

ABOUT ASHURST ALUMNI

Alumni news

Catch up on the latest news about Ashurst and Blake Dawson alumni.



If you are an alum of the firm who has started a new position, won an award or perhaps moved into a different career path then please let us know, we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at alumni@ashurst.com.

Achievements and appointments

Congratulations to our alumni on their recent achievements and new appointments.

DUBAI - ANAS BHURTUN APPOINTED COUNSEL AT CHECKOUT.COM



Anas Bhurtun (Associate, Dubai, until 2019) recently took up the role of Counsel for Checkout.com, a leading connected payments provider. Anas has a keen interest in cyptocurrency, blockchain and FinTech and is looking forward to being part of the push towards new global financial systems.

Tell us about your new role.

I am counsel for Checkout.com, working closely with the General Counsel, and cover Checkout.com's expansion and operations across the MENA and Asia Pacific regions. Checkout.com is Europe's premier FinTech unicorn, with a valuation of US\$15bn, and operates worldwide across five continents. We work with companies like Klarna, Robinhood, Deliveroo, TransferWise and Revolut, offering a range of acquisition and payment processing services using real-time data through one integration.

I assist the GC and MENA regional manager in project managing internal projects, negotiating commercial agreements with our payment partners and merchant clients, as well as providing general legal advice to all members of the Checkout.com team, from management to software engineers and business development teams.

What are you most excited about in your new job?

It is certainly an exciting time to be in FinTech because a lot of movement is happening in financial services and banking regulatory frameworks worldwide. Personally, I am quite passionate about the emergence of cryptocurrencies and the number of blockchain businesses starting up right now. Checkout.com works with a number of cryptocurrency/blockchain companies and is a key payment partner of Facebook's Diem Association, which seeks to change the way global payments are undertaken through the issue of its own cryptocurrency.

I am very much looking forward to how Checkout.com participates in the push by governments for a new financial system in relation to the issue of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) (the EU, the US and China

have recently announced plans for their CBDCs) and the growth of companies seeking to tokenise assets (such as real estate, art, gold and currencies) on the blockchain, which will revolutionise how assets are bought and sold in the future.

What are you passionate about outside of work?

To be honest, I am quite passionate about FinTech and spend a lot of time attending seminars and talks on cryptocurrency and blockchain tech, as well as new ideas that are sprouting in the wider venture capital and start-up community. Currently, I am working with a friend to produce a podcast to help demystify cryptocurrency people in the MENA region, which we plan to title "Crypto Sheikhs"!

Outside of this, I am passionate about music and languages. I have been playing guitar for 12 years and make sure I play almost every day. Although COVID presents an issue right now, I am looking to set up a band in Dubai with fellow musicians just to have fun jamming on the weekends.

Although I am Mauritian, I was raised in Taiwan and then moved to London and Dubai, so I speak Mandarin, French and Creole. I have been attending Italian classes twice a week for almost two years now, as my girlfriend is Italian, and we visit Rome to see her family every year. I therefore try to spend as much free time as possible ensuring I don't lose my grasp of these languages, which often happens with lack of practice!

Do you keep in touch with Ashurst colleagues?

Certainly! In the past few months, I have met Will Keen a couple of times and, very recently, I also met Albert Kromm (who shares similar interests in FinTech/cryptocurrencies). I am also in regular contact with Brad Sandford, who used to be a mentor of mine when I was at Ashurst and who is now on secondment in Japan.

LONDON - CAROLINE PAGE LAUNCHES NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC PROJECT PROMOTING WELLBEING



Caroline Page (Tax lawyer, London, until 2017) is a professional pianist and music educator. She is the founder of Harmony's Music Club, an all-round musical experience for younger children. Caroline recently launched the Paddington Bear Concert & Workshop Package, a new primary school music resource centred around wellbeing and inclusivity, which is all about reuniting primary school communities now that pupils are back at school.

Caroline, please tell us about your new project.

