complete at least ten hours of learning and development (this can be seminars, webinars, training courses, or reading or writing articles)

3. **an analysis of how your training and experience have covered key elements of learning and development** such as keeping up with the law, understanding safeguarding and understanding theories and developments in mediation

4. **attendance at a Child Inclusive Mediation (CIM) information day** – Resolution runs these and they are a great way of understanding what CIM is and how it can be used in mediation – we recommend attending the CIM information day as early as possible once you have completed your foundation training

5. **theoretical essay-based questions based on fictional case studies** – these are certainly easier when the foundation training is fresh in your mind so the sooner you tackle them the better

6. **a reflective account of your experiences as a mediator** over your first three years of practice

7. **an observation by you of another mediator's session** and an observation by your PPC of one of your sessions

8. **case analysis and production of documents** for at least three of your mediation cases, to include one all-issues case (children and finances)

As you can see there is a lot to do, but the main reason for the three-year period to work towards accreditation is to do with that last point – establishing clients and building experience.

For your accreditation portfolio you will need to prepare case analyses for at least three mediation cases and produce outcome documents that have been prepared for clients. So, before you can be accredited, you need mediation clients!

The ability to build a mediation practice can be heavily influenced by where you work. If you work in a firm that already has an established NCDR practice and promotes building an NCDR client base, you may be able to pick up general enquiries straightaway and use the established reputation of your firm to kickstart your practice. If your firm does not have that reputation, or the mediation referrals they get are to specific individuals, you may need to be more creative.

Some top tips for building your practice are:

- establish relationships with other mediators so that you can do some co-mediation or take on any overflow work that they don't have the capacity for – this is where PODs come in very useful

- reach out to solicitors in your network who you have worked with, or you know from YRes or other networking, and arrange lunches, dinners, coffees or small group events to talk about your recent training

- make sure you write lots of LinkedIn posts about your training, qualification and experience so that the wider family law community are aware that you are now a mediator

- ensure you have updated your profile on Resolution, FMC and The Law Society so that you appear as a mediator on all three, as these have search functions that are often used by clients

- think about writing a blog or article about your mediation practice, what you can offer and your wider experience
- shamelessly bring up mediation in every conversation you have – some of the best advice I've been given is that your next client could be the person behind you in the supermarket queue! Don't be afraid to talk to friends, family members, anyone you come across, about what you do and how you can help families
- think about offering reduced or fixed fees to get your practice started and encourage people through the door – it can be a hard sell commercially for your firm but well worth the investment in the longer term

This all may seem like a lot but the benefits to establishing a mediation practice, broadening your experience and creating a varied workload are well worth the work. It is a growing practice area without a doubt and definitely one we would highly recommend getting in on!

"Shamelessly bring up mediation in every conversation you have – some of the best advice I've been given is that your next client could be the person behind you in the supermarket queue!"

polly@familylawpartners.co.uk
mcassamoali@itnsolicitors.com
hcovington@bbslaw.co.uk

Practical considerations and tips for solicitors when instructing a mediator

Appropriateness of mediation

- Assess whether mediation is suitable for the case, particularly if there are concerns about child safeguarding, personal safety or domestic abuse.
- When voluntarily instructing mediators, consider whether both parties are open to mediation or if one party is unlikely to engage.

"Clarify the mediator's fees prior to instruction."

Experience and expertise

- Ensure the mediator is accredited by the relevant recognised body.
- Consider whether the client's cultural or religious background will have any influence in how they approach the conflict. A mediator with the relevant background knowledge of these issues should be instructed where possible. The mediator should understand cultural and religious sensitivities and practices, and should avoid cultural bias or preconceived notions in their approach. If the conflict involves issues that touch on religious doctrines or ethical boundaries, the mediator must be respectful of those values.
- For cases involving vulnerable individuals, such as those with additional needs, choose a mediator with experience in those areas and who is able to provide the relevant accommodations.

Fees and funding

- Clarify the mediator's fees prior to instruction. Family mediation may be covered by Legal Aid in some cases, so check whether your client qualifies and check whether the mediator undertakes work with Legal Aid clients.

Availability and location

- Choose a mediator with availability that fits the timeline of the case.
- Consider the mediator's location, especially if the case involves multiple parties who live in different areas. Consider whether remote mediation would be helpful or a hindrance.

Expectations of the parties

- Discuss with the client the expectations they should have of the mediation process.
- Ensure that the client understands that mediation is not a "win/lose" process but an opportunity to reach a mutually acceptable agreement while avoiding lengthy litigation.

Post-mediation follow-up

- Clarify whether the mediator will assist with drafting a formal agreement after mediation or if that will be handled by solicitors.
- Confirm that the mediator is able to provide follow-up sessions or support should it be necessary or requested.

Financial wellbeing: a foundational step for sustainable practice

- FINANCE - COLUMN



Daniel Gornall *Centurion Chartered Financial Planners*

Looking after our own financial position from the very start of our careers can bring us essential peace of mind – and opportunities

When we think about financial planning in family law, it's easy to focus entirely on supporting clients through wealth division, pensions, and long-term financial strategies. But what about our own financial wellbeing, particularly early in our careers, when balancing workload, training and personal life often feels like a juggling act?

For junior practitioners (paralegals, trainees, newly qualified solicitors, or early-career associates), financial wellbeing is not a "nice to have". It's a foundation for resilience, focus and ultimately a sustainable career. Worrying about personal finances (such as debts, irregular cash flow, or insufficient savings) can quietly erode confidence, distract from professional development and lead to stress or burnout.

In this article I'll explore common financial challenges faced by junior family lawyers, practical steps to manage them, helpful resources, and why investing in your own financial health matters in the long run.

The financial realities for junior practitioners

Many junior family lawyers face a perfect storm of modest earnings, unpredictable costs and social pressure. Common challenges include:

- **Modest or irregular income:** Entry-level salaries in law can look respectable on paper, but high tax, student loan deductions and rising living costs quickly erode take-home pay
- **Up-front costs:** Qualification, training, CPD and professional memberships all add up
- **Student debt:** Often £50,000+ in loans, repaid via salary deductions
- **Lifestyle expectations:** The unspoken cost of "looking the part" in client-facing roles
- **Time poverty:** Long hours and high stress leave little time for financial self-care

Practical steps and how to make them stick

1. Automate your budget, savings and investing

Automation is key. Setting up direct debits to savings or investment accounts means you "pay yourself first". You'll be less tempted to overspend if money is already routed to a separate savings or ISA account on payday.

Many banks now offer "round-up" features that automatically add a small amount to savings every time you make a purchase, which can be a helpful, low-effort way to grow your savings pot over time.

2. Understand and embrace compound interest

The earlier you save and invest, the more powerful the effect of compound interest. As for the famously misattributed quote to Einstein (there's no evidence he ever said it), "Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world." Misquoted or not, the sentiment endures for good reason.

Here's an example:

- Emma starts investing £200 per month at age 25, but only contributes for 10 years (total invested = £24,000).
- Liam starts later at age 35 and contributes the same £200 per month for 30 years (total invested = £72,000).
- Both achieve an average return of 6% per year after charges.
- By the time they each reach age 65, both investments will have grown to around £200,000.

Despite saving three times less, Emma ends up in roughly the same financial position, simply by starting ten years earlier. That's the power of compound growth. It's not just how much you invest, but when you start. The earlier you begin, the more work your money can do over time, even if your contributions are small.

3. Student loan vs investing: which should you prioritise?

Many junior lawyers feel pressured to clear their student loans quickly. But this isn't always optimal. For example, if your loan is under Plan 2, repayment is income-based and any balance is wiped after 30 years. If you're earning £30,000–£40,000, overpayments may not be financially efficient, especially if you could invest instead.

Suppose you have £200 per month spare:

- Overpaying student loans may save 3–6% in interest.

- Investing the same amount in an ISA or pension could yield 5–7% annually.

Everyone's situation varies, but it's important to weigh opportunity cost, and not let debt become an emotional decision.

4. Build a buffer: emergency fund essentials

An emergency fund isn't glamorous, but it's foundational. Aim for 3–6 months of essential expenses. This reduces your reliance on credit and gives you breathing space if you face illness, redundancy or a career pivot. Start with £500, then aim for £1,000, then 1–3 months' rent or mortgage. Even saving £50 per month can make a difference.

5. Start your pension (even if it's small)

If your employer offers a pension, it's usually best practice to maximise the amount the employer will match. You're turning down free money if you don't.

Self-employed? Consider a SIPP. Contributions are tax-deductible, ie every £80 you contribute becomes £100, even before any growth. And with decades ahead, even modest contributions can grow significantly.

6. Review the benefits your firm offers

Don't overlook what may be available through your workplace. Firms often provide a range of perks, from gym discounts, cashback schemes and health benefits to buy/sell holiday schemes, legal services and even financial advice referrals. These can ease day-to-day financial pressure or enhance your overall financial position, so it's worth checking what's on offer.

Tools to get you started

- **Budgeting apps:** Try tools like Emma or Snoop, which are UK-based and often free.
- **Savings accounts & ISAs:** Use high-interest deposit accounts for short-term goals and Stocks & Shares ISAs for longer-term investing.
- **Government calculators:** Visit *MoneyHelper* and *gov.uk* to understand pensions, loan repayments and tax.
- **Professional advice:** When your circumstances become more complex (for example, buying a home, investing beyond ISAs, marriage or children) speak to an Independent Financial Adviser. Many offer an initial meeting at no cost.

Long-term benefits of strong financial foundations

1. **Reduced stress = better performance:** Worrying about money distracts from legal work. Calm finances allow better focus
2. **Career agility:** Financial stability gives you the power to make career choices based on values, not desperation
3. **Burnout prevention:** If finances force you to work overtime constantly, burnout becomes much more likely
4. **You become a better adviser:** Understanding money personally makes you more empathetic and insightful when guiding clients through financial settlements or divorce outcomes

Final word: start small, start now

Financial wellbeing isn't about being perfect – it's about being proactive and intentional. The biggest gains often come not from complex strategies, but from simple habits repeated consistently. Time is your greatest financial asset early in your career. Decisions you make in your twenties or thirties can ripple forward for decades, compounding into financial security, freedom and peace of mind.

By taking care of your own financial health, you give yourself the best platform to grow professionally, support clients confidently, and make career choices on your terms, not your bank balance.

Financial wellbeing isn't a luxury; it's a form of self-care and professional sustainability. Start now. Your future self will thank you.

10 quick wins for financial wellbeing

1. **Track your spending** – Know where your money goes to identify patterns and spot waste
2. **Build your buffer** – Aim for 3–6 months of essential expenses in an accessible savings account
3. **Invest early, even modestly** – Time in the market matters more than perfect timing
4. **Use tax wrappers** – Maximise ISAs and pensions for tax-efficient growth
5. **Diversify investments** – Don't rely on one asset class; spread risk across shares, bonds, cash and more
6. **Keep an eye on charges** – Investment and platform fees add up; opt for low-cost providers and investment solutions where appropriate
7. **Ignore the noise** – Media headlines often push short-term fear or hype; stick to your plan
8. **Protect yourself** – Consider income protection or life cover, especially if you have dependants
9. **Review regularly** – Revisit your plan at least annually or after major life changes
10. **Get advice when needed** – A good IFA can help you avoid mistakes and stay on track

Daniel.Gornall@centurioncfp.co.uk

Daniel Gornall is a Chartered Financial Planner and Resolution Accredited Specialist in Divorce and Separation. Daniel is a committee member of Bristol's Collaborative POD, Bristol Family Law Solutions, and a former national YRes committee member.

