



The Law  
Society

# Creating a Healthy Alcohol Culture in the Legal Profession

Good Practice  
Case Studies

Junior Lawyers Division  
April 2020

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## Foreword

In January 2020 the Junior Lawyers Division (JLD) of the Law Society of England and Wales launched the Creating a Healthy Drinking in the Legal Profession Guide. A copy of the guide and all of the JLD's resources relating to healthy drinking cultures can be found in the Resources.

The Guide was overwhelmingly welcomed by the legal profession, the media and international bar associations. Following the success of the Guide, the JLD has collected case studies from law firms, chambers, courts and others working in the legal profession to provide ideas and suggestions as good practice for anyone looking to implement a healthy drinking culture on a personal or organisational level.

To mark Stress Awareness Month, one case study was published on the JLD's social media platforms each day of April. They have received so much attention that they are also contained in this compilation.

It should be stressed again that the intention is not to stop individuals drinking alcohol altogether – that is a choice for individuals. Instead, it is promoting insight and the opportunity to create a healthier, more inclusive approach to work-related activities and examples of what others are doing may assist.

I am grateful to everyone who assisted in collating these case studies and must extend my gratitude, in particular, to Charlotte Parkinson and Jonathan Hodge.

**Laura Uberoi, Council Member, Law Society of England and Wales**

## DLA Piper

“DLA Piper is about to launch guidance on inclusive events which recommends:

- avoiding events where alcohol is the primary focus (wine tastings, etc.)
- ensuring a good selection of alcohol free drinks at all events
- that events are not always labelled as ‘drinks’, which can be off-putting
- and hosting events in locations where alcohol is not the primary focus such as pubs and bars

We have also set up a working group to look at other steps we can take to promote an inclusive healthy culture in which alcohol can play a part for those who chose it, and may not for those who don’t.

We will be launching a series of initiatives later this year focussing on supporting all our people to make the best choices for them.”

## University of Essex

“We hold regular staff events which rarely involve alcohol, the main summer event being a BBQ which to which staff are encouraged to bring family and pets at which little alcohol is involved.

Most networking events attended are daytime events which again do not involve alcohol. We are also working with one of our clients, a charity which is involved in drug/alcohol therapy and which is now offering services to the business community to raise awareness of alcohol related issues in the workplace.”

## 7 Bedford Row Chambers

"At 7 Bedford Row we have introduced and promoted credible alcohol free options at our evening marketing events in chambers so that drinking non-alcohol or low alcohol drinks can be normalised.

We have run marketing events outside of chambers that allow members to socialise with professional clients without alcohol and the chambers well-being committee has also set up events where members can socialise with each other without using alcohol.

These include escape rooms and even learning axe-throwing!"

## PDT Solicitors

“At PDT we have always worked hard at creating relationships with clients and other professionals, which has often included evening based activities involving alcohol. We have however recently been expanding our focus to continue to develop relationships in ways that are not alcohol centric.

Our Women in Marketing forum has explored daytime and non-alcohol based events, and our Future Leaders group has openly recognised that while they want to develop their marketing skills through the events they organise, those events have to offer more drink options than beer and prosecco.

Acknowledging the need to do something and then taking steps however small is how change happens, and we are pleased to be supporting the Junior Lawyers Division’s campaign in this regard.”

## Amy Clowrey and Natalie Cosgrove of Switalskis

“Amy Clowrey and Natalie Cosgrove proudly champion that Switalskis does not have a drinking culture: Because of the nature of our work, entertaining of clients and referrers is rare.

Many of us attend networking events – including events run by the firm – but these tend to be during working hours to ensure they are inclusive for all and alcohol is not an option on the drinks menu.

Other events that may be held on an evening or weekend such as charity events, awards ceremonies, Summer BBQ or our Christmas party are not centred around alcohol and often family are invited to come along.

The firm’s culture comes from the top and at a director level, once a year, the directors have an away day to build relationships within the director group. The directors are all encouraged to bring along their family, including children. Another example of Switalskis being a forward-thinking, family-friendly firm.

To celebrate an achievement, rather than drinks after work, departments tend to go out for lunch during the working day or the directors might surprise staff by paying for a sandwich run!”

## The Gazette

"On the ground, the drinking culture in journalism and the legal press has already changed as a result of the 24/7 news agenda, online presences and challenging

economics, which do not sit with habits of 'multiple drinks with contacts on expenses'.

