

### CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: SL5 EARN'S DOUBLE LALY RECOGNITION

SL5 Legal proudly celebrated major recognition at the 2025 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards (LALYs), held in London on 4 July 2025. These prestigious national awards highlight the outstanding work of legal aid practitioners who defend human rights, champion fairness and ensure access to justice where it is most needed.

This year, SL5 Legal achieved the remarkable distinction of having **two finalists** at the LALYs — a rare accomplishment for any prison law firm. The nominations recognised the firm's consistent record of success across judicial reviews, parole hearings, prisoner rights cases and wider criminal justice reform work.

Among the firm's achievements this year were:

- Successful challenges to unfair recall and recategorisation decisions
- Ground-breaking work in securing licence termination for IPP prisoners
- Significant results in complex parole matters, including releases and reconsiderations
- Strategic litigation protecting procedural fairness and access to oral hearings
- Advocacy that has helped restore hope and rebuild futures for long-term prisoners

These successes reflect SL5 Legal's unwavering commitment to people in prison — a client group whose struggles are often hidden and whose voices are too often unheard.

The firm's recognition at the LALYs underlines an important truth: **legal aid work changes lives**. The tireless efforts of SL5 Legal's lawyers ensure that clients are treated with dignity, fairness and humanity, no matter the circumstances of their past.

**SL5 Legal Director, Andrew Sperling, said:** "This recognition is a tribute to the dedication, determination and expertise of our whole team. We are proud to stand up every day for clients who depend on the protection of the law."

Being shortlisted at the LALYs is an honour in itself — a celebration of the professionalism, resilience and passion that drive SL5 Legal's mission to secure justice for those society too often overlooks.

The team looks forward to building on this year's successes in 2026, continuing to campaign for fair treatment, accountability and real opportunities for change across the prison and criminal justice system.



*SL5 Legal's LALY finalists: Yasmin (Legal Aid Newcomer) and Emma (Criminal Defence) at the 2025 awards ceremony.*

**Yasmin Karabasic** was awarded the **Legal Aid Newcomer** title for her outstanding work advocating for people in prison. Her practice spans complex parole cases, judicial reviews and security-category challenges — always with a focus on dignity, fairness and the human stories behind each case. Her professionalism and compassion have rebuilt hope for many clients who felt unheard within the system.

**Emma McClure** was recognised as a finalist in the **Criminal Defence** category — a significant achievement for a specialist in prisoner rights. Her tenacity in representing IPP prisoners, and her success in securing licence terminations and holding decision-makers to account, has led to life-changing outcomes for individuals and their families.





**Andrew Sperling**

**Next year, it will be thirty years since I qualified as a Solicitor.**

I still have my own caseload but an important part of my work is developing SL5 and supporting my incredible colleagues. I am so thrilled that we had two finalists in the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards this year. I am immensely proud of the work that all of our team undertake, day in and day out.

My personal highlight of this year (other than Spurs finally winning a trophy) has been helping several clients to have their IPP sentences terminated. It was an emotional and joyful experience calling people for whom I have acted for several years, to tell them that they were finally free of this cruel sentence and no longer at risk of being recalled to prison.

**We are determined to challenge decisions refusing to terminate IPP licences. We have pursued several successful reconsideration applications for our clients.**

One of the difficulties our clients have faced is that the Parole Board have decided that they will only allow an oral hearing for this decision on very rare occasions. We believe that this policy is unlawful and have commenced a judicial review claim, challenging this policy and the decision to refuse to terminate the IPP licence for one of our clients.

This year we made a decision to take on a small number of sentence appeals for IPP clients. We had our first success in the Court of Appeal during November. This was particularly satisfying because it was for a client who had recently received yet another knockback from the Parole Board.

In last year's newsletter, we wrote about a successful challenge in the High Court to the Secretary of State's decision to refuse to allow compassionate release for

one of our clients who was terminally ill.

Early this year, the Secretary of State appealed to the Court of Appeal. We opposed the appeal and the Court of Appeal rejected it. Not only did this mean that our client remained in the community with his family, it also left the High Court's judgment intact.

Legal judgments can set helpful precedents for the benefit of others in the future. We hope that this case will make it easier for people with very serious illnesses to pursue early release on compassionate grounds.