Understanding the Pathfinder Pilot Scheme



Felicia Munde *Stewarts Law*

The new scheme reshaping the architecture of private children law

The Pathfinder Pilot Scheme represents a significant re-engineering of the private children law process, aiming to embed a more investigative, multi-disciplinary and trauma-informed approach at the earliest procedural stage.

Developed in response to the findings of the Harm Panel Report, the pilot seeks to address longstanding concerns about delay, adversarial behaviours and inconsistent safeguarding practices within the existing Child Arrangements Programme (CAP), which are so clearly contrary to children's best interests.

Central to the Pathfinder model is the early and systematic identification of risk. Upon issue of proceedings, information from bodies such as the local authority and the police is collated. This enables the court and social workers to form a comprehensive picture of the family dynamic at the outset, and most importantly, the issues facing the children, prior to an attended hearing.

A defining feature of the pilot is the introduction of Child Impact Reports (CIRs) – enhanced, holistic assessments prepared by either Cafcass or the local authority, which explore not only the child's wishes and feelings but also the impact of issues such as parental conflict, domestic abuse, coercive control and any other behavioural or emotional vulnerabilities within the family. They are designed to provide the court with a nuanced, evidence-based analysis of how different proposals may affect the child's short- and long-term wellbeing.

The pilot scheme also reconfigures the procedural architecture. Rather than funnelling parents into adversarial positions ahead of the First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment (FHDRA), the pilot consolidates early assessments so that the initial hearing (known as a Decision Hearing), if it proceeds, can operate as a more substantive, problem-solving event. The court assumes a proactive, inquisitorial role – shaping the evidential requirements from the outset. This reduces duplication, minimises the risk of litigation drift, and ensures resources are targeted where safeguarding concerns are most acute.

While the long-term data is still emerging, the Ministry of Justice suggest that the Pathfinder model may deliver improved outcomes, particularly in cases involving allegations of domestic abuse. If the current trends are sustained, the pilot has the potential to form the blueprint for a reformed, nationally implemented CAP

Voices from the Regions

LEA LEVINE – BARRISTER AT NEW PARK COURT CHAMBERS, YORKSHIRE AND THE NORTHEASTERN CIRCUIT

Perhaps the most significant difference for a family lawyer engaging in the Pathfinder Pilot Scheme is the focus of proceedings, which is entirely child-centric. The inquisitorial approach used within Pathfinder certainly marks a departure from protracted and lengthy adversarial approach of CAP. Within CAP, practitioners were at risk of becoming enveloped in conflicting parental narratives, losing sight of the children at the very heart of proceedings. I profess it is refreshing to see images of smiling children on the front of every CIR – a stark reminder of what private law children matters are truly about.

TOP TIP: My top tip is to embrace the problem-solving, non-adversarial approach to proceedings. Gone are the days of the "belt and braces" approach to litigation.

Seeking directions for rafts of police disclosure, expert input, drug and alcohol testing and narrative statements will not be tolerated at Decision Hearings.

Where gaps within the CIR are identified, practitioners should frame their submissions around the necessity of seeking further input or clarification on specific issues, with a focus on reducing conflict.

– one that is child-centred and capable of promptly addressing the complex realities that bring families into the private law system.

The Pathfinder pilot scheme could fundamentally reshape not only how cases are managed, but how family lawyers define their role and, as junior family law practitioners, the justice system may soon look very different from the one we first entered.

fmunde@stewartslaw.com

Day 1	Application lodged. Checking of application for completeness. Request to local authority to determine its recent involvement with the family within the last 12 weeks. Refer to legal adviser for Gatekeeping 1 (GK 1).
Day 2	GK1 legal adviser directs Local Authority or Cafcass to file Child Impact Report (CIR) within eight weeks. Order issued to Local Authority or Cafcass, who commence preparation of CIR, making referral for domestic abuse support if required.
Days 7 – 10	Case Progression Officer (CPO) tracks case and makes contact with litigant in person (if applicable) to check receipt of documents, explain CIR has been directed which will contain recommendations to the court, and confirm key dates. Record of call made.
Weeks 7-8	CPO contacts Local Authority or Cafcass to check CIR will be filed as directed. When CIR filed, CPO tracks receipt, preparing application to refer to Gatekeeping 2 (GK2).
Week 9	GK2 judge or legal adviser considers the CIR. Case allocated to tier of judiciary. Order made if appropriate or case listed for Decision Hearing within two weeks. CPO makes contact with litigant in person (if applicable) to ensure understands next steps.
Week 11	Decision Hearing before judge or magistrates. Time estimate: usually one hour before judiciary, 1.5 hours before magistrates. Report writer not expected to attend this "problem solving hearing with the aim of resolving the application".
Week 11+	Final Hearing – listed as required but expect to be the exception rather than the norm.

NB: This is a summary of how the Pathfinder pilot scheme is operating in West Yorkshire. There may be some slight regional differences.

Voices from the Regions

GWENLLIAN REEVES – HCR LAW, WALES

Pathfinder replaces the CAP's safeguarding letter/section 7 with a personalised CIR completed before directions, bringing together safeguarding checks, earlier child and parent engagement, risk assessment (including a DASH via domestic abuse services) and clear recommendations.

The model is document-led and promotes partnership working between Cafcass, HMCTS and the domestic abuse sector, enabling earlier engagement with those services.

Where appropriate, judges decide matters on the papers to avoid unnecessary hearings, delay and cost, and ultimately keeping the focus on child welfare and proportionality.

TOP TIPS:

- Follow the Resolution Code
- Keep your tone measured
- Respond promptly to safeguarding enquiries and recommended programmes
- Put forward workable, child-centred proposals
- Consistent compliance with directions is critical

ALBERT GIBBON – PUMP COURT CHAMBERS, LONDON

The most significant difference between Children Act proceedings progressing under the traditional CAP and those under the new Pathfinder pilot scheme is the emphasis on Cafcass or the local authority's early engagement directly with the parties.

Under the CAP, parties engage with Cafcass in a short safeguarding interview before not needing to engage again with a Family Court Adviser until an interview during section 7 enquiries. If there is a fact-finding hearing under the CAP, this might be many months and hearings further down the line.

The CIR puts party engagement front and centre, and early advice on this is imperative.

TOP TIP: For any party, speaking to an independent professional can feel intimidating, especially for vulnerable individuals or those with additional needs. It's easy to forget an issue or understate a concern. Keeping a journal or list can help clients ensure they remember to discuss the key issues, but they need to remember to ensure those issues are relevant to the child arrangements.

Pro bono costs orders in children proceedings



Lily Jeffree *Moore Barlow*

The lessons from the Mahmoud v Glanville *judgments run to the core of the Resolution ethos*

Whilst rule 28.1 of the FPR 2010 enables a court to make "such order as to costs as it thinks just", the court seemingly follows the underlying principle in children proceedings that each party generally bears their own costs. The purpose of this principle is to prevent parents from using litigation as a financial weapon against the other. However, whilst costs orders in these types of proceedings usually remain an exception, the recent decision of the High Court in *Mahmoud v Glanville & anor* [2025] EWHC 1064 (Fam) and *(No 2) (Pro Bono Costs Order)* [2025] EWHC 2395 (Fam) demonstrates that this is not an absolute presumption. In this case, where Moore Barlow represented the father on a *pro bono* basis, Mr Justice MacDonald made a substantial costs order against the mother in response to her persistent and unreasonable litigation conduct, and it serves as a striking warning against litigation abuse, reiterating the important professional obligations on family lawyers to promote amicable solutions and guide our clients to present reasonable positions, as set out in the FPR and embodied in the Resolution Code of Practice.

Background

These proceedings concerned a young boy, Adam, whose welfare had become the subject of long and complex litigation between his parents, spanning over the majority of his lifetime. Mr Justice MacDonald made two significant judgments: one in relation to Adam's child arrangements and long-term care; and the other involving a substantial costs order against the mother, including an unusual and landmark *pro bono* costs order.

Serious safeguarding concerns were raised as a result of the mother's conduct and repeated breaches of court orders, including multiple international and domestic abductions of Adam from his father's care. In June 2024, the mother hired two male associates to forcibly remove Adam from his father's care outside of school and then concealed him for a period of eight months. This resulted in extensive litigation, police involvement and press coverage in an effort to locate Adam. Fortunately, Adam was found by the police in February 2025 and was returned to his father's care.

During previous hearings in this case, compelling expert evidence from a clinical psychiatrist, as well as Adam's Guardian, found that he had suffered emotional harm as a result of his mother's actions, and both felt that there was a high risk of a further abduction. Adam was therefore to remain in the sole care of his father. A section 91(14) barring order was made against the mother to prevent her from making any further application to the court for a child arrangements order (CAO) without prior permission, and a non-molestation order was also made against the mother.

The applications and issues before MacDonald J in this instance included:

- an application by the mother for permission to apply for a child arrangements order
- an application by the mother for the discharge of the non-molestation order and an application by the father for the extension of the same
- an application by the father for the restriction of the mother's parental responsibility (PR)
- an application by the father for indirect contact between Adam and his mother
- an application by the mother for the return of her passports, which had previously been confiscated

A review of the law

Section 91(14) Children Act 1989 prevents a person from making further applications to the court without the court's prior permission. The legal test that MacDonald J had to consider in relation to the mother's application for permission to apply for a CAO was whether she had demonstrated a need for renewed judicial intervention or an arguable case. This test was set out in *Re S (Permission to seek relief)* [2006] EWCA Civ 1190.

In relation to the restriction of a parent's PR, this can be achieved through a combination of prohibited steps and specific issue orders. Although these types of orders in respect of PR can be generally hard to obtain, it was confirmed by the court in *Re T-D* [2024] EWCA Civ 793 that they can be made where the conduct of the parent poses a risk to the child's welfare.

Section 194 of the Legal Services Act 2007 permits the making of pro bono costs orders, with the award payable to the Access to Justice Foundation. It was stated in *Manolete Partners v White* [2024] EWCA Civ 1558 that this type of costs order serves the dual purpose of making litigation fair and also funding future access to justice for those in need.

Outcome

The mother's application for permission to apply for a child arrangements order was dismissed on the grounds that she had shown no change or insight into her conduct that resulted in the initial section 91(14) barring order. She repeatedly denied any wrongdoing; continuously made false allegations against the father, his legal representatives, and the judiciary; and her application was deemed as being entirely without merit. The barring order and non-molestation order were both extended until July 2029.

The mother's PR was also severely restricted by MacDonald J via numerous prohibited steps orders, which meant that she would be prevented from accessing information about Adam's whereabouts, education and health, and was unable to remove Adam from his father's care. The father was therefore permitted to make any decisions about Adam's welfare without the need to consult the mother or obtain her consent.

