



FACULTY OFFICE

Quarterly Master's Council Meeting

held on Monday, 12 January 2026 held via Zoom and in the office

PRESENT: Morag Ellis KC, Master of the Faculties (ME)
Howard Dellar, Registrar, Faculty Office (HD)
Ian Blaney, Deputy Registrar, Faculty Office (IB)
Neil Turpin, Chief Clerk, Faculty Office (NT)
Mili Bhanji, Deputy Chief Clerk, Faculty Office (MB)
Rebecca Martin, Solicitor, Faculty Office (RM)
Hannah Fingleton, Trainee Solicitor, Faculty Office (HF)
Jaymisha Tailor, Administrator, Faculty Office (JT)

Jim Clifford, Advisor, (JC)
Sam Coutinho, Accountant (SC)
Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO, LawCare (ER)

Welcome and apologies

No apologies to report

Opening matters : Declarations of interest relevant to the business of the meeting

None to report

PART I – England & Wales Notarial Matters

1. Wellbeing & Law Care initiatives:

The Master and members of the Council welcomed Elizabeth Rimmer, Chief Executive Officer of LawCare.

LawCare's roots trace back to the Lawyer's Support Group, formed in 1983 by lawyers in recovery from alcohol addiction who met to support one another in London. In response to growing concern about alcohol misuse and wellbeing in the profession, a working party was formed in the mid-1990s that led to the creation of an independent support charity.

April 1997 saw the launch of the organisation initially known as SolCare, with a small helpline run by a retired solicitor in recovery. Soon after the launch it became clear that professionals needed help with more than just alcohol related issues, including stress, anxiety, depression, workplace bullying and other pressures. As the Charity broadened its remit and began serving barristers and others across the profession, it changed its name to LawCare in 2001.

Over the following decades LawCare expanded its services far beyond its original helpline, offering free and confidential emotional support, peer support, email and online chat, training, information and advocacy across the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

LawCare continues as a leading charity focussed on the mental health and wellbeing of legal professional at every stage of their careers, striving to reduce stigma and transform legal workplace culture for the better.

LawCare supports people facing investigations and disciplinary proceedings by focussing on their emotional wellbeing, rather than the legal merits of the case. This help includes confidential emotional support and peer support, to talk through any anxieties or isolation linked to investigations or disciplinary action, in a completely confidential and non-judgemental space. They will connect individuals with trained volunteers who have experience of working in the legal profession and understand the pressures and stigma associated with regulatory or disciplinary processes.

While LawCare does not provide legal advice, it can signpost individuals to appropriate professional, medical or counselling services if more specialist support is needed.

[Life in the Law](#) is major research led by LawCare that explores mental health, wellbeing and working culture across the legal profession. It provides evidence about how working practices in law affect wellbeing and why systemic change is needed.

LawCare surveyed a number of professionals working in law, including solicitors, barristers, judges, trainees and non-lawyer staff. The study examined issues such as stress, burnout, depression, bullying, long working hours and workplace culture. Its findings highlighted widespread mental health challenges, the impact of toxic or high-pressure environments, and barriers to seeking help. The findings highlighted that the second most common reason prompting professionals to reach out to LawCare was career concerns, particularly among those considering leaving their current role or moving away from the legal profession altogether.

The Life in Law 2025 Report highlighted people management and workload issues as a key focus affecting wellbeing, including concerns that managers don't often have sufficient time, training or adjustments to properly support their teams.

Elizabeth stressed that the key message is that complacency is not an option. Legal workplaces must be proactive in ensuring that the way work is structured is sustainable, in order to prevent poor mental health. This includes actively identifying risk and taking steps to mitigate them.

Referring to the recent DEI survey conducted by Sonnet, Jim Clifford highlighted that the top concern among notaries within those surveyed, was working with vulnerable individuals – underscoring the need for training and guidance in these sensitive situations.

It was asked whether any data could be used to determine if notaries are contacting Law Care. Elizabeth confirmed that it may be possible to obtain (anonymised) information.

The Master thanked Elizabeth for her presentation and noted that notaries typically practice as sole practitioners. As a result, issues relating to people management do not generally arise within the notarial profession. Instead, wellbeing concerns for notaries are more likely to stem from disciplinary and investigations.

It was noted that a Faculty Office consultation on introducing one-hour of wellbeing CPD had received some resistance, requiring the proposal to be reconsidered. This discussion was therefore timely. Issues relating to professional isolation had also been identified during inspections. Elizabeth was invited to share ideas on how best to engage with the profession on these matters.

