Welcome to the

MALA

MIDLANDS ASIAN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Ball

Friday 9 October 2026

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UK Friends of Unique Home (Punjab)

MALA Annual Ball 2026



Dear Guests,

I would like to personally welcome you all to the 2026 Midlands Asian Lawyers Association Ball.

HHJ Fayyaz Afzal CBE
MALA President

We are incredibly pleased to have you as our guests; this is our **18th Annual ball.** The MALA ball is a firm fixture in the legal social calendar now and we're delighted to welcome guests from the Midlands and beyond.

We are incredibly proud of being the inspiration for the creation of the Northern Asian Lawyers Association which launched earlier this year and wish them every success.

I take this opportunity to thank our lead sponsor: **JMW Solicitors (Business Crime and Regulatory)**, their support helps us create an unforgettable event for everyone attending the ball and beyond.

I would also like to extend our thanks to our secondary sponsors **C Lewis & Company** and **36 Crime** and our drinks sponsor this year: **St Philip's Chambers**.

Each year we are flattered by the number of companies wishing to support MALA and for this we are grateful to everyone who has sponsored us or provided adverts.

Our chosen charity this year is the **UK Friends of Unique Home for girls**, this charity is close to our hearts, as it is spearheaded by former vice president Ranjit Thaliwal of Welford Solicitors. It is a great charity that is saving the lives of young girls in the Punjab region, and we're pleased to support them this year. I encourage you all to participate in our raffle and donate generously to this wonderful cause.

Over the years, we have enjoyed a wonderful mix of keynote speakers and this year we are delighted to welcome the incredibly charming **Harpreet Sandhu KC**, one of the most respected criminal barristers and a leading voice for diversity and opportunity within the legal profession.

Harpreet's values align with those of MALA, and he has already collaborated with us at our Talking with Trailblazers event earlier this year, so we're grateful for his support.

This year, we have said goodbye to **Iqbal Mohammed** and our former secretary; **Priya Bakshi**. We're incredibly grateful to Iqbal for managing our website and communications and to Priya for organising the committee throughout the years and they will be missed.

Since its founding, MALA has grown from a small network into a thriving and respected organisation at the heart of the Midlands legal community. With an expanding programme of events, outreach and collaboration, we continue to evolve and the addition of new committee members is an important part of that journey.

This year, we welcomed **Reena Patel**, (You and Your Story), **Kinza Wahid** (3PB Barristers) **Kiran Herard** (Mills & Reeve), **Shereen Chohan** (HCR Law), **Sana Saddique** (Collective Law) and **Sangeeta Kohli** (Higgs LLP) to the MALA Committee.

Kinza and Kiran have already been instrumental in supporting Harbinder in planning our Birmingham events and we're looking forward to bringing you more events across the East and West Midlands.

In addition **Rita Kotecha** has taken up the role of Secretary and her experience and knowledge is invaluable to the MALA committee

With this latest intake, our committee is stronger than ever. We're excited to bring together a wider range of perspectives, energy, and experience as we continue to champion diversity, inclusion and opportunity across the profession.

We hope you have a fantastic evening and we will update the calendar of events for the forthcoming year.

Best wishes and many thanks,

His Honour Judge Fayyaz Afzal CBE,
MALA President

MALA Commitee 2026



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MALA Treasurer
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Rita Kotecha
MALA Secretary
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Sangeeta Kohli
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Kiran Herard
Mills & Reeve



Kinza Wahid
3PB Barristers



Shereen Chohan
HCR Law



Sana Saddique
Collective Law

2026 Events

We're pleased to share that this year, we have successfully run 4 events in Leicester and Birmingham in the first 6 months of the year.

Our first networking event of 2026 was held at Haute Dolci and it was a wonderful way to begin the year.

After a long, cold January, guests enjoyed relaxed conversations oaver mocktails in keeping with our Dry January theme.













Our second event, delivered in collaboration with Mills & Reeve and the Birmingham Law Society REACH Subcommittee, was a powerful reminder of why conversations about representation and equality in law truly matter.

The panel shared personal stories about the barriers and challenges faced by South Asian lawyers - stories of doubt, resilience and determination.

