

LEADING MINDS TRAINEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

2025-2026



Junior Lawyers

Core challenges



At the helm of any law firm's competitiveness and sustainable growth is the competence, robustness and adaptability of their talent pipeline. It's no surprise then that developing talent remains a top priority and the average investment for UK law firms to recruit and train a single trainee ranges from £70,000 to £100,000 annually.

Despite this focus and investment, the sector continues to face numerous and costly challenges relating to junior talent:

01

IQ vs EQ

As the legal landscape has evolved it has become even more apparent that academic and technical expertise are simply not enough to succeed in the high-pressured environment. Junior talent pipelines that lack EQ competencies remain a key challenge for HR teams with 82% of firms reporting that trainees lack the essential personal effectiveness and resilience skills required of them.

02

DISENGAGEMENT & ATTRITION

Even with NQ salaries increasing by over 50% in the last five years, 67% of firms reported that trainees did not take responsibility for their learning experience at the firm or develop a plan for continuous improvement. Additionally, the Law Society's JLD reported that turnover rates for solicitors in their first year of qualification were as high as 35%.

03

GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

The emergence of the 'new generation' of lawyers with different values and expectations has resulted in cross-generational friction, further impacting engagement and retention, as well as increasing the burden on senior leaders. 87% of firms reported that trainees did not take ownership of their role in the success of working dynamics with their supervisors, team and other key stakeholders.

04

MENTAL HEALTH

The expectations of junior talent about the role of their workplace in supporting their mental health has led to increased pressure on senior leaders and HR. Adding to this is the SRA's increased focus on mental health culture, particularly its emphasis on the role of managers and supervisors.



The Junior Lawyer Gap

Trainee Competencies



The introduction of new entry routes and the move to the SQE pathway partly reflects the sector's attempt to tackle these challenges by increasing the level and consistency of standards required to practice at qualification.

Although this approach may address issues relating to the technical element of training, it still does not address the clear deficit in the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed to navigate the complex client-focused legal environment. In fact, less specific training requirements for firms on the SQE pathway has further magnified this gap as well as put heightened pressure on HR teams to find solutions.

Closing the Competency Gaps at Your Firm

Through our partnerships and work with 70+ law firms, including early adopters of the SQE pathway, HR teams, trainees and senior leaders, we have spent the last 18 months working to address these intrapersonal and interpersonal competency gaps.

We have engaged in sector research including surveys, focus groups and a 1-2-1 case study and partnered with experts in the field to clearly define the core competency gaps and design a comprehensive training solution. (*Read more about Leading Minds Trainee Competencies on page 4 and 5.*)

The result is a competency-led trainee programme designed to:

- Ensure your talent pipelines are equipped with the key intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies required to navigate a client-led VUCA legal sector and the realities of working in a law firm
- Reduce your firm's resourcing requirements for training needs assessments and design
- Provide HR and early talent teams with a research-based set of competencies to benchmark trainee development against
- Equip your junior talent with a clear understanding of the expectations on them
- Support wider business objectives including adherence to SRA best practice recommendations on supporting junior talent

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Trainee Core Competencies

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1 - Relationship Management:

Effectively communicates and collaborates with supervisors, the wider team and internal and external stakeholders

- 1a - Demonstrates personal responsibility and initiative
- 1b - Identifies and adapts to working and communication styles where needed
- 1c - Utilises relevant internal resources, knowledge and support
- 1d - Actively listens and demonstrates clear and skilful communication
- 1e - Identifies and manages the expectations of colleagues and clients
- 1f - Competently navigates high-pressure working dynamics

2 - Commercial Awareness:

Demonstrates a clear understanding of the firm as a commercial enterprise and acts in accordance with business and client needs

- 2a - Understands their role in business development as a junior member of the team
- 2b - Understands and contributes to firm culture and upholds firm standards
- 2c - Demonstrates a solution-focused approach to client and business needs
- 2d - Develops a strong personal brand that showcases skills and expertise
- 2e - Develops and maintains a professional network
- 2f - Takes active steps to maintain client relationships and enhance the firm's reputation

3 - Personal Effectiveness and Resilience:

Implements work practices that support sustainable peak performance and wellbeing

- 3a - Accurately identifies and works within the scope of tasks and overarching deadlines
- 3b - Constructively plans and prioritises workload
- 3c - Utilises effective process management strategies
- 3d - Proactively develops personal performance capacity
- 3e - Understands and navigates common workplace stressors
- 3f - Has an awareness of the firm's internal resources and procedures to support mental wellbeing

4 - Career Management:

Proactively engages in personal development opportunities and career planning and progression

- 4a - Plays an active role in seeking and utilising feedback for professional growth
- 4b - Identifies and engages with role-models and mentors to support career progression
- 4c - Understands the firm's career progression pathways and engages with L&D offerings
- 4d - Develops strengths-based professional goals aligned to the firm's mission and values
- 4e - Undertakes regular personal and professional development reviews

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Session 1: Working Effectively With Your Supervisor

This session provides you with essential skills to effectively and confidently navigate the core interactions you have with your supervisor, including task allocation, briefing, task checking and feedback.