More importantly, how topics are reported fundamentally impacts cultures and how issues are perceived across the board. At the Gazette, we give matters relating to wellbeing, including an unhealthy drinking culture, close attention and a wide airing, not least following feedback from the profession."

## Geldards

"Geldards aims to be an open and friendly workplace and that includes hosting networking events that cater to everyone.

This has included serving sweets and alcohol-free drinks at our Insight Evenings in January as part of Dry January campaign. It has also included hosting free yoga classes for employees and team building days that are more than 'just drinks.'

Our committees understand that alcoholic events don't appeal to everyone and that is why they continue to organise events where everyone can be involved."

## Baker McKenzie

"We have had clear alcohol policies and expectations in place for a number of years and these were reviewed and refreshed in 2019.

To support these policies, we are making conscious changes to the way we plan events in London. We have reduced the time that alcohol is served at events, for example, our Firm's Christmas party. We have also increased the options of non-alcoholic drinks and we aim to serve food at any event where there will be alcohol consumed. In addition, ahead of every event at which alcohol is served we remind our people attending of our alcohol policy.

We have also been more mindful of the type of events we organise, and we are encouraging anyone planning a workplace event to explore alternative ideas which do not involve/are not centred around alcohol.

This looks at changing the format, time, having an interactive activity or a theme (e.g. panel discussion, movie night, afternoon tea, a big breakfast event, charitable events, volunteer days etc.)."

## Doughty Street Chambers

“At Doughty Street Chambers we promote and maintain a very strong ethos of ensuring good mental health and well-being among our barristers and staff.

This includes ensuring a healthy drinking culture throughout the variety of contexts of chambers’ business life - be it in regards to all client-facing activities or activities for the benefit of barristers and staff (eg cohesion, education and training, celebration, etc).

Details of such implementation include:

- Sits within wider supportive well-being programme for staff and barristers, involving mentoring, massages, team of well-being supporters, weekly internal well-being newsletter, access to professional coaches and counselling – all of which would offer support for stress and alternatives to alcohol-dependence
- Part of a wider programme to encourage health and nutrition – eg 'Fruity Friday', nutrition talks in chambers, piloting new personal trainer/nutrition expert
- All our events are planned more with cohesion or inclusion in mind than alcohol
- Focal point for events is invariably other than drinks eg. baked goods, charitable or ethical cause, BBQs, games nights, film evenings, summertime table tennis and other outdoor games
- Delicious ‘fun’ (labelled!!) non-alcoholic drinks and excellent snacks/food” always available as standard at all events”

## Elevate Services

“Elevate promotes a healthy, inclusive culture by arranging a wide variety of engagement activities that our Associates can choose from that do not include alcohol, inviting families to alcohol-free social events, such as picnics, escape rooms, mini-golfing, and hiking.

Our engagement activities include volunteering to give back to the community at schools, community centres, centres for the aging, and hospitals, where we spend alcohol-free time together.

We do not restrict individuals from drinking alcohol at events where alcohol is available, such as holiday parties, but those events are monitored by our People Team and Global Leadership Team.

Prior to each event we communicate our expectation that Associates treat alcohol responsibly.”

## The Commercial Court

“A healthy drinking culture is important across the legal profession, including amongst the judiciary.

By way of example, the Judges of the Commercial Court hosted a lunch recently for senior members of the legal profession to celebrate the Court’s 125th anniversary and we had a large variety of non-alcoholic drinks served by our roaming waiting staff and taking prominence on a drinks table.

Wine was also available on a side table for those who wanted it, however the prominence of the non-alcoholic options gives attendees a greater opportunity to choose not to drink at events without giving a justification, whilst still allowing others to opt for something alcoholic if they so wish.”

## Surrey Junior Lawyers Division

“We want to be inclusive to our members and so when the executive JLD announced its Healthy Drinking Campaign, we were excited to promote this at our first event of 2020, the Surrey JLD New Year Party.

As well as providing a delicious selection of free mocktails, we were keen to let our members make their own choices.

We therefore gave each attendee a token they could use to order an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink as they wished.

We are not banning alcohol at our events by any means. Instead we plan to ensure an equal selection of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages for our members. We also look forward to introducing more activity-based events so that our members leave with fond memories rather than hangovers.”

## Giles Wilson

"Giles Wilson does not have a drinking culture. This comes from the top where the Partners socialise at all events but do not ever drink too much – leadership on this issue has to come from the top.

