

RM3788 Wider Public Sector Legal Services

An Introduction to Carson McDowell

Carson McDowell is Northern Ireland's largest corporate and commercial law firm, with over 160 people working across 25 specialist areas of expertise. Our team works with some of the largest, most commercially sophisticated Northern Irish based clients as well as "blue-chip" industrial, service and financial companies, educational institutions, emerging enterprises, public bodies and international clients requiring a legal partner in Northern Ireland.

Our areas of expertise include:

- BANKING & FINANCE
- CHARITY
- COMMERCIAL LITIGATION & DISPUTE RESOLUTION
- COMMERCIAL LAW
- CORPORATE/M&A
- DEBT RECOVERY
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT
- ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
- EU AND COMPETITION
- HEALTHCARE
- HEALTH & SAFETY
- INFORMATION LAW
- INSOLVENCY AND RESTRUCTURING
- INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
- LICENSING
- PLANNING
- PUBLIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE
- REAL ESTATE

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Our Education Experience

Carson McDowell has developed a multi-disciplinary education team, reflecting the broad section of advice that our education clients require. Our clients range from higher education, further education, schools and education service providers. Our longstanding experience in this sector gives us the ability to provide support in areas such as technology transfer, property and regulatory advice including support including student and staff discipline and contract support.

What we do

- Advising in respect of Education Law
- Knowledge Transfer Protection
- Intellectual Property Recognition and Registration
- Support on Visitorial and Charter Issues and Governance in the Education Sector in Northern Ireland
- Educational Property matters including support in the development of broad property portfolios for our educational clients
- Advising on the setting and implementation of entrance and award criteria
- Procurement support on capital projects and service contracts
- Copyright and Database legal support, in particular in the range of services required of the examination scripts
- Preparing memorandum of understanding for collaborative projects
- Contractual advice and support including contentious support services
- Advising on policy and practice in relation to student discipline.

Primary Contacts

Richard Gray, Joint Head of Corporate (richard.gray@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8949)

Declan Magee, Joint Head of Litigation (declan.magee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8863)

Our Commercial Experience

The Commercial Team at Carson McDowell delivers on all contractual areas to help private and public sector clients achieve their objectives. We have a dedicated team of commercial lawyers, providing practical, innovative and well-documented solutions for our clients.

The Commercial Team offers substantial expertise across a diverse range of specialisms such as commercial contracts, technology & innovation, data protection, confidentiality and Intellectual Property and is a trusted adviser to clients across a broad range of industry sectors such as manufacturing, education, information technology, energy & renewables, retail, transport, agri-food and waste.

As a team, we are well known for having a real understanding of our clients' businesses, taking a pragmatic and cost-conscious approach and developing strong working relationships with our clients.

What we do

- Commercial Contracts
- Data Protection and Information Law
- Technology & Innovation
- Intellectual Property
- Information Technology
- Partnerships
- Franchise Law
- Lifesciences
- Telecommunications
- International trade and investment
- Transport

Primary Contact

Dawn McKnight, Head of Commercial (dawn.mcknight@carson-mcdowell.com. DDI 028 9034 8813)

Our Banking Experience

Carson McDowell has a cutting-edge reputation in banking and financial services through our strong links with major lenders locally and globally, including Bank of Ireland, Bank of Scotland PLC, Barclays Bank plc, HSBC Bank PLC, Santander UK PLC, JP Morgan Chase Bank, Credit Suisse, First Trust Bank, Northern Bank Limited, Closed Asset Finance Ltd and Lombard North Central Plc. We advise many of the major domestic financial institutions and many of the world's leading international banks, finance houses, investment managers, investment funds, insurance companies and other financial services firms operating in Northern Ireland. Our specialist lawyers work with teams across the firm to provide comprehensive in-house support for clients managing multi-faceted corporate and financial matters. Our lawyers also accept instructions from leading law firms across the UK, the Republic of Ireland and further afield in relation to all aspects of banking and financial services.