Mr Justice MacDonald ordered that the mother's passports be returned to her on the basis that liberty-restricting orders such as this must be proportionate.

The father appreciated that Adam should have some contact with his mother but wanted this to be via indirect means; MacDonald J praised the father for his position and agreed. He ordered that indirect contact should be facilitated via an online communication platform and that the progression of this was to be entirely at the father's discretion due to the ongoing risk to Adam's safety. The judge emphasised that any development of contact must be on the basis that the mother has demonstrated a genuine change.

Mr Justice MacDonald later handed down his costs judgment. He found that the mother's conduct throughout the litigation had been "wholly unreasonable and reprehensible" and was satisfied that this was a "paradigm case for a costs order against a parent who has acted both unreasonably or reprehensibly" [27]. He went on to say that the effect of the mother's conduct was to "delay, obfuscate and frustrate the proceedings and to increase markedly the father's legal costs as a direct result".

The costs order made against the mother consisted of:

- £95,000 in legal costs to the father
- £20,000 in *pro bono* costs to the Access to Justice Foundation.

Why is this case important?

The judgments provide important examples of the court's growing intolerance of unreasonable and reprehensible litigation conduct and its dedication to safeguarding children from harm. False allegations, tactical delays and repeated applications will be met with judicial consequences. It is not about punishing parents but about safeguarding children and preserving the family justice system. This growing intolerance has been demonstrated in numerous recent decisions, such as *Re O (Appeal: Costs)* [2024] 2 FLR 104 (where Mrs Justice Henke re-affirmed that litigants in person are not immune from costs orders) and *Re E (Children: Costs)* [2025] EWCA Civ 183.

Legal professionals play a pivotal role in preventing litigation abuse and we can do so by encouraging non-court dispute resolution (where possible) as well as avoiding confrontational correspondence. The case highlights the duty on legal professionals to advise clients that litigation abuse is not a good "strategy", and may actually be a liability. We must consider our obligations under the SRA Code of Conduct and strive to follow Resolution's main ethos and Code of Practice in this respect.

The *pro bono* costs order in this case is unusual and it reflects the judiciary's recognition of the value of *pro bono* work and the importance of funding such representation for those who need it. It further reinforces the principle that abusive litigation conduct cannot be used to exploit legal support, even if this is being provided to the other party on a *pro bono* basis.

Conclusion

Mr Justice MacDonald's judgments in *Mahmoud v Glanville* are more than just a cautionary tale; they are a stark reminder that the High Court will impose significant financial sanctions upon individuals where litigation is used as a weapon for abuse, even within children proceedings. For family lawyers, the message is clear – we must advocate responsibly, prioritise the child's welfare, encourage parents to remain reasonable and amicable throughout where possible, and in doing so, adhere to Resolution's Code of Practice. This is not only ethically sound to help achieve better outcomes for children and uphold the integrity of the family justice system, but it is essential to protect our clients from extreme financial consequences.

Lily.Jeffree@moorebarlow.com

Unapologetically me



Lauren Guiler *Birketts LLP*

A look into my ADHD brain as a neurodivergent lawyer



Lauren is proud of her 'Slay-DHD' mug

There's been a lot of talk about neurodivergence lately, especially when it comes to our clients and their children (which is great and necessary). So why am I writing this piece? It's for us: the trainees, juniors, barristers, partners, judges – anyone in the legal world who is neurodivergent (or suspects they might be), and navigating a profession that prizes precision, stamina and judgement.

My journey to an ADHD diagnosis has been challenging, deeply personal, and ultimately empowering. Writing this feels scary and vulnerable, but I'm sharing it because awareness matters. If even one part of this resonates with you, I want you to know: you're not alone, and you don't need to apologise for the way your brain works.

Understanding the landscape

Neurodivergence is a broad umbrella that covers conditions like ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and that's just scratching the surface. My experience is with ADHD, specifically the inattentive type, which is far more common in women and often overlooked because it doesn't fit the stereotypical image of the "hyperactive little boy" bouncing off the walls. That stereotype is valid too, but it's not the whole story. For many women, ADHD looks very different. We often mask, overcompensating with meticulous preparation and constant self-monitoring, which can delay recognition and lead to burnout.

Research suggests that around 15% of the UK population is neurodivergent. Statistically, that means a good number of people reading this are likely neurodivergent, and some may not even know it. Women diagnosed in adulthood typically receive their diagnosis in their mid-to-late 30s; one NHS Trust estimates the average age at 36–38. I was diagnosed at 29, earlier than average, but still after years of wondering why things that seemed effortless for others felt like climbing mountains for me.

My diagnostic journey

It started with patterns I couldn't ignore: struggling to begin tasks, time-blindness around meetings, and the chaos of everyday "admin" (to name a few). I reached out to my sister, who is on her own similar path, and she suggested this may be ADHD. I dug deeper and decided I needed a professional view.

I'm lucky and privileged to work in a firm with access to an incredible nurse. After talking through my history and experiences, she encouraged me to see my GP. The first hurdle? Writing a one-page narrative about how my symptoms show up and have done over time, and how they affected me and my mental health. Classic inattentive ADHD move: I avoided it for weeks. Eventually, I got it done, completed a screening tool, scored sky-high, and was referred for a specialist call.

That call lasted an hour. The doctor confirmed ADHD was likely and put me on the NHS waiting list for a full assessment, then two years long. Today, waits can stretch from two years to over seven, depending on where you live; autism assessments for adults are usually even longer (note this is taking the NHS free public route, not a private route). At one point, I was told my wait had jumped to five years. Around that time, my mental health hit a low, and I needed more support. So, I reached back out to work and thank goodness for my firm's ADHD coach (and that there was one). Even without a formal diagnosis, she was a lifeline for my confidence.

I hadn't heard of Right to Choose, a legal route that lets patients in England pick an alternative NHS-funded provider, often cutting wait times to around six months (although this may be more now). When my coach told me about it, I switched and was seen just over six months later.

The diagnostic interview? Intense. Two and a half hours digging into childhood, education, work and relationships. The report? Fifty pages confirming predominantly inattentive ADHD. I got my diagnosis in October 2025, and the weight of uncertainty lifted. I wasn't broken; my brain is just different. And that's something to celebrate.

Being a neurodivergent lawyer

Let's be honest, some people still don't fully recognise the struggle. There are countless ways I adapt to

fit in (though, really, I shouldn't have to). Thankfully, my workplace gets it. I use headphones or my noise-cancelling Loops, move to quieter rooms when the open office feels overwhelming, and requested a standing desk because, yes, I'm a fidgeter. My supervisor and head of team (two inspiring women) have each sat down with me to talk through what I need. Together, we created a list of strategies that make my day-to-day easier.

And here's the thing: my ADHD isn't just a challenge, it's a strength. My head of department calls it my superpower, and she's right. ADHD brings creativity, resilience, hyperfocus and, especially in family law, an ability to deeply empathise with clients.

But I won't sugar-coat the lows. They're real. I'm on a waiting list for medication to help calm my "loud brain". In the meantime, I've found my own hacks: classical music for focus, and a team that understands if I arrive a little late after a rough night's sleep. Oh, and my "Diagnosed with SLAY-DHD" mug (see photo)? It's received many a compliment and is my little badge of pride.

As a junior, opening up about this isn't easy. Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) – that intense emotional sting from perceived criticism or failure (to very briefly summarise it) – is common in ADHD. Research suggests almost everyone with ADHD experiences it. Learning about RSD has helped me manage it and reframe those "you're too sensitive" comments (which, frankly, shouldn't be happening, but we're all still learning).

My aspirations as a neurodivergent lawyer

As a neurodivergent lawyer with ADHD, one of my aspirations is to help shape a profession that truly understands and accommodates the diverse ways in which lawyers and litigants work and process information. I want to be part of the conversation that ensures our courts and legal systems are inclusive, not just in principle, but in practice. For example, I believe there is scope for greater awareness around adjustments that can make a real difference, which might include:

- extended timeframes for filing documents, where cognitive processing or executive functioning challenges are a factor
- clearer, more structured communication from courts and legal professionals, reducing ambiguity and cognitive load
- accessible hearing environments, including breaks during lengthy proceedings and flexibility in how evidence is presented

These changes don't just benefit neurodivergent professionals; they create a fairer system for everyone. My hope is to contribute to guidance and best practice that empowers courts and other professionals to recognise these needs early and respond proactively.

Ultimately, I want to use my experience to advocate for a profession that values neurodiversity as a strength. ADHD brings creativity, resilience, and problem-solving skills that are invaluable in family law. By sharing my perspective, I aim to encourage others to see difference not as a barrier, but as an opportunity to innovate and improve the way we deliver justice.

Alongside systemic change, there are strategies that can help neurodivergent lawyers thrive day-to-day. These are approaches I've found useful and would recommend to others (but these are all just suggestions, not one-size-fits-all):

- **structure your day with micro-deadlines:** break tasks into smaller steps with clear timeframes – this reduces overwhelm and keeps momentum going
- **leverage technology:** tools like task managers, calendar reminders, and AI can help manage executive function challenges
- **communicate openly where possible:** if you need extra time or clarity, don't be afraid to ask – transparency often leads to better collaboration
- **create sensory-friendly workspaces:** noise-cancelling headphones, natural lighting and decluttered desks can reduce distractions and improve focus
- **schedule recovery time:** court hearings and client meetings can be mentally taxing – build in short breaks to recharge and avoid burnout
- **find your strengths and lean into them:** ADHD often brings creativity and quick problem-solving, skills that are invaluable in family law. Use them to your advantage

What I want you to know

- ADHD can be hard. The journey to diagnosis can also be hard. But ADHD can also be amazing
- No two presentations are the same. What works for me might not work for you, but sharing and staying open-minded always helps
- Our profession thrives when we make space for different minds

If you're neurodivergent, or think you might be, please know this: you are important. We all are, neurodivergent and neurotypical alike. All our brains matter. Keep being your unapologetic self. I worried for years that I was "too much". Now I know it's just part of who I am and that's okay.

I'm always happy for anyone, junior, senior, whatever your role, to reach out if you want to talk about this article. Sometimes, just knowing someone gets it makes all the difference.

Lauren-Guiler@birketts.co.uk

In conversation with FLANC

Jenny Beck KC (Hon) *Beck Fitzgerald Solicitors* *and Caroline Croft* *Coram Chambers*



Understanding and responding to neurodivergence

Awareness and recognition of neurodivergence is finally increasing, but we know that many practitioners have questions about neurodivergence and how best to approach it, so Zhenja Cann asked Jenny Beck KC (Hon) and Caroline Croft, who are both founding members of FLANC (Family Law Advice for the Neurodivergent Community), to answer some of the most common questions about neurodivergence.

1. What is the difference between neurodiversity and neurodivergence?

The short answer is that neurodiversity describes the natural differences and diversity in the way that people's brains work. People whose brains work in the way that most people's brains work (and the way in which society expects people's brains to work) are referred to as neurotypical. Neurodivergence is when someone's brain works differently from what is considered a neurotypical brain. Estimates differ but it is thought that around 15 to 20% of the population might be neurodivergent. The majority of neurodivergent people are almost certainly undiagnosed.