Some legal judgments have the opposite effect, restricting the rights of prisoners to challenge certain decisions of the State. It has become much more difficult to challenge open conditions refusals. We are proud to have had the only successful challenge reported this year.

After the High Court declared that this decision had been unlawful, the Secretary of State was required to make a fresh decision. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State refused to follow the open conditions recommendation again and we have had to pursue a second judicial review claim for him which has been adjourned until the New Year.

These days, my parole cases tend to be complex, long-running affairs including 'TACT' cases and those involving people with learning and other disabilities.

One case I was particularly delighted about the release of a long-standing client who is serving an extended sentence. When I first met him, during the first Covid lockdown, he was in segregation at a high security prison. He was extremely unwell and I pushed for him to be transferred to hospital. Over time, he was able to recover and make very positive progress which led to him being moved back to prison. At his parole

hearing he had no support for release but there was an excellent supported accommodation placement in place and the panel agreed to direct his release. I am thrilled for him and his family.

On the horizon for 2026 is yet another new power for the Secretary of State which undermines the independence of the Parole Board. The 'High Court referral' mechanism provides the Secretary of State with the opportunity to ask the High Court to review release decisions in 'top tier' cases. This new power will exist alongside the reconsideration system.

My colleagues in the Association of Prison Lawyers and I made very detailed submissions to the Ministry of Justice and the Civil Justice Council, explaining the dangers and difficulties which this new power will present.

Unfortunately, the government has decided to press on with this and we now need to prepare for implementation in the New Year.

**Our experience of acting in serious and complex cases and in High Court proceedings will mean that we are well-placed to represent our clients effectively if their release decisions are referred to the High Court.**

I spend far too much of my free time compiling playlists. There are always great songs for every emotion, experience and landmark. I know that this time of year can be particularly challenging and difficult to bear for our clients.

**My choice of song for this year's newsletter is a tribute to Jimmy Cliff, whom we sadly lost a couple of weeks ago.**

**SL5**  
**SOLICITORS**

**MANY RIVERS TO CROSS**



**The song portrays life's struggles as "rivers" that must be crossed, with themes of resilience, loneliness, and perseverance. Despite hardship and heartbreak, it's ultimately a message of enduring strength.**



At the 2025 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards (LALYs), held on 4 July 2025, **Yasmin Karabasic** of SL5 Legal was honoured with the **Legal Aid Newcomer** award — a recognition of her dedication to representing prisoners and upholding human rights.

Yasmin’s work spans a range of challenging and vital areas — from judicial reviews and parole hearings to security-category reviews and recalls. What sets her apart is not just her legal skill, but her human approach.

Colleagues and clients alike have praised her meticulous attention to detail and her ability to treat clients — even those in the highest-security prisons — as more than their worst mistakes.

She is considered by **King’s Counsel** to be **“the up-and-coming star of prison law”** and described by a **Barrister** as **“principled, brilliant, and wholly dedicated to her clients and to public**

**service.”** One expert said she is **“a truly outstanding lawyer, but also an outstanding human being and... an inspirational role model for girls and young women.”**

Clients had this to say: *“Absolutely brilliant... excellent knowledge, amazing personality, giving 100%.”*

*“One of the best solicitors I have had in 14 years of incarceration... she gave me hope again.”*

*“Incredibly considerate, confident and passionate.”*

*“She puts light at the end of the tunnel and makes things feel possible again.”*

*“She truly advocates for her clients.”*

*“A blessing... the only lawyer who took the time to truly get to know my son.”*

Over the last year, Yasmin

- has acted in cases concerning:
- Recategorisation reviews and related procedural fairness judicial reviews
  - Category A reviews and securing downgrades for long-term life-sentenced prisoners
  - Successful reconsideration applications against negative Parole Board decisions
  - Achieving release for long-term prisoners serving EDS sentences at their first parole review
  - Challenges to refusals of oral hearings
  - Challenges to negative pre-tariff sift decisions

**Yasmin said ‘Winning my award was a dream come true. But this award wasn’t just for me - it’s for every client who trusted me to stand up for them when they felt they had no voice. You all enrich my life in so many ways. Wishing you all Seasons Greetings, and here’s to a progressive 2026.’**



**Yasmin Karabasic**



**Lisa Burton**

I think it’s fair to say that 2025 has been a challenging year for anyone involved in prison law. **The delays, inconsistent decisions and increasing pressures on the system have been difficult to navigate, and I know many of my clients have felt those pressures firsthand.**

But even in a year like this, there have been moments that reminded me exactly why I do this job.