This unique project, launched in March 2021 and written during the third lockdown, uses music to address wellbeing and isolation and to reunite primary school communities (ages 4-11). In short, it comprises a cross-curricular video workshop series with extension activities and the opportunity to form and record a virtual choir (singing is still a big no-no for many schools in England), with each school receiving its own bespoke interactive video concert performance of Paddington Bear's First Concert by Herbert Chappell for piano and narrator, illustrated by the children's artwork displayed on "the big screen" (which generates huge excitement) and featuring the virtual choir. I am the pianist, and former international opera star Liz Franklin-Kitchen is the narrator.

Schools undertake the video workshops during the summer term in the run-up to their selected concert date during a time that suits them. I lead the workshops so that non-specialist teachers taking part in the project can feel as comfortable as specialist teachers, and through these workshops the children explore body percussion, including beatboxing, make a range of instruments (we always make our own instruments to poverty-proof the project as many schools don't have instruments, and those that do can't currently use them because of the cleaning involved), explore the science of sound, pitch and timbre, improvise, and approach big questions such as what is music, singing and more. The workshops naturally have a music focus, but also address Art, English and Science and are suitable for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (Reception to Year 6), making this a fantastic resource for recovery curriculum. Indeed, on March 26 the Department for Education released its new Model Music Curriculum stressing the arts to be included in the curriculum "catch-up" and the power of music to bring schools back together – so the project is bang on trend.

The concert uses the same exciting format as our video concert of Paddington Bear's First Concert in June 2020, which was promoted by Stephen Fry, Hugh Bonneville and BBC Radio, and which was broadcast live on four continents and attracted thousands of viewers – so the children really are in for a treat! You can listen to our interview on BBC Radio [about our June 2020 performance](#).

The project is already very popular and we now have a waiting list of schools wanting to take part – school budgets are currently even tighter than usual as fundraising over the last year has been minimal, so schools are waiting for me to find more sponsors so that they can join in. A project for the whole school, including a bespoke concert, costs only £250.

What made you start Harmony's Music Club?

I left Law to return to Music as a collaborative pianist and so if I'm honest this avenue took me (although not others!) a little by surprise. Despite having politely asked my daughter's nursery on several occasions in 2018 when they were going to start music provision, while also stressing the importance of music, I wasn't expecting them to approach me about providing it. While they were happy for me to come in and do something low key, as a result of my research and being quite frankly horrified not only by how few children had access to music at an early years level because of fear of chaos and the unknown, but also by the limited resources available, I saw an opportunity to make a difference. So, with my daughter's cuddly toy hedgehog (Harmony) I was off, and things haven't stopped since.

What is your favourite memory from your time at Ashurst?

I've had a lovely time reflecting on lots of great memories I could include here, but the thing which sticks with me about Ashurst is the people, more than a favourite memory. I was fortunate to get to work with so many lovely people, especially within the Tax department across Europe, and I loved my March 2003 trainee intake; and some of these people are amongst my dearest friends today.

To find out more about the project, or to become a sponsor either individually or via your firm, please visit www.harmonysmusicclub.com/paddington or contact Caroline via her LinkedIn profile or harmonysmusicclub@gmail.com.

LONDON - MIA FORBES PIRIE NAMED UK INDEPENDENT MEDIATOR BY CORPORATE INTERNATIONAL



Congratulations to **Mia Forbes Pirie** (Competition solicitor, London, until 2007) who has been named UK Independent Mediator 2021 by Corporate International.

Since leaving Ashurst, Mia has become a leading international mediator working with clients ranging from the G7 countries to the Church of England. In addition to her work in mediation, this award recognises her work on localised issues during the pandemic, including a free weekly support meeting via Zoom attended by a wide range of the public, including NHS workers, lawyers and small business owners. Mia also provided free online events to promote healthier discussion around race following the killing of George Floyd in the US, and has trained mediators on how to mediate online.

"I am thrilled to have won the award, particularly given that one of the emphases is on service, which is so important to me. I miss mediating face to face with people in the real world but we are finding that online mediation is highly effective and in some cases has advantages over mediating face to face. It feels really nice to be recognised for my efforts."

Read Mia's advice on [how to become a more effective communicator](#), both in real life and virtually.

