

Dear colleague,

### **Your weekly Law Society update**

As the professional body for solicitors, every week the Law Society is working hard to influence the legal and regulatory environment on behalf of our profession and to promote solicitors at home and abroad. We support practice excellence, are an informed source of legal sector news and support members at every stage of their career.

### **Delivering for our members – our Business review**

Today we published *Delivering for our members - The Law Society's Business review for 2017*, highlighting the wide range of our activity. A copy is attached for you.

Last year we set out the member needs we wanted to address. Some things we do on behalf of the whole profession, others are to meet specific member needs and challenges.

During a year of significant developments, we have made great progress with the work we do and the review highlights just some of our key achievements and examples of the impact we have had.

You can see more detail on our website and our twitter feed from Monday. Highlights and infographics from the review also feature in the Gazette today.

Here are some highlights from our work this week.

### **Influencing on behalf of the profession and promoting the profession**

#### **Solicitor brand campaign highlights**

Over the next few months we're doing a lot to promote solicitors, including advertising on digital screens, buses, trams, the metro, at rail stations and in underground carriages, as well as TV, newspaper and online advertising, PR and social media.

At the heart of the campaign is our promotion of you as experts in your field - as honest and honourable, client-focused, approachable and accessible, giving value for money and adding value to society. These are the values that our research told us were important to you, and that the public and businesses want from a solicitor.

You can see more detail [here](#)



**The Law Society's media profile last week:**

Indemnity insurance reforms put forward by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) last month will damage the small firms the regulator is trying to help, a specialist law firm has warned. The reforms were strongly attacked last week by Law Society vice president Christina Blacklaws, who said she found it “baffling” that the SRA was proposing “further demolition of client protections”, on top of plans approved by their board to allow solicitors to practise from unregulated firms. Full story in [Legal Futures](#) and [New Law Journal](#)

Legal professional bodies have called for the government to halt its court closure programme while technology to replace physical justice is fully tested. The [Law Society Gazette](#) quoted me saying: “If current proposals are implemented unchanged, people will lose access to their local courts and potentially have to travel hundreds of miles to alternative sites.”

Richard Atkinson, co-chair of the criminal law committee, appeared on BBC Breakfast & BBC News 24 last Friday to discuss an increase in the number of suspected criminals, including those suspected of violent crimes, being released without bail conditions as a result of changes implemented last year.

Senior lawyers have warned that the rapid expansion of “online courts” could result in people being cheated of justice as the government launches a ground-breaking pilot scheme today. Ministers are testing a system designed “to make it quicker and easier for people to claim money owed, resolve disputes out of court and access mediation”. Under the scheme, operated by HM Courts & Tribunals Service, those involved in a dispute with a value up to £10,000 will be able to make their claims online instead of filling out paper forms.

You can read the full story in [The Times](#) (subscription required) & [The Times Brief](#) in which I’m quoted saying: “People must also be able to access legal advice in more complex cases and we would be alarmed if this option was extended beyond the current £10,000 limit. Using tech where appropriate will hopefully free up resources to aid those who are unable to make use of such tools.”

A letter from the Bar Council and the Law Society — the bodies that represent barristers and solicitors in England and Wales — as well the International Bar Association called on the Turkish government to lift its state of emergency. The call related to the detention of lawyers. Full coverage in [The Times Brief](#) (subscription required) & the letter has been published in full in the [Law Society Gazette](#)

## **Consultation responses and parliamentary activity, influencing on behalf of the profession:**

### *Court closures*

We submitted responses to a number of consultations on court closures. One consultation related to the overall approach to the [closure](#) programme, and there were five other consultations proposing specific court closures. We have argued that the closure programme should be suspended until the alternative options being tested through the HMCTS reform programme have been developed and proved to work.

### *Brexit – what members can do to help*

29 March marked one year on from the triggering of Article 50 and we have put together a short summary of the work we have been doing on Brexit – [read about our work here](#).

Members can support our Brexit activity by:

- **Writing to their MP** – we have launched a [write to your MP action](#). Using our online system, you can write to your MP to urge the government to negotiate and secure the continued rights of lawyers in EU member states after Brexit.

- **Submitting evidence to the APPG on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry on Brexit on the provision of legal services** – we act as the secretariat for the APPG on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which has launched an inquiry into the effect of Brexit on the provision of legal services. As part of that inquiry, we have [published a call for written evidence which is now open](#) and we are encouraging members to contribute. We will be holding three oral sessions in Parliament over the coming months, before making a final report with recommendations to government.

#### *Criminal Law*

Two criminal consultation papers were received this week: a Law Commission Sentencing Code on child and young person sentencing provisions and a Sentencing Council draft guideline on arson and criminal damage.

#### *AML*

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has contacted us about a supervisory visit to the Law Society by the Office for Professional Body AML Supervision (OPBAS). The visit will take place at the end of May.

The Treasury Select Committee has announced an inquiry into economic crime, with a deadline for submission of written evidence of 8 May.

