2016 was a year of strong growth – up almost a quarter on 2015 – and it was across all Departments.

We want to thank all of our staff for the contribution they have made to this remarkable achievement. Not only are many individuals making huge efforts to develop their particular areas of law within the firm, but results like these can only be achieved when people are also working together to achieve success: fostering a real team spirit in each of our offices, our specialist areas and in our practice as a whole.

We also believe that this a reflection of the way staff embrace our culture of professionalism combined with exceptional customer service – we know from the feedback we receive that our clients rate us not only for our expertise but our approachability and empathy too.

But we will not be resting on our laurels: we want to continue to drive our growth in 2017. We will be recruiting more staff to join the teams in all areas and building on the relationships we have established with the people and businesses in our local areas.

Overall, our aim is to continue developing our reputation in the North West and establish ourselves as one of the leading law firms in the region.
Sonia Rickard

Solicitor

Sonia is an expert family law solicitor, specialising in child care law. Because she has practiced locally for some years, she already knew and rated poole alcock’s reputation in this field – and is now delighted to have joined our dedicated care team. Her work is focused on helping parents and children through often very complex and difficult legal proceedings.

‘It’s very busy and the cases are very varied, both of which I like,’ she said.

Outside of work, she is married to Andrew but has little time for hobbies as they have a three-year-old daughter Sophia – and Honey the German Shepherd needs plenty of walks too!

Caroline Townsend

Receptionist

After several years working in travel agencies, Caroline Townsend was ready for a career change – and is delighted to have joined us at our new Congleton office.

‘I’ve used poole alcock as a client, and had fantastic service, so I knew they would be a great company to work for,’ she told PASS it on.

‘My previous job gave me lots of experience of dealing with people and I’m also interested in the law so it’s a really exciting move for me.’

On the home front, Caroline and her partner Jonathan are looking to move from nearby Kidsgrove into Congleton – and when she’s not busy looking after her 10-year-old daughter Charlotte, Caroline also enjoys a spot of Yoga.

Kellie Evans

Senior Support Assistant – Crime Department

Joining our Crime Department was a return to her favourite specialism for Kellie Evans. Although she has recently worked in Litigation, she has more than 17 years experience in Criminal Defence, which she says she enjoys because it’s a constantly changing, fast moving area of the law.

Outside of work, she’s busy with her family, husband Darren and daughter Ami, who at 13 is a gymnastics coach and a budding model with contracts for the likes of JD sports under her belt.

Last but not least is seven-year-old Lennie who has his sights set on a footballing career – which he’s started at the Crewe Alex Academy.

Rebecca Taylor

Cashier

With more than 20 years experience working in legal practices, Rebecca Taylor says she’s delighted to have joined poole alcock and loves her role as Cashier, looking after the firm’s Purchase Ledger.

She says everyone’s really friendly and welcoming and it’s also a chance to catch up with an old colleague – she worked with one of our other new recruits, Kellie Evans, more than 20 years ago!

Like Kellie, she says her free time is taken up with family matters – partner Marcus and their children Charlie (aged nine) and Daisy (aged six). Both children are keen swimmers but other hobbies are football for Charlie and ballet for Daisy.

Julia Ly

Conveyancing Case Worker

Julia’s background is Conveyancing in the area of remortgaging; she’s joined our Sandbach team, working alongside Victoria Moetamedi, to develop her skills into all areas of Conveyancing.

She told PASS it on: ‘I’ve wanted to broaden my career for a while, and I already knew poole alcock’s reputation because my family has used the firm’s services – and had a really good experience.’

‘I only started a few days ago, but everyone’s been really welcoming and positive.’

Julia lists music as her main hobby, with R&B being her favourite genre, both for listening to and for playing, as she has a well used set of drums at home!

New apprenticeships posts

Andy Roach

Legal Apprentice, Crewe

After studying law at college, Andy Roach’s career originally took him down a different path... or rather motorway – he was Manager at Sandbach Services for over four years!

Keen to get back into the law, he applied originally to join us as an Office Junior – and although he didn’t get the post, he took on board the suggestion to gain some office experience. This he now has – and he was delighted to be our successful applicant for the new role of Legal Apprentice.

Said Andy: ‘The combination of on-the-job learning, study time and some lectures at Manchester Metropolitan University really works for me. It will take me two years to qualify as a Paralegal and another four to become a Solicitor – and I’m enjoying it already.’

Away from work, Andy’s a football fan, supporting Liverpool and playing five-a-side when he gets the chance. He’s also hoping to get back playing league football next year.

Joshua Phillips

IT and Telecoms Apprentice, High Street

Although he has an accountancy degree, Joshua Phillips has always been fascinated by computers and computing – so when his sister Melissa (who works in Conveyancing at the Downey) told him there was an apprenticeship post in IT at the firm where she worked, he jumped at the chance...

Explained Joshua: ‘I’ve always enjoyed computers and gaming as a hobby, so this is really an ideal job for me.

‘I started in January and I’m working with Chris Joseph and I can see it’s going to be a great way to learn. I’m already updating Visualfiles Data and getting to understand more about the systems here.’
A new office as we grow our business in Congleton

Our Congleton team has just moved into new and larger premises in the historic Riverside Mill in Mountbatten Way.

Originally built as a fustian mill (a type of heavy woven cloth), the Mill was later turned into a state-of-the-art cigar manufacturing mill at the start of the 20th century. Its latest evolution has seen a comprehensive renovation which combines the best of both worlds: lovely architectural features with high ceilings and lots of light in its open plan interiors plus state-of-the-art communication facilities.

Partner Claire Ellis is delighted with the move: She told PASS it on...

It’s a really exciting time. We are already a very well established law firm and this move will help us to grow even further.

