



Latimer Hinks' trainees and former trainees

Latimer Hinks demonstrates that the law profession can be open to all

Former minister Alan Milburn has chaired a social mobility study for the prime minister on widening access to high-status jobs. Among its conclusions, it says those entering careers such as the law and medicine are increasingly likely to be from affluent families, despite efforts made to open up the professions.

Policies employed by North East law firm Latimer Hinks demonstrate it has for some years now been breaking down what are perceived as the recruitment barriers highlighted by the report. Partner Anne Elliott said: "At Latimer Hinks, we have a rolling programme, which involves taking on several trainees a year. We have always believed that opportunity should be open to all.

Latimer Hinks selected to represent the elderly

Latimer Hinks solicitors Claire Farrell and Natalie Walker have been appointed as the North East Regional Co-ordinators for the national organisation Solicitors for the Elderly (SFE).

SFE is a network of lawyers specialising in legal services for older people. The organisation's aim is to improve legal services for older people and their carers, providing advice on wills, lasting powers of attorney, long-term social and health care, tax planning and other retirement issues.

Claire and Natalie will be responsible for running a branch of the SFE for solicitors in the region.

Their role will involve arranging discussion groups to deal with all issues in the field of elderly client law and organising training sessions with experts.

Claire and Natalie will help ensure that member solicitors in the North East have the requisite knowledge to provide the best legal advice to their clients.

They will also be the local ambassadors for the SFE,

"Here, we appoint on merit and are interested in the personalities and strengths of bright candidates and what they know and not where they come from. Since the turn of the century we have employed a mix of people all from different backgrounds most of whom have been state educated."

None of the youngest partners, Andrew Way, Mark Clayton, Nicola Neilson and Claire Farrell, were privately educated. None of the recent intake of three trainees and none of the five former trainees (all of whom have all been retained as solicitors on qualification) were privately educated.

Anne continued: "All of these individuals have worked extremely hard and been self supporting. Because of the expense of training and qualification four of them studied for their final exams on two year part time courses at the College of Law involving weekend study during which period they held down full time positions with us. We have huge admiration for their resolve and sense of purpose and tenacity - their success is purely down to their intelligence, character, personality and hard work.

"Our experience at Latimer Hinks over the past 10/15 years is quite the opposite to that as projected by Alan Milburn's report - our solicitors are much less likely to be recruited from so called 'affluent families'."

making contact with the national group and other appropriate legal organisations to raise awareness of elderly client issues.

Claire said: "We are both looking forward to our new roles as North East Regional Co-ordinators for the SFE and being at the forefront of improving the knowledge and understanding of legal services required by older people."

Claire, who studied law at Durham University, was a trainee with Latimer Hinks from 2001, qualified in 2003 and became a Partner four years later.

Natalie, who joined Latimer Hinks nine years ago, qualified in 2007. She specialises in wills, trusts, Inheritance Tax, affairs of the elderly, and community care issues.

Latimer Hinks Partners, Anne Elliott and Andrew Way, are also members of Solicitors for the Elderly as well as solicitor Gillian Perkins and trainee Nadine Sweeney.

Andrew is Executive Director and Secretary of Solicitors for the Elderly.

For further information contact Andrew Way.



Claire Farrell



Anne Elliott, Partner at Latimer Hinks

without a Will there can be disappointed relatives

Latimer Hinks is concerned that many people do not have a will, wrongly assuming that everything they own will automatically go to their spouse/partner or children.

The distribution of estates where someone dies intestate (without a will) has recently changed.

Anne, warns: "For a widow(er)/civil partner where the deceased has children the statutory legacy has risen from £125,000 to £250,000. This means that in most estates with a value of less than £250,000 the whole of the estate will pass to the surviving spouse or civil partner.

"But what is not generally appreciated is that if a couple are living together but have not made the union legal (by way of marriage or a civil partnership) if they have not made wills then their estate will not pass onto the survivor."

She added: "Also today it is far more common for people to have been married more than once. A will can be vital in ensuring that any assets someone leaves go to the people they want to benefit, particular if there are children from previous relationships."

New Intestacy Rules:

- All of an estate valued at less than £250,000 goes to the spouse/civil partner.
- If the estate is worth more than £250,000 and, there are children, anything above that figure is divided into two shares with one going to any children of the deceased at

18 and the other share being left so that the surviving spouse/civil partner receives the income from that share which, on his/her death passes to the children. Personal possessions pass to the spouse/civil partner.

- When there is a spouse/civil partner but no children it might be assumed that a spouse will receive everything. In fact, if there are surviving relatives eg parents, brothers or sisters, the spouse/civil partner will receive the first £450,000 plus personal possessions and anything over and above £450,000 will be split into two shares one going to the spouse/civil partner and one to the surviving relatives - with a specific order of seniority - parents then brother/sisters etc

If there is no surviving spouse or civil partner, but a co-habitee, he/she will not be entitled to anything under the intestacy laws. There is no such thing as a "common law" spouse. Children, in this case, would inherit the whole estate. If there were not any children/grandchildren then the estate would pass through the blood line of relatives of the deceased - if there were surviving parents, brothers or sisters they would inherit before the cohabitee regardless of the length of the relationship.

Anne said: "The intestacy rules are complex. Anyone who dies without a will runs the risk (depending on their personal circumstances) of his/her estate not going as they intend.

"It is important, if you want to provide for someone (or, indeed, exclude someone from benefiting) that you make a will or up-date your will - an out of date will is often as problematic as there being no will at all! And remember, if you've married or entered into a civil partnership since you made your last will you must make a new will. "A will is crucial if you want to guarantee you benefit chosen friends, relatives or charities and also helps to prevent challenges from unhappy relatives. It has to be sensible to seek expert advice."

For information regarding Private Client issues contact Anne Elliott.

living apart together

Despite talk of an economic recovery, the recession is still making life hard for couples in the North East wanting to move on after divorce, says Judith Middleton at Latimer Hinks solicitors.

Judith's comments come as new online advice on living together postdivorce is unveiled.

Resolution, which represents more than 5,700 family lawyers nationwide, says that continuing problems in the housing market are preventing divorcing couples from moving to separate accommodation after their divorce.

Judith, who is Resolution's Tees Valley's spokesperson, said: "Selling the family home is often an important step for couples and their families making the transition from one home to two after divorce.

"But with limited mortgage deals, the increase in unemployment, and one in ten homeowners now in negative equity, selling up or moving on is easier said than done for many couples.

To help, Resolution has launched a series of hints and tips for couples "living apart together".

Judith, added: "Having made the difficult decision to split, it can be incredibly stressful for couples to then have to live together - and to not know when this property limbo will end.

"That's why we have launched these useful tips, which are available online or through your local Resolution solicitor". Here are some of the tips for couples "living apart together".

1. Try to agree some 'ground rules' - especially around subjects that are likely to prompt argument. If you can't do this together - think about using a professional - such as a mediator - to help you to discuss and agree things calmly.
2. Get short breaks from one another - a weekend with a friend, a day out - or even a short holiday will help you to see things from a fresh perspective.
3. If you can, try to stay cost efficient whilst you are still under the same Roof. Continuing to share costs in regard to food, housekeeping items etc. will be better than doubling costs unnecessarily.

For more tips, including those on dealing with debt and property, log onto http://www.resolution.org.uk/advice_centre/

For information regarding Family issues contact Judith Middleton.