

Squaring up for membership: what makes a LawNet firm



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Member profile



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Membership of LawNet is by invitation and firms must meet stringent entry standards and be the right fit for our community: being confident that you are among equals is at the heart of our membership ethos.

One of our most recent members is Biscoes, who came to us with ambitious plans to build on quality work and outstanding client care. Their story reflects the standards that member firms must achieve to join the network, and for whom we can play a role in helping to realise their ambitions.

All new LawNet members must achieve the network's ISO9001 quality standard within two years of joining, and then undergo annual independent auditing to ensure they continue to deliver the highest standards in client care and professional service.

That includes the LawNet Mark of Excellence, for which network members must take part in client service reviews and online customer surveying, with resulting feedback being used to guide future training and development.

How membership helped us move into a different league



Managing partner Alison Lee outlines the journey of becoming a LawNet member

"We could see big benefits, for the firm and for our clients, in being part of the national network of LawNet. It aligns us with other well-regarded firms through a collaborative support group, without sacrificing our independence, and gives us access to a wealth of knowledge, support and purchasing power."

"When I first heard LawNet's chief executive talking at a fraud seminar about how the network operated and how the firms shared information in areas such as risk and cybercrime, it was a revelation. The collaboration outlined, and the opportunities presented by the combined buying force, was a breath of fresh air.

"Our main motivations for joining were the opportunity to collaborate and the chance to save money on our professional indemnity insurance, through the network's group placing, and through other supplier arrangements, and we certainly

achieved those objectives. Being able to speak openly is so refreshing, and the first year's saving on PII alone covered our membership fee for the first three years. But those were very modest expectations when compared to our actual experience.

"It's reached into our firm in ways that we never imagined, with benefits across the board, and has had a significant impact in our shift from a traditional law firm partnership to a modern business, delivering legal services.

"Early on, we had a session with LawNet's management specialists Wilkinson Read, and now have committed to on-going work which helped us hone our approach, and the annual conference helps provide us with the vision to move forward.

"The first annual conference I attended was on the topic of developing and retaining staff, and the ideas were revolutionary to me, from speakers like the ex-head of people for the BBC. It had a significant impact on how we approached our people development and we have seen outstanding results – we have very low staff turnover and staff who join say how business-like we are, while still being a friendly, good place to work."





Alison Lee, Biscoes Legal Services Ltd

Biscoes was created through the merger in 1994 of three long-standing firms in the city of Portsmouth which date one firm's history back to 1864.

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A modernisation and expansion programme was launched in 2015, forming a limited company and setting a younger group of directors in place, which has seen the firm's footprint and reputation grow. The strategy has seen turnover increase by 70% in just two years, to £4.7m in 2018, and with over 120 staff across seven branch offices, the firm combines a general high street practice with specialist niche areas that enable it to punch above its weight. Well known for its family work, with specialists in fertility law, forced marriage and FGM, drawing clients from London, the firm also has a growing reputation for its commercial, immigration and leasehold enfranchisement expertise. Locally, it works with military personnel through Forces Law, a specialist group providing free and subsidised services to the Armed Forces Community.

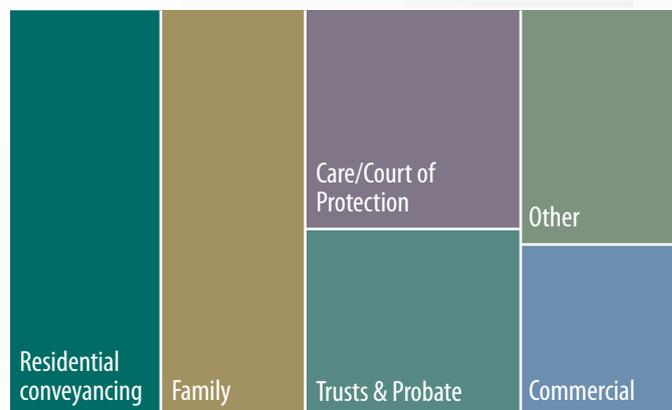
Alison Lee has been managing director since 2015 and is a care lawyer and Children's Panel member. She joined one of the original firms that now comprise Biscoes as a trainee in 1992, later becoming the youngest ever partner in 1998, and has run four of the branch offices at different times. Biscoes has been a member of LawNet since 2015 and Alison Lee joined the LawNet board in 2017.

ABOUT BISCOES

Turnover target 2020



Mix of work



6 Children Panel Specialists including a **Family Law Awards** Shortlisted Associate of the Year 2017



Leading fertility law specialists

Hampshire Law Society
Firm of the Year 2016

