Willans LLP | solicitors

Law News

Newsletter for commercial clients

Spring 2019

Welcome

In this issue, we tackle the big issues like Brexit, with advice on the new immigration rules and whether our departure from the EU means all your GDPR good work needs to be undone (hint - it doesn't!).

We also introduce our sister company, Willans Data Protection Services, which provides a neat solution to some unique post-Brexit challenges on the horizon for some international businesses.

We also discuss changes to the litigation process, rules for mobile phone masts, and practical worries like what an employer's rights are if they suspect a staff member is "pulling a sickie".

If you'd like advice on anything you read in this issue, we'd be delighted to hear from you, so feel free to contact our lawyers.

Bridget Redmond managing partner

What's in this issue?

New faces and promotions at Willans

We've recently appointed six additional lawyers and made three senior-level promotions, to help meet the growing demands of our commercial and private clients.

Our *Legal 500*-rated wills, trusts & probate division has welcomed associate Hannah Wall, solicitor Laura Stone and private client executive Susie Jones.

Chartered legal executive Mary Young and solicitor Dorcas Guillebaud have joined the firm's highly-regarded residential property team, and solicitor Charlotte Brunsdon has joined our commercial property and charities department.

We're also delighted to announce three senior-level promotions. Sophie Martyn became an associate solicitor in our corporate & commercial team, with partner Chris Wills made head of department. In the wills, trusts & probate team, Rachel Sugden is now an associate solicitor. ■

Supporting the Gloucestershire Live Business Awards 2019

We are pleased once again to support the Gloucestershire Live Business Awards, now in its 22nd year, by sponsoring the 'Family Business of the Year' award.

This is open to companies large and small across the county in which founding families are still significantly involved.

To find out how to enter, visit **reachplcevents.com/events/west/gloucestershire-live-business-awards.** The black-tie ceremony will be held at The Centaur, Cheltenham Racecourse on 10 October. ■

GloucestershireLive Business AWARDS 2019

New rules for mobile phone masts – one year on

Over a year since the Electronic Communications Code came into force, many landowners are still unaware of their rights, explains commercial property partner **Alasdair Garbutt.**

The Electronic Communications Code came into force on 28 December 2017, giving telecommunications operators statutory rights to install and operate electronic communications apparatus on, under or over land. It came about as a result of consolidation in the mobile phone networks and the increased demand by the operators to share the existing infrastructure.

One year on, we have seen network operators wanting to use new agreements incorporating their new code powers on various mobile phone sites.

Under the old code the agreements had restricted the operators from adding additional equipment to the masts without paying additional fees.

The new code gives operators sweeping new powers to upgrade equipment and provides different procedures for requiring removal of equipment, depending on which party is seeking the removal and in what circumstances. In effect, the new code makes it easier for network operators to renew, add and upgrade apparatus such as masts, exchanges and cabinets on public as well as private land.

If agreement cannot be reached contractually between the parties, the new code allows operators to go to court to force a landowner to enter into a code agreement. In a recent case, *EE Limited v London Borough of Islington (2019),* the tribunal imposed a 10-year lease on a landowner, noted it was in the public interest to avoid a breakdown in mobile phone network coverage and therefore allowed operators to secure rights to move their equipment to a new site. The tribunal decided that a financial sum would adequately compensate the property owner despite them being "deprived of the right to do as they wish with their own property".

It is clear that whilst we at Willans have been dealing with a number of code agreements for landowners, there are a large number who simply sign up with the telecommunications operator without taking advice from a lawyer or a surveyor.

As operators continue to build upon recent tribunal cases and to enforce their new powers, it is increasingly imperative for landowners to obtain professional representation from surveyors in respect of the rents payable and from solicitors in respect of the agreement documenting the siting of equipment, to ensure that the landowners' interests are represented properly. In many cases, the network operator will pay the landowners' professional fees or at least contribute to them. ■

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Alasdair Garbutt
Partner, commercial property

Alasdair deals with a wide range of work in relation to sales & acquisitions, development transactions, landlord and tenant and commercial property management. He is recommended by *The Legal 500.*

Electrical checks for privately rented homes

The government has laid out plans for compulsory five-year electrical safety checks for privately rented homes in England.