Our third event was in collaboration with the Leicestershire Junior Lawyers Division LJLD Division and welcomed over 40 attendees from across the Midlands legal community for an evening of connection, conversation and excellent food at Mem Saab.

The evening highlighted the importance of creating spaces where lawyers at every stage of their careers can connect.













Our fourth event was an inspiring and thought provoking evening at the Talking with Trailblazers event in Birmingham in collaboration with Midland Circuit and Birmingham Black Lawyers.

We were privileged to hear from an outstanding panel, chaired by Harpreet Sandhu KC, whose openness and leadership guided a discussion that explored race, identity, barriers and success in law.

We thank the committee, co-hosts and those who attended to make the events a success. We would also welcome working with others to further our objectives of improving equality, diversity, inclusion, social mobility, education and wellbeing.

If you feel that there is an event that can be jointly held with MALA, please do not hesitate to contact us: **committee@midlandsasianlawyers.org**

Our Keynote Speaker

Harpreet Sandhu KC

Leader of the Midland Circuit
No5 Barristers' Chambers



Harpreet Sandhu KC is one of the Midlands' most respected criminal barristers and a leading voice for diversity and opportunity within the legal profession.

Called to the Bar in 2005 and taking silk in March 2022 - in only his **fifteenth year** of practice and on his **first application** - Harpreet was appointed Leader of the Midland Circuit in October 2024.

Recognised by **Chambers UK and The Legal 500**, he prosecutes and defends in some of the most serious and complex criminal cases in the country, from alleged homicide and terrorism to fraud and serious sexual offences, and is regularly instructed by the CPS's Complex Casework Units, Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division and London Homicide Unit.

Harpreet's own journey reflects many of the themes he now champions from leadership. The son of parents who emigrated from Punjab, India, in the 1970s, and the first in his family to attend university, he read English Literature at Durham University before training as a barrister and starting pupillage in 2006.

Reflecting on his **South Asian heritage** and its influence on his career, Harpreet has spoken about the grit and determination passed down through generations.

MIDLAND CIRCUIT

No5 BARRISTERS CHAMBERS

"Being appointed King's Counsel is an enormous honour, privilege and responsibility."

Harpreet's connection to MALA goes way back, a MALA Ball was his first encounter with the organisation, and he has known HHJ Fayyaz Afzal CBE, for years, at times appearing against one another in court before Fayyaz took the bench.

Bringing the Midland Circuit and MALA closer together has been a deliberate priority of Harpreet's leadership, and events like the Trailblazers event in May 2026 are, in his words, an example of the Circuit and MALA working together - something he has been keen to promote alongside his wider push on equality, diversity and social mobility (EDSM) and the **Circuit's Women's Forum**.

This year, identifying a clear gap, Harpreet also set up the **Midland Circuit's first pro bono committee**. It is this combination of professional excellence and personal commitment to representation that makes him such a compelling voice for our audience.

"The only qualities which should determine whether someone is able to have a successful career in the law are ability, determination and hard work, but also caring about what we do. I believe that those who have the skills to succeed should be given the opportunity to do so."

We are delighted to welcome **Harpreet Sandhu KC** as our keynote speaker. Expect a candid, personal account of what it takes to reach the top of the criminal Bar, the responsibility of leadership on Circuit, and why building pathways for underrepresented talent remains one of his proudest ongoing commitments.

- Ranked as a leading criminal practitioner by Chambers UK and The Legal 500.
- Regularly instructed by the CPS's Complex Casework Units, Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division and London Homicide Unit, and by the Health and Safety Executive.
- Appointed Leader of the Midland Circuit in October 2024.
- Founded the Midland Circuit's pro bono committee in 2026.
- Chair, MALA's "Talking with Trailblazers" panel (May 2026).
- Championing EDSM initiatives and the Circuit's Women's Forum.

Our Charity Partner This Year

UK Friends of Unique Home (Punjab)

Supporting Unique Home, Jalandhar - a place of safety, care and opportunity for girls who need it most.