Elizabeth acknowledged that the notarial profession is smaller in scale compared to other regulators and noted that sole practitioners can be harder to reach. She suggested that awareness campaigns would be a good starting point and highlighted that LawCare has a range of articles that could be included in publications to support engagement with the profession.

Elizabeth shared that LawCare regularly hold webinars. The next one will be held on 5 February 2026 on [anxiety](#) (a free event exploring anxiety in the legal sector). So far, it has already attracted 120 attendees, and it is anticipated that the numbers of attendees will reach between 300 to 400 participants. The “Lets Talk About” webinars explore the psychology and science behind these issues, offering insights that can help people better manage their concerns. It’s a great opportunity to learn, reflect and take practical steps toward well-being.

Elizabeth suggested hosting a webinar for the notarial profession. The Master endorsed the proposal and suggested arranging a meeting with the two societies to discuss it further.

It was further suggested that wellbeing would make a suitable topic for the 2027 Rule of Law Lecture. Elizabeth endorsed this idea, emphasising that wellbeing is fundamental.

ACTION 1: HJD to set up a meeting with the two societies to discuss and explore ways to advocate well-being and law care webinars.

2. Faculty Office

(i) Matters arising that are not covered in the agenda

Marriage Reform - On 2 October 2025, the government announced its intention to reform weddings law in England and Wales in response to the Law Commission's recommendations in its 2022 report, *Celebrating Marriage: A New Weddings Law*. The government's proposals for reform include moving from a system that regulates buildings to one that regulates officiants responsible for ceremonies and introducing universal rules for all weddings to remove inconsistencies and simplify the marriage process. A public consultation on the detail of the reform is expected to take place early this year.

The Faculty Office will keep a watching brief.

(ii) Review of previous Minutes of meeting and action points

The Minutes of the Master's Monthly meeting held on 1 December 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

(iii) Financial update (SC)

Sam Countinho reported the following:

- The accounts are fully on QuickBooks, and the reconciliations are being signed off monthly.
- The accounts from 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025 are being finalised and will be issued by the end of the month when the management charge has been agreed.
- Further work is being carried out on the reporting and a meeting with Neil Turpin is being scheduled later in the month to analyse the data and refine the reporting

With regard to the practising certificates, 770 certificates were budgeted. However, due to the accounting period, this had to be split over two years. As a result, the income received for the period 1 April to 31 December represents only 496 certificates, although we have approximately £4,000 of income carried forward from the previous year. This needs to be reconciled to accurately reflect the monetary income against the number of practising certificates issued.

The financial report was **noted**.

(iv) Away Day – Agenda / Planning (JC)

To be held on Friday, 16 January 2026, led by Jim Clifford of Sonnet.

(v) House of Lords Committee on Industry and Regulators – inquiry into regulators and growth (Letter from Baroness Taylor of Bolton)

The House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee, chaired by Baroness Taylor of Bolton, has launched an inquiry into the relationship between regulators and economic growth, in light of the Government's ambition for regulators to support investment and innovation and drive growth.

The Committee invited The Faculty Office to submit evidence to this inquiry by 16 January 2026.

A draft response has been prepared. Jim additionally highlighted that the draft should reference the Master's Priorities (1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 14), all of which relate to economic growth and will be discussed further at the upcoming Away Day.

The letter from Baroness Taylor and draft response was **noted**. The Master suggested that a discussion with Professor Stephen Mayson prior to submitting the response for call for evidence would be beneficial.

ACTION 2: HJD to contact Professor Stephen Mayson to discuss the content and nature of the call for evidence

3. Risk register

The risk register was **noted** and IB highlighted the following key risk factors:

C06: *Risk of poor budgeting and management of accounts* – review with the finance manager about how we can segment our budget better and track in a more sophisticated manner what our expenditure is against various heads of our work.

D05: *Risk of changes in marriage law obviates the need for Special Licences* - Government now confirms that it accepts the recommendations of the Law Commission. However, consultation, preparation of draft legislation and parliamentary approval means that implementation is over 12 months away at the earliest. The risk level has therefore increased. IB reported that he has reached out to Church National Institutions and Church in Wales.

ACTION 3: IB to contact The Revd Alexander McGregor, Head of Legal Office at the Church of England, regarding marriage law reform.