We run lots of team bonding events focusing on the wellbeing of our teams: in-house yoga classes after work on a Monday; a monthly movie night on our big screen with soft drinks and fish & chips; and lunchtime walking groups.

In terms of external networking events, we cater for everyone and prefer breakfast meetings that remove any expectation of alcohol. We also believe that more women

in leadership affects drinking culture and our successes with women in leadership equate to successes with a healthy drinking culture."

## Instituto de Salud Mental de la Abogacía - Mental Health Institute of Legal Professions

"We have translated the 'Creating a Healthy Drinking Culture in the Legal Profession' guidance into Spanish so that it is accessible and can be implemented by our colleagues internationally.

When we produced our Healthy Business Charter, one of the provisions for firms to adopt focused on providing non-alcoholic drinks and healthy food during events.

In addition, we are raising awareness amongst our colleagues by more widely publicising factsheets relating to alcoholism on our website."

## LawCare

"LawCare was set up in the first instance to support solicitors who were over using alcohol, so we have our roots in supporting the healthy drinking culture campaign.

For our most recent series of events 'Fit for Law', we consciously decided to make them alcohol free.

We are also reflecting on how the Covid-19 outbreak may lead to an increase in the number of people working from home starting to drink more and earlier in the evening - there are lots of alternatives to entertain ourselves and relax at the end of the day."

## 33 Bedford Row

"33 Bedford Row has always organised "Cake Tuesday" on the first Tuesday of every month for team building, which is well attended. Senior members are also realising that giving a bottle of wine as a reward for good work does need not to be the norm any longer.

Externally, we have organised tailored marketing events with alcohol as a last resort. Recent activities include: breakfast meetings/seminars, cooking classes, go-karting, comedy nights, running club, playing cricket/football, urban tours of London, poker, gaming, trade shows and attending the flower show.



We have tried to be proactive and appeal to all. We have the feeling that people want to learn and have an experience, so we try to be on trend. Greater health awareness is one driver, though other factors are family and travel commitments.

Given the choice, many people might not drink but there's an expectation that if others are drinking they should too, and people don't want to feel left out."

## Stevens & Bolton

"Stevens & Bolton is fully supportive of this sensible initiative and always looks to provide a choice of alcoholic and non-alcoholic options at office social events.

Taking things one step further, after our recent park run – held as the culmination of the firm's 'Wellbeing Month' programme of events in January, the plucky runners and their supporters were welcomed back into the office with a healthy selection of smoothies and energy boosting snacks on a dark cold Friday evening."

## Macfarlanes

"At Macfarlanes we host a variety of social events which everyone at the firm is invited to. Last year we relaunched "MacSocial", our firm get-togethers, emphasising that the purpose of the gathering is mixing with colleagues across the firm rather than drinking alcohol.

More recently we held a live music charity quiz with a range of rounds to suit all musical tastes, raising funds for our charity of the year."

## American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division

"The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division established the Fit2Practice platform to drive a discussion about physical and mental health in the bar and in the profession. Our Fit2Practice team has increasingly focused on alcohol consumption in the past few years.

While alcohol is a difficult topic in bar associations because of the ingrained culture, we have worked hard to wriggle out from the assumption that alcohol is a necessary part of the bar association experience.

This work includes a reinvigorated focus on networking activities that do not include alcohol and providing prominent non-alcoholic options at all other networking events. We find refocusing our members' attention to healthier habits is a more subtle, yet effective, way of encouraging responsible consumption."

## Addleshaw Goddard

“At AG our mocktails are extremely popular and we have had feedback from clients on how good they are.

There is always a non-alcoholic option available – for example, if someone requests a bottle of champagne for a completion celebration, it is standard practice to send a non-alcoholic alternative too, even if this has not been asked for.

Our social committees across each office are also working hard to organise a variety of different events, so that our socialising with colleagues is as diverse as possible.

On occasions when it is appropriate to give someone a gift, we don't automatically default to alcohol – whilst some people will appreciate a bottle of AG champagne, we check with the individual in question.”

## Resources

[Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

[Club Soda \(for a guide on low and no-alcohol venues\)](#)

[DrinkAware](#)

[Junior Lawyers Division Booze Culture Campaign](#)

[LawCare](#)

[Mind](#)

[Solicitors Benevolent Association](#)