What we do

- Banking and Finance
- Asset Finance Leasing and Receivables
- Corporate finance
- Debt Securities
- Leveraged & Acquisition Finance
- Property Finance
- Invoice Discounting/Factoring
- Project Finance
- Energy and Renewables Finance

Primary Contact

Sinead McGrath, Head of Banking (sinead.mcgrath@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8869)

Our EU, Competition and Procurement Experience

EU and Competition

Carson McDowell's EU and Competition Team provides both contentious and non-contentious advice to clients on all aspects of competition law, sector regulation and other areas of EU law. The team's comprehensive experience and wide-ranging expertise is unmatched in Northern Ireland. Specialist areas of expertise include merger control law, cartels, abuse of dominance, competition investigations, State aid, energy, transport and bribery law.

Procurement Law

Carson McDowell has a team of highly experienced lawyers specialising in all aspects of public procurement. Whether you are a purchaser in the public sector, procure contracts in the utilities sector or bid for these types of contracts, we can help. We are a dedicated procurement law team based in Northern Ireland, but advising throughout the UK. We support our clients across a wide range of procurement matters, from strategic planning and conduct of the procurement process, to resolving disputes. Our clients rely on us for our expertise, innovative approach and pragmatic advice.

What we do

- EU Law
- Competition Law
- Public Procurement

Primary Contacts

Declan Magee, Joint Head of Litigation (declan.magee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8863)

Kerry Teahan, Head of Procurement (kerry.teahan@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8820)

Our Corporate Law Experience

The Corporate Team at Carson McDowell advises leading Northern Ireland businesses and international companies doing business in Northern Ireland across a broad range of sectors. We are involved in providing specialist legal advice on all aspects of corporate transactions and matters. For decades, our lawyers have advised on the most significant M&A and corporate transactions in Northern Ireland. Our experience and reputation speaks volumes, which is why we are widely recognised as one of the leading corporate and M&A legal practices in Northern Ireland. Our partner-led team has over 100 years combined experience, which we bring to bear in offering a results driven, problem solving approach.

What we do

- Mergers and acquisitions
- Corporate Law
- Telecommunications
- Life Sciences
- Private equity and venture capital
- Reorganisations and restructuring
- Shareholder agreements, joint ventures and partnerships

Primary Contacts

Richard Gray, Joint Head of Corporate (richard.gray@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8949)

Neasa Quigley, Joint Head of Corporate (neasa.quigley@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8918)

Our Employment Experience

The Employment Team at Carson McDowell is widely recognised as one of the leading employment teams in Northern Ireland. Our clients, who span the private, public and voluntary sectors, tell us they value the quality and speed of our technical advice and our ability to provide strategic solutions which balance legal and commercial issues. Above all, they value the importance we place on investing time in getting to know our client's business and building on personal relationships.

What we do

- Drafting and advising on all aspects of the employment contract and associated employment policies including staff handbooks
- Employment litigation, spanning the defence and representation of employers at Industrial and Fair Employment Tribunals, as well as dealing with High Court breach of contract claims and injunctions
- Employment aspects of corporate restructuring, outsourcing and mergers
- Equality and fair employment advice, ranging from compliance with Northern Ireland's unique equality legislation to defending equality claims
- Advising on the handling of grievance and other workplace investigations
- Industrial relations and trade union matters
- Performance- advising on performance, managing absence and misconduct
- Restrictive covenants and team moves
- Redundancy, reorganisations and changes to terms and conditions of employment
- Handling senior executive terminations, including drafting and negotiating compromise agreements
- TUPE
- Whistleblowing
- Advising on data protection, employment records and employee monitoring
- Bespoke training, seminars and workshops on a wide range of employment issues
- At Carson McDowell LLP, 'top-class employment lawyer' Rachel Penny ('she has a great attitude') acted alongside Leona Rankin for Santander UK in a constructive dismissal case. Orlagh O'Neill heads the practice, and specialises in advising schools and colleges on governance and employment matters.