D11 – *Faculty Office stripped of its supervisory functions for AML and CTF (New Risk)* - Single supervisor of AML and sanctions proposed by Government. This has the potential to lead to disruption in the existing workload of supervision and in responding to regulatory change. It also might mean new regulatory pressure on notaries which could force them out of doing supervised work. Steps to mitigate risk include, engaging with other supervisors as they also grapple with the announcement and arrange contact with FCA so that we can explain the particular position of notaries and the role of the Faculty Office in regulating them.

4. Horizon Scanning

The Horizon Scanning report was **noted** and IB highlighted the following key issues:

- *UK Government policy that regulators should promote growth* - it appears that the UK's pressure on regulators to promote growth is focussed on the main statutory regulators covered by the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and not including the Legal Services Board. There was a [Government announcement](#) on 21 October 2025 about how the Government was going to do this. The Government do not appear to have included the legal services sector in their present policy but it is clearly the message from Sarah Sackman, minister in the Ministry of Justice, that legal regulators should be. There is nothing sector specific aside from some proposed tinkering to the Money Laundering Regulations set out in the [draft Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing \(Amendment and Miscellaneous Provision\) Regulations 2025](#), however the LSB business plan 2026/2027 ensures that the regulatory framework will continue to support and enable economic growth, suggesting the growth agenda will cascade into the legal services sector.

- *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation led by Professor Stephen Mayson* – The Board noted the article by Brian Rogers in *Legal Futures* [The case for a single legal services regulator: why the current system is failing](#) (28 November 2025) and that by Neil Rose [Is AML move the first step towards single legal regulator?](#) (27 October 2025). Also, the Mazur judgment has the potential to lead to re-opening certain parts of the Legal services Act 2007.
- *Mandating tax adviser registration with HMRC* - In the Autumn Budget the Government announced (para 4.134) that it would not be proceeding with this proposal. This item will therefore be removed from future horizon scanning reports.

A discussion about the Government growth agenda and their interest in regulatory reform followed, including how the Faculty Office might contribute to this agenda and prepare itself to engage in debate on the issue.

5. LSB matters

(i) **LSB Regulatory Performance Assessment – Action Plan (JC)**

Deferred – to be discussed in detail at the upcoming Away Day

(ii) **LSB consultation on encouraging a diverse legal profession – update (HJD)**

The Legal Service Board is currently consulting on a draft policy statement on Encouraging a diverse legal profession as part of its work programme, and that consultation runs until 2 March 2026.

RM attended a meeting on Wednesday 7 January, with representatives from other regulatory bodies.

6. The Master's priorities

Protecting and promoting the interests of the Consumer

Priority 1: Practice authorisation (IB)

Deferred

Priority 2: Review of insurance arrangements (NT)

Deferred

Protecting and promoting the public interest and promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles

Priority 3: Review of disciplinary arrangements (IB)

IB was pleased to report that the LSB have approved the proposed rules. The Master will therefore make the rule on 28 January 2026, coinciding with the election of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so that the rules will bear the name of the new Archbishop. A three-month implementation period will follow, during which preparatory work, such as training investigators, will be carried out.

The Master noted the above and expressed her support to endorse it. She further extended her thanks to IB for leading such an important and substantial piece of work. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the annual notarial forum to demystify it.

Priority 4: Consolidation of accounts rules (NT)

Deferred

Priority 5: Develop and outcomes framework (JC & Team)

Deferred

Priority 6: Professional ethics (IB)

Deferred

Priority 7: Review inspections work (MB)

Deferred

Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession

Priority 8: Diversity – Sonnet DEI research report (JC)

The Faculty Office commissioned Sonnet to understand the principal issues and concerns of notaries within the fields of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This research complements the Faculty Office's quantitative survey work, taking a qualitative and in-depth approach to understanding the DEI issues that notaries and their clients may be facing today.

Thirty notaries participated in the survey. Ten overarching themes emerged from the research, the key-ones being:

- The Cost of qualifying as notary may limit entrants to the profession.
- An outdated perception of notaries as a barrier to entry to the profession
- The importance of a personal network and implications for inclusivity
- Technology and its implications for inclusivity
- In-person meetings and accessibility and mobility issues for clients; and
- Challenges in serving vulnerable clients well

The report makes a number of recommendations and suggests topics that could be explored further.

JC proposes to refine and work through the report with MB, with a view of publishing it in due course.