The checks will be done on new tenancies first, followed by existing ones.

The checks must be done by qualified inspectors, echoing requirements in Scotland.

The plans still require legislation, and no start date has been confirmed.

What we've been advising on...

Corporate & commercial partner, Paul Symes-Thompson, and associate solicitor Sophie Martyn, advised two shareholders of one of the UK's leading marketing services providers, **Blueberry Wave**, on the recent sale of their remaining shares to investment company Veriteva, which was then acquired by media company HH Global.

We have been working with Blueberry Wave since the early 2000s and have enjoyed watching their business evolve and thrive.

We wish Pamela and Steve the very best for the future.

Divorce - what happens to the family business?

Where a family business is involved, divorcing couples and the court have to consider other factors. Associate **Jonathan Eager** in our family law team explains more.

Family businesses are often the source of much of a couple's wealth, and indeed most of their future income. Once it has been established that a family business is an asset to be distributed as part of a divorce, the court and the parties have a lot of important decisions to make. They need to consider factors like the weight of the business valuation, and how that relates to the way other assets are divided.

Generally speaking, a business is considered a risky asset. In *Wells v Wells (2002),* the family business was compared to the more stable assets such as houses and was valued accordingly. This results in either the value of the business being discounted, or the party that keeps the business having a greater share of other assets (to reflect the fact that they are retaining the riskier asset).

Doubt was cast over this approach by the case of *Martin v Martin (2018)*, in which the judge simply divided the parties' assets equally (including the business), despite the fact that the majority of the husband's award was made up by the shares in the private company. The wife retained the more attractive and less risky assets.

This case was later re-examined by the Court of Appeal, which reaffirmed the view that businesses are risky, and this has to be taken into account when valuing them.

It's worth remembering that the family business is indeed a marital asset, but its value for the purpose of divorce may be a lot less than the value of other assets, like the family home or cash.

With this in mind, you'll need specialist advice when faced with a divorce or separation, particularly if a business is involved. ■

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Jonathan Eager
Associate, divorce & family law

Jonathan is an associate, chartered legal executive. He is a member of Resolution, an organisation committed to the constructive resolution of family disputes, and is noted for his expertise in national guide *The Legal 500.*

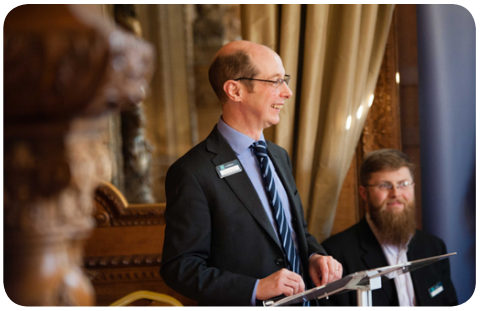
Brexit workshop brings clarity

We were delighted to be joined by some of the county's biggest businesses when we held a half-day workshop on the law on Brexit this February.

Gloucestershire businesses gained some clarity over their legal obligations post-Brexit at our workshop at Manor by the Lake in Cheltenham on 26 February.

Over 30 county decision-makers and executives were briefed on the employment, commercial & data protection law implications of Brexit.

Commercial lawyers from the firm and Dr. Jayne Nation from Wynne-Jones IP explained and answered audience questions over tricky topics such as commercial agreements, commercial property and intellectual property post-Brexit, along with the new rules for EEA workers in this country, and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation after our departure from the EU.



Guests from high-profile firms such as Brewin Dolphin, Cotteswold Dairy, Lillian Faithful Homes and Kohler Co, enjoyed networking and lunch after the briefing.

*For advice on your legal obligations post-Brexit, contact us on **01242 514000.*** ■

Corporate & commercial partner, Paul Symes-Thompson and associate, solicitor Sophie Martyn advised the shareholders of **Cathedral Care (Gloucester) Limited** on the sale of their shares to Holmleigh Care Homes Limited. Employment law associate solicitor, Jenny Hawrot and commercial property solicitor, Emma Thompson were also involved. We wish the sellers every success for the future.

Commercial property solicitor Emma Thompson acted on behalf of **Twogate (Cheltenham) Limited** in the purchase of mixed-use property on the bustling Bath Road in Cheltenham, comprising residential accommodation and a popular grocery store.

