

## **Dare to be different: Alternative legal careers**

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*Ashurst Glasgow Managing Partner, Mike Polson, provides an overview of Ashurst's operations in Glasgow and explains how the firm has created alternative career propositions for law graduates who are not pursuing the traditional traineeship route.*

Since opening in the summer of 2013, Ashurst Glasgow has grown rapidly, starting with a team of only seven to now employing over 230 staff. There are two main elements to this office – a new legal sourcing model and it is also where teams from all our global business support functions are located.

The legal support within the office is represented by a growing team of legal analysts and legal technologists, two innovative roles within the legal market which the firm created specifically for our Glasgow base. These two roles, along with a team of legal project managers, now form the basis of Ashurst Advance, our uniquely integrated team bringing together three fundamental areas of legal service innovation - resources, process and technology. Following the launch of Ashurst Advance, we were delighted to receive a highly commended ranking in the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers report in Resourcing and Efficiency.

The role of the legal analyst combines elements from roles historically undertaken by junior lawyers, trainees and paralegals. The team handles a very wide range of legal work including document reviews for litigation cases and due diligence for corporate and finance transactions.

We were thrilled when the introduction of this new role was recognised at the Legal Week Innovation Awards 2015. Taking home the coveted title of Next Generation Innovation, the judges commented on how Ashurst had "cleverly identified a unique gap in the market with the creation of the legal analyst role for graduates not pursuing the traditional traineeship route." This was a fantastic achievement for our Glasgow team.

We have also invested in a specialist team of legal technologists who possess a unique blend of legal knowledge and software development expertise. As technology becomes increasingly integral to the delivery of legal services, the team's dual skillset represents a critical resource for Ashurst and our clients.

Our legal teams in Glasgow are heavily involved in Ashurst's global pro bono practice, contributing to a number of the pro bono projects undertaken by the firm, which allows them to fulfil their ethical professional responsibility and give back to the wider community. Our legal analysts and technologists really care about social justice issues, and enjoy the opportunity to get involved in such interesting and varied work. This contribution has not gone unrecognised, with Ashurst receiving a commended ranking in the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers report 2016 in Social Responsibility for the use of Ashurst Advance in increasing the firm's pro bono work.

These legal roles, as well as an expanding team of risk and compliance specialists, has seen Ashurst become one of the largest employers of law graduates in Scotland. Each of these teams allow law graduates to pursue new, alternative career paths by developing areas of expertise which can be deployed effectively into the innovative delivery of legal services.

Ashurst is very much a people oriented firm with a strong values led culture. As such, we recognise the role our people can play in supporting local communities and we actively encourage them to get involved wherever possible. Over the past 12 months, our Glasgow office has been supporting local charity, Finding Your Feet by volunteering at, and participating in, a wide variety of challenges and activities to raise money for this worthy cause. One fundraising effort even saw volunteers take to warmer climates to take on the challenging 109 kilometre Cape Argus Cycle Tour in Cape Town!

We believe that diversity and inclusion are key to the success of the firm and crucial in making Ashurst a great place to work. Last year, as part of our wider commitment to diversity and

inclusion, we launched the LGBT Allies programme in Glasgow, where people, irrespective of their own sexual orientation, recognise the importance of acceptance and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) colleagues in the workplace and in the wider community and who actively articulate their support. The programme expands the scope of our existing LGBT network, Spectrum, and increases collaboration, ensuring that whether members of the firm identify as LGBT or not, they feel equally valued.

Our vision is to be a continued driver of change, efficiency and innovation for the firm globally, and are looking to grow significantly the size of our teams in Glasgow..

A growing number of clients have already benefited from our increased efficiency through flexibility of resource, accelerated timescales and reduced costs. The legal teams in Glasgow are now an integral part of our service delivery model, across our international network of offices. Growing the team in Glasgow will ensure we continue to meet this increasing client demand.