Primary Contacts

Orlagh O'Neill, Head of Employment (orlagh.oneill@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8907)
Rachel Penny, Employment Partner (rachel.penny@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8865)

Our Energy and Renewables Team Experience

Our team of dedicated corporate, planning, environment, property, regulatory, finance, property and commercial lawyers has unrivalled experience in the energy and renewables sector in Northern Ireland. Our enviable broad client base ranges from on-shore and off-shore renewable power generators to the electricity network owner in Northern Ireland. We are also in the unique position in the Northern Ireland legal services market of being able to offer the full range of specialist legal services to our energy clients entirely from our Belfast based team, without relying on external Dublin or London based resources. This means we are in a position to deliver unparalleled services at very competitive rates.

What we do

- Projects
- Energy Regulation
- Grid connection
- Power purchase agreements
- EPC & O&M contracts
- Project Finance
- Procurement
- Renewable Support Advice
- EU & Competition
- M&A
- Site Assembly and Project Structuring

Primary Contacts

Gary McGhee, Head of Planning (gary.mcghee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8802)

Neasa Quigley, Joint Head of Corporate (neasa.quigley@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8918)

Dawson McConkey, Head of Real Estate (dawson.mcconkey@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8846)

Our Commercial Litigation Experience

Our highly experienced Commercial Litigation Team strives to help clients avoid litigation where possible. We have been at the forefront of the movement towards alternative forms of dispute resolution in Northern Ireland and regularly represent clients in mediation, arbitration and adjudication settings. Where litigation cannot be avoided we guide clients through what can be a difficult process and provide commercially focused, strategic advice to deliver the best possible outcome.

What We Do

We regularly act in County Court, High Court with experience also in the Supreme Court and European Court of Justice.

Below is a selection of the type of matters we can assist with:

- General commercial disputes including breach of contract and negligence
- Contentious Corporate matters including Shareholder Disputes and SPA Disputes
- Judicial Review
- IP Litigation to include Patent, Trademark and Copyright Disputes
- IT Disputes including issues surrounding procurement of IT Solution and Website Development
- Civil Fraud cases (including dawn raids)
- Banking & Financial Services Litigation
- Insurance Disputes including coverage issues, material non-disclosure etc
- Procurement challenges
- Partnership Disputes
- Media & Broadcasting/Reputation Management
- Product Liability
- Property litigation
- Debt Recovery
- Insolvency
- Dispute resolution

Primary Contacts

Declan Magee, Joint Head of Litigation (declan.magee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8863)

Peter Guzhar, Partner Litigation (peter.guzhar@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8919)

Our Real Estate Experience

Carson McDowell's Real Estate Team is ranked Band 1 in Chambers and Partners UK and is recognised as a leader in the Northern Ireland market place providing advice to clients on all aspects of property law. In an ever changing market and challenging economic climate, the Real Estate Team advises many specialist sectors and is constantly adapting to meet the demands of its clients. With a high profile in the retail sector, the team successfully manages the balance in acting on behalf of both landlords and tenants. The team has also developed a strong reputation for development work and has been involved in major infrastructure, education, leisure and entertainment projects. The team also has a particularly strong presence in the energy sector having advised clients on energy related property issues for over ten years. In an uncertain market, we have an unrivalled ability to add value to our clients by sharing our market knowledge, providing a proactive and dedicated team to meet client demands. The team increasingly works as part of a larger multi-disciplinary team on complex transactions, drawing advice from other specialisms across the firm such as the corporate, environmental, construction, dispute resolution and regulatory teams to ensure that our clients enjoy a full and seamless service at all times.

