

Lexcel Matters



JULY 2026

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LegalAdvantage Conference 2026 Additional Places Filling Fast

We're delighted by the continued response to [LegalAdvantage](#) 2026 following our recent announcement that additional places had been released.

With over 100 tickets already sold, availability is once again becoming limited as firms continue to secure their seats. As many of you know, the original allocation of places sold out in record time so if you're planning to join us on 12th November, we recommend booking your place soon.

LegalAdvantage is hosted by Recognising Excellence in partnership with PDA Legal and in association with the Best Practice Group. It brings together law firm leaders, managers and compliance professionals for a day of practical insight, expert speakers, interactive discussions and valuable networking opportunities.

[Bring a Colleague Offer](#)

Our Bring a Colleague Offer continues to provide excellent value for firms wishing to attend as a team. The first delegate place is £149 + VAT, with any additional delegates from the same legal practice charged at £99 + VAT per person.

We look forward to welcoming you to LegalAdvantage 2026. [Booking Form](#)



The price includes full access to all sessions, the opportunity to engage with speakers and experts throughout the day, lunch and refreshments.



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LegalAdvantage Conference 12th November 2026 What's happening on the day...

Below is a sneak peek at two of the sessions taking place at LegalAdvantage 2026, offering a flavour of the practical insight, expert perspectives and discussions you can expect.

Session 2b: The COFA – Every Firm's Superhero (Cape Optional)

What if your COFA could be one of the most influential drivers of financial performance, compliance, and operational efficiency within your firm?

This practical and engaging session will challenge law firms to rethink the role of the COFA and explore how meaningful behavioural change across the business can lead to stronger, smarter, and more proactive firm management.

Our expert panel at this session:

Jenny Staight, Law firm specialist accountant, Hazelwoods Accountants

Sean Hankin, former Head of Forensic Investigations at the SRA, now a specialist consultant

Paul McCluskey, Law Society approved Lexcel assessor, Gemstone Legal

Through real-world insight and practical strategies, the panel will highlight high-impact actions proven to strengthen financial performance, compliance, and operational efficiency across firms of all sizes.

The session will also explore how the COFA can become a key driver of smarter decision making and long-term success, supported by a practical framework for stronger financial planning and more proactive firm management.

If you are involved in risk, compliance, finance, or leadership within a law firm, this is a session not to be missed.

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Session 1C: Handling Complaints in the Modern Age, with LeO

The landscape of complaints is changing quickly, particularly with the growing use of artificial intelligence, which is creating new challenges for complaint handlers and firms alike.

In this session, two Senior Ombudsmen from the Legal Ombudsman will share their insight on how firms can adapt and strengthen their approach to complaints handling in a modern environment.

- Developments in complaints handling – new approaches to old problems
- Making complaints work for you – why complaints matter to a high-performing business
- What the best do best – the importance of culture in handling complaints well
- Common mistakes and how to avoid them – knowing what not to do is critical in making fast improvements
- Dealing with LeO effectively – LeO's business process, what LeO needs from you and why having these things in mind will help

Hear from our two experts:

Clair Daniel, Senior Ombudsman, the Legal Ombudsman

Clair brings over 10 years' experience at the Legal Ombudsman. Through her complaints handling and insight work, she plays an important role in supporting LeO's impact across the legal sector and helping firms improve practice and standards.

Simon Williams, Senior Ombudsman, the Legal Ombudsman

Simon has been working in legal complaints since starting at what was the Law Society's Consumer Complaints Service in 2005. He joined the Legal Ombudsman in 2011 and has been an Ombudsman since 2013, now a Senior Ombudsman, dealing with complaints across the entire spectrum of legal services.

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Legal Advantage Conference Timetable

TIMING	LECTURE THEATRE	WORKSHOP ROOM	CAFETERIA AND NETWORKING AREA
0820 - 0900			Refreshments and networking and exhibition
0900 - 0910	Welcome address		
0910 - 0955	Session 1a: Implementing AI in Legal Practice	Session 2a: Lexcel workshop; five hot topics (first run)	
1000 - 1040	Session 1b: Cybersecurity workshop		
1040 - 1100	Comfort break (served in the cafeteria and networking area)	Comfort break (served in the cafeteria and networking area)	Refreshments and networking and exhibition
1105 - 1205	Session 1c: Handling complaints in the modern age, with LeO	Session 2b: The COFA: Every Firm's Superhero; Cape Optional	
1205 - 1210	In-room changeover	Delegates access the Workshop Room	
1210 - 1255	Session 1d: Panel discussion; what to expect from Lexcel moving forward	Session 2c: Is Your Law Firm Financially Sustainable?	
1300 - 1400	Lunch (served in the cafeteria and networking area)	Lunch (served in the cafeteria and networking area)	Refreshments and networking and exhibition
1405 - 1525	Session 1e: AML hot topics workshop	Session 2d: Lexcel workshop; five hot topics (second run)	
1525 - 1535	In-room changeover	Delegates move to Lecture Theatre	
1535 - 1550	Closing remarks and prize draw		
1550 - 1625			Refreshments and networking and exhibition



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A light moment...

