

# Squaring up for membership: what makes a LawNet firm



Biscoes reflects the stringent standards our member firms must achieve – and the attitude and ambitions that we can support”

Member profile



# Squaring up for membership: what makes a LawNet firm

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."

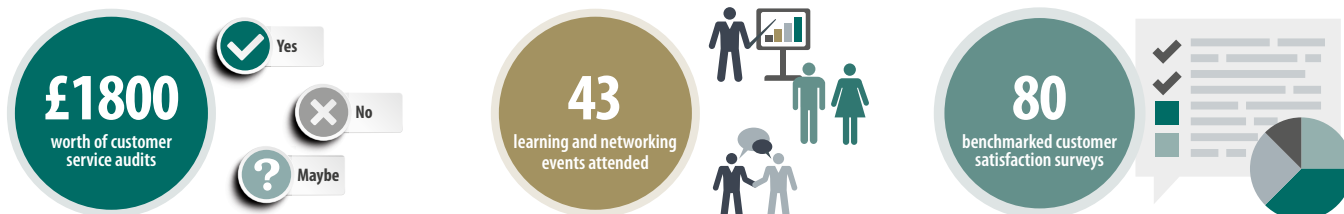
"The first annual conference I attended was on the topic of developing and retaining staff, and the ideas were revolutionary to me, from speakers like the ex-head of people for the BBC. It had a significant impact on how we approached our people development and we have seen outstanding results – we have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





# ACHIEVING LOWNET'S ISO9001 IS A SERIOUS COMMITMENT, BUT IT'S ONE THAT HAS ADDED VALUE TO OUR OPERATIONS

## HOW BISCOES LAW USES LOWNET (usage over a 12 month period)



“Staff also benefit from LawNet’s free CPD provision, with training and development that is outstanding and enables our staff to learn in an environment that is specifically designed to suit a firm of our size and attitude.

“We have gradually taken on a number of services through the LawNet approved supplier partnership arrangements, including many that we simply would not have considered without the idea being presented to us, and hearing other firms’ experiences, rather than having to rely upon our own ideas and research.

“Sometimes, it’s just about opening one’s eyes to doing things differently, and our telephone outsourcing through Moneypenny is one good example. I went to see their set up and as a result we have consolidated all our call answering into one site, serving all six branch offices, with Moneypenny kicking in to deliver reception services outside our 8am to 8pm internal cover, and we’re now looking to provide online web chat as well. As a firm, we must respond to client needs and that means being available when they need us.

“The Moneypenny operation also triggered some unexpected initiatives in employee engagement as I was impressed by their working environment and came away with ideas that we could introduce. As a result, we have a strategy to make Biscoes the first choice as an employment destination in the South East legal world.

“For any new member of LawNet, the requirement to achieve the ISO9001 quality standard within two years is a serious commitment, but it’s one that has added value to our operations.

“We were already Lexcel accredited, which gave us a strong grounding for ISO, and as we could have dual accreditation through LawNet, we knew we would be maximising, rather than duplicating, efforts. What ISO has done is helped us dig deeper; we are looking for a constant cycle of review and continual improvement and it has helped us to introduce changes that make us better at practising and delivering legal services. For example, our complaints go through a practice manager now, who can take a pragmatic view and say ‘how can I help’, where a lawyer may feel defensive about their professional capability. Together with the LawNet Excellence Mark, which involves client service reviews and benchmarked independent customer surveying, it’s helped us look at ourselves with fresh eyes.

### How Biscoes Law makes use of free member services and discounted supplier arrangements



### LawNet in 3 words



“When we joined LawNet, I was intent on making sure the firm maximised the value of membership, whether by ensuring that one of the directors attended every discussion supper, or by making sure we take full advantage of LawNet’s learning programme. Now, we are heading into a further period of expansion, bolstered by a niche commercial practice we acquired in 2017 which is opening new doors for us, and feel we have moved into a different league.

“As a profession, we may have not done a very good job of holding on to our standing, but as a firm we’re very proud of our brand, our staff and our values, and LawNet’s ethos and the way it stands up for member firms and the profession in general, is a positive reinforcement of those values.”



# 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.

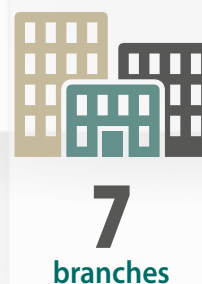
www.biscoes-law.co.uk  
ALee@biscoes-law.co.uk  
023 926 60261  
@BiscoesCOP

**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.

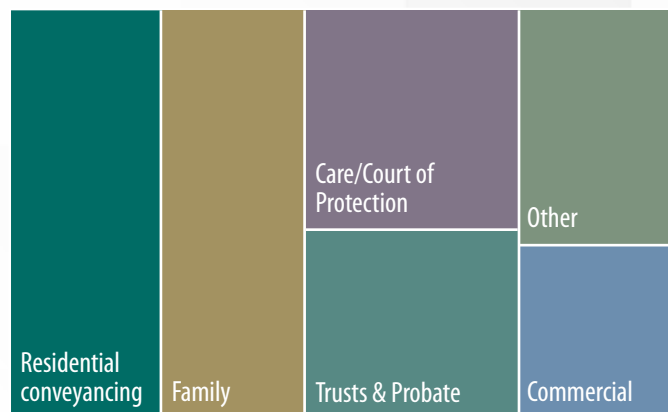
**Alison Lee has been managing director since 2015** and is a care lawyer and Children's Panel member. She joined one of the original firms that now comprise Biscoes as a trainee in 1992, later becoming the youngest ever partner in 1998, and has run four of the branch offices at different times. Biscoes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

