

Christmas Newsletter 2024

As it approaches the end of 2024, we would like to take a moment to look back and share our reflections on the past year. It has been another great year of growth, adaptation and building more relationships with clients and the local community.

In September we celebrated a huge milestone – the firm’s fifth birthday. Since the beginning we’ve faced challenges and celebrated successes, all while remaining focused on providing the highest level of service and care to our clients. We are thankful to all our clients who have trusted us to help them with their personal legal matters. Our ability to provide specialist legal advice would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of our small but strong team of four. We look forward to helping more people with their legal matters in 2025.

On behalf of all of us at Spall Clark Solicitors, we would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

Paul Clark and Becky Spall
Directors



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Retirement of Sarah Bushell

This year marked the retirement of Private Client Solicitor, Sarah Bushell. Sarah played a huge part in Spall Clark's growth from when she joined the firm in 2022 until she retired.

Sarah qualified as a solicitor 33 years ago and spent much of her legal career working in both Congleton and Macclesfield. Sarah was an exceptional solicitor who has made an enormous contribution to the local legal profession by helping many clients and families over the course of her career. Earlier in the year, the team celebrated Sarah's retirement at the Orange Tree Bar and Grill in Congleton.

Whilst we miss having Sarah as part of the team, we wish her well for her next chapter and the many adventures that lie ahead.



Natasha Yelland joins the team

In April we welcomed to the team our newest Private Client Solicitor, Natasha Yelland.

Natasha advises clients on Wills, Lasting Powers of Attorney, Probate, and Estate Administration, with a focus on elderly and vulnerable clients. After gaining experience in different legal areas, Natasha decided to focus on private client work, starting her career as a Private Client Paralegal at a firm in Staffordshire. Natasha went on to complete her training contract and qualified as a Solicitor at the same firm.

Since joining Spall Clark Solicitors, Natasha has hit the ground running and has already helped many clients with their personal and often sensitive legal matters. She has received some exceptional feedback from her clients so far which is testament to her excellent client care skills and dedication to private client work.

In 2025, Natasha will start working towards becoming a Trust and Estate Practitioner (TEP) with STEP, further enhancing her technical abilities and expertise.

Congleton Lawn Tennis Club

In July, we were delighted to attend and sponsor the Congleton Lawn Tennis Club's Town Mayor's Tournament. It was a fantastic afternoon of tennis made even better by some sunny weather. We presented each of the winners with a voucher for the Paragon Group to be redeemed at the Orange Tree Bar and Grill in Congleton.

It was also a pleasure to meet the Town Mayor Kay Wesley and her husband Mike. At the end of the tournament, club committee member Mark Smith presented Kay with a cheque for £160 to support the Mayor's chosen charities.

We've thoroughly enjoyed sponsoring a variety of tournaments at the Club since 2019 and we look forward to continuing our support in the future.



Congleton Dementia Friends

In September we hosted an art exhibition in support of Congleton Dementia Friends. They are part of Congleton Partnership's Senior Forum and help the community become more aware of the needs of people living with dementia.

The artist spotlight was on local amateur artist Linda McKellar. Linda has created many paintings over the years and the exhibition showcased a small number of pieces from her private collection. Some of the paintings were for sale and Linda kindly agreed to donate 10% of the proceeds of any painting sales for

the benefit of Congleton Dementia Friends.

Linda and her husband Neil, who is living with dementia, are strong supporters of the Dementia Friendly initiative as it encourages communities and local businesses to provide a safe and supportive environment for residents and visitors to the local area living with dementia.

We are delighted to announce that the art exhibition raised a total of £167.84. Some of the amount raised was used to buy a hamper which was recently raffled off by Congleton Dementia Friends at the Congleton Maker's Market.

Charity nominations and supporting local artists in 2025

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 2025. For more information, please contact Becky Spall on 01260 769 639 or email becky.spall@spallclark.co.uk.



A Legal Update: changes to Inheritance Tax

The budget announced on 30 October 2024 made significant changes to Inheritance Tax.

At a glance:

From 6 April 2026:

Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief – combined £1 million tax free allowance* – taxed at 20% thereafter.

*The £1 million allowance does not apply to AIM shares.

From 6 April 2027:

Pensions to be subject to Inheritance Tax from 6 April 2027.

Until 5 April 2030:

Nil Rate Band frozen at £325,000.

Residence Nil Rate Band frozen at £175,000.

No increases to the Nil Rate Band and Residence Nil Rate Band

The Inheritance Tax free allowances (the Nil Rate Band and the Residence Nil Rate Band) have been frozen until 2030. This means that there will be no increase in line with inflation. Therefore, as net estates continue to grow, more people move closer to the taxable line and some will cross over.

Pensions are now subject to Inheritance Tax

Perhaps the change that will affect most people is that from 6 April 2027, unused pensions will now be subject to Inheritance Tax. In practice, this means that the value of your pension is taken into account when calculating Inheritance Tax.

Example:

Sara is divorced and is approaching retirement. She has a property worth £400,000 and savings of £100,000. She has saved for her retirement and her pension fund is worth £250,000.

Current Inheritance Tax position:

Sara's net estate is £500,000 (property and savings). Inheritance Tax free allowances of £325,000 (Nil Rate Band) and £175,000 (Residence Nil Rate Band) are deducted leaving her with a taxable estate of zero.

Sara's pension passes free of Inheritance Tax to her children. Note that the beneficiaries may need to pay income tax on the pension inherited depending on whether Sara dies before or after 75.

Inheritance Tax bill: £0

Inheritance Tax position from 6 April 2027:

Sara's property and savings amount to £500,000. However, the unused pension pot of £250,000 now needs to be added to her net estate which totals £750,000. After deducting the Inheritance Tax free allowances (£500,000), this leaves her with £250,000 subject to Inheritance Tax at 40%. This means Inheritance Tax of £100,000 needs to be paid.

Inheritance Tax bill: £100,000

Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief

Currently assets that qualify for Business Property Relief at 100% (for example shares in a business) are free of Inheritance Tax. This 100% relief is also available on qualifying agricultural assets and is known as Agricultural Property Relief. From 6 April 2026, the 100% relief will be restricted to the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business property. Any value above £1 million qualifies for 50% relief i.e. it is effectively taxed at 20% instead of the usual Inheritance Tax rate of 40%. It is important to note that any unused allowance cannot be transferred between spouses or civil partners (unlike the Nil Rate Band and the Residence Nil Rate Band).

Planning for the future

It is important to review your Will and estate plan now more than ever given the changes outlined in the budget. It is also important to consider not just your position now but also your potential position over the coming years. It is beneficial to consider your financial planning as a whole and seek advice from a financial advisor as well as your solicitor to ensure you have covered all aspects of your estate plan. We offer a free review of your Will and Lasting Powers of Attorney to review your position, discuss potential tax planning opportunities and ensure that your legal documents reflect your current wishes and circumstances.

Please note the information in this newsletter does not constitute legal advice and we recommend you take professional advice before taking any action.

Our final message

For many people, the festive period is filled with joy. However, it is important to remember that the season can be a difficult time for those who may be experiencing loneliness and loss. Although we may only be a small part of our clients' lives, each person leaves a lasting impression. As our office closes at 1:00pm on Tuesday 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 6 January 2025.