One highlight was supporting a long-standing client whose case had been stuck for years due to trauma, neurodiversity and repeated setbacks. After months of preparation and incredible determination on his part, the Parole Board recommended open conditions. Witnessing progress after so many barriers was genuinely uplifting.

Another meaningful moment came when helping an IPP client who had been forced to sleep in his car because of accommodation restrictions. After raising concerns with probation and PPCS, he was finally allowed to return safely to his mum’s home. A small change on paper — but a huge step in helping him rebuild his life.

I also want to acknowledge the brilliant work of my assistant, **Lisa Major**. She is the driving force behind the scenes — chasing timetables, pushing for listing dates, keeping pressure on decision-makers — and making sure I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be. Her support this year has been invaluable, and I couldn’t sustain the standard I aim for without her.

Despite everything, I continue to be inspired by the resilience of the people I represent. They face long delays, uncertainty, and decisions that don’t always feel fair — yet they continue to push forward. Their strength is a huge part of what keeps me committed to this work.

Outside of the legal world, I’ve been doing my best to look after my own wellbeing — mainly by playing netball. What started as a bit of stress relief has somehow turned into playing for four teams... which probably says a lot about the year we’ve all had!

**As 2025 draws to a close, I want to thank everyone who has trusted me to stand alongside them. I hope the Christmas period brings you some peace and that 2026 brings progress, clarity and real opportunities for change.**

I can’t quite believe I’ve been working with Lisa B and SL5 since 2017 — **time really does fly when you love what you do.**

It’s been another full year of keeping everything moving in the background, from visits to hearings, and then switching off by chasing the sun and walking the dog.

**Wishing everyone a peaceful Christmas and a brighter year ahead.**



**Lisa Major**



**Emma McClure**

It is very rare for prison lawyers to be recognised in the Criminal Defence field, which typically focuses on trials rather than the ongoing fight for justice after sentencing.

**Emma McClure's recognition reflects her long-standing commitment to defending the rights and freedoms of prisoners,** particularly those trapped by the injustice of IPP sentences.

Emma's work is driven by a determination to end the suffering caused by a sentence that has left thousands in indefinite uncertainty. Her advocacy has played a key part in helping many achieve long-awaited freedom through the termination of their IPP licences — often in highly challenging circumstances.

The impact of her work is best described by those whose lives she has changed:

*"I am privileged to have known Emma... She finished the job by having my IPP removed... She gave me courage and determination to keep up the good fight... I have never been so happy... She will always be the Queen of IPP."*

Family members have also expressed deep gratitude:

*"Thanks again for all the work you consistently put into helping him... The world needs more people like you."*

Clients repeatedly highlight Emma's honesty, her communication, and her willingness to go further than others ever have:

*"No fake promises... she keeps me in the loop... she goes above and beyond to fight my corner... I trust her — nothing is more important to me."*

Another former client added: *"She has given me hope and confidence for the future... I would trust her with my life."*

Her commitment is recognised beyond client feedback. A Coroner who presided over the inquest into the tragic death of one of her clients wrote in support of her work, praising the clarity and context she brought to the hearing, and describing her as a **"committed, compassionate and effective lawyer whose work deserves to be affirmed."**

Emma's expertise has also helped long-term prisoners understand themselves differently and be understood differently by others — building trust, confidence and the ability to move forward. Her advocacy has brought genuine progress in cases where clients had previously lost hope.

**It is now possible to petition the Secretary of State to 'disapply' a period of recall when calculating the two-year time period for automatic termination of an IPP licence.**

Without this, the two-year period 'resets' every time a prisoner is recalled. It can take many months, sometimes years, to be re-released after a recall. This can push the timing for automatic termination further and further back.

Emma made the **first ever** 'disapply' application on behalf of an IPP client. He had been recalled for a seventh time. This recall had been based on a heavily disputed allegation that was ultimately found to be untrue. As the procedure was new, the application required a great deal of time and skill.

The application was **successful**, and her client's IPP licence has now ended — rather than having to endure a tense two-year waiting period — finally allowing him to escape the traumatic recall merry-go-round.