Disclosure rules shake-up with new pilot scheme

Litigation partner **Paul Gordon** explains the implications of the new Disclosure Pilot Scheme.

Paul Gordon
Partner, head of litigation & dispute resolution

Paul is noted by national independent guide *The Legal 500* for his "strong technical knowledge". He is experienced in handling complex commercial proceedings through the High Court and County Court.

Disclosure is a stage in the litigation process in which the parties have to submit documents which are relevant to the issues in the dispute, even if they are detrimental to their own case. For this purpose, most documents tend to be stored and/or sent by electronic means, frequently requiring specialist IT assistance. This can make disclosure lengthy and costly.

However, a sea change in the disclosure process has been introduced by the new Disclosure Pilot Scheme (DPS), which now applies to the Business and Property Courts.

In broad terms, parties and their legal representatives now need to start to deal with the disclosure part of the procedure at a much earlier stage.

Parties must provide 'initial disclosure' of key documents when they file their statements of case (such as the claim and defence). After this, there are specific time frames in which the parties must co-operate to identify whether more disclosure is required, to agree issues for disclosure and the extent to which each issue is to be provided for.

Parties must also complete a disclosure review document which gives information about where the documents may be stored, such as on servers, phones, social media accounts and so on.

The court will list a hearing known as a case management conference and specify the extent of any further disclosure to be provided, considering the list of issues for disclosure.

It's still early days, but it appears the DPS provides a more focused approach to disclosure, with the aim of reducing the burden and related costs if additional disclosure is required. However, by further front-loading the process it will increase the costs being incurred at an earlier stage. As many cases often settle at an early stage, this could potentially mean that the costs in many settled cases are higher than before.

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Tougher regulation for charity trustees

The Charity Commission's new legal powers were introduced in the *Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016*. They include the power to issue an 'official warning' to charities and/or trustees, the ability to disqualify a person from serving as a charity trustee or senior manager of a charity and the power to direct that charity property is used in a certain way.

A recent report published by the Charity Commission confirms that these expanded legal powers have been used on 137 occasions since the implementation of the act, demonstrating its tougher approach to regulation.

For example, the Commission has recently issued an official warning to a trustee of Expectations (UK) due to a breach of trust and legal duties. The Head of Regulatory Compliance emphasised: *"Charity trustees should at all times consider the needs of their beneficiaries and be driven by their charitable purpose and mission in everything they do".*

It is now more important than ever that trustees comply with their legal duties, including:

- ensuring the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit;
- complying with the charity's governing document and the law;
- acting in the best interests of the charity;
- managing the charity's resources responsibly;
- acting with reasonable care and skill; and
- ensuring the charity is accountable.

The Charity Commission's guidance, '*The essential trustee*', explains what trustees should be doing to comply with these legal duties, such as taking advice when needed, asking challenging questions about information at trustee meetings and avoiding conflicts of interest or conflicts of duty.

For advice on trustees' legal duties and related issues, please get in touch.

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Charlotte Brunsdon
Solicitor, charity law

Charlotte specialises in advising charity and not-for-profit clients on various commercial property matters, as well as other charity law matters, such as helping charities comply with their regulatory requirements.

Property litigation partner **Nick Cox** and trainee **Megan Bullingham** advised a Gloucestershire manufacturing firm who had been served a hostile notice on redevelopment grounds by their landlord. The clients secured substantial compensation after their decision to vacate. We frequently advise on issues like this, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Corporate & commercial consultant **Kym Fletcher** carried out an audit of an international manufacturing client's intellectual property portfolio.

If your business would benefit from a comprehensive IP audit, contact **kym.fletcher@willans.co.uk.**

Post-Brexit immigration rules and your business

HR teams must stay informed on the latest immigration rules, says trainee solicitor **Helen Howes.**

Helen Howes
Trainee solicitor

Helen is an employment law masters' graduate with extensive experience in employee relations and negotiations. She also advises businesses on immigration matters and assists them with securing sponsorship licences.

The government has confirmed that the EU settlement scheme will apply regardless of whether a Brexit deal is agreed. However, in the event of a 'no deal', the deadline for the scheme closing will be different, and there will be separate arrangements for EU citizens arriving in the UK after Brexit.