We have written to the Law Commission about its review of the consent regime provisions in the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Terrorism Act 2000.

#### *Women and Equalities Committee*

In [this](#) written submission to the Women and Equalities Committee on its inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace, we discuss the law relating to harassment functions, and make suggestions on possible improvements.

The chair of the Employment Law Committee, Max Winthrop, gave oral evidence on this to the Committee on 28 March.

Last week we were mentioned by MPs in four parliamentary debates on:

- Legal aid and the Birmingham pub bombings – Richard Burden MP (Lab) referenced our call to widen the scope of funding for representation.
- Court closures and reform – Tan Dhesi MP (Lab) raised our concerns on the impact of court closures on legal aid firms and on police resources and other organisations that use the courts.
- Promotion of legal services after Brexit - we were mentioned in the debate three times by Justice Committee Chair Bob Neill MP and by Justice Minister Lucy Frazer QC MP.
- Brexit implications for the justice system - in a debate on the Justice Committee's report (and Government's response) on the implications of Brexit for the justice system, our recent report on a Canadian style trade model for Brexit was mentioned and quoted from by Justice Select Committee member Bambos Charalambous MP.

### **Our influencing work internationally:**

On 3-4 April, we participated to the International Law Conference in Cambridge.

On 5 April, Day of the Lawyer in Turkey, we sent an open letter to Turkish authorities highlighting human rights violations against lawyers in Turkey. The letter was sent jointly by 5 organisations: The Law Society, the Bar Human Rights Committee, the IBA Human Rights Institute, the Union Internationale des Avocats and the Bar Council (see Media above).

## **Supporting members at every stage of their career**

In the week when gender pay again hit the headlines, you can access our our one hour webinar on the topic in our [Professional Development Centre](#).

## **Supporting practice excellence**

### **Handbook for Local Law Societies**

The planning and writing of the handbook to help support the invaluable work that local law societies undertake is well underway and is on schedule for its launch at this year's Presidents and Secretaries Conference on 11 and 12 May. The handbook is intended as a working resource, to help Local Law Societies manage and run their affairs more efficiently, get their governance right, give societies the tools to lobby and campaign on behalf of the profession and improve their communications with their members. With more than 120 Local Law Societies around the country - all different sizes and structures - the handbook also aims to share best practice through a series of case studies.

*Technical Q&As - Finance (No.2) Act 2017: tax changes for non-UK domiciliaries and trusts*  
The draft [guidance](#) has been prepared by the technical committees of STEP, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT) and the Law Society (Capital Taxes sub-committee) and is designed to assist those advising non-UK domiciled clients on the important tax changes introduced by the Finance (No.2) Act 2017.

### **Some of our upcoming events to support practice excellence are:**

#### **[10 Apr 2018 - Competition Section seminar: achieving professional ambitions in Competition law](#)**

In this seminar, speakers from different backgrounds and areas of expertise will share their best practical advice for achieving professional ambitions in Competition law.

#### **[11 Apr 2018 - Law Society joint seminar with the French National Bar](#)**

Seminar in association with the French National Bar

#### **[16 April 2018 - Deregulation & ethics - what can solicitors learn from professionals in other markets?](#)**

The global financial crisis was in part caused by failures of financial regulation and supervision, and since then there has been a greater focus on professional ethics. We have an expert panel of speakers to discuss lessons learnt from other sectors and how competition and deregulation may impact on day to day ethics of professionals at this free breakfast event on 16 April in London. Speakers include Philip Wood (Allen & Overy), Colin Mayer (Oxford University), Simon Davis (Clifford Chance) and Ingrid Holmes (Hermes Investment Management).

#### **[17 Apr 2018 - Get Data Protection Ready: Down to the wire](#)**

The EU GDPR enforcement date of 25 May 2018 is fast approaching – is your organisation general data protection ready?

#### **[17 Apr 2018 - Anti-money laundering workshops 17 April 2018 – Manchester](#)**

Money Laundering Reporting Officers are faced with difficult and challenging questions on a regular basis. Reporting decisions, deciding what guidance and training to give to your staff and simply answering their questions can all be daunting. The aim of this seminar is to help you deal with those challenges by discussing real life scenarios with experts in the field.

A.I and ethics – plotting a path to the unanswered questions 27 April 8.30 - 13.00  
At Hogan Lovells, 50 Holborn Viaduct.

The growth in AI in society and in law gives rise to a range of fundamentally important questions. This conference will explore these questions, bringing together global experts from the tech community, private practice, in house and academia. This free event will feature a keynote address from Professor Richard Susskind OBE and speakers from Microsoft, the Alan Turing Institute and the Law Society. To book your free place, please e-mail [aiandethics2018@lawsociety.org.uk](mailto:aiandethics2018@lawsociety.org.uk)

As always, please feel free to share this update with your members unless otherwise specified.

Kind regards,

Joe

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Thank you.