Priority 9: Post-qualification supervision of probate and conveyancing (IB)

Deferred

Priority 10: Wellbeing (HJD)

See above

Priority 11: AI and New technology (IB)

Deferred

Supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law and legal education

Priority 12: Rule of law lectures (HJD)

Deferred

Increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties and improving access to justice

Priority 13: Access to justice (HJD)

Deferred

Priority 14: Wales (HJD)

Deferred

7. AML matters

(i) AML Reform -update (MB)

Deferred

(ii) Management Information Report (MB)

The Management information report was **noted**.

The Faculty Office is currently awaiting feedback from OPBAS following the inspection last October.

8. Papers for noting:

The following papers were **noted**.

- (i) Advisory Board – Notes of meeting held on 9th December 2025
- (ii) Legal Services Consumer Panel – Regulatory Leadership on Access to Justice
- (iii) Legal Services Consumer Panel – Service Delivery Research

9. AOB

PART II – Overseas Notarial Matters

These items are not for publication

PART III – Ecclesiastical Matters

These items are not for publication.

Date of next meeting

09 February 2026 – Monthly Master’s Meeting

13 April 2026 – Quarterly Master’s Meeting

FACULTY OFFICE LIST OF ACTIONS – 12 January 2026**(this includes a summary of all actions from previous meetings)**

Minute reference	Action Required	Person(s) Responsible	Date of Action Required	Progress Report
Action 1 of Meeting held on 12/01/2026	to set up a meeting with the two societies to discuss and explore ways to advocate well-being and law care webinars.	HJD	09/02/2026	In Progress
Action 2 of Meeting held on 12/01/2026	Liaise with Professor Stephen Mayson to discuss the content and nature of the call for evidence	HJD	09/02/2026	In Progress
Action 3 of Meeting held on 12/01/2026	To contact The Revd Alexander McGregor, Head of Legal Office at Church of England regarding marriage reform proposals.	IB	09/02/2026	In Progress
Action 1 of Meeting held on 01/12/2025	Away Day - follow up with Jim Clifford regarding the agenda for the away day	HJD	16/12/2025	Completed
Action 2 of Meeting held on 01/12/2025	Faculty Office Seal – NT to contact the Crown Office	NT	12/12/2025	In Progress
Action 3 of Meeting held on 01/12/2025	LSB Consultation on Diversity - To discuss internally and prepare draft response to consultation	Senior Management	02/03/2026	In Progress
Action 4 of Meeting held on 01/12/2025	AML Supervisory Reform - contact Aileen Armstrong (SRA) and Stephen Mayson (UCL) for their view on the changes to the AML Supervision Reforms.	HJD	09/12/2025	In Progress
Action 5 of Meeting held	Surveys - to review and report on surveys	HF	12/01/2026	Completed

on 01/12/2025	carried out by other regulatory bodies.			
Action 1 of Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Prepare formal correspondence to Bishop Sarah congratulating her on her appointment, on behalf of the FO.	HJD	By 01/12/2025	Completed
Action 2 of Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Sam Coutinho had previously raised concerns about the Year-End. Liaise with Sam to address these concerns and to identify a method to extrapolate the data on time recording.	HJD	By 01/12/2025	Completed
Action 3 of Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Prepare a draft response to LSB's information request and to share with the Master	NT/IB/HJD	By 07/11/2025	Completed
Action 4 of Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Prepare correspondence inviting the Dean of the Law of Faculties, UCL to be a key speaker at the next upcoming Rule of Law Lecture.	HJD	By 01/12/2025	Completed
Action 5 of the Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Provide The Master with an update on the Gareth Fatchett matter following the meeting with the two societies.	Senior officers	By 01/12/2025	Completed
Action 6 of the Meeting held on 03/11/2025	Model Complaints Resolution Procedure - Corral a meeting with the two societies to discuss alignment on handling complaints and related matters.	HJD	By 01/12/2025	In progress
Action 1 of Meeting held	Reflection on Accounting Process	NT & JC to accompany HJD	By 03/11/2025	Completed

on 01/10/2025		on conference call with SC		
Action 2 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Reserves policy to be reviewed and the six months' estimate reconfirmed based on current risk environment. Audit committee to address this and bring it back to master's meeting once done.	SC	Following next meeting with the Audit Committee (Date of which is to be confirmed)	In progress
Action 3 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	MB to prepare a note for the Master. as requested at the meeting held on 15 September 2025, including potential questions. Additionally, the Master has requested copies of the documents sent to OPBAS, in accordance with their information request.	MB	As soon as possible	Completed
Action 4 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Review existing Data Protection Policy and those of other regulators	HF	By 03/11/2025	Completed
Action 5 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	JC to circulate the redacted version of the Value for Money report to be presented to the Audit Committee for approval following the meeting.	JC	By 03/10/2025	Completed
Action 6 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Review Consultations Policy	FO	By 03/11/2025	In progress
Action 7 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Wellbeing - Subject to availability, invite the Law Care Chief	HJD	January 2026	Completed – Elizabeth Rimmer will be attending