Businesses who currently employ EU nationals will need to consider if they wish to offer support to affected employees. In deciding this, knowing the demographic of the workforce, and number of affected staff, is key. This will also provide useful information regarding right-to-work policies and checks in the future.

The level of support offered will often be determined by cost and resource available. However, consideration should also be given to the level of support given to employees in other immigration categories to avoid the risk of setting a precedent or engaging in discriminatory practices.

Good communication should not be underestimated. An informative presentation about the EU settlement scheme to affected staff can help reduce anxiety and help minimise disruption by ensuring an employee feels secure in their employment. It can also equip HR professionals with the knowledge they need to advise employees when making applications, and to be aware of the documents likely to be required as evidence for the Home Office.

Businesses who rely on skills of, and who expect to be employing EU citizens arriving in the UK post-Brexit, will need to consider the implications of the proposed post-Brexit points-based system. This could require a business to sponsor EU citizens and to pay a minimum annual salary to that individual (currently likely to be £30,000 per annum – although this is open to consultation). There are also additional costs to consider, such as the fee for applying for a licence to become a sponsoring employer and various charges attached to sponsoring an individual (which in some circumstances can amount to £5,000).

With so many changes, HR teams must keep informed about the various immigration requirements and key dates, to ensure a business complies with right-to-work checks. ■

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Workplace reform on the horizon?

Matthew Clayton
Partner, head of employment law

Matthew is described as "responsive and commercial" by independent legal directory *Chambers UK*.

The government intends to introduce a number of legislative changes designed to implement many of the recommendations made by the Taylor Review; the report into employment and modern day working practices published in July 2017. The reforms increase protection for agency employees, those working in the 'gig economy' or those workers engaged on zero-hour contracts.

Businesses will have to provide a 'statement of rights' to workers on their first day, detailing their eligibility for paid leave. Workers will also have a statutory right to request more predictable hours if they have worked non-fixed hours for a business for 26 weeks.

Further changes include the removal of a loophole which enables agency staff to be paid less than permanent employees, and an increase to the maximum financial penalty for employers found to have shown malice, spite or gross oversight.

Of particular significance is the proposed amendment as to how holiday pay is calculated for those in atypical roles, such as zero-hour or seasonal contracts. Under the new legislation, this calculation period will be extended to 52 weeks (it is currently 12). The period required to break continuity of employment between contracts will also change increasing from one week to four.

The proposals, expected to come into effect April 2020, are published within the government's 'The Good Work Plan'.

As always, if you need commercial and pragmatic employment law advice, we're here to help so please get in touch. ■

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THE NELSON TRUST

Commercial property lawyers Emma Thompson, Susie Wynne and Yasmin Lewis were contracted by Gloucestershire-based charity **The Nelson Trust** to advise in the purchase of a commercial premises in Bridgwater to house the Somerset Women's Centre.

The building will be a safe place for daily drop-in services for women who are in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system. They will now have access to holistic, trauma-informed support, where the root causes of substance misuse, violence, abuse, deprivation and poverty will be addressed.

The building will house a wide range of resources, such as cooking facilities, a free crèche for children, and spaces to have counselling and probation meetings.

GDPR after Brexit - what happens now?

Consultant **Kym Fletcher** discusses the data protection implications of our departure from the EU.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) countdown clock has barely stopped ticking yet UK companies doing business in the EU are having to brace themselves for another layer of complexity after Brexit.

Brexit is unlikely to reverse the work that has been done in the area of data protection in the UK - the Data Protection Act (DPA) on 23 May 2018, which contains equivalent regulations and protections to those set out in the GDPR (known as 'Applied GDPR'). UK companies doing business in Europe, however, will nonetheless face new challenges from a GDPR compliance perspective.

For a start, a UK company may find itself subject to both the GDPR and the parallel Applied GDPR regime introduced under UK law. Consequently, a data breach might well fall within the competence of both the UK ICO, and one or more EU Regulators.

In addition, EU companies are likely to face increased procedural challenges in terms of reporting data breaches. Currently, UK companies can rely on the ICO to take the lead in any breach scenario, without the need to engage the other affected authorities directly.