2. What are the most common types of neurodivergence?

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term which refers to a variety of different presentations. The most commonly encountered and diagnosed are: Autism (also known as autistic spectrum condition), ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and Tourette's. The Family Justice Council Guidance on Neurodiversity, available on the Judiciary website, has a really helpful introduction to each of those types of neurodivergence. Many of the terms for types of neurodivergence use "disorder", "condition" or the prefix "dys", but members of the neurodivergent community are not "disordered" or in need of a "cure". Neurodivergent brains are different from the majority, not lesser, and we hope that the work which FLANC is doing is helping to challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings about neurodivergence.

3. Why do practitioners need to recognise and respond to issues of neurodivergence?

Recognising and responding to neurodivergence is essential to ensure that neurodivergent adults and children have equal access to justice. The family justice system is set up to meet the needs of neurotypical people, which can lead to neurodivergent people facing barriers in that system. Neurodivergence can be relevant to the outcome for a family, for instance: could "nesting" work in a situation where a neurodivergent child struggles to move between two homes? Or does your client's neurodivergence need to be factored into the financial arrangements on divorce? Neurodivergence also needs to be considered to ensure that the process being adopted to reach an outcome is fair and that everyone involved is able to fully participate in that process. For instance, does your client need adjustments made to how you take instructions, how mediation or arbitration is structured, or to how court proceedings are conducted?

4. Which resources should I start with?

The FJC guidance on Neurodiversity provides a great introduction to neurodivergence, the research available, and a step-by-step guide to making adjustments to process and procedure to overcome barriers to participation. The FJC guidance is applicable whether you are in the court arena or not, but we were delighted to collaborate with Family Law in Partnership to produce a

"The FJC Guidance on Neurodiversity provides a great introduction to neurodivergence, the research available, and a step-by-step guide to making adjustments to process and procedure."

toolkit for non-court dispute resolution which contains additional tools for making adjustments to dispute resolution processes, and to ensure that dispute resolution is accessible to the neurodivergent community (*flanctoolkit.org*). There are also lots of resources and material on the FLANC website (*flanc.org.uk*).

5. When do I need to think about neurodivergence?

At the very outset of working with every client, look out for issues of neurodivergence for your client, for any children of the family and for your client's ex-partner and any other significant family members. Every neurodivergent person will have a unique profile and it is vital to understand that person's profile so that you can identify how their neurodivergence needs to be taken into account from the outset.

6. How can I gather information about someone's profile and neurodivergence?

The FJC guidance and the NCDR toolkit contain a framework for gathering information and a good place to start is by using FLANC's *All About Me* document. There is a freestanding version of this amongst the resources on the FLANC website and a tailored version in the NCDR toolkit. This document is used to gain a holistic picture of someone's needs, strengths and preferences. Developing an understanding of someone's profile will enable you to identify how neurodivergence is relevant to the outcome and any barriers to participation which need to be overcome by adjusting process and procedure.

7. What do "adjustments to process and procedure" look like for someone who is neurodivergent?

To be effective, adjustments must be tailored to that person's needs, profile and the circumstances. The person who is to benefit from the adjustments will often know best what will help them and they must be happy with the adjustments proposed. Adjustments should be kept under review. The vast majority of adjustments are simple and common sense: for instance, if your client struggles to maintain concentration whilst sitting still, using a fidget toy and taking regular breaks where they can move around freely are likely to help; if your client is dyslexic it might help to provide them with documents on coloured paper or to support them to use text-to-speech software to digest documents. If your client is sensitive to artificial light and noisy places, can rooms with natural light in quiet areas be used?

8. Is a diagnosis needed to take someone's neurodivergence into account?

No, and the majority of neurodivergent people are probably undiagnosed, for a variety of reasons. The key to supporting someone with suspected/undiagnosed neurodivergence is understanding their profile, needs and functioning. The FJC guidance, the NCDR toolkit and the *All About Me* document are all designed to be used where neurodivergence is suspected but not diagnosed. Even in situations where assessment of suspected neurodivergence is necessary or awaited, the suspected neurodivergence should still be taken into account pending that assessment, and then support and adjustments can be reviewed on receipt of the assessment.

"To be effective, adjustments must be tailored to that person's needs, profile and the circumstances. The person who is to benefit from the adjustments will often know best what will help them."

9. How can practitioners approach clients sensitively when they suspect that they or their child(ren) may be neurodivergent?

The right approach will vary depending on the circumstances and the client, but the key is to make sure that you raise it in a non-pressured environment and that you explain in a non-judgemental way, why you suspect it and that you are raising it to ensure that the right outcome is reached and/or to identify support and adjustments that may be needed to ensure that things are dealt with fairly. You should allow your client plenty of time to digest what you have said and any advice and options you have given, and it is important your client understands that they can ask you questions about it at any point.

10. Where there are difficulties due to communication between parents/ex-partners due to one or both being neurodivergent, how can we support clients to continue to communicate without conflict?

This can be a difficult situation to navigate but the key to good communication and avoiding conflict for all separated parents and ex-partners, not just those who are neurodivergent, tends to be clear boundaries and expectations, and there being agreement about how communication should work. For instance, making it clear how communication is to take place (ie by email save for in the case of emergency); how often and when emails or messages will be checked by those involved, to manage expectations about when replies will come; agreement that communication will only be about the children; and agreement not to use aggressive or upsetting language. Our Family Wizard can be a really helpful platform for managing communication for neurodivergent and neurotypical separated parents and at FLANC we are delighted to be collaborating with OFW to produce some specific guidance and tools for separated parents where there are issues of neurodivergence.

11. Parents might disagree about whether their child should be assessed for neurodivergence. What is your advice?

The first step is ensuring that both parents have access to all the information relevant to whether a child should be assessed because it may be that once they both have all the information, agreement can be reached. Information relevant to whether a child should be assessed might be information from school, from health or from any other professionals involved with the child; it might also be information and observations from the other parent or someone else who cares for the child regularly, or a recently discovered family history of neurodivergence which the other parent is not aware of. If assessment has been recommended by a professional involved with the child, both parents should have the chance to speak to that professional about why they are making that recommendation, the procedure for assessment and the possible next steps if neurodivergence is diagnosed. If agreement is then reached about assessment being undertaken the first step would be for the parents to ask the child's GP or school whether they can refer the child for assessment, and their understanding of the likely local waiting times. If the timescales are very long then private assessment could be explored, but it is important to consult with the child's school and GP to make sure that any private assessment and diagnosis will be accepted by the school/NHS. If agreement still can't be reached, mediation might be a good next step to try to resolve the issue.

12. Some neurodivergent children can have particular struggles with changes to routines and environments, and an increased need for certainty. How can separating parents take this into account?

A really good way for separating parents to take this into account is to try to agree what their child finds the most challenging and what works well for their child. Where changes to arrangements must be made due to the end of a relationship, or other changes in the family circumstances, the child's voice and needs are key, and centring those will often help families to find the right way forward.

FLANC will soon be publishing a child version of the *All About Me* document which will help families to do this. This document can be completed by the child or the parents, depending on the child's age and understanding, and the circumstances. As touched on above, if a child has particular struggles with moving between environments, nesting can be a great solution in the right circumstances. It might also be helpful to agree a time to review arrangements or a trial period for arrangements so that adjustments can be made with the benefit of experience.

jenny.beck@beckfitzgerald.co.uk
clerks@coramchambers.co.uk

Jenny Beck KC (Hon) is one of the founding members of FLANC, chairs the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (NFJO), and sits as the Private Law representative on the Family Justice Council (FJC)

Caroline Croft is one of the founding members of FLANC and a family law barrister with particular expertise in representing vulnerable clients and neurodivergent clients

If you are interested in bespoke training, please contact one of the FLANC team using the details on their website

Key websites, blogs and podcasts – as recommended by the YRes Committee



- **Today's Family Lawyer**
- **Financial Remedies Journal:** "has some fantastic resources – I scour it at least once a week"
- **Talking Family Law:** "Obvs!" see p30
- **My Family Pod:** "deals with the law but also other issues arising out of separation including finances and mental health. I'm super proud to be part of that podcasting team"
- **St Johns Chambers** family law pod
- **Family Brief:** blog by Alex Chandler KC
- **Rhys Taylor:** "a brilliant judge and barrister, his posts on LinkedIn are always informative"
- **Pump Court Chambers:** The Family Law Podcast
- **Thorrun Govind** "is fantastic. She's a friend from law school and to watch her on national TV is so brilliant"
- **We Are Family Law** by Rachel Cooper (Coram Chambers)
- **The Resolution website:** "full of resources to ensure that our approach is constructive and child-focused, particularly when supporting parents in high-conflict private children law matters"
- **Cafcass resources:** "various guides which can be invaluable for analysing safeguarding, wishes and feelings, and the child's journey through proceedings in a clear, realistic, and reassuring way, which can be useful for clients"
- **LawCare:** "a fundamental professional support for maintaining wellbeing and resilience, particularly at junior level"
- "For everyday fee earning work, the classic duo reign supreme: **Lexis PSL** and **Practical Law**. But for my pro bono clients? **Advicenow** is unbeatable. It's accessible, clear, genuinely user-friendly and a brilliant tool for improving access to justice."

Complexity and intrigue: the case for Legal Aid and Public Law



Bethany Burnard *Queen Square Chambers*

A brief overview from the junior bar

Whilst not only affecting Public Law cases but all Legal Aid cases, practitioners and firms alike are still recovering from the Legal Aid Agency cyber attack which happened in May 2025. Alongside this, the Bar Council Report dated 11 December 2025 titled "System overload – A report on family Legal Aid" paints a stark picture on the impact on family Legal Aid barristers. The question therefore for many newly qualified barristers or solicitors, given the headlines, is why would I practise in Public Law which is publicly funded through Legal Aid?

To some, Public Law cases can be divisive. They are often seen to be either chalk or cheese to practitioners. Whether it's the unpredictability of the caseload, a last-minute urgent application being heard within a few hours, or later that day if you are lucky, or the complexity that can come with dealing with cases which involve local authority involvement, there is never a dull day nor any day that is the same. An urgent removal of a newborn baby from their parent's care could be listed within hours of the baby being born – the mother attending the court hearing remotely from her hospital bed. The role you play as a professional involved within those proceedings can be critical. They are emotional hearings for the client, who in the example just given might be facing an immediate separation from their newborn, but part of your role is to help them to understand the process, to understand the legal jargon that is thrown around when court proceedings are mentioned, and to help support the client through the beginning of what is often hoped to be only a 26 weeks' process.

It is always hoped that there is a positive outcome, that the child remains with their parents, or there is a reunification with the parents, or a family member steps forward to care. Even when the positive outcome seems unlikely, for example if there's been a negative parenting assessment, the key part of your role is ensuring that your client is able to challenge it, that you have looked at whether all the information was considered and analysed, and that ultimately your client leaves the court process having felt heard and supported.