*Emma said:*  
**"I am proud of my successes but many IPPs are entering their third decade on that sentence so there is plenty more to do."**



**Kay Douglas**

**As the year draws to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on the work we all do and the people we serve.** At SL5 Legal our commitment to supporting clients through the complexities of Prison Law remains at the heart of everything we do.

Behind the scenes, I'm proud to play my part in the administration that keeps these cases moving forward—small steps that, together, make a big difference in ensuring our clients feel supported during what can be an uncertain time.

Christmas is a season of hope, and that hope is something we strive to bring to our clients all year round. Whether it's preparing for parole hearings, offering reassurance, or simply ensuring that every detail is handled with care, even the smallest contributions can help light the way forward.

I wish you all peace, joy, and brighter days ahead this festive season.

**PS above is a picture of me in my dinosaur costume as I completed my walk 60 miles in September for Cancer Research.**



As 2025 comes to an end, we have both taken the opportunity to reflect on a year that has been full of challenges, progress and meaningful moments.

This year has seen us navigate the complexities of prison law together, preparing detailed parole reviews, managing recalls and supporting clients who continue to work incredibly hard to move forward. It has been a privilege to walk alongside people at such pivotal stages of their lives, and we remain committed to giving each case the attention, care and patience it deserves.

It has also been a year that reminded us of the importance of compassion outside of work. Jamaica, a place very close to Nichole's heart, was hit by a

devastating hurricane earlier this year. Watching the destruction unfold from afar has been deeply difficult, but it has strengthened her resolve to help in any way possible. She has been working on gathering supplies to send to those affected and hopes to travel to Jamaica in the new year to support rebuilding efforts. This has been a powerful reminder of how connected we all are and how much impact even small acts of support can have.

Alongside this, we have both tried to focus on personal growth, balancing work with family life, wellbeing and the small moments that keep us grounded. It has not always been easy, but it has certainly been meaningful.



Nichole Warren



'No Storm, no matter how fierce can destroy the seeds of hope sown in the human heart - Daisaku Ikeda'



Hayley Warnes

I am based in the Midlands and have **over 25 years of experience** in prison law. I take on all prison law matters, but I am particularly recognised for my specialist expertise in supporting **IPP prisoners, lifers, and individuals serving long-term sentences**. My focus is always on finding realistic ways to help people progress — especially when they feel stuck or overlooked.

This year has been extremely busy, and I have represented **around 50 clients** at oral hearings alongside many paper reviews.

Each case matters to me, but a few highlights stand out:

- I represented a client with very poor physical health and mobility who was unable — and unwilling — to attend his oral hearing. I ensured his wishes were clearly communicated and his complex needs understood, and the Parole Board ultimately **directed his release** in his absence.
- I took over a case for a client who was significantly over tariff and had become

"As the year comes to a close, I am reflecting on a year that has been both challenging and rewarding.

Supporting Nichole with the prison law work has given me a deeper appreciation of the effort and care that goes into ensuring clients feel supported and heard. Being part of the process, managing the details, keeping things organised and helping ensure everything runs smoothly, has been a significant and fulfilling part of my year.

I am grateful for the teamwork, the progress we have seen and the people we have been able to help."

We are both truly grateful for our colleagues, partners and clients, and for the collaborative spirit that carries us all through even the most demanding periods. Wishing you all a peaceful, restorative and hopeful festive season and a bright start to 2026.

despondent after years of very limited progress. I instructed independent psychological and psychiatric experts, and the Parole Board agreed with the new treatment pathways they identified — giving my client a **genuine opportunity to move forward** for the first time in years.

- I supported an automatic life-sentenced client who was recalled after **8.5 years in the community**, helping him to challenge the situation and begin making progress once again.

One case that meant a great deal to me involved a client I had represented for many years who was **considerably over tariff** and had previously received no support for release. Securing his release from closed conditions means he will **spend his first Christmas in the community since 1996** — something truly life-changing for him and his family.

Outside of work, I spend any spare time I can find — which isn't much — out fishing. My biggest catch so far is a **12½ lb carp**, though I'm working on beating that record!



Chris Mould



This year, Baxter has continued to work across his varied practice.

He secured significant damages arising from delays in Parole Board reviews, including a county court claim in which the settlement rose from the Board's £300 pre-action offer to £10,000.