Why don't solicitors ever get lost on the Tube?

Because they always read the small print on the map.

Why do solicitors like tea breaks?

Because it's the only time nobody raises an objection.

Legal Compliance Word Search

M Q Z T A P L R Y U I O P A S D F G H J K L N B V
E W C X V B N M Q A M O N E Y L A U N D E R I N G
N A S L F G H J K L Z X C V B N M Q W E R T Y U I
L O P A I D F G H J K L E X C E L Y U I O P A S D
A X C V B E M Q W E R T Y U I O P L K J H G F D S
U Q W E R T N U I O P A S D F G H J K L Z X C A B
N M B V C X Z T K J H G F D S A Q W E R T Y U T O
D F G H J K L C Y B E R S E C U R I T Y Q W E A T
E R T Y U I O O O S D F G H J K L N X C V B N P Q
R S D F G L J U L L W E R T Y U I O P A S D F R H
I O P A D D F R H J P L Z X C V B N M Q O E R O Y
N M Q W E R T T U I O P A S D F G C J K L Z X T V
G H J K L Z X C V B N M Q W E R T O U I I P A E D
L E G A L O M B U D S M A N Q W E M T Y C I O C A
S O L E P R A C T I T I O N E R Z P C V I N M T W
P O I U Y T R E W Q A S D F G H J L L Z T C V I N
R T Y U I O P A S D F G H I K L Q I E R O Y U O O
O A S D F G H J K L Z X C N B N M A W E R T Y N I
T A X E V A S I O N Q W E A T Y U N O P A S D F G
E C V B N M Q W E R T Y U N O P A C D F G H J K L
C O F A Z X C V B N M Q W C R T Y E I O P A S D F
T L K J H G F D S A S U P E R V I S I O N S D F G
I C L I E N R Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F G H J K
O N M B V C X Z L K J H G F D S C O F F R T Y U I
R S R A Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F G H J K L Z X

Words to find

COLP
COFA
MONEYLAUNDERING
TAXEVASION
SRA
SUPERVISION
NONCOMPLIANCE
LEXCEL
CYBERSECURITY
DATAPROTECTION
LEGALOMBUDSMAN
SOLEPRACTITIONER
CLIENT
SOLICITOR
COURT
FINANCE

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ASSESSOR SPOTLIGHT - MEET AN ASSESSOR

Q&A WITH MICHAEL JOHNSON

Experience:

Former Solicitor, came off the Roll in 2023. Practised 1986 to 2007, including as an Equity Partner in private practice, and as COO and Head of Legal for an International Title Insurance Group.

- Law Firm Management consultant.
- SRA authorised Trainer.
- SQM Standard Auditor (auditing Legal Aid Practices).
- GQM/AQS (auditing University Advice Centres and Charities).

Specialisms:

Seeing compliance through the perspective of the practice and its people.

Base and Reach:

Based in Cirencester. Covers England, Wales and Scotland.

Approach:

- Empathetic and supportive.
- Practical application of Lexcel, ISO 9001 and LQS to create effective, tailored management systems.
- Focused on recognising good practice and providing relevant, constructive recommendations.

What do you enjoy most about being an assessor?

Seeing how Practices (in-house and private) adapt in a fast changing Legal sector, and how staff are motivated and their careers developed.

What's one piece of advice you give clients preparing for assessment?

Keep your Lexcel compliance systems rolling throughout the year, rather than giving them an annual "brush up" just before the assessment! Assessors can smell wet paint.

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Interacting with interviewees and putting them at ease, whilst doing the auditing that we have to do. We and they are all trying to do the best we can, and assessors must never raise a non-compliance unless we are absolutely sure. Check the audit trail, check the evidence, before making any non-compliance. If there is a non-compliance, they will see it for what it is, no arguments. That way you will gain the respect of the Practice. Be firm but fair.

If you weren't an assessor, what would you be doing?

Well, for work, before qualifying and practising as a Solicitor, originally I was going to join the Paratroops, but I'm too late for that now! I have two passions, military history and running. If I were to indulge those, I would like to be (I can dream, amateur though I am) an adviser on historical accuracy in films, and also to be a guide runner for runners who are blind or visually impaired so that they can have as much enjoyment out of running as I do. I might still yet do that.

Favourite Book?

This changes but right now it would be *The Hidden Life of Trees*, by Peter Wohlleben. Absolutely eye-opening. Mind you, I love trail running through woods and forests, so this is an easy choice for me. Close behind it is *Running Free* by Richard Askwith.

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The inclusion of any organisations, or services within this newsletter is intended solely for informational purposes. Recognising Excellence does not assume any responsibility for the entities featured. Readers are encouraged to conduct their own research and make independent decisions based on their own judgment and discretion before engaging with any organisation or service mentioned herein.

We'd like to wish all our clients a very enjoyable summer. We hope you're managing to stay cool in the hot weather and find time to relax in the sunshine.



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Thank you for your continued business, see you in the next edition...

Liz & Emma