

Christmas Newsletter 2025

What a year 2025 has been! We have a lot of exciting news to share.

In July we welcomed solicitor Melissa Howman to our team and you can read more about her on page 2. Our consultant solicitor Simon Heapy co-authored a dictionary about the Court of Protection and Paul Clark has continued supporting the Law Society with their cross border events programme. We are proud to announce that Natasha Yelland was shortlisted in the 'Rising Star' category at the STEP Private Client Awards. Further, Paul and Natasha were both nominated as finalists in their categories at the British Wills and Probate Awards. You can find out more about the awards on page 2.

Earlier this year we took on additional office space at Oak House which now means we have new waiting room offering a calm and quiet space for our visitors to wait. We have worked with Congleton Museum to obtain historic pictures of Congleton and these are now displayed in our office. If you haven't been to the museum, it is a fantastic way to spend a few hours discovering how the town has developed over the past few hundred years.

We have continued to support the Congleton community by helping to raise donations for local charity Ruby's Fund through our art exhibition. We have also helped to raise awareness of other great local causes and initiatives through providing sponsorship. You can read more on page 3 about how we have been involved in supporting our local community this year.



On behalf of everyone at Spall Clark Solicitors, I would like to thank you all for your continued support. We wish you all the very best for Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Becky Spall
Practice Manager

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Staff News

Melissa Howman joins the team



We are delighted Melissa Howman joined us in July. Melissa qualified as a solicitor in 2018 and has spent the last 5 years building her experience across a wide range of private client matters, including Wills, Lasting Powers of Attorney and Probate. She particularly values the personal connection that comes from meeting clients face to face and guiding them through often sensitive and complex issues.

Melissa is a member of the Association of Lifetime Lawyers and has recently passed the Lifetime Care in Practice Award. She is also an affiliate member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) and will soon begin her journey to obtain the STEP Diploma.

STEP Private Client Awards



The STEP Private Client Awards are widely regarded as the benchmark of excellence within private client and are considered by some to be the 'Oscars' of the private client world. The awards are open globally to both STEP members and non-members and attract entries from all over the world.

Natasha was named as a finalist for the Rising Star (Legal) Award which recognises individuals with five years or less of experience who have demonstrated exceptional promise, made a significant impact, and shown leadership potential. This nomination is a significant achievement and a well-deserved recognition of Natasha's exceptional dedication to her role. In September, the team celebrated Natasha's nomination at the awards ceremony at the London Hilton on Park Lane.

British Wills and Probate Awards

Paul was shortlisted for Private Client Practitioner of the year and Natasha was nominated for One to Watch Practitioner of the Year. In October, the team marked the occasion with a private celebration at St James Club in Manchester before heading to the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel for the awards ceremony, hosted by magician Ben Hanlin.

Dictionary of the Court of Protection

Simon Heapy co-authored the *Dictionary of the Court of Protection 2025* which is a unique reference guide for practitioners working in this complex area of law. Simon was invited to co-author the Dictionary alongside other well renowned experts in the area of Court of Protection.

Simon's contributions to the Dictionary reflects his expertise in mental capacity law and property and financial affairs cases.

No Tier Snooker Society

In June, 1985 World Snooker Champion Dennis Taylor attended the Congleton Snooker Club to draw the raffle run by the No Tier Snooker Society. Dennis showed off some trick shots as well as some entertaining stories from his career.

No Tier Snooker Society offers weekly snooker sessions for people living with early-onset dementia or frontotemporal dementia. The society is based at Congleton Snooker Club in Cheshire and meets every Wednesday for two hours. It offers a space where people with similar conditions can meet, share experiences, and enjoy a friendly game of snooker. We were delighted to sponsor and donate to such a good cause. You can find out more about No Tier Snooker Society by visiting <https://notiersnooker.co.uk>.



Art Exhibition in support of Ruby's Fund

In October, our art exhibition preview evening took place in support of Congleton charity Ruby's Fund. The exhibiting artist was Deborah Lees who enjoys painting portraits of people and pets in addition to sporting scenes and local landmarks. To view some of Deborah's fabulous artwork, visit www.deborahleesart.co.uk or follow her Instagram page @deborahleesart.

Deborah kindly agreed to donate 15% of the proceeds of any paintings purchased to Ruby's Fund. We are delighted to announce that the amount raised from donations and 15% of the proceeds of sale of two paintings was £123.75. We have matched the amount raised taking the grand total to £247.50.

About Ruby's Fund

Ruby's is an award winning charity supporting children and young people aged 0-18 years old with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families and carers in Cheshire East. They provide high-quality facilities onsite at their centre in Congleton which include a community cafe which is open to everybody, a sensory room with hoist, soft play frame, sensory garden and changing room with hoist.

Congleton Lawn Tennis Club

It was a pleasure to provide the winners' prizes for the Congleton Lawn Tennis Club's Fun Fireworks Tournament which took place on bonfire night. Twenty four players of all ages and abilities took to the courts, switching partners every fifteen minutes until the finalists were determined. The lucky winners each received a voucher for the Brownlow Inn in Congleton.

We thoroughly enjoy sponsoring such a friendly Club which provides playing opportunities for all, regardless of ability. To find out more about becoming a member of Congleton Lawn Tennis Club, visit: <https://www.congletonlawntennis.club>.



Charity nominations and supporting local artists in 2026

We would like to hear from local artists and art groups who would like to display their artwork as part of a temporary exhibition. The exhibition preview evening will be held in support of another great local cause and we would be delighted to receive your nominations for a community initiative that would benefit from our support in 2026. For more information, please contact Becky Spall on 01260 769 639 or email becky.spall@spallclark.co.uk.

Legal Updates

The Wills Act 1837

In May, the Law Commission published its report into reforming the law relating to Wills and a draft Bill has been introduced to replace the Wills Act 1837. There will be some seismic changes on the horizon which will better reflect the developments in society that have taken place since the Wills Act was introduced 188 years ago. Paul is part of the working group formulating the Law Society's response to the Law Commission's Report. We will be providing a detailed report about the impact of the changes next year.

Budget announcements

The recent Government budget announcement may have implications for your estate planning, especially in relation to Inheritance Tax. The main changes are as follows:

1. Inheritance Tax thresholds will remain fixed until 2031.
2. Any unused £1m allowance for Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) will be transferable between spouses/civil partners. It was announced in a previous budget that the unlimited exemption for APR and BPR will be capped at £1m from April 2026.
3. All payments under the infected blood compensation scheme are now fully exempt from Inheritance Tax.

Given the changes above and the previous budget which announced that unused pensions will be brought into Inheritance Tax from April 2027, it is now more important than ever to review your estate plan to ensure that it remains tax efficient. To book a free initial appointment with one of our solicitors, please contact us on 01260 769 639.

Our final message

Whilst the festive season is often a time of joy and celebration, it can also be challenging for those facing loneliness or loss. Whilst we may only play a small role in our clients' lives, every interaction leaves a meaningful and lasting impression.

As our office closes at 1.00pm on Wednesday 24 December, we will take a moment to reflect on those who are no longer able to share in the festivities with us. We will reopen at 9.00am on Monday 5 January 2026.