Baxter also helped to achieve the successful appeal of a long-running IPP sentence, resulting in the immediate release of a client who had spent 17 years on the sentence. His practice has remained diverse, encompassing the judicial review of recall decisions, repatriation cases, and several successful outcomes in independent adjudications.

Looking to the year ahead, Baxter hopes to continue building on his public law practice, notably by challenging the use of recall powers, and pursue further appeals for IPP clients, and build up his civil damages claim practice. Baxter is particularly interested in cases where the freedom of the individual is at stake.



Baxter Jephcott



**Joel Binns**

Joel has been representing prisoners for nearly 20 years. **He has a strong interest in representing prisoners serving indeterminate sentences before the parole board.**

He has a varied and complex workload including TACT cases, those prisoners who maintain their innocence or have been detained well after their tariff expiry date. Joel was recently instructed in a case where client is detained under the rarely used Power To Detain legislation and has been instructed by the Official Solicitor in cases where the client lacks capacity.

Joel's successes this year, include obtaining release for a TACT prisoner who within a six month period obtained a downgrading from Category A and then release by the Parole Board. Joel has experience with representing prisoners who are managed by the National Security Division of the Probation Service and robustly advocates on their behalf especially in terms of additional licence conditions and restrictions.

Joel has also obtained some fantastic outcomes for clients in 2025. He represented several clients serving indeterminate sentences who were recalled and convicted of further offences. Joel secured release from closed conditions arguing that the a period in open conditions was unnecessary given the strength of the release plan.

Joel also understands the importance of his role in working with his clients long term to achieve successful outcomes.

Many of Joel's client have been detained for several years post tariff or have been recalled for several years. Navigating through a complex parole system can be overwhelming and frustrating for prisoners and Joel always advocates on behalf of his clients to minimise delays and proactively seeks to resolve issues as soon as possible.

**Joel takes a proactive approach in assisting these clients working with other professionals to try and progress cases and to achieve release.**

### What another crazy year in this world of prison law!

I am sure you, like all of us, have been watching with interest as several changes have been made to legislation that affects individual's release dates.

**Having specialised in recall cases for a very long period, the impact of FTR48 was the most interesting to get to grips with!**

You will have all seen that the Prisons and Probation Service were unable to keep up with the changes, leading to incorrect criteria being applied and some people not being released on time (and others being released incorrectly or too early). Using my experience, I have been able to navigate this legislation, fully advising a large number of clients and ensuring that they have been released promptly and without delay but also ensuring the legislation has had minimal impact on any ongoing parole proceedings.

Unfortunately, FTR48 only applied to those of you serving sentences of under 4 years and there are a lot more of you that required assistance with your recall who were serving over 4 years or serving life/IPP sentences. Recalls have been more common than ever this

year, and I have been able to use my experience to assist my clients with the complex parole process surrounding recalls and in particular help to understand recalls where there are unproven allegations.

I have had success in this area, and I am always so pleased when my clients are able to secure re-release but also demonstrate to the Parole Board that there was no substance to these unproven allegations!

My consistent area of interest for me has been in assisting Category A prisoners to secure their downgrade to Category B, which I have again done with some success this year despite the ever difficult stance of the Category A Review Team! These results are always extremely rewarding, given the real difficulty that being held as Category A can have on your day to day sentence and indeed parole prospects in the future.

On a personal note, seeing my beloved Sunderland AFC getting back to the Premier League this year has been the cherry on top of a fabulous year!

**It will be interesting to see what 2026 brings, and I wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**



**Amy Rochester**



## **RUNNING FOR PRISON REFORM: SL5 Goes the Extra Mile Behind the Walls**

This year, members of the SL5 Legal team have been proud to take part in two special events alongside residents at **HMP Brixton** and **HMP New Hall**.

The runs were organised by the Prison Reform Trust — the charity working to improve fairness and conditions in the criminal justice system.

Inspired in part by our own **Emma McClure**, who previously ran marathon distances inside the former prisons at Shepton Mallet and Dorchester.

Just like those challenges, residents at Brixton and New Hall committed to **16 weeks of demanding training**, preparing themselves both physically and mentally.

In April, Emma and **Andrew Sperling** joined residents and community runners for the inaugural event at HMP Brixton — a **half marathon made up of repeated loops around the prison grounds**, including plenty of **stairwells** to keep everyone working hard.