Our Wills and Probate, Family Law and Conveyancing business is already expanding and we are particularly looking to develop our Commercial Business. We look forward to working with the local Chamber of Commerce and building relationships with other firms in the town.

NEW
BUSINESS
ADVICE CLINICS
ARE YOU INTERESTED
IN GIVING YOUR BUSINESS A HEALTH CHECK?

NO APPOINTMENT REQUIRED
DROP IN TO MEET OUR COMMERCIAL
LEGAL EXPERTS FOR A FREE INITIAL BUSINESS REVIEW.

EVERY FIRST FRIDAY IN THE MONTH

30 MINUTES

9.30AM - 12.30PM
AT OUR NANTWICH DOWERY OFFICE

Looking back, looking forward
Welcome aboard
New Congleton office and Business Clinics
Department Spotlight – Family Law
Recognising great work
News briefings and Jargon Buster
Department Spotlight

Family Law – Divorce

The following information has been drawn from questions posed by a number of our clients.

Q: What are the grounds for Divorce?
A: A Court will grant a Divorce when it is convinced that a marriage has irretrievably broken down either because of adultery, unreasonable behaviour or desertion by one of the parties – or if the couple have been separated for at least two years.

Q: Does that mean that both parties have to agree on the terms?
A: No, proceedings can be brought by one party, but it's obviously much easier, and less expensive, if they can agree.

Q: Do you support both parties in Divorce proceedings or do we need different lawyers?
A: A law practice can only represent one party. Our duty is to act in the best interests of our client, so it would be a conflict of interest if we were to represent both sides.

Q: How long does it all take?
A: There can be three elements involved: the actual Divorce, i.e. the ending of the marriage, but then people can also have their finances and arrangements for any children decided by the Court too. An undefended Divorce takes around three to six months, but the other two aspects can take up to nine months, or more if they are complex or the couples can't agree.

Q: Can I just talk to someone without actually starting proceedings?
A: Yes of course. We have dedicated Family Law Specialists in all of our offices and the first consultation – in person or over the phone - is free, with no obligation. As professionals, we can provide objective, informed advice, including explaining all the cost implications, to help you decide what is the best way forward.
Recognising great work and great people

At poole alcock, we’re really proud of our people the great work they do. To recognise their achievements, we have now established an annual awards ceremony which takes place as part of our Christmas party celebrations at the end of the year.

Most of the awards are voted for by the Heads of Department, with the exception of the Caroline Green Award which is chosen by members of staff. This special award is given to celebrate the memory of our colleague and friend who was a Partner and Head of Family, and a bright star in the firm until she sadly passed away in August 2013.

**Caroline Green Award**
Chris Joseph – IT Manager

**Support Staff Award**
Lucy Warwick – PA to Richard Barratt

**Trainee/Paralegal of the Year**
Jon Hill

**Lawyer of the Year**
Kate Heath

**Young Lawyer of the Year**
Amie Pine, Family Department

**Team of the Year**
Family Department
Well done Richard Barratt, Nicola Jones, Amie Pine, Jane Jacques, Nicola Deakin, Sarah Thomas, Chelsey Bayliss, Cheryl Cooper, Lucy Warwick, Olivia Armitage, Helen Stoller, Jess Cook, Louise Gorst and Julia Hearn.

Goodbye and good luck

We have bid a fond farewell to Tina Clarke who retired in December after nine years with the firm.

Tina had worked in most of our offices during her time with us, most recently at the Dowery in Nantwich in a Customer Care Role. She told *PASS it on*...

I’ve always enjoyed working with people so the role was tailor-made for me - I’ve enjoyed every moment of it!

I’ve always enjoyed working with people so the role was tailor-made for me - I’ve enjoyed every moment of it!

**Would you like to join us?**

We currently have vacancies for Office Juniors in our Nantwich and Alsager offices:

CLICK HERE for full job descriptions and to download our application form.

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Welcome aboard

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Department Spotlight – Family Law

Recognising great work

News briefings and Jargon Buster
Caveat Emptor: this literally means ‘Buyer Beware.’ The principle that the buyer alone is responsible for checking the quality and suitability of the goods before a purchase is made. For example, a client should have a surveyor inspect the property and have their legal advisor conduct investigations of the legal title.

Chain: a chain is a sequence of linked house purchases, each of which is dependent on the preceding and succeeding purchase. In other words, a client is only buying a property on the basis that their current property is sold and the person buying the property from the client selling is only able to purchase that property because of their linked sale.

Client Care Letter: this is the required initial letter sent to the client at the outset of a transaction. It confirms several things, including but not limited to, the cost of the service and the terms and conditions. It usually includes a questionnaire for the client to complete so that the conveyancer has all of the required detail to begin work on the file.

Completion Date: This is the date when money changes hands and the sale/purchase is concluded. The seller has to move out of the property and the buyer is entitled to possession of the keys.

Completion Statement: this is a final statement of the conveyancer’s account produced by the solicitor containing details of all the financial aspects of the transaction. It sets the cost of the transaction against the money being received and will highlight to the client whether there is a shortfall that needs to be paid prior to completion.

Conservation Area: This is an area which the Local Authority protects because the area is usually of notable environmental or historical interest. Properties located in these areas are likely to be subject to stricter planning permission requirements than a property that is not within a Conservation Area.

Contract: This is the legal document that defines the agreed terms of the sale/purchase of which there are two copies. One copy is signed by the buyer and one by the seller.

Covenants/Restrictive Covenants: these are obligations to do something (positive covenant) or refrain from doing it (restrictive covenant) with the property. When you purchase a property, your legal adviser will always advise you as to what covenants affect the property and what obligations you may have in relation to the same.