	Executive to the next quarterly meeting.			the Quarterly Meeting on 12 January 2026.
Action 8 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Rule of Law – PDR to consider and confirms whether a member of the UCL profession would be an appropriate speaker. Prepare a note to the Master.	PDR	By 03/11/2025	Completed
Action 9 of Meeting held on 01/10/2025	Suspicious Activity Reporting - in light of the recent Monzo Bank case, HF to prepare a news article for the website.	HF	By 03/11/2025	Completed
Action 1 of Meeting held on 08/09/2025	liaise with Elaine Standish with the proposal of hosting the March Education Day at 1 The Sanctuary	NT	By 03/11/2025	In Progress
Action 2 of Meeting held on 08/09/2025	Arrange for the available funds to be invested in GILT	HJD	By 03/11/2025	Completed
Action 3 of Meeting held on 08/09/2025	ME to finalise the address to the Notaries Conference by no later than Wednesday, 10 th September (AM)	ME	By 10/09/2025	Completed
Action 4 of Meeting held on 08/09/2025	Contact Fraser Sinclair and check his availability to attend the meeting on 15 th September 2025.	MB	By 12/09/2025	Completed
Action 5 of Meeting held on 08/09/2025	Obtain up to date contact details.	JT	By 06/10/2025	Completed
Action 1 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Evaluation of contribution of notaries to international trade	JC	By January 2026	In Progress

Action 2 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Liaise with Stephen Mayson following the lecture to see if he would be willing to assist with the work noted in Action 1	HJD	By 06/10/2025	In Progress
Action 3 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Agree and sign Sonnet's engagement terms for the EDI review.	HJD	By 31/07/2025	Completed
Action 4 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Arrange meeting with SG w/c 15 July to finalise accounts and budget.	HJD	W/C 15/07/2025	Completed
Action 5 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Identify and book appropriate venue.	JT	By 21/07/2025	Completed RFSK booked for 31 October 2025
Action 6 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	JC to work with various members of the team to plan the Away Day.	JC	By 06/10/2025	In Progress
Action 7 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Review draft LSB action plan and cross check the risks against the 13 points in the Master's Business plan.	JC	By 08/09/2025	Completed
Action 8 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Review and consider at the Awayday, answering the Master's questions on Action 7.	All	31/10/2025 (Awayday)	In Progress
Action 9 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Data from customer survey for use in the briefing of the EDI work to be provided to JC	NT	By 31/07/2025	Completed
Action 10 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	JC and the Notaries Society to explore alternatives to raise response rates	JC	By 08/09/2025	Completed

Action 11 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Discuss with David Nason whether the consumer survey can be produced on the website?	NT	By 06/10/2025	Completed
Action 12 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	<p>Draft Sanctions Guidance:</p> <p>(a) Draft guidance sent to the Commissary and Deputy Commissary for their comment</p> <p>(b) Subject to that to include in the application package to the Legal Services Board</p>	IB	By 08/09/2025	Completed
Action 13 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Review guidance and materials provided by the Victorian Legal Services Board	IB	By January 2026	In Progress
Action 14 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Review of Supervision of Conveyancing and Probate - Prepare consultation paper	IB	By 06/10/2025	Completed
Action 15 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	EDI Research - provide JC a list of notaries to be interviewed.	NT/MB	As soon as possible	Completed
Action 16 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Provide an update following the UK AML Supervisors Forum held on 08 July 2025	MB	By 06/10/2025	Completed
Action 17 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	ASCP - discuss with David Nason how we can openly publicise information so	MB	By 06/10/2025	Completed

	companies house can obtain updates via our system.			
Action 18 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Complaint against Inspector - Instruct advisor to review complaint and provide advice.	MB	As soon as possible	Completed
Action 19 of Meeting held on 07/07/25	Provide HJD contact details for a potential candidate (recommended by the Master) to be considered as a lay member for the Advisory or Qualifications	The Master	As soon as possible.	Completed