What We Do

- Advising landlords and tenants with respect to all issues pertaining to the leasing of property
- Advising with respect to the acquisition and disposal of property
- Advising with respect to site assembly for residential and commercial projects
- Advising with respect to commercial and residential site development
- Energy projects including wind, off shore and bio mass
- Energy from waste projects including landfill
- Infrastructure and project development
- Portfolio management
- Advising with respect to Compulsory Purchase and blight
- Property due diligence
- PFI/PPP
- Title defect rectification

Primary Contacts

Dawson McConkey, Head of Real Estate (dawson.mcconkey@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8846)

Emma Cooper, Real Estate Partner (emma.cooper@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8939)

Our Planning Experience

Established over two decades ago, Carson McDowell's Planning Law Team exists in recognition of the need amongst its diverse client portfolio to deliver specific and tailored advice in the specialist area of Northern Irish planning law. With national and European jurisprudence and legislation on planning issues emerging on a near daily basis, the provision of planning law advice in NI requires the expertise of lawyers specialising in this increasingly complex area. The Planning Law Team in Carson McDowell is the largest team of specialist planning lawyers in NI, with each of the five team members practising exclusively in the fields of planning and environmental law.

What We Do

Set out below are just some of the areas in which Carson McDowell's Planning Law Team provides specialist, practical and strategic advice:

- The instigation and defence of judicial reviews of planning decisions;
- The co-ordination of major planning applications;
- Advice on the form, content and lawfulness of Environmental Statements;
- Advice on the form, content and lawfulness of Strategic Environmental Assessments;
- Advice on the form, content and lawfulness of Habitats Regulations Assessments;
- The preparation of planning and roads agreements;
- Representation of clients at area plan inquiries, roads inquiries and planning appeals;
- Advice on comprehensive development legislation;
- Advice on planning conditions and lawful amendment of applications;
- Making, opposing and monitoring of applications for planning permission;
- Advice on areas of special control including legislation and case law relating to conservation areas, listed buildings and historic monuments;
- Advising on all aspects of planning legislation, jurisprudence and planning process;
- Planning due diligence pursuant to the acquisition and financing of renewable energy developments in NI; and
- Planning due diligence - including due diligence pursuant to the acquisition of real estate development companies and assets, energy from waste plants, and the financing of such acquisitions of business operating in NI for local and international investors.

Primary Contacts

Gary McGhee, Head of Planning (gary.mcghee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8802)

Grant McBurney, Planning Partner (grant.mcburney@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8927)

Our Healthcare and Health & Safety Experience

Healthcare

Carson McDowell's Healthcare Team has unrivalled knowledge and experience of this sector in Northern Ireland. The team advises medical defence organisations, insurers, healthcare practitioners, private clinics, pharmacists, optometrists and care homes. In addition to defending clinical negligence/medical malpractice claims on behalf of practitioners from across the spectrum of health related disciplines, the Healthcare Team includes three lawyers who are dedicated to defending healthcare professionals in regulatory and disciplinary matters. We have represented the needs of healthcare clients at a range of high profile Inquests and Inquiries, including the Vale of Leven Hospital and the Hyponatraemia Inquiries. We pride ourselves on adopting a practical and proactive response to the legal problems faced by our clients. In achieving this, we recognise the need for a rapid response. This comes to the fore for many of our clients when facing complaints or enforcement action by regulatory bodies, such as the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. We also deal with ethical issues and advice on policy and procedure. Our experience allows us to fully understand and assist with the complex issues surrounding information governance with experience in data protection and freedom of information issues. The team is the largest Healthcare Team in NI and comprises of seventeen lawyers specialising exclusively in healthcare law.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Team at Carson McDowell is comprised of Partners, Associates and Assistant Solicitors who have first-hand experience of advising in this specialist area in Northern Ireland. Many of our Solicitors have practised in England and Wales, in addition to Northern Ireland, and are able to advise your business seamlessly across these legal jurisdictions. We also have experience of co-ordinating international health and safety advice and can work with associate firms in other countries to project-manage this for you.