Whilst Public Law cases often are contentious litigation, there is to an extent an undercurrent of all working towards a similar goal, all working towards a goal of ensuring that the subject child has a safe, well-cared-for life and upbringing. Though you may not all agree on how best that is achieved. Speaking only from my personal experience on the Western Circuit, the professionals involved, including the Judiciary, share that common aim. There is a less aggressive approach taken.

The complexity of Public Law cases adds to the intrigue and interest. Allegations, for example of non-accidental injuries, abuse or neglect all must be determined by the court through a fact-finding process prior to considering any long-term welfare decisions for the child. That process often involves various experts in their respective fields giving their opinions on causation.

The work is highly rewarding and a vital part of the justice system. So, if you are looking for a challenge, variety in work, and the unpredictable nature that is Public Law, then hopefully this article has given you a brief insight into what it is like day to day.

bethany.burnard@qsc.law

In case you missed it, in the last issue of *The Review* Carrie Hyde of Watson Ramsbottom Solicitors also argued the case for taking the Legal Aid route.

"The best part of being a Legal Aid lawyer," Carrie wrote, "is the relief that you see when clients feel that they finally have someone in their corner. Victims of domestic abuse often feel let down by other authorities and find comfort in having a solicitor on their side to take on the burden of the administration, to give advice, and someone to listen. Despite everything that we see in family law, this makes it all worthwhile, and on even the lowest of days, keeps me logging back on."

Looking back: a year of Talking Family Law



Zhenja Cann *Thrings*

Why Resolution's podcast is essential listening for junior practitioners

A cornerstone of Resolution, it is not surprising that the Talking Family Law podcast is on its fifth season already. Co-hosted by the brilliant Anita Mehta, barrister at 4PB, and Simon Blain, partner at Forsters LLP, their frank discussions on some of the most pressing issues in family practice make this podcast a must-listen for junior practitioners. Whether you are listening in the car before work, or have a spare moment over lunch, these short podcasts (which are free to listen to on Spotify and various other platforms) are going to enhance your awareness of current issues and give you an edge over your peers. In this article I look back at the past 12 months of the podcast to show why you should give them a listen.

We started the year with a thought-provoking discussion from Jenny Beck KC (Beck Fitzgerald), Dr Jamie Craig (Consultant Clinical Psychologist) and Zoe Fleetwood (Mills & Reeve) on **The Three Rs: Reluctance, Resistance and Refusal**. Hot off the release of the Family Justice Council Guidance on alienating behaviours, it is a refreshing reminder that there are so many other reasons why a child may refuse contact with a parent that do not automatically mean alienation has occurred. For juniors, this is a great resource to listen to and share with clients.

The YRes national committee then took over the podcast with their discussion on **Thriving in Law**. Our very own Annie Boxer (IFLG) and Lauren Guiler (Birketts) spoke with Matthew Richardson (Coram Chambers) and Trevor Sterling (Moore Barlow). They take us on a heartfelt journey through their careers and the challenges they faced along the way, both with their wellbeing and breaking boundaries to help shape law firm culture for the next generation. A truly inspirational listen.

Thankfully I have yet to come across the issue of capacity in any of my cases to date, but if I do then I know that the episode **Capacity Issues in Family Litigation: The Lights Are Not Out** is the first place I will turn. Joseph O'Brien (St Johns Buildings) and Laura Flanagan (Burgess Mee) demystify litigation capacity, offering guidance on how to manage such cases with sensitivity and procedural accuracy. It is also particularly helpful in understanding how to handle the giving of evidence in such a scenario.

It was a real pleasure listening to Sir Jonathan Cohen (former High Court judge, now arbitrator at 4PB) talk about **Half a Century in Family Law**. It is easy to take for granted the changes that have happened, we simply don't have the lived experience. From the evolution from public to private divorce hearings, to the introduction of the Children Act 1989, *White v White* and no-blame divorce, Sir Jonathan reflects on this all. Sir Jonathan accepts there is more to be done for better treatment of domestic abuse victims. You do not want to miss his view about domestic abuse as conduct in financial remedy cases. That said, his reflections make you realise we have come a long way from where we were and the big part that Resolution has had to play in that.

It was fascinating to listen to Professor Nick Hopkins (Law Commission), Professor Emma Hitchings (University of Bristol) and Jo Edwards (Forsters LLP) discussing the long-awaited Law Commission Scoping Report on **Financial Remedy: to reform, or not to reform?** They highlighted the main areas of feedback received, together with the findings from the Fair Shares report and Resolution's own Vision for Family Justice and research on Domestic Abuse in financial remedy work. Although sharing cases may be predictable, in the area of needs cases the judicial approach is less consistent. Clearer guidance on maintenance, pensions and conduct is discussed, as well as potential options for reform (such as bringing settled case law into statute). I am an advocate for clearer guidance for litigants in person, and this was a helpful listen to understand how such an aim could be achieved in future.

I was fortunate to be at the National Conference in Birmingham to witness the live podcast from Professor Jane Monckton Smith (University of Gloucestershire) and Ruth Dodsworth (journalist) discussing **Serious**

Coercive Control. Ruth bravely told her raw and deeply personal story of her husband's coercive control, which led to his imprisonment. A stark reminder that anyone can be the subject of this type of abuse and how quickly behaviour can escalate. Professor Monckton-Smith highlights the patterns of coercive control, so junior practitioners can build an awareness and better safeguard clients against such behaviour early on.

Admittedly, I did not know much about **Bankruptcy** before listening to the podcast with Anna Lintner (Maitland Chambers), Gareth Schofield (Clarke Willmott) and guest host Matthew Taylor (Stowe Family Law), mainly because the topic fills me with dread. Although the general consensus is that if there's no money, there's little benefit in pursuing (and you're better off deferring your financial remedy claim until the bankruptcy order is complete), there was some light at the end of the tunnel with practical tips on protecting your clients as best as possible in such a scenario (including a discussion on the treatment of pensions, property adjustment orders, timing and securities).

In the episode on ***Standish*** – perhaps the most important case of the past year – Rebecca Bailey Harris (1 Hare Court) and Sam Longworth (Stewarts), who acted for the husband, have a lively debate about the application of the five principles set down by the Supreme Court when establishing whether an asset is matrimonial v non-matrimonial or has become (our new favourite word) "matrimonialised". There were many questions that arose from this podcast, including uncertainty about the sharing of matrimonialised property and whether the source of the asset is still a relevant consideration. Even with the examples of inheritance and pre-marital acquired assets, there were differing views from the speakers and it required an in-depth analysis of the intention and treatment of the asset when it was introduced. What was clear is that the case opened up just as many arguments as it closed.

We've long been told that recordings of children are a big no-no, but listening to Natasha Watson (Brighton & Hove City Council) and Darren Howe KC (1 Crown Office Row) discuss the Family Justice Council's guidance on **Covert Recordings and Tracking Devices** it was a helpful reminder as to why. With the increased use of technology and AI, juniors need to be live to the ethical issues of covert recordings and the test when seeking to rely on them (the appendices of the guidance are particularly useful on case management). Important topics such as the manipulation of recordings in abusive relationships and the treatment of recordings of professionals (which, be warned, may not be treated with the same protective stance as recordings of children) are all discussed and important for junior practitioners to be aware of.

The issues of **Trusts and Divorce** are helpfully summarised by Emma Hargreaves (Serle Court), Abby Buckland (Kingsley Napley) and Louise Woolrich (Carey Olsen). In this episode they discuss how to identify an express trust, the different terminology used, points to be mindful of in relation to off-shore trusts (not so much *show me the money* but *where is the money?*) and the questions/evidence to ask for when dealing with trusts in financial remedies. The important message for junior practitioners is that the Family Court is well equipped to "look behind the curtain" of a trust, so disclosure and specialist advice early on are important.

Emily Roskilly (Roskilly & Co) and Alexander Learmonth KC (New Square) celebrated the **50th Birthday of the Inheritance Act** by taking us through the essentials we need to know as family practitioners. We all need to have a basic understanding of when a spouse or cohabitee can claim for financial provision against their deceased partner/ex-partner's estate. It was particularly helpful to hear their discussion on the potential weight given to pre-nuptial and cohabitation agreements.

Conduct, a Joint Episode with Law & Disorder with the amazing Baroness Helena Kennedy and Sir Nicholas Mostyn is a fascinating listen not least because the debate becomes quite heated! As a junior practitioner it was interesting to learn about the history of "conduct" being introduced as a factor in financial remedies, not least because it is a stark reminder of how far the law has come in this area and how much more it has yet to do to catch up with society. Reflecting on the outcome of the Fair Shares Report and the research by Resolution, the speakers discuss potential ways the law on conduct could be reformed. I was particularly inspired by Anita's passion for supporting victims of abuse and her call to arms for us and our clients to be brave enough to one day challenge the test. You do not want to miss Sir Nicholas's thoughts about the applicability of *OG v AG* to cases involving domestic abuse!

Coming up this year and off the back of the success of the first **YRes Takeover**, the national YRes committee will look to host another podcast discussing the questions you want to ask but feel you can't as junior practitioners. It will be a frank and open discussion, with speakers Alison Bull (Mills & Reeve) and Philip Barnsley (Higgs LLP) talking to our very own Abigail Whelan (TLT and new co-chair of YRes national committee) and Natalie Dunn (Moore Blatch). I am sure it will be a must-listen for all junior practitioners and a reminder that YRes national committee are here to support you with whatever resources you need to help in your career.

For junior practitioners, these episodes are more than CPD – they are a toolkit for practice. From technical issues like trusts and bankruptcy to human centred topics such as coercive control and child resistance, Talking Family Law has offered clarity, inspiration, and practical guidance. A huge thank you to Anita and Simon for continuing to ask the important questions we all want to know the answers to, and for never failing to make these discussions lively, entertaining and thought-provoking.

zcann@thrings.com

Get to know Lucy Loizou, our vice chair of Resolution!



Lucy (left), pictured with national chair Melanie Bataillard-Samuel



Rosa Schofield and Georgie Huse are both associates at The International Family Law Group LLP, where Lucy Loizou is managing partner. They caught up to get hot takes on all things Resolution, career highlights, and future aspirations.

Where did your involvement with YRes begin?

I was a junior lawyer who was keen to network with my peers so that we could all support each other, share experience and have fun together. I was based at a firm in Surrey and, at the time, only one YRes group existed, which was based in London. I wanted to ensure that Resolution lawyers across all of the regions had the opportunity to meet other lawyers in their areas. This desire was shared by my network in Surrey and so we founded a YRes group in Surrey which later inspired the creation of the national YRes group. I am very proud to have been part of the founding chapter for YRes on a national level.

"We have the launch of the Resolution blog in the next few months. The blog will ensure that Resolution can stay at the forefront of legal developments."

What are your career highlights?

A key career highlight for me was being elected National vice chair of Resolution last year. I have been heavily involved in Resolution throughout my career and so to have been elected by the Resolution National Committee for this role is a great honour. Another significant highlight for me was being appointed as managing partner for my firm, The International Family Law Group LLP in 2021. I have now worked there for 16 years and I am so proud of my colleagues and the success we have achieved together at the firm. The firm has developed and changed over the last two years and I am excited to see what the future holds for iFLG.