LONDON - PENNY KISIEL PROMOTED TO ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL AT HSBC

Since leaving Ashurst, alum **Penny Kisiel** (née Hewitt, Associate, London, until 2012) has forged a career within the private banking sector. Now at HSBC, she was recently promoted to Associate General Counsel. Congratulations Penny!

Tell us about your role at HSBC.

I am an Associate General Counsel supporting stakeholders in the UK Commercial Bank at HSBC. As Head of Structured Finance and Real Estate Finance Legal, my business teams support large corporate customers in three main areas - corporates, sponsor-backed corporates and real estate. I lead a team of 13 lawyers who are a mix of senior legal counsel (ex-private practice solicitors) and law firm secondees (including from Ashurst). Deal teams in our space will primarily be focused on debt-lending, but of course we work with product partners in all parts of the Bank depending on the customer's need.

What do you love most about working in-house at a company like HSBC?

Working in-house is challenging - every day is different and, in my team, we support 100+ business stakeholders who need time-critical legal support. However, HSBC is a very supportive place and you have the huge benefits of being part of a global bank, with very knowledgeable and experienced colleagues and a collective ambition to support customers in the best way we can. I enjoy the daily challenge, seeking to solve problems and collaborate with first and second line colleagues. We also maintain critical relationships with a variety of global and national law firms given our market presence and requirement for professional services support across our transactions.

Do you have any tips for lawyers wanting to make the move to an in-house role?

For lawyers considering a move from private practice, I suppose that any institution (particularly one the size of HSBC!) could be considered intimidating. However, I would encourage people to seek out an opportunity to be a legal secondee on the client side – this is a great way of learning what an in-house position covers day to day and also for understanding what it's like to be a legal professional outside of a law firm. Most of the major banks have these types of positions available and I would encourage lawyers to ask within their firm about the options available to them. Regardless of whether a lawyer ultimately moves to a different role, they will gain skills and knowledge from the client side that will be invaluable in understanding the market too.

How did your time at Ashurst help you to succeed?

Ashurst helped me succeed in offering me my first experience of an in-house secondment – this was at another major UK clearing bank (RBS). I was mentored by partner Mark Vickers during this period and learnt so much from the opportunity: I gained a new network of contacts, broader skills and greater insight into the financial services sector. Since I've been working in-house, Ashurst has continued to be a key relationship law firm and it's great to be able to continue to work with the global loans team.

Forums and events

We are delighted to welcome our alumni to participate in Ashurst forums and events.

PODCAST: CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE THIS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Former Sydney partner Elizabeth Broderick, Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls and Australia's longest-serving Sex Discrimination Commissioner (2007-2015), joined Ashurst Global Managing Partner, Paul Jenkins, for a special International Women's Day podcast episode.

In this special episode Paul Jenkins speaks to Elizabeth about her time at Ashurst, founding the Champions of Change Coalition, her work with the UN and what drives her to continue to work for change in her unwavering commitment to global gender equality.

"Gender equality starts in the home", says Elizabeth. "It extends to the organisation level with flexible work as fundamental, not a favour, and continues at a nation state level, where we can lift our voices to call out sexual assault and sexual harassment, and lobby our elected representatives to stay strong on gender equality."

[Listen to the podcast.](#)

CV REVIEW SERVICE

Our recruitment team are delighted to offer a CV review service to all Ashurst alumni, both legal and business services professionals.

Whether you are just starting out or have a well-established career our recruitment experts can help.

Simply email your CV (in English) to alumni@ashurst.com and one of the team will be in contact to set-up a 30 min call to provide you with some personalised advice and tips.

Meet the experts



James Oliver, Resourcing Manager

James is a Resourcing Manager in the Sydney office of Ashurst and is primarily responsible for recruiting lawyers from associate to counsel level. Prior to joining Ashurst James worked for a global legal recruitment agency assisting private practice and in-house lawyers in their recruitment processes. He has over 10 years' experience reviewing legal CVs.