Every year, the MALA Ball brings the Midlands' legal community together not only to celebrate, but to give back. This year, we are proud to support **UK Friends of Unique Home (Punjab)**, a registered UK charity that raises funds and awareness for Unique Home, a children's home in Jalandhar, Punjab, caring for girls who are unwanted, abandoned or orphaned.

MALA will make a donation to the charity on the night and will be running a raffle to raise additional funds for this great cause.

Unique home in Punjab was established on 17 May 1993 by Bibi Prakash Kaur, who remains its guiding force today, Unique Home was founded in response to the deeply troubling issue of female infanticide and the abandonment of baby girls in the region.

More than three decades on, it continues to provide vulnerable girls with a safe home, education and care - nurturing them into healthy, educated and self-respecting women able to build independent, fulfilling lives.














Because many of the girls' exact birth dates are unknown, the home celebrates all of their birthdays together on **24 April** each year, a day that draws supporters and well-wishers from across the world, including many who travel from the UK to take part.

In the run-up to the celebration, UK Friends of Unique Home runs its **"Cake and Candles"** campaign, inviting supporters to share a photo of themselves with a cake and candle as a birthday wish for the girls, helping to raise awareness of the wonderful work carried out by the home.

"A daughter is one of life's most beautiful miracles. She's your heart walking around outside your body"

Anonymous

MALA is honoured to support **UK Friends of Unique Home (Punjab)** this year, in recognition of the vital work being done to protect and empower vulnerable girls in Jalandhar, Punjab.

We hope you'll join us in supporting this cause tonight and beyond, by taking part in our raffle, making a donation and raising awareness of the charity on social media or visiting their website: **www.uniquehomeforgirls.co.uk**

Donate directly to UK Friends of Unique by visiting their their justgiving page - scan the QR Code to the right or visit:

www.justgiving.com/page/uniquehomeleicester

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A message from Hojol Uddin

Head of Business Crime and Regulatory Department

It is a great honour for JMW Solicitors to be the lead sponsor for this year's Ball. I have personally been attending the annual ball for many years, and it is one of the main events on my calendar – and that's not because of the food only, albeit it plays a part.

We are thrilled to support MALA as we recognise the importance of its role in the legal landscape. MALA continues to be a leading light in creating opportunities for connection, collaboration and mentorship and we are proud to support them along the way. The Ball has always been a place where likeminded individuals can come together to hold progressive conversations whilst continuing to celebrate inclusion and diversity within our legal profession.

Thank you to MALA and its committee for the work done throughout the year. We are proud to continue to support you and wish you the best for the upcoming year!



Hojol Uddin

Head of Business Crime and Regulatory Department

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"Due to their legal prowess and their passion for the work that they do we have had the best outcome and a better result than we could ever have hoped for. They were with us every step of the way and truly gave everything they had to us as their clients, I will never stop being grateful to them."

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- **Professional Regulation & Discipline –** As well as offering representation and support to regulated professionals in investigations and disciplinary proceedings, JMW supports organisations in their dealings with regulators.

For Businesses/Corporations/ Organisations

- **Regulatory Lawyers –** Our team regularly represents clients across all the sectors of UK industry through regulatory investigations, parallel proceedings, trials and appeals.
- **Business Crime –** With our significant experience in dealing with investigations by the FCA, Serious Fraud Office, law enforcement agencies and other regulatory authorities, we can help our clients (businesses, corporations and organisations) navigate their rights and legal obligations.

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Midlands Asian Lawyers Association (MALA) is a non-profit organisation, promoting diversity and equality in the legal profession. We do this by running wellbeing, networking and career development events across the Midlands region as well as raising funds for good causes.

As an inclusive body, we proudly welcome people of all backgrounds to our events and from our first ball with 100 attendees to the 500+ people we have here today, the success of the Ball is an enduring example of MALA's striving legacy in the Midlands legal community.

MALA is entirely run by volunteers and funded by ticket sales and sponsorship so we're grateful for your support and that you have chosen to spend your evening with us today.

Connect with us online to stay up to date, follow us on social media and sign up to our newsletter for the latest events and news.

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To find out more, please visit **www.midlandsasianlawyers.org** or email us at **committee@midlandsasianlawyers.org** if you have any questions.