Finally, I will always be proud of the role I had in founding National YRes and to see YRes go from strength to strength is incredible. It was particularly exciting to attend the National YRes Conference in November as vice chair and see the level of interest in YRes by junior practitioners across regions; I can see that the future of Resolution is in good hands.

What advice would you give to junior members of the profession?

Network, network, network! Start developing your network early on. The job as a family lawyer can be tough and we all face a lot of pressures. Having a supportive network of peers can be crucial in the harder moments. It is also great to have friends to share the exciting moments with! I would also reiterate the importance of self-belief and confidence. Every single person will have something different to offer, so never doubt what you can bring to the table!

What are you most excited for in 2026 in your role as vice chair of Resolution?

Firstly, I am looking forward to supporting our wonderful chair, Melanie Bataillard-Samuel, and the wonderful team at Resolution HQ. As an international lawyer myself, I

also look forward to bringing an international dimension to Resolution and to exploring how Resolution can best support international family lawyers. I am also looking forward to delivering the finance update at the Resolution National Conference in Brighton in May this year.

We also have the launch of the Resolution blog in the next few months. I know the Publications Committee have been working hard on this project. The blog will ensure that Resolution can stay at the forefront of legal developments and will enable more regular content to be published by a variety of different authors. I look forward to following along!

What family law reform are you most hopeful for in 2026?

Cohabitation reform is long overdue and it is something that many family law practitioners have been seeking for so many years. Resolution as an organisation has been at the forefront of seeking changes in rights for cohabitants, and I really hope that the change can finally happen in 2026 or 2027.

How have you seen Resolution and the profession change since over the years?

In terms of Resolution, the opening of membership to different categories of people has been the biggest change. As I said in an interview last year, when I initially joined the National Committee, we were just starting to think about opening membership up to barristers and other family law professionals. It certainly provoked some debate in various National Committee meetings as to whether the organisation should allow non-solicitors to be members. Looking back, I'm sure we made the right decision, and I think the organisation has changed for the better as a result of opening it up to the entire family justice community, rather than just to solicitors.

In terms of the profession, everything changed with Covid and the resulting digitisation. Court systems have changed so much and so quickly with the online portal for divorce cases, we have remote bundles, and my firm works completely paperless, which was rare in many firms 10 years ago.

Why is diversity important in family law?

Everyone brings something unique to the table in family law. Every family is different, so diversity amongst family law practitioners can only work to better assist the families we work with. My own ethnic background as a Greek/Cypriot has enabled me to bring my own perspectives into practice, and it has particularly helped me to assist clients within the Greek/Cypriot communities in the UK and

"I think the organisation has changed for the better as a result of opening it up to the entire family justice community, rather than just to solicitors."

beyond. Diversity within the Resolution community makes us as an organisation better, whether it be in our dealings with other family law practitioners or to ensure we are able to best service our clients.

How can people get involved in Resolution?

Most family law practitioners probably know someone who is a member of Resolution – there are currently 6,500 Resolution members across a range of different professional backgrounds. However, if anyone is stuck, then the lovely people at Resolution HQ will undoubtedly be able to assist and put you in touch with Resolution or YRes representatives in your relevant region.

And finally, outside of the family law world, here are a couple of quick-fire questions:

What is your go-to karaoke song? 'I Feel Good' by James Brown.

If you were stuck on a desert island, what three things would you bring? My golf clubs (and golf balls); my family, my dog Mylo and some Lego sets to build!

Are there any fun facts about you that the family law community may not know of? I can name two: (1) I was a ball-girl at Wimbledon and (2) I once made it to the last 1,000 people for the X-Factor auditions!

lucy.loizou@iflg.uk.com
georgina.huse@iflg.uk.com
Rosa.Schofield@iflg.uk.com



Lucy (second from left), with other members at the first YRes Conference

The role of a divorce coach



Catherine Cooke *Rightstep Coaching*

How practical and emotional support can assist the legal process

Divorce is widely recognised as one of the most stressful life events a person can experience, second only to bereavement. It is not just the breakdown of a marriage, but the loss of future plans, shared identity and financial certainty. For parents, this is often compounded by deep worry about the impact on their children, and alongside the practical reality of separated parenting, work and running a household.

Having been through my own divorce, I understand how overwhelming this period can feel. When people are in a heightened emotional state, it is not unusual for them to avoid the legal process altogether or become reactive within it. This is where divorce coaching can offer valuable, practical and emotional support alongside legal advice.

What does a divorce coach do?

Divorce coaches typically work one-to-one with an individual within a separating couple, offering emotional and practical support during the divorce process. Coaches come from a range of professional backgrounds, including family law, education, social work and therapy, and many have personal experience of divorce themselves. Regardless of background, ethical divorce coaches are clear about professional boundaries.

A divorce coach does not give legal advice and does not replace a solicitor, mediator or the court process. Instead, coaching helps clients to:

- manage emotional overwhelm and anxiety
- think clearly about decisions they need to make
- prepare practically and emotionally for meetings or hearings
- stay focused on what truly matters to them
- reduce conflict through effective communication and de-escalation strategies

Coaching is forward-looking. While emotions are acknowledged and managed, the emphasis is on helping clients move through the process with greater clarity and confidence, and on planning for life after divorce.

Many divorce coaches develop particular areas of specialism. With my background as a teacher and headteacher, my work focuses mainly on co-parenting dynamics and supporting parents to make child-focused decisions, particularly where communication with the other parent is difficult or high conflict.

How coaching complements the legal process

Clients often seek legal advice very early on, sometimes before they have had space to process the emotional reality of their situation. While legal advice is essential, clients who are overwhelmed, fearful or in denial can struggle to absorb information or make reasoned decisions.

Divorce coaching complements the legal process by helping clients to:

- understand the implications of legal advice
- reflect on how that advice aligns with their expectations
- work through emotional reactions such as shock, anger or fear
- prepare questions and priorities in advance of appointments

This often results in clients arriving at meetings better prepared, more regulated emotionally, and clearer about the outcomes they are seeking. From a lawyer's perspective, this can mean more focused instructions, fewer reactive communications and a smoother progression through the case.

Managing overwhelm and decision fatigue

Divorce requires a series of significant decisions, often made under pressure and uncertainty. Clients can quickly become overwhelmed, leading to avoidance or impulsive decision-making.

Coaching helps clients break complex situations into manageable steps, prioritise tasks, and regain a sense of control. Sessions often focus on practical organisation as well as emotional regulation, ensuring clients are able

to engage constructively with the legal process rather than feeling consumed by it.

Case study: regaining clarity and confidence

One client came to me feeling completely paralysed by the number of decisions he was facing. He had already received legal advice but felt unable to move forward, particularly around decisions about the family home and interim arrangements for the children. Through coaching, we worked on clarifying his values and what felt most important to him and the children in the medium and long term. By breaking decisions down and exploring his fears around "getting it wrong", he was able to approach negotiations with more confidence. He later described feeling calmer in meetings with his solicitor and more able to engage in constructive discussions, rather than feeling overwhelmed or defensive.

Reducing conflict and managing expectations

Conflict during divorce is often driven by fear: fear about finances, housing, time with children or loss of control. Divorce coaches have the time and space to explore these fears in depth, helping clients to understand their emotional responses and avoid reacting impulsively. By helping clients identify what is realistically achievable and what they can influence, coaching can reduce unrealistic expectations and entrenched positions. This does not mean encouraging clients to give up what matters to them, but rather helping them distinguish between emotional reactions and practical priorities. For parents, this work is particularly important. Children are highly sensitive to conflict, even when it is not openly expressed. Supporting parents to regulate their own emotions and communicate more effectively can have a significant positive impact on children's wellbeing.

Case study: reducing co-parenting conflict

I worked with a parent who was experiencing ongoing conflict with their former partner around co-parenting arrangements. Communication was tense and often escalated quickly, resulting in repeated disputes and significant emotional distress. Through coaching, we focused on understanding triggers, setting clearer boundaries and developing calmer, more strategic ways of responding. We also explored how to keep conversations child-focused rather than rooted in past grievances. Over time, the client reported fewer confrontations, greater confidence in their approach, and a noticeable reduction in stress for both themselves and their children.

Collaboration between lawyers and coaches

The most effective outcomes occur when lawyers and divorce coaches work alongside one another, each within their professional remit. The lawyer provides expert legal advice; the coach supports the client to process that advice, manage emotional reactions and follow through on agreed actions.

This collaboration can:

- reduce delays caused by avoidance or overwhelm
- minimise emotionally driven conflict
- support clients to make informed, considered decisions
- improve the overall client experience

Clear communication and mutual respect for professional boundaries are key to successful collaboration.

What should lawyers look for in a coach?

Divorce coaching is currently unregulated, meaning anyone can describe themselves as one. For this reason, it is important for lawyers to carry out due diligence when recommending a coach to clients. Factors to consider include:

- completion of a recognised coaching qualification
- training in safeguarding and domestic abuse awareness
- understanding of professional boundaries
- membership of a professional coaching body

In my own practice, I trained with The Divorce Coaching Academy and maintain clear ethical boundaries around the support I offer, with appropriate signposting where more specialist intervention is required.

What does working with me look like?

I generally work with clients over a six-month period, as divorce rarely moves quickly and clients benefit from consistent support over time. Sessions may take place monthly or more frequently during particularly challenging stages. Clients also have the option of messaging between sessions to sense-check decisions or prepare for upcoming meetings. I offer an initial consultation to ensure I am the right fit for the client's needs and that they feel comfortable working with me. If I believe a client requires a different form of support, or is not yet ready for coaching, I will always signpost appropriately. With a background in education, I am deeply committed to ensuring that children are not drawn into adult conflict during separation. In my experience, supporting the emotional regulation and decision-making of even one parent can have a powerful ripple effect, lowering tension and improving communication across the wider family system. When parents feel calmer and more grounded, they are better able to make thoughtful, child-focused decisions. Divorce coaching offers a practical way to reduce conflict, protect children's wellbeing and support more constructive engagement with the legal process.

cath@rightstepcoaching.co.uk

Supervision and reflective practice in family law



Vanessa Gardiner *Vanessa Gardiner Supervision*

Tackling issues before they become problems is a key part of supervision – and the statistics suggest all family practitioners could benefit

In this article I want to explore with you supervision: why the family law profession needs it, what it is, how it can benefit you and how you can access it for yourself and others in your firm.

Why does the family law profession need supervision?

In supervision everything starts with you, the practitioners. So, first of all it is helpful to identify the type of people who choose to become family lawyers. Most likely you are empathetic, sympathetic, caring people who want to help others. The types of characteristics we have can open us up to vulnerabilities and risks if we do not take care to support ourselves in our work, and these can include:

- having a sense of achievement and self-esteem which are intrinsically linked to success at work when working in a profession which is full of uncertainty, judicial discretion and many ups and downs
- being driven, ambitious, highly performing with a propensity to be go, go, go in a fast-paced sector which can lead to not taking breaks or time off
- being people pleasers and/or rescuers who find it hard to say no, hang up the phone on clients, under time record/reduce bills or take extra measures to impress those they work for by being continuously available
- catastrophising small mistakes or problems into a potentially complete disaster
- imposter syndrome and a tendency to take too much responsibility for clients, lacking boundaries in relationships
- experiencing vicarious trauma, particularly prevalent when working with domestic abuse

There is no manual as to what to expect when you begin working in family law and no one really understands what it is like to be a family lawyer unless they are one! Most of us will learn through trial and error, gain knowledge and experience, and look to those around us to model our own behaviour. This can lead to unintentionally developing unhealthy or unhelpful working practices or experiencing high levels of stress or even burnout.