In November, Emma returned for the second event at HMP New Hall: a **three-hour timed challenge**, once again involving circuit after circuit within the prison — no easy task when there's no open track and every turn and staircase adds to the climb.

Thanks to the encouragement and support for both runs, Emma and Andrew became the **top fundraisers by a significant margin**, raising **nearly £3,000** for PRT — money that will go toward improving the experience and rights of people in custody.



**2025 has already been a year of major progress for clients serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences, and solicitor Catherine Bond has been at the forefront of this work.**

The new legislation has made termination of IPP licences more achievable, although the process has not been as straightforward as many hoped. The Parole Board continues to adopt a risk-averse approach in many termination applications. Catherine has successfully challenged this through four successful reconsideration applications, which have now resulted in three termination decisions being overturned at reconsideration reviews.

Catherine continues to take the view that the best way to minimise delays is to prepare detailed and persuasive written representations so the Parole Board can make decisions without the need for an oral hearing. While the Parole Board still tends to direct oral hearings by default, it has been encouraging to see that some members are prepared to grant release “on the papers” where the case is clear. Recent examples include a recalled IPP client being directed for release on the papers, with the recall itself found unjustified; the release of another recalled IPP client at Member Case Assessment despite a further conviction for violence; and a similar release outcome for a recalled lifer client with a further conviction for violence.

Catherine has also secured release for a determinate recall client under Rule 21, at least six months earlier than if he had been required to wait for an oral hearing — an outcome which meant he was able to keep his accommodation at a crucial time.

**A significant part of Catherine’s work involves representing clients who were sentenced to life as children.**

She continues to push strongly for their hearings to be prioritised, because this important principle is too often overlooked. Last year, she secured release from closed conditions for one such client who had served decades past his minimum term, only for him to be recalled very quickly in what she considered a grossly unfair decision.

Catherine challenged the recall and the Parole Board agreed that it was unjustified, directing his re-release. More recently, she has also secured release from closed conditions for another client sentenced to life as a child who had served many years beyond tariff, and she has achieved release for the sixth time for another longstanding child-lifer client.

Another key achievement involved a lifer client who was refused release at his end-of-tariff review. Catherine made a successful reconsideration application, and release has now been directed. These outcomes reflect her determination to continue pushing every possible avenue to achieve fair results. Catherine wishes all her clients the very best wherever they are on their journey and reassures them that she will continue fighting for the right outcomes in every case.

Clients consistently express their appreciation for Catherine’s work. They describe her as “the best solicitor out there,” someone well-known in the prison system by both staff and residents, assertive yet kind. Others recognise her exceptional professionalism, the extra effort she puts in, and the comfort of having her on their side.

**One client put it simply: “As always, I could not hold Catherine Bond in any higher regard than I do. She’s always all over her brief, whilst at the same time engendering complete trust, with empathy and a rare human touch.”**



**Catherine Bond**



Koestler Arts is the UK’s leading prison arts charity, encouraging creativity among people in prisons, secure hospitals and on probation. Through its annual Koestler Awards, participants receive recognition, feedback, and the opportunity for their artwork, writing or music to be showcased in public exhibitions. The programme helps build confidence, supports rehabilitation and gives a powerful creative voice to people whose talents are often unseen.

**Below are just a few of our team’s favourite picks this year.**



*Where Dreams Have Flown – HMP Bure*



*Jail Birds – HMP Dovegate*



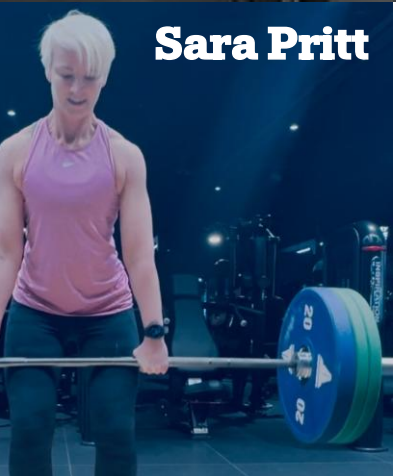
*Wheelie Bin – HMP Dovegate*



*Tiny Books, Big Ideas– HMPYOI New Hall*



*Freedom of Art – HMP Warren Hill*



**Sara Pritt**

**As we move into 2026, I am as dedicated as ever to helping people navigate the parole process and achieve meaningful progress in custody.**

Every case matters deeply, and the trust clients place in me and the rest of the SL5 Legal team remains something I value enormously. This year has brought a number of positive outcomes — including progression to open conditions, successful challenges to recall decisions, and parole results that truly reflect the progress clients have worked hard to achieve.