Rebecca Owen, Resourcing Manager

Rebecca is a Resourcing Manager in the London office of Ashurst. Rebecca deals with the recruitment of lawyers, from newly qualified to counsel in our London, Glasgow and Luxembourg offices. Prior to joining Ashurst, Rebecca worked for specialist legal recruitment agencies in the UK and Australia, assisting lawyers with their career moves within the private practice sector.



Zahra Nowrouz-Tafreshi, Resourcing Consultant

Zahra is a Consultant in the Resourcing team at Ashurst where she recruits both business services and legal roles. Prior to joining Ashurst Zahra worked for a number of recruitment agencies where her focus was solely on legal recruitment. Having originally studied law, Zahra has also worked as a lawyer both in Australia and overseas.



Fraser Duff, Resourcing Advisor

Fraser is an Advisor in the Resourcing team at Ashurst where he recruits across both the legal and business services sectors. Prior to joining Ashurst Fraser has worked within established recruitment agencies dealing with executive headhunting and freelance recruitment, before moving to an internal recruiter role.

200 STORIES FOR 200 YEARS



Do you have a story to tell?

To celebrate Ashurst's bicentenary in 2022 the team behind the firm's successful First Women project are embarking on a new storytelling project, "200 Stories for 200 years".

This project will produce 200 multimedia stories that celebrate the firm's people and achievements over the past 200 years. The stories will be about Ashurst's people, both as individuals and groups, but could also be about events or places that are connected with the firm.

To kick start the project we are calling for a selection of photos and memories from our alumni. If you have recently been tidying out some cupboards and have come across any old photos from your time at Ashurst, we would love to hear from you! Please also get in touch if you would be interested in contributing a story via another medium such as a written piece, podcast, artwork or video.

Contact the [alumni team](#).

In memoriam

We are very sad to share the below news about the loss of three members of our Ashurst family.

GEOFFREY DAVID APPLGATE OBE





Geoffrey David Applegate OBE, partner of Ashurst/Blake Dawson between 1977 and 1994, has recently passed away.

We would like to pay tribute to the life of Geoff Applegate, and recognise the contribution that he made to the legal and business community in Papua New Guinea from 1979 onwards.

He mentored many young lawyers who have gone on to achieve great things in law, commerce and politics.

He is remembered with much fondness, especially by the staff, past and present, of Ashurst PNG, Blake Dawson Waldron, Beresford Love Francis, as well as by many others in the legal profession and business world.

KAREN DWYER



Karen Dwyer, a partner in our Sydney office, has passed away following an illness at home in Ireland.

Karen joined the firm in 2012 as a Senior Associate in our Digital Economy Transactions practice and was promoted to the partnership in 2018.

Karen was a skilled practitioner, an important part of our Digital Economy team, a valued colleague, friend and mentor to many. She will be missed by all who knew her at Ashurst. Our deepest thoughts and sympathies are with Karen's family and friends.

In accordance with Karen's wishes and to honour her memory, the firm has made a donation to the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Associate.

STUART IMRIE



Stuart, a long-standing member of the Digital Economy team in Canberra, recently passed away following an illness.

Stuart was originally a lawyer in our Canberra office from November 1998 as a government and Commercial Solicitor and then re-joined in March 2018 as a Consultant in our Digital Economy team. Stuart was also the loving husband to Angela Summersby, partner of our Digital Economy team.

Stuart will be remembered by those who had the great privilege to work with him as a deep thinker, and a pragmatic and solutions-driven lawyer with a wicked sense of humour. Stuart was a valuable member of the firm and a dear friend to many in the team. He will be greatly missed. Our deepest thoughts and sympathies are with Stuart's family and friends.

In accordance with Stuart's wishes and to honour his memory, the firm has made a donation to Transplant Australia.

Firm Friends yearbook

Our yearbook contains a selection of articles and interviews with alumni from across our global network. If you would like to feature in our next edition please get in touch with alumni@ashurst.com.

[READ FIRM FRIENDS 2021](#)

Alumni contacts

If you have any questions or you need to update your contact details, please email alumni@ashurst.com or get in touch with our alumni team.



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