Irrespective of whether a Brexit deal is reached, this 'one stop shop' approach will no longer apply and a company will need to report a data breach separately to each affected EU supervisory authority.

If a deal is reached, then it is anticipated the status quo will continue as far as EU data transfers are concerned until 2020. It is hoped that this transition period will allow enough time for the UK to obtain an 'adequacy' ruling from the European Commission, to enable data to continue to be freely transferred between the EU and the UK.

If Britain exits with no deal, subject to further guidance being issued in this area, it will no longer be lawful to transfer personal data from the EEA to the UK, without additional legal protections being put in place.

These additional legal protections for inter-group data transfers can take the form of standard contractual clauses known as 'EU Model Clauses' drafted by the European Commission and binding corporate rules (BCRs). Both of these options will require additional resources to implement and administer and will need to be reflected in the company's online privacy policy.

Any contracts in place which currently prohibit the transfer of data outside of the EU will also need to be evaluated.

Kym Fletcher
Consultant, corporate & commercial

Kym is a leading sports, media and technology lawyer with over 25 years of commercial experience.

She advises clients on a diverse range of commercial agreements to include contracts, new media, technology agreements and advises clients on GDPR compliance.

Brexit action points

UK-based firms doing business in Europe should consider:

- appointing an Article 27 EU Representative
- documenting their EU-UK data transfers, as well as identifying a transfer strategy, e.g. adoption of Model Clauses
- reviewing their existing business contracts, as some contracts may prohibit transfers of data outside of the EU; and
- updating Privacy Notices, to ensure they are transparent in informing the data subject that their personal data will be passed out of the EU, and they reflect any change in the main establishment of the company, or the identity of the EU Representative.

The Willans GDPR team is on hand to guide clients with any questions, and advice on the points above. Please contact Matthew Clayton on **matthew.clayton@willans.co.uk**, or Kym Fletcher on **kym.fletcher@willans.co.uk.** ■

Article 27 EU Representative services

Article 27 of the GDPR requires non-EU data controllers and processors to appoint a representative within the EU if they are processing the data of EU subjects.

This means that, post Brexit, UK businesses will be required to appoint a representative within the EU if processing EU data subject data, leading to possible cost implications for UK businesses, and opening them up to fines if they fail to comply.

The Article 27 EU Representative is tasked with maintaining a record of the company's data processing activities and acting as an interface between the company and the EU data subjects, or the relevant EU supervisory authority. It may also be the subject of enforcement proceedings, in the event of non-compliance with the GDPR.

The purpose of this is to make sure that EU citizens can contact controllers and processors of their personal data situated outside the EU, and to make it easier to legally enforce their rights in respect of such data.

Details of the EU Representative must be included in a company's online privacy policy. Its absence is an 'easy spot' for the relevant data protection authorities, in terms of a company's non-compliance with the GDPR. Given that an infringement of this obligation can lead to administrative fines up to 2% of annual turnover or 10 million EUR, whichever is higher, it is not a matter which should be overlooked.

If you need an Article 27 EU representative, our sister company can help.

willans
data protection | services

Call Willans Data Protection Services on **+35 3144 70402**, or visit **www.willansdataprotectionservices.com**, where you can take a short self-assessment quiz to see if your organisation needs an Article 27 Representative, now or post-Brexit.

Protecting your brand on an international scale

Corporate & commercial consultant **Kym Fletcher** explains the key weapons a brand owner needs in its IP armoury.

Despite the significant resources which a company will allocate to international brand protection, it is surprising how often trade mark protection programmes are launched without a clear strategy.

An international trade mark registration programme is not only expensive to initiate, but also to prosecute and maintain. There is also no guarantee that, when a problem of infringement arises, the trade mark cover which has been put in place will even be of use. Even large companies have been known to assume that they have somehow purchased brand "insurance" just by having filed for trade mark protection and having dutifully paid the endless fees which roll in.

In fact, trade marks often prove to be a limited tool in the war against brand infringement, particularly in companies with multiple products in multiple territories. To cover all relevant product classes, in each manufacturing and distribution territory, can be prohibitively expensive - the key is to spend wisely.