What we do

- Healthcare regulation
- Healthcare litigation
- Transactional healthcare issues
- Health and Safety law

Primary Contacts

Roger McMillan, Head of Healthcare (roger.mcmillan@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8812)
Leigh Linton, Partner Regulatory (leigh.linton@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8862)

Our Charity Experience

Our Charities Team has developed a reputation for providing clear and unequivocal advice to the third sector focusing specifically on the needs of charitable and “not for profit” clients. We provide practical and cost effective advice to a range of charities on corporate structure. In the current economic climate with pressure on resources, our team has been able to advise on collaborative arrangements and partnerships between charitable groups and provides assistance with funding arrangements. Specialist areas of expertise include corporate advice, public procurement, property advice, employment advice and information management. The team comprises lawyers with specialist experience advising third sector clients. Their individual expertise in corporate governance, property, employment and information management allows us to provide a comprehensive service to our charitable clients dealing with all their legal requirements. In addition to the clients we advise, partners and solicitors in the firm serve on a variety of trustee boards and committees bringing their wealth of experience to this sector.

What We Do

- Advising in relation to corporate structure and ensuring compliance with the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act (NI) 2008
- Providing advice in relation to compliance with the requirements of the NI Charity Commission and whether clients will meet the public benefit ...test;
- Advising in relation to corporate governance both for charities in Northern Ireland and GB to include organisational restructures, constitutional ...reconfigurations, officer induction training and director's duties;
- The specialist Public Procurement team have extensive experience (both contentious and non-contentious) advising charities under the Public ...Contracts Regulations 2006;
- The Real Estate Team has wide experience acting in the acquisition and disposal of sites for charitable bodies and in particular advising them of their duties in relation to land dealings pursuant to the Charities Act (NI) 2008;
- Employment issues specific to the third sector to include contentious and non-contentious advice;
- Advising clients on the impact of the Historical Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland;
- Information management advice on data protection, confidentiality and Freedom of Information issues.

Primary Contacts

Orlagh O'Neill, Head of Employment (orlagh.oneill@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8907)

Dawn McKnight, Head of Commercial (dawn.mcknight@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8813)

Our Public and Administrative Law Experience

Carson McDowell has a longstanding reputation in advising clients in the public sector in Northern Ireland. As a result our experience is longstanding in advising in the area of Public & Administrative Law. We have considerable experience in supporting our public sector clients in their decision making processes, acutely aware of the close scrutiny that potentially contentious decisions can have in the modern forum.

Our cross disciplinary team provides expertise in contentious and non-contentious teams, enabling us to support our clients through each stage in the decision making process to include any challenges that may arise.

What We Do

- Support clients in establishing their processes to ensure they are robust
- Facilitate our clients in decision making processes to ensure compliance
- Regulatory advice on compliance obligations
- Real Estate advice for the public sector
- Support in assessing any challenges to the decisions by our public sector clients
- Freedom of Information and Data Protection advice and support
- Representation in Judicial Review proceedings
- Procurement advice and support

Primary Contacts

Declan Magee, Joint Head of Litigation (declan.magee@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8863)

Leigh Linton, Partner Regulatory (leigh.linton@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8862)

Our Licensing Experience

The Licensing team provides both contentious and non-contentious advice to clients on all aspects of Licensing Law. The services on offer range from obtaining restaurant, hotel and pub liquor licences to securing the grant of protection orders and transfer orders for pubs and hotels. The team also acts on behalf of established pubs, restaurateurs, hoteliers, retailers and retail groups in the grant and renewal of licences. In addition to applying for provisional and final grant licences, the team also advises in respect of transfers, sales and purchases, objections, occasional licences and club licences. The team is responsible for advising clients on a regular basis on developments in licensing legislation and case law, in particular, to include the recent and continued proposals to reform liquor licensing in Northern Ireland.

What We Do

- Obtaining restaurant, hotel and pub liquor licences
- Dealing with liquor licence matters arising from the administration sale of companies that own pubs, hotels and restaurants
- Advising on the application for protection orders and transfers orders in relation to pubs, hotels, off-sales and other licensed premises
- Obtaining provisional and final grant of new licences
- Advising in respect of transfers, sales and purchases, objections, occasional licences and club licences
- Advising on licensing legislation
- Obtaining court orders for alterations
- Renewal of licences
- Applications for ancillary additions to licences
- Provision of regular updates to clients regarding proposed changes to the law regulating the sale and supply of alcohol in Northern Ireland