Supervision has arisen out of what is a clear and obvious need within the legal profession generally for mental health and wellbeing to be proactively protected for our lawyers. Through 2021 to 2024 a number of reports were published into wellbeing in law and Deloitte have conducted global surveys across all professions into mental health for the last five years. The results are glaring:

- **Resolution Wellbeing Survey May 2021:** 89% of family lawyers experienced mental ill health in the previous 12 months.
- **LawCare Life in Law Survey September 2021:** 69% experienced mental ill health in the previous 12 months; over 60% suffered from anxiety often, very often or all the time; and 65% said they needed to check emails outside regular working hours to stay on top.
- **International Bar Association Mental Wellbeing in the legal profession: A global study October 2021:** the profession is described as being in crisis amongst under 30s and there is an urgent need for culture change due to “systematic problems”.
- **LawCare Impact Report 2023:** 14% increase in people contacting their services for mental health support in 2023. More people sought help in 2023 than during the Covid 19 pandemic. Issues included: 22% stress & 13% anxiety; 14% workplace bullying and harassment; 13% career concern.
- **Deloitte Global’s Gen Z and Millennial Survey 2024:** over a third of those who feel regularly anxious or

stressed (36% of Gen Zs and 33% of millennials) say that their job is a key factor with this, showing no improvement on previous years.

- **The Solicitors Charity Big Report 2024:** Referrals for emotional support rose by 178% and demand for financial wellbeing support rose by 60%.

- **LawCare Life in Law Report 2025:** the 26-35 age group had the lowest average score for mental wellbeing. 50% said they had experienced anxiety, either often, very often or all of the time, over the last 12 months. The average risk of burnout was high and the average indication score for psychological safety was in the lower half of the range provided.

What is supervision and what are the benefits?

In practice, it is meeting every four weeks with your supervisor for 60 minutes and confidentially talking about all things work related. Your firm can appoint and fund an independent supervisor for you to work with, or you can appoint your own supervisor.

BUT it is so much more than this. Taking part in supervision is an opportunity to take a big step back, take a breath and think about our clients, relationships and practices, assessing our resources and then learning. It is a chance to set intentional practices into motion that we are in control of and that meet our needs.

How many of us get to express our feelings, concerns, worries, insecurities, mistakes, perceived mistakes, relationships, vent, rant, talk about our boss/partners openly, cry and actually be heard and seen without judgement or without an opinion being offered or a solution imposed on us?

The supervisor is there to listen and engage with you in creative discussion as well as sometimes challenge you. They have no expectations of what you will bring to a session and are there solely for your benefit.

What often begins as an opportunity to express and relieve yourself of concerns or experiences evolves subtly into a long-term sustainable opportunity for professional and personal development. Those who engage in supervision purposefully and with intention to understand themselves better can increase their knowledge and skill level, improve client relationships and widen their abilities to approach problem solving, developing resilience, confidence and agency.

Supervision approaches the work you do with curiosity. Not to solve the problem for you but to support you in engaging in creative thinking or just exploring the dynamics at play – what could you do, what do you want to do and feel able to do with your resources? It can be possible to change the nature of the relationship you have with clients and colleagues,

"The supervisor is there to listen and engage with you in creative discussion as well as sometimes challenge you. They have no expectations and are there solely for your benefit."

maintain professional standards and move forwards positively or change direction even in the most challenging of situations.

Most people only seek mental health support when the situation is so bad they cannot ignore it any longer, and will work hard to regain emotional stability, and then relapse with the cycle repeating itself. There is a wonderful African proverb: If you want to go faster, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Supervision is a collaborative practice and who knows how far you might go if you try it for yourself.

How do I get it?

I strongly encourage anyone who wants to try supervision to ask their firm to provide it and fund it. Get together and lobby the heads of department, partners, wellbeing leads or HR. We have the power to effect change within our own firms. As a supervisor I can meet with a team or partners and explain the benefits for not only the wellbeing of the team but also the commercial and financial benefits for the firm of investing in supervision. This is not a zero-sum game.

According to Deloitte, for every £1 spent on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce, employers get (on average) about £4.70 back in increased productivity and as high as £7.30 for "early investment directed at the whole workforce". The global cost to employers of poor mental health is £51bn per year, with presenteeism as the largest contributor.

It is a commercially viable cost which every firm can provide and be part of a sea change in the culture of our profession. I believe the future of family law eventually will include regular supervision for all family law practitioners. Does your firm want to be part of the movement for change or a late adopter forced to evolve through necessity only?

If you are interested to find out more about supervision you can contact me or visit my website *vanessagardinersupervision.co.uk* and the Association of Family Law Supervisors (AFLS) website has a directory of all supervisors who have qualified with FLiP Faculty at *familylawsupervisors.co.uk*. Supervisors are available nationally to work with you and your firm.

vg@vanessagardinersupervision.co.uk

West End Girl: analysing an album





Joe Ferguson *Myerson Solicitors* *and*
Lesley Edelstein *LesleyME Consultancy*



A solicitor and a psychotherapist examine the relationship breakdown issues in Lily Allen's raw and emotionally honest new album

Joe Ferguson: Perspectives from a Northwest Boy

Anyone who has ever had the (mis)fortune of dating a musician is no doubt well aware that songwriting is often a deeply personal endeavour, used to express ideas and convey complex emotions.

In recent years, we've seen a cavalcade of brutally honest songs and albums written about heartbreak. Adele's tearful 21 became the best-selling album of the 21st century. Olivia Rodrigo broke streaming records as she charted the throes of teenage angst with her single "Drivers License". The list goes on.

Enter, a heartbroken Lily Allen

Lily released her latest album, *West End Girl*, in November. To say it is searing is to understate the point, as the album appears to chart the breakdown of Lily's relationship with actor David Harbour. The album has garnered the attention of the world's press and a legion of fans because beyond the syncopated beats lie themes which, as family lawyers, we are all too familiar with.

The breakdown

What is clear from the album is that the relationship didn't have a singular moment of breakdown but rather there were ongoing relationship issues which, over the course of time, caused the relationship to become irretrievably broken down.

In the title song "West End Girl", Lily charts the start of her marital woes and this continues throughout the majority of the album. This protracted breakdown is important for practitioners to remember: clients may have spent years in a difficult position and come to the table already fatigued, before the process has even commenced. Options like non-court dispute resolution (NCDR) are helpful and should be explored.

Manipulation and gaslighting

Lily sings on the album about issues around manipulation and gaslighting. In the song "Sleepwalking", she sings "you let me think it was me in my head; and nothing to do with them girls in your bed".

Later, in the song "Tennis", Lily believes that her partner is cheating and she sets out her confrontation with him. She sings: "I got a lot of information, now I can't even process; So I wrote a little email and I told you what I saw; Then you came up to the bedroom and you made it all my fault" – something which all legal practitioners will be well aware of.

Different perspectives on the breakdown

It's clear that Lily and her partner have different perspectives on the relationship and the breakdown thereafter. Lily sings this plainly in the first verse of "Beg For Me":

> *I feel embarrassed, I feel ashamed*
> *You're so indifferent and that's insane*
> *Where's all your empathy for, for all my pain?*
> *My friends all tell me you are deranged*

It's often the case that two parties can be in two very different positions in the breakdown of a relationship. One party can be very emotional and raw, and the other can be more placid and calm. Our job, to an extent, is to help parties to understand the consequences of their actions and to provide support. This should not extend into therapeutic support, though there is some small overlap, and referrals should be made to mental health support where necessary.

Addiction issues

Perhaps the most difficult song to listen to on the album is "Relapse", in which Lily discusses how her marital

West End Girl album artwork © Lily Allen/BMG/Nieves González

difficulties have impacted on her recovery from alcohol and drugs.

Lyrics like "You pushed me this far and I just need to be numb; If I relapse, I know I stand to lose it all" are reflective of the very sad reality that the stress of a relationship breakdown can have a severely detrimental affect on someone's mental health and increase vulnerability as a direct consequence.

The impact on the children

In "Relapse" Lily talks about the children and the fact that she feels she can't advise them about relationships whilst hers breaks down. In "Let You W/In" she's clear that the children should not be aware of the reasons for the breakdown of the relationship. This is often the toughest part for parents, who feel they are letting down their children, which of course we know they are not.

These are also children who have moved internationally with their mum. The impact of a relationship breakdown is tangible and it would be worthwhile instructing a psychotherapist to deal with the emotional ramifications.

Emotional toll

As mentioned, the mental toll of all of this is gross and obvious – particularly for Lily. In "Just Enough" Lily talks about feeling "so drawn, so old" and being powerless to this man. In "Let You W/In", she describes herself as invisible and miserable. In "Dallas Major" she seeks validation in the arms of another.

Our role

As family practitioners, we often seek to step back from the emotion of the breakdown of the relationship, and whilst I do not suggest that a breakup album necessarily accords with our Code of Practice (at least, without some creative liberty), I do think that the album is a timely reminder of the impact of divorce on a client's mental health and the importance of our Good Practice Guides.

As Resolution practitioners, we wouldn't (or rather, shouldn't) judge Lily's woes, but rather would treat her with respect and human dignity. We would help her to understand and manage the potential long-term financial and emotional consequences of her decisions and support her in putting the best interests of the children first.

In doing so, we also would adhere to the various Good Practice Guides which would help us assess and work with any vulnerabilities that she may have sensitively and with a view to empowering her.

We would consider NCDR, given her celebrity status and the difficult court backlogs we are experiencing, to make the process as smooth as possible.

Art like *West End Girl* is enriching, often acting as a mirror and allowing us to feel seen. Through using Resolution's resources in an appropriate and constructive way, we can ensure that the reflection is as kind as we would hope it to be.

Joe.Ferguson@myerson.co.uk

Lesley Edelstein: A psychotherapist's view

Relationships are as complex as the people involved. They make us feel elated, valued and give us a sense of deep belonging. When they go wrong, relationships can shatter your world and effect those around us. Heartache and vulnerability are felt in every fibre of your being. Impacting on mental, emotional and physical health, a broken relationship has the power to reconfigure the way you see yourself and others.

Why do musical artists express their heartache and expose their vulnerability through their chosen medium?

Lily Allen is known for her no-holds-barred lyrics set to upbeat music. The same is true for her album West End Girl, where she touches nerves for all who can relate to or imagine the devastation of her broken marriage and pending break up.

Music has the power to connect us to time and place, even when memory fails – in cases of dementia music from a person's past can still be recalled. Little wonder then that musicians and songwriters tap into this powerful source to write lyrics that will be indelibly printed into the emotional centre of our minds.

What do Lily Allen and most clients going through divorce have in common?

