



Westgate Chambers – Changing perceptions

How the only remaining Common Law Chambers in Sussex embraces change and prides itself on delivering a progressive, approachable and efficient service.

Cover Story

From what was believed to be a Criminal set of Chambers in Lewes to a powerhouse across Family, Civil and Criminal Law in Brighton – changing the perception has been a key obstacle to overcome in its continuing pursuit of excellence.

It may be celebrating its 35th anniversary but Westgate Chambers has both feet firmly in the future.

While proud of its past, it has swept decades-old perceptions to one side to carve out a forward-thinking brand that brings Barristers and clients closer together.

Forging those links is the Clerks' Room, headed by Senior Clerk Sean Gould, with the new addition of Deputy Senior Clerk Stuart Taylor, it prides itself on providing excellence. No case is too small, and this approachable, friendly team are acutely aware of the need to ensure that excellence is provided as standard. There is nearly 100 years'

experience in this 'engine room' and one of their core beliefs is providing the Solicitor with the right Barrister for the client, at the correct price. The clerks' room believes in a truly collaborative approach to providing legal services.

We spoke to Sean and Stuart about the Chambers' work and priorities. What we discovered is that there is nothing stuffy or set in stone when it comes to running a modern Chambers.

Flexibility is a real buzzword here - and that nimbleness even extends to negotiating fees.

"It is important to us that individuals and businesses know we are

approachable," said Stuart. "That is why we make getting to know our Solicitor clients a priority."

"Building friendly but professional relationships helps us continue to provide the stellar service we are so proud of. In every relationship there is give and take and our modern approach to client management allows us to facilitate repeat instructions of members of chambers."

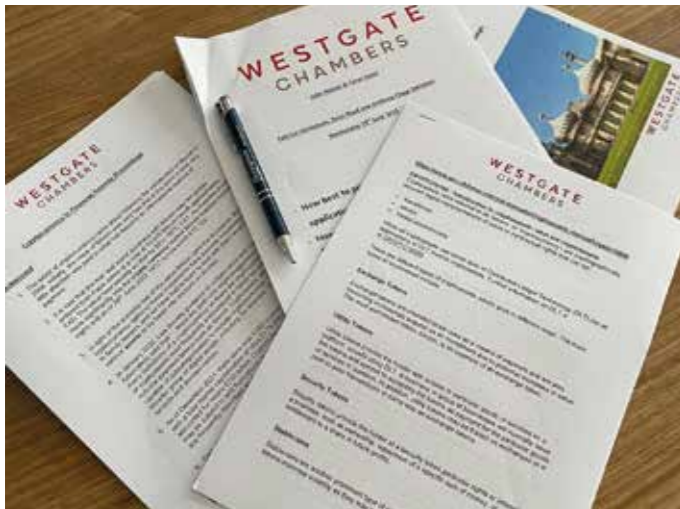
Areas of work

With 44 Barristers and three pupils, Westgate Chambers offers rapid access to leading specialist Barristers who can provide outstanding advocacy or

advisory services. Westgate Chambers accepts instructions within Family, Civil and Criminal law as well as Regulatory, Police Law, Local Government and Health and Safety. The largest percentage of its work is focused within Family law, most notably in Public Law Children, Financial Remedies and Divorce and Child Arrangement proceedings.

Barristers travel across Sussex, Surrey, Kent, London and Hampshire to provide excellent representation.

While many sectors experienced an almost total shutdown during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Westgate Chambers was busy re-branding and relocating to Pavilion Parade in central



Brighton. It wasn't a time for the team to stand still.

Sean Gould said: "We have gone from strength to strength, and I am certain that is because we are constantly thinking progressively."

"Many businesses expect Chambers to be rigid and stale, but that is not the modern reality with us. For example, we are open to negotiation on fees. We are flexible."

Stuart points out that flexibility is at the heart of all good relationships. "In terms of fees, I do not want to be reactive to your lay clients' needs. We put the Solicitor's budget at the heart of our negotiations. It is not lost on our clerks' room that what we agree with our instructing Solicitors has to be paid by

the lay client, and that at times this can cause a difficulty that we would not want our Solicitor to have to constantly face."

Reaching out

From clerks to Barristers, everyone has embraced technology - so much so that Chambers has been invited to participate in a seminar on Twitter.

The clerks are 'faces' in local networking circles, attending events across Sussex, Surrey and beyond. Westgate Chambers has a renowned seminar package that provides training to Solicitors firms, Law Societies and Organisations. It recently entertained Public Law Children lawyers from local Solicitors' firms. The exclusive invite only event was staged at [Enter Gallery](#) in Bond Street, Brighton.

It also supports community events, recently sponsoring a local school summer fete. Chambers has also been a staunch supporter of fundraising efforts for Brighton Hospital's Neonatal ICU and often contributes to the fundraising efforts of its clients. It even recognises the achievements of its Solicitor base, when individual lawyers have obtained further accreditation.