Before any registration programme is launched, consideration needs to be given to the choice of mark or logo - what elements of the mark or logo need to be protected, to what extent are those elements already protected by other trade marks, how difficult will it be to protect a certain element of the mark? A global search should be conducted to ascertain the extent of prior competing marks. All of these factors can impact the cost and success of a registration programme.

A brand owner also needs to rely on other weapons in its intellectual property armoury. Copyright is a fantastic tool in international protection - even if the design elements of a logo appear limited. It doesn't cost a penny; thanks to the operation of the Bern Convention, if copyright exists in the country of origin then it may be enforced in any of the 176 signatory countries. It is important to ensure whenever a new brand is commissioned that a copyright assignment is obtained from the designer, as this will be the easiest document to rely on in any copyright action.

Finally, unfair competition and passing off should not be forgotten. Steps should be taken to gather evidence of brand use in various territories, which may prove invaluable in supporting enforcement actions at a later date.

Even the owners of established registration programmes should consider undertaking periodic audits, to eliminate any "zombie" registrations which may still be incurring costs but which do not serve any useful purpose. The cost savings can be surprising and it can offer an invaluable opportunity for a company to re-evaluate and strengthen its overall brand strategy.

Contact us if you would like us to carry out a brand protection audit. ■

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Save the dates

Upcoming employment law workshops for 2019

If you are an HR professional, a director or executive responsible for risk management, and you feel you'd benefit from peace of mind that your employment practices are legally compliant, please do join us for our upcoming workshops. You'll gain practical, clear insights from our lawyers and there will be plenty of opportunities for networking and group discussion.

Wednesday 22 May **CIPD employment law update** | 1.30-4.30pm (1pm registration) | Business School, University of Gloucestershire, Oxstalls Campus

Wednesday 2 October **Succession planning breakfast seminar** | 7.30-9am | National Star College

For more information

Please email events@willans.co.uk or call 01242 542931. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sanctions and the sickie

What do you do if you suspect your 'ill' employee is not actually unwell? Employment law associate, solicitor **Jenny Hawrot** explains what the law says.

As an employer, what do you do if you suspect that an employee, who is absent from work due to illness, is not actually unwell? Perhaps you have an employee who is routinely 'sick' on Mondays and Fridays, or perhaps it's reported to you that the social media profile of an unwell employee suggests that they are not actually at home convalescing, as claimed.

Contrary to popular belief, employees are only entitled to sick leave when they are actually too unwell to work. Therefore, any employee 'pulling a sickie' is not entitled to sick leave, nor any associated sick pay. If an employee claims to be sick when they are not, their absence is unauthorised, and this may amount to a breach of contract which employers are entitled to investigate and act on.

If this is the case, employers should undertake a full, fair and thorough investigation into any allegations against the employee who you suspect may be lying about their illness. If the investigation concludes that there is a case to answer, the allegations, investigation report and evidence collated should be presented to the employee, and they should be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations at a hearing. A decision should be made on the basis of the evidence presented at the hearing.

If the employee is found guilty of 'pulling a sickie', the level of the sanction will depend on the nature of the offence. For example, for a first time offence, a written warning may be sufficient, but dismissal may be considered for serial offenders.

It is therefore important for employers to have a comprehensive policy in place that details the procedure to be followed if it is suspected that an employee is claiming to be absent from work due to illness when they are not, in fact, unwell.

According to a recent survey by Time 4 Sleep, 61% of participants have 'pulled a sickie' to recover from a hectic work schedule, so it may be more common than you think. Interestingly, in a bid to retain the best staff and maintain morale and productivity, some innovative employers have introduced the concept of a 'duvet day' entitlement. This allows employees to take a certain number of 'duvet days' a year, to be used when they are contemplating pulling a sickie. This type of policy reflects the changing trend to create more flexible working arrangements.

For more detailed, tailored advice on the above or any related topic, please contact us and we'll be delighted to advise you.

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Jenny Hawrot
Associate, solicitor, employment law

Jenny has an extensive track record in advising SMEs to national organisations on the full range of employment-related matters, including TUPE, contractual matters and defending employee relations.

Contact

For advice on any of the issues covered in Law News or any other area of law, these are the people to contact in the first instance.

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