Based on relevant scenarios, you will consider how to navigate a variety of situations including managing competing deadlines, dealing with mistakes, proactively seeking work and taking responsibility for acquiring feedback.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Take ownership of your role in the success of your working dynamic with your supervisor
- Better manage your workload and navigate competing deadlines
- Communicate assertively with your supervisor
- Effectively navigate mistakes and setbacks
- Proactively seek and utilise feedback to advance your development and career progression

Session 2: Essential Communication and Collaboration Skills

In today's dynamic legal environment, a crucial component of a lawyer's success is their capacity to engage and work well with both colleagues and clients.

This session supports you to strengthen your communication and collaboration skills, enabling you to work more effectively within a high-performing team and better navigate the various departmental dynamics experienced during your seat rotations.

Through scenario-based learning you will also develop your ability to engage with and influence clients.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Better identify team and client needs to enable more effective collaboration
- Enhance communication skills for clearer and more persuasive interactions
- Approach conflict constructively and effectively navigate difficult conversations
- Increase your confidence working across departments and with key stakeholders

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Session 3: Building Resilience and Tackling Challenges

For many, the opportunity to showcase their talent and develop their technical excellence is what attracts these leading minds to the legal profession.

However, as well as developing elite technical skills during your training contract, it's vital that you're taking steps to proactively cultivate the resilience required to operate in the fast-paced and high-stakes legal sector.

In this session you'll uncover your personal stress signature and learn how to build the resilience needed to perform to the required level. We'll also explore how a growth mindset will help you overcome setbacks and tackle challenges. Finally, we will review your firm's wellbeing offerings and sources of support available to you.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Improve awareness of your early warning signs of excessive stress
- Develop the self-regulation skills required to manage the demands of your role
- Increase your capacity to navigate change, setbacks and periods of intense pressure
- Develop a personalised resilience toolkit to support your sustainable performance and career progression

Session 4: The Business of Law

Positioning yourself as a competent and trusted junior lawyer is an integral part of early stage business development in the competitive legal sector.

This session provides you with the tools to strengthen your personal brand and showcase yourself as a valuable asset to both internal and external stakeholders.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Understand your firm's legal ecosystem and how your role contributes to the firm's overall success
- Develop a strong personal brand that showcases your skills, expertise and value proposition in line with your firm's vision, mission and values
- Enhance your networking and stakeholder engagement abilities and build a strong professional network

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Session 5: Optimising Personal Capacity and Performance

Optimising both your efficiency and the quality of your work within the fixed billable hours construct relies on excellent process management and a commitment to continuously sharpening your personal cognitive performance.

This session provides you with a framework to review and assess your daily work strategies with a view to minimising errors and inefficiencies. You will also learn how to apply neuroscience-based strategies to improve your cognitive performance and sharpen your competitive edge.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Improve your prioritisation and workload management with evidence-based productivity strategies
- Proactively develop your personal performance capacity
- Enhance your problem-solving abilities
- Design a personalised routine for peak productivity and wellbeing

Session 6: Your Second Seat and Beyond

The final session is designed for trainee solicitors who are ready to take ownership of their career progression and build a successful and sustainable future in law.

It provides you with a framework to review your training contract to date, identify your personal and professional development goals and strategise your legal career.

The session will equip you with skills to:

- Understand your firm's career progression pathways and development offerings
- Set strengths-based goals that leverage your unique talents
- Develop a roadmap to achieve your career goals
- Master the art of successfully transitioning between practice areas
- Undertake ongoing reviews as you navigate your second seat and beyond

About

Leading Minds



We are the leading provider of integrative training in the legal sector, partnering with over 60 firms, including high-profile London and US law firms with a strong global presence.

Our mission is to support the sustainable growth and competitiveness of your law firm and your people in the increasingly competitive, unpredictable and regulated legal market. We achieve this through our work with firms on culture and leadership development, and by supporting your talent to achieve optimal personal effectiveness.

Impact-Driven Training Solutions

Tailored programmes: To support engagement, impact and ROI, our programmes are designed specifically for each key group in your firm, ranging from trainee and apprentice level through to senior leadership teams.

Accessible, engaging and practical solutions: We thoroughly understand the demands of the sector, including limitations on employees' time to attend training sessions. Content is concise, evidence-based and offers practical guidance appropriate to the legal sector environment.

Expert trainers / coaches: Our trainers and coaches have extensive experience working in high-pressure, fast-paced corporate environments. You can view our coaches bios [here](#).

Blended learning: We are predominantly an online learning provider, with capacity to facilitate in-person sessions globally.

Strategic approach: We work closely with your HR teams, both globally and locally, to ensure training fully supports your firm's wider strategic objectives and is culturally sensitive.

Who we work with: View our client list and see what firms are saying about us [here](#).