Stuart says reaching out has been a powerful and successful communication strategy. He sees the wider reach as a way to further foster relations and demonstrate there is a friendly, human side to Chambers. 'Reciprocal communication' is how he paraphrases it.

After all, having a multi-faceted approach is what has given Westgate Chambers the edge.

"We are not only bringing solicitor clients in, we are keeping them," he said. "Clients share their needs - and we assist them to ensure those needs are met, without fail."

"We understand the value of giving back and working collaboratively."

Culture and diversity

Developing and nurturing a supportive culture has paid dividends. Westgate Chambers is described as a 'diverse, friendly and forward-facing' place to work.

Sean said: "There is fairness in Chambers but also a healthy amount of competition. "

"It is this culture that has enabled us to offer a one-stop-shop to help individuals and businesses collectively."

"We can take a flexible approach to clerking because of it."

Ongoing training

With laws being constantly tweaked or replaced, training never stops at

Westgate Chambers. It is ongoing. Direct training takes place regularly and Chambers is planning to host a mock trial training session in the very near future.

Members of Chambers keep the clerks constantly up to date, ensuring they are kept up to speed with new and relevant changes in the law and directions provided by the courts. Members of Chambers also sit on local legal steering committees.

Along with its impressive seminar offerings, members of Chambers produce blogs and legal updates to its Solicitors as well as having a **bi-monthly newsletter 'Briefly Westgate'**.

What clients say

Clients continue to provide extremely positive feedback about Westgate Chambers. Here's what just a few of them have to say:

'Weightmans Police Team appreciate the super quality clerking we receive from Deputy Senior Clerk, Stuart Taylor. We have instructed several members of their Police Law Team

who are all excellent, friendly, and approachable.' – Hannah Walsh, Partner – Weightmans LLP

'When I have instructed Westgate Chambers on behalf of my clients, I always receive a swift and first-class service from beginning to end from the Clerks and Counsel' – Deborah Sandford, Head of Family – Setfords Solicitors.

'Our family law department regularly uses Westgate Chambers. We find Stuart, and the team of clerks, are always happy to help and are extremely responsive. They go over and above to make the admin easier when booking and organising Counsel. The Chambers has a wide ranging and knowledgeable offering of Barristers, who provide a high level of service to the Solicitors instructing and to the lay clients throughout their instruction.' – Emma Taylor, Head of Family and Partner – Goodlaw Solicitors

'Westgate is a highly respectable set of Chambers who I instruct regularly. I have found the clerking team and their Barristers to be easy to deal with, experts in their field and always on hand





to assist wherever possible - nothing is too much trouble.' Tia Harrison, Partner – Mayo Wynne Baxter.

'In recent months I have instructed a number of Barristers in the Family Law Team at Westgate Chambers in both Private Law children cases, financial remedy cases as well as Family Law Act injunction proceedings & have been impressed in the way the cases were dealt with. Counsel have been well prepared in all my cases with the result that my clients have been very happy & satisfied with their representation.' Debra Frazer, Partner – Gaby Hardwicke Solicitors

'Westgate Chambers consistently provide us with first class service across the board. The Barristers we have instructed are not only specialists in Financial Remedies, Child Arrangements and TOLATA, but they are also very approachable, favouring a collaborative working relationship which is invaluable for us as Solicitors and, in turn, our

clients. The team of clerks at Westgate are extremely affable and a pleasure to deal with. We can always rely on them to respond promptly and provide fair fee quotes taking into account the limitation of our clients budgets when needed, which is refreshing. They are our 'go to' set.' Natalie Jones, Head of Family and Partner – Heringtons Solicitors.

'The Barristers at Westgate Chambers provide a fantastic service with significant expertise in a wide range of legal sectors. The clerks are very responsive and make the instruction process as seamless as possible.' Daniel Dickson - Dean Wilson Solicitors

'Westgate Chambers are our Chambers of choice and are at the top of our list when we instruct Counsel! The clerking team are extremely swift to respond and go above and beyond to assist in every way they can. It's always a friendly voice on the other end of the telephone' – Lauren Robinson - Wannops LLP

What's next?

Keep an eye out for further news from Westgate Chambers in our subsequent editions and podcasts.

In the meantime, it is keen to spread the word that it is recruiting Barristers across all levels. For Barristers looking to join a progressive, thoroughly modern Chambers – please get in touch with Sean or Stuart.

www.westgate-chambers.co.uk

Telephone: **01273 480510**

Twitter: **@Westgate1987**

LinkedIn: [Westgate Chambers](#), [Sean Gould](#), [Stuart Taylor](#)

Chambers has a highly competitive commission rate which is confirmed to be lower than the local market.

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