It has also meant a great deal to me to continue maintaining positive relationships with long-standing clients who I have supported for many years, while also building new and trusting relationships with those I have only recently begun to represent.

Each person's journey is different, and being able to stand alongside them at such a crucial stage remains a privilege. What continues to motivate me most is seeing clients take control of their future and knowing that I have played even a small role in that journey. I always seek to be honest and straightforward in my advice — even when conversations are tough — because realistic preparation is often the key to success.

Hearing from clients after a positive outcome is what makes all the long hours and difficult battles worthwhile. I am often told how much it means to have someone in their corner who treats them with respect and humanity — one client wrote,

*"She was always honest with me, even if it was something I didn't want to hear... we are all truly grateful for the humanity she has shown me."* Another thanked me for being there whenever support was needed, saying, *"Every time I phoned for updates, everything was done to a very high standard. Thank you."* And after achieving long-awaited progress, a client told me that my work had helped him finally move forward: *"Compassionate and diligent... I will be forever grateful."* To know that the people I represent feel heard, believed in, and supported — not just legally but as individuals — is the greatest reward I could ask for.

It has also been a year of strong legal challenges. I successfully opposed two Public Oral Hearing applications, ensuring that my clients did not face the scrutiny or public backlash that can come with unnecessarily holding hearings in public. I was pleased to finally achieve release for a recalled lifer who had been repeatedly recommended for open conditions, only for those recommendations to be blocked by the Secretary of State. And one of the most meaningful results this year was securing release for a significantly post-tariff lifer with a long-standing dementia diagnosis. He had never previously received legal representation, and adult social care had failed to recognise his needs or offer suitable accommodation. With the right challenge, he has now moved to a supported living facility where he will receive the care he deserves. I was genuinely touched when his prison carer told me: *"Thank you — if it wasn't for you, he would have never been released."*

I am also excited to have welcomed **Dave Allen** as my Legal Assistant this year. Dave has settled into the role extremely well, already building strong trust and rapport with clients. His down-to-earth approach and unassuming manner make him an excellent first point of contact, helping ensure clients feel supported and heard at every stage of their case.

Away from work, I've continued training and competing in **Hyrox**, a hybrid strength and endurance challenge. Whilst I'm not particularly keen on the running involved, I always push myself to get it done — and the sense of achievement at the end is worth it every time. That persistence is something I bring into every case: keep moving forward, keep improving, and don't lose sight of the goal. I'm now fully fit again and raring to go for my next event in January — my first as a solo competitor — and I'm stepping into it with high hopes and full commitment.

Looking ahead, my focus remains on continuing to deliver excellent advocacy at Parole Board hearings, challenging unfair recall decisions, and pushing for fair outcomes wherever the system falls short. No matter how complex the situation, I will always stand firmly with my clients — ensuring their progress is recognised and their voices are heard.

**Thank you to everyone who has allowed me to be part of their journey so far. I look forward to supporting many more clients in 2026 — helping them move forward with hope, confidence, and the best possible chance of success.**



KOESTLER ARTS

**Written by a resident of HMP Bure, this poem is full of courage and quiet strength, showing that hope can flourish anywhere.**

Behind these walls, where shadows loom, a flicker of hope begins to bloom.

The clanging gate, the stone-cold floors cannot silence dreams that soar.

The hours stretch long, the days crawl by but within my soul, I reach for the sky.

Through tiny windows, the sunlight gleams. A reminder of freedom and far brighter dreams.

Though iron bars may hold me tight, they can't cage my soul's vibrant light.

For in each moment, I find way to make my spirit rise each day.

A book, a thought or quiet prayer in every corner strength is there.

The world outside may seem so far away, but peace and solace I can find today.

For life's true freedom lies within. Not in the walls nor the skin we're in. And although I'm here, I know it's true the power of hope will drive me through.

So, I'll walk this road, though it's steep and long, with courage in my heart and with silent song.

For even in prison, one can still be free if your heart knows the truth of its liberty.