The track "Sleepwalking" recalls how things changed after the wedding that indicate there were issues from the start. Lily and husband David Harbour had agreed to a non-monogamous relationship with contingencies in place.

> *Been no romance since we wed*
> *But you let me think it was me in my head*
> *And nothing to do with them girls in your bed.*

In therapy I have worked with clients who choose to be non-monogamous. For some it works, for others the complexities of bringing other sexual partners into the relationship brings confusion and unexpected insecurities.

Those with attachment disorders, low emotional quotient (EQ) or mental health issues ought to stay clear of non-monogamous relationships.

Lily Allen has never shied away from sharing her mental health issues – she openly shares her time in therapy. So why did she agree to have a relationship that had the potential to break her?

Again, in "Sleepwalking" we hear her willingness to partake to quench her husband's thirst for multiple sexual partners.

You know you have made me your Madonna
I want to be your whore,
I could preserve all your fantasies
if only you could act them all out with me.

In "Nonmonogamummy" she goes on to plea, "I am so committed that I'd lose myself." And lose herself she did.

Non-monogamous relationships are one of the top five fantasies imagined by people in long-term relationships. Strictly speaking they are not as straightforward as pure fantasy. They must be boundaried, they have to be agreed, and equal consideration given to both parties. The boundary for Lily was depicted in "Tennis", the track where she expresses her realisation that the rules had been broken.

You moved the goal posts,
You broke all the rules; I tried
To accommodate but you took me for a fool,
So, I read your texts.

The boundaries they stipulated were there had to be payment, and the other person had to be a stranger.

Boundaries are defined in logical terms where everything makes sense and there is a shared understanding. Sex, feelings, drives and urges all reside in the emotional centre of the brain, and logic doesn't reside there. While Lily may have successfully fed David's fantasies before they married, suddenly the "snot bubbles" of real life crept in and shattered illusions. The fantasy bubble was burst, exploding into heartbreak.

The heat, the passion, the electricity of a non-monogamous relationship is so seductive it is often mistaken for a love connection, and so it becomes an affair. Guilt triggers misplaced anger, as we hear in all the tracks, Lily is made to shoulder the blame and feels manipulated.

"Relapse" sees Lily's fear as she cries out for a drink and a sedative to take away the pain. She feels unsafe in the marriage, the reality begins to hit as she sings "I tried to be your modern wife…" and:

If I relapse, I stand to lose it all,
Can you bring me back, when
I'm climbing up the walls.

The vulnerability bleeding from her words hits deep for any of us who have felt their world crumble during a break-up.

This finely crafted album sees a wife and mother at her most fragile state. She may find this cathartic; she may find a tribe that have been through a similar turmoil. What is often seen in relationship therapy is a person who has shared widely then had to hear a crescendo of opinions. Whilst well intended, they are often unhelpful. Lily did seek professional help, and her daughters have kept in touch with her ex, we can imagine then that some level of healing is taking place.

If you see your own reflection in these lyrics, if you have been through a break-up (who hasn't) then you will relate to *West End Girl*. Thank goodness Resolution members agree it takes a team to support clients through a divorce. To seek therapeutic support for both parties and, importantly, the children. Further, there is the recognition that legal practitioners cannot expect to work with clients who are reconfiguring their lives while picking up the pieces of their shattered dreams.

I urge legal practitioners to engage a Wellness Practitioner who is formally trained to support you therapeutically, coach you through any deficit discourse, imposter syndrome etc. Furthermore, you will be encouraged to focus on your strengths and values to assure you of all the worthwhile work you do in changing the lives of your clients.

I hope you enjoy the album!

lesley@lesleyme.co.uk

How to unwind… as recommended by the YRes Committee

- **fibre arts** – "I have recently taken up knitting having been a crocheter for years and find it a great way to switch off from work and unwind"
- **make a conscious effort to switch off outside work** through activities, such as yoga and meditation during lunch breaks, which can help you manage your wellbeing and remain focused for clients
- **walking on the beach or cold swimming** – "nothing takes your mind off work like freezing your bits off"
- **make time for things you enjoy** – "it's a tie between a scorching hot bath and trashy reality television – *Housewives* of some god-awful city"
- ***Desperate Housewives*** – "if you get it, you get it"
- **coffee order** – "there's nothing quite like a vanilla latte"
- "My perfect downtime totally depends on the day. Sometimes it's a theatre trip, a quick reset run or trying out a restaurant that's been on my list for weeks. Other days, nothing beats **time with loved ones** or simply **curling up with a brilliant book or film**. There are just too many good ways to switch off!"

Spotlight on the Regions

Do you have a regional event you would like us to feature? Email communications@resolution.org.uk



South-western belles (right) at the joint Resolution Ball held by Devon, Cornwall and Somerset Regions







Anyone for avocado toast? Tasty nibbles on offer at a Dorset YRes Walk and Talk breakfast event (above)

The wind in their sails

A medley of photo highlights of events from balls to beaches across the South West

Our SW Ball was a great collaboration between Devon, Cornwall and Somerset committees (YRes and Big Res – initially an idea discussed between YRes members and Ian Walker at the regional liaison day in 2024). It was really well attended, with approximately 150 tickets sold.

Dorset YRes do a lovely morning event called "Walk and Talk" where they have beachside breakfast events for YRes (and apparently it was so successful that Big Res asked to attend too).

The Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall YRes committees are currently working together to put on a free webinar afternoon for YRes members in February (date TBC) with some excellent speakers focusing on AI/tech/cryptoassets. Members should keep an eye on the National YRes Linkedin for more information on this and other upcoming events.

Zhenja Cann, Thrings

National chair Melanie (left) and West Mids Region committee member Adam Maguire (right) listen to the address by Kadie Bennett (inset, right)

West Mids winners raise a glass for charity

Members enjoyed the Region's annual Charity Christmas Champagne Drinks



Raffle prize-winners at the event

This is the highlight of our events calendar, and was very well attended and full of festive spirit, bringing together members from across the region to celebrate the year's successes. We were delighted to be joined by Melanie and Lucy, and we were grateful to them for choosing to spend the evening with us.

During the event, we were also able to make charitable donations of £1,000 each to The Buddy Bag Foundation, Standing Tall, and Cauda Equina Champions Charity.

Prior to the main Resolution drinks event, YRes hosted their annual pre-drinks event, which was another huge success.

Ellie Norton, Higgs LLP



Melanie and Lucy (near front, centre) with other guests at the Champagne Christmas Drinks



Earlier...

Yorkshire United at Winter Ball celebration

Active Region focuses on junior members with bitesize training and summer BBQ

The West and North Yorkshire YRes Committee are looking forward to another busy year.

Our 2025 highlights included our "Back to Basics" event where speakers delivered three bitesize sessions, varying from company disclosure to mental health, all aimed at the junior end of the membership. We also celebrated our annual summer BBQ in style, which this year took place at The Lock overlooking the Leeds and Liverpool canal.

We rounded off the year by letting our hair down at the annual Winter Ball (pictured), where our YRes committee organised a charity raffle raising money for Sue Ryder, with some fantastic prizes kindly donated by local firms. Our focus for 2026 is planning events with a particular emphasis on wellbeing and bringing our neighbouring regions together. If you happen to be spending time in the Yorkshire area and are interested in attending our events, please take a look at our LinkedIn page, where we will be sharing details of what we have planned – we would love to meet you!



Later...

Regional snippets

No story too succinct – send us your tiny updates for our Regional snippets section

Newcastle YRes look to the future after successful programme of events in 2025

Newcastle YRes have had an action-packed year getting their events back up and running. Following Covid, Resolution events were scarce but in 2025, the committee were able to organise a wellbeing event presented by a psychotherapist, summer drinks and their first formal AGM which was combined with some arbitration CPD.

The committee are committed to another year of growth and will be looking to expand their committee and organise more events.

Hollie Murray, Stowe Family Law



Eyes down at the Bristol YRes annual quiz

Bristol YRes hosts sell-out quiz event

Bristol YRes annual quiz is always popular and usually sells out. Our 2025 event was kindly sponsored by Albion Chambers, with Alex West as quiz master.

We also hosted a seminar focused around nutrition for stress management and family law supervision, with Louisa Maslaveckas and Claire Macklin.

Meet the National YRes Committee

Felicia Munde
fmunde@stewartslaw.com
- Associate, Stewarts
- Qualified 2021
- Leeds/London



Abigail Whelan
Abigail.Whelan@TLT.com
- Senior associate, TLT LLP
- Qualified 2019
- Bristol-based, but works nationally



Annie Boxer
annie.boxer@iflg.uk.com
- Solicitor, The International Family Law Group
- Qualified 2023
- London



Catherine Cooke
cath@rightstepcoaching.co.uk
- Divorce and co-parenting coach, Right Step Coaching
- Completed Transformational Coaching Qualification in 2020
- Cheshire, works nationally



Emily Chapman
clerks@pumpcourtchambers.com
- Family law barrister, Pump Court Chambers, 2023 call
- London



Georgina (Georgie) Huse
georgina.huse@iflg.uk.com
- Associate, The International Family Law Group
- Dual-qualified Australian and English lawyer – 4PQE in England & Wales, 5PQE in Australia
- London



Grace Mullis
Grace.Mullis@IrwinMitchell.com
- Associate, Irwin Mitchell
- Qualified 2021
- Birmingham



Helen Stoller
helen.stoller@poolealcock.co.uk
- Partner, joint head of Divorce and Family, Poole Alcock
- Qualified 2017
- Cheshire



Jessica Johnson
jessica.johnson@mishcon.com
- Managing associate, Mishcon De Reya
- Qualified 2018
- London



Lauren Guiler
Lauren-Guiler@birketts.co.uk
- Associate, Birketts
- Qualified 2021
- London



Lauren Winser
lauren.winser@3pb.co.uk
- Family law barrister, 3PB
- 2022 call
- London



Lucy Reynolds
lr@freemanssolicitors.net
- Solicitor, Freemans Solicitors
- Qualified 2024
- London



Natalie Dunn
Natalie.Dunn@moorebarlow.com
- Associate, Moore Barlow
- Qualified 2022
- Richmond



Polly Dallyn
polly@familylawpartners.co.uk
- Senior associate and mediator, Family Law Partners
- Qualified 2017
- Horsham



Zara Rafiq
zara.rafiq@stowefamilylaw.co.uk
- Associate, Stowe Family Law
- Qualified 2021
- Sheffield



Zhenja Cann
zcann@thrings.com
- Senior associate, Thrings
- Qualified 2019
- Bristol/Cornwall



We'd love to hear from you so if you're interested in getting involved with YRes or have any questions for the committee, just drop us an email

Lexis+ AI™

Research starts it.
Guidance explains it.
AI improves it.
Lexis+® connects it.

Get My Quote



© 2025 LexisNexis SA-0625-2266.

resolution

Dispute Resolution Conference

Leading the way in NCDR Practice and Collaboration

26 March | London



WHAT TO EXPECT:

- A keynote address by Professor Golombok and Rebecca Christie
- Insightful sessions with leading professionals on cross-border mediation and the future of NCDR
- A thought-provoking panel discussion exploring NCDR's hot topics





Book your place