Primary Contact

Cathy Colton, Head of Licensing (cathy.colton@carson-mcdowell.com, DDI 028 9034 8955)

Key Profiles

Cathy Colton, Partner, Head of Licensing

Cathy joined the Real Estate Team at Carson McDowell as a Partner in 2015 and heads up the Licensing sub-team within the Department. She enjoys an extensive client base in both the retail and business sectors at the forefront of Liquor Licensing in NI for the past fifteen years. She is recognised as being a leading player in this niche area of practice. Her clients describe her as “very knowledgeable and timely” in her advices and they appreciate “her ability to deal with this complex area of law whilst offering practical and commercially viable solutions”.

Dawn McKnight, Partner, Commercial

Dawn heads up the firm’s Commercial Team as well as its Non-Contentious Intellectual Property Team and its Tech Sector Team. Dawn is well experienced in advising on a wide range of commercial matters including: framework agreements, long term supply arrangements (goods and services), standard Ts & Cs, distributor agreements, franchise arrangements, agency arrangements, concession agreements and sales promotion agreements. She also advises on a variety of non-contentious IP matters including licensing, assignment, applying for trademarks, copyright matters, app/software development agreements, etc.). Dawn has gained extensive experience in advising on a wide range of commercial issues for clients operating both within and outside of the higher education sector.

Dawson McConkey, Partner, Head of Real Estate

Dawson advises clients on a full range of property matters including acquisitions and disposals, development, landlord and tenant and investment work. He has developed a specialist interest in the property aspects of energy and renewable projects and has been personally involved in the majority of wind energy developments in Northern Ireland to date. Dawson also represents a number of clients in the food and agriculture sector. Chambers and Partners UK has described as ‘a justifiably rated lawyer with expertise in renewable energy work’, who is ‘always pleasant to deal with’.

Declan Magee, Partner, Joint Head of Litigation

Declan has developed a strong client base in both the public and private sectors, he jointly leads the Dispute Resolution Team in Carson McDowell. The team is recognised in a number of sections of the leading guides on the legal profession as being at the forefront of the niche practice areas covered by the Department. Declan specialises in defending / initiating tender challenges and represented FP McCann in its successful challenge against the Department for Regional Development. He advised on Ulster University governance scope under a contract in respect of student accommodation residence.

Gary McGhee, Partner, Head of Planning and Environment

Gary McGhee heads the Planning Team and is one of the few solicitors in the jurisdiction specialising exclusively in planning law. Gary’s team advises major commercial, institutional and entrepreneurial clients including most of the large wind farm developers in Northern Ireland on all aspects of the planning process from the formulation of planning applications to the instigation and defence of judicial review proceedings into planning decisions. The Team has acted for both applicants for planning permission and objectors for over 20 years and therefore brings a wealth of all-round experience to applications for planning permission.

Grant McBurney, Partner, Planning & Environment

Grant has been a member of the Planning & Environmental Law Team within Carson McDowell since 2005, qualifying as a solicitor in September 2007. Grant advises on a wide range of planning and environmental matters, including waste and contaminated land; waste management licencing; environmental permitting; trans-frontier shipment of waste; defence of waste and environmental prosecutions; and the provision of due diligence for the acquisition, disposal and funding of major renewable energy projects including wind farms and energy from waste plants. Grant is a committee member of the Environmental and Planning Law Association of Northern Ireland and the UK Environmental Law Association.

Kerry Teahan, Partner, Head of Procurement

Kerry is Head of the firm’s Procurement Department and specialises in all aspects of the procurement and contracting process, from structuring and pre-procurement market engagement, through to conduct of the tender process, supporting evaluation, contract negotiation and defence of challenges. Kerry is trusted to advise on some of the most complex and challenging projects in procurement, both within Northern Ireland and beyond, and has extensive experience working with NDPB’s, local authorities, Universities and in a wide variety of market sectors.

Leigh Linton, Partner, Regulatory

Leigh joined the Healthcare Team at Carson McDowell in 1999 practising in the fields of Regulatory and Professional Discipline work and in the defence of Clinical Negligence claims. Chambers and Partners 2017 Interviewees say she is

“highly conscientious and has good attention to detail on important issues in a case.” Leigh is a Committee Member of the Association of Regulatory and Disciplinary Lawyers (ARDL).

Neasa Quigley, Partner, Joint Head of Corporate

Neasa has practised as a corporate lawyer throughout her career in Dublin and Belfast working across a number of sectors but specialising in the Energy and Technology sectors. She trained with William Fry Solicitors in Dublin and qualified as solicitor in 1997. Neasa has been a partner with Carson McDowell LLP since 2010. She is dual qualified in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Chambers and Partners UK describes Neasa as an ‘utterly reliable’ solicitor. She is also described as ‘exceptional’, ‘very professional’ and ‘very commercially aware’.

Orlagh O’Neill, Partner, Head of Employment

Orlagh heads the Employment Team at Carson McDowell which represents clients including Royal Mail Group, Translink, Port of Belfast, Kainos and CVS Caremark. Since qualification, Orlagh has specialised in Employment Law and has advised some of Northern Ireland’s largest and best known employers. She is a Committee Member and Treasurer of the Employment Lawyers Group of Northern Ireland, a member of both the UK and Irish Employment Law Groups (ELA and ELAI) and a regular speaker at annual employment law update conferences.

Peter Guzhar, Partner, Litigation

Peter graduated in 2002 with an LLB Honours Degree in Law from Queen’s University Belfast. Peter then obtained his qualification from the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in 2006 having been an Apprentice with Carson McDowell during the previous two years. Peter became an Associate in August 2012 and works closely with Partner, Declan Magee, in the Commercial Litigation and Dispute Resolution Team. He has particular experience with contentious corporate, commercial and partnership matters and intellectual property disputes.

Sinead McGrath, Partner, Head of Banking

Sinead is Head of the Banking and Finance team and advises a wide range of banks, borrowers and financial institutions on acquisition finance, real estate finance, general corporate lending, project finance and restructuring. She has been consistently recognised as a leader in her field in the Chambers Guide to the UK legal profession and Legal 500 for more than ten years.

Rachel Penny, Partner, Employment

Rachel’s experience straddles both contentious and non-contentious employment law for a wide range and size of clients. Rachel has particular expertise in advising on TUPE and other employment matters in corporate transactions and mergers, including public sector reorganisations. Rachel also has long experience in defending employers in industrial and fair employment tribunals. Rachel is ranked in Chambers and Partners UK as a leader in her field and has been described in that publication as having a ‘clear, articulate and assertive approach’, being ‘bright and experienced’ and a ‘great all-rounder’.

Richard Gray, Partner, Joint Head of Corporate

Richard’s main areas of practice are in corporate, corporate finance and projects work. He also advises a number of clients in relation to competition matters. Richard has also worked as an external course adviser at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in Belfast in the area of company law. He is a member of the Law Societies of Northern Ireland and of England and Wales. Richard has been named as a ‘leader in the field’ for corporate finance (and previously for banking and projects). He has more than 25 years’ experience advising on a full spectrum of company law and commercial issues for a range of private and public sector clients, including a number of clients in the higher and further education sectors. In his previous firm, Richard advised the Queen’s University of Belfast for more than 15 years.

Roger McMillan, Head of Healthcare

Roger McMillan (Head of the Healthcare Team and Joint Head of the Litigation Team) attained a Business & Finance Law (Hons) Degree from Brunel University in 1994. Roger was admitted to the Roll in England & Wales in June 1997, after studying at the Chester School of Law. Roger is a Member of the Association of Regulatory and Disciplinary Lawyers (ARDL), the Clinical Negligence Practitioners’ Group and the QBD Medical Negligence Sub-Committee. Roger is ranked band one in the Chambers and Partners guide 2017. One source notes “His vast knowledge is invaluable. He is an impressive strategic thinker and quickly grasps the complexities of cases.”