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.

*Presidents and Secretaries Conference – 11/12 May*

We are delighted to confirm this popular event will incorporate a varied mix of plenary and breakout sessions ensuring delegates are offered the opportunity to discuss common challenges, share experiences and hear practical tips from both their peers and expert speakers. Conference sessions will include GDPR, policy developments, developing your social media presence and much more. Please encourage your president and secretary to book their place [here](https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabid=37&id=1919&orgId=1&guid=2a0d64b3-35b3-4bf8-90e8-f8d307cea501).

Congratulations to all our members who ran in the London marathon recently, many for legal advice charities.

Here are some highlights from our work this week.

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

**The Law Society’s media profile this week:**

Immigration law committee member Barry O’Leary spoke to BBC Radio 4 Today about the Home Office’s ‘immigration exemption’ contained in the Data Protection Bill. You can listen to the programme [here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09zt3fj). The story begins at 1:16:10. The discussion followed a [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/23/home-office-data-exemption-sparks-fears-of-renewed-windrush-scandals) article on the concerns we raised alongside the Bar Council. I’m quoted saying: “Recent events have shown how important it is to be able to scrutinise Home Office decision-making.” There was further coverage in the [Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/windrush-immigration-theresa-may-home-office-amber-rudd-deport-law-society-a8319276.html) and the [*The Times Brief*](https://www.thetimesbrief.co.uk/users/39175-the-brief-team/posts/32443-home-office-data-protection-exemption-will-lead-to-miscarriages?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=newsletter_121&utm_medium=email&utm_content=121_24.04.18%20The%20Brief%20No-fault%20divorce%20(1)&CMP=TNLEmail_118918_3202957_121)(subscription required).

The Today programme covered a judicial review being brought by Annette Elder, a member of the Law Society Immigration Committee, over systemic delays processing asylum claims by unaccompanied children. You can listen to the programme [here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09zt3jj#play). The clip begins at 1:17:17 and includes an interesting case study.

Head of justice Richard Miller spoke to the [Niall Paterson on Sunday](https://www.sky.com/watch/title/series/3efaa2a9-cc67-47ca-9f06-65c3c5a27459/sunday-with-niall-paterson-3efaa2a9-cc67-47ca-9f06-65c3c5a27459/episodes/season-0/episode-4) programme on Sky to discuss the impact of legal aid cuts including on people who are vulnerable because they can’t access legal aid. The “system of justice is significantly imbalanced” he said. Richard appears at approximately 28 minutes.

The Yorkshire Post had major coverage of the impact of cuts to the justice system this weekend which quoted Richard Miller and the Law Society extensively. Read the [full story](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/call-for-urgent-halt-to-closure-of-local-courts-1-9128042). Richard said that solicitors’ firms were often the first to be hit when courts closed. You can read additional coverage of the subject in the [*Yorkshire Post*](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/economies-take-a-hit-when-court-buildings-close-1-9128036) as well as their [leader column](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/the-yorkshire-post-says-justice-must-be-open-and-local-court-closures-betray-the-public-1-9127851).

The Ministry of Justice is to invest £152,000 over the next three years in an education programme to make the judiciary more diverse. Law Society vice-president Christina Blacklaws said: ‘We know the enormous value solicitor judges bring to our courts and we’re delighted that the programme is targeting solicitors as they are under-represented on the bench.’ Full story in the [*Law Society Gazette*](https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/law/moj-chips-in-152000-to-judicial-diversity-drive/5065840.articlehttps%3A/www.lawgazette.co.uk/law/moj-chips-in-152000-to-judicial-diversity-drive/5065840.article)

There has been extensive coverage of the Law Society and Barclays’ legal tech incubator – a partnership between us and Barclays Eagle Labs. [The Law Society Gazette](https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/law/aando-to-announce-new-tech-collaborators/5065803.article), [City AM](http://www.cityam.com/284480/barclays-launches-law-tech-incubator-support-magic-circle), [Legal Week](http://www.legalweek.com/2018/04/23/ao-cc-and-simmons-among-firms-on-board-as-barclays-launches-first-london-legal-technology-hub/?slreturn=20180323130328), [Legal Futures](https://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/major-law-firms-law-society-and-top-academics-back-launch-of-major-lawtech-incubator), [Legal Business](https://www.legalbusiness.co.uk/blogs/fly-like-an-eagle-barclays-joins-raft-of-firms-with-city-law-tech-incubator-launch/),  [Global Legal Post](http://www.globallegalpost.com/big-stories/barclays-bank-launches-lawtech-hub-85011416/), [Artificial Lawyer](https://www.artificiallawyer.com/2018/04/23/barclays-bank-law-soc-launch-legaltech-incubator/), [Legal Cheek](https://www.legalcheek.com/2018/04/barclays-and-law-society-launch-new-lawtech-hub-with-support-from-top-firms-and-law-schools/), [Legal IT Insider](https://www.legaltechnology.com/latest-news/turbo-charging-londons-law-tech-ecosystem-barclays-launches-start-up-and-scale-up-incubator/), [The Lawyer](https://www.thelawyer.com/barclays-launches-legaltech-incubator-with-ao-and-clifford-chance-backing/) to name a few.

Don’t forget you can read all Law Society press releases by clicking on this[link](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/search/?=&amp;ctype=press+release&amp;sort=date).For live updatesfollow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/TheLawSociety)

**Celebrating excellence in 2018**

The 12th annual Excellence Awards promise to be the biggest and most impressive yet, taking place at a striking new venue – Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane, London. Celebrating excellence across the profession is what we do; from smaller firms, to the big city players and in-house teams - and everyone in between. Exceptional individuals are also recognised, with several categories for the brightest and best. Every year offers a snapshot of the inspirational and innovative work you do every day. Enter the [2018 awards](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/events/excellence-awards/) for your chance to be recognised and celebrate your successes.

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

*Regulation*

We successfully hosted an event on deregulation at Chancery Lane: Deregulation – what can Solicitors learn from Professionals in other Markets?

Speakers included Christina Blacklaws; Ingrid Holmes, associate director of policy, responsibility office, Hermes Investment Management; and Colin Mayer, Peter Moores professor of management studies, Said Business School, University of Oxford.

Discussion covered:

•           How might competition interact with professional obligations to a client?

•           Can lawyers play a greater role in shaping how corporations function in light of the SRA seeking to liberalise and reduce the

            rulebook to encourage competition and innovation.

*Professional Indemnity Insurance*

We [published](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/policy-campaigns/articles/the-sra-2018-pii-consultation-law-society-briefing/) a briefing for members on the SRA’s PII consultation, which closes on 15June. The SRA is proposing substantial reductions to the minimum levels of PII cover that firms and clients must hold.  We are concerned that this may reduce protections without seeing any significant reductions to premiums.

*Parliamentary*

We were quoted three times by peers during the Second Reading of the Civil Liability Bill.  We were also mentioned by Justice Minister Lucy Frazer QC MP during justice oral questions on our research on the looming crisis in criminal duty solicitors. The government tabled a number of amendments to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill which amended the bill in line with our asks. The government also lost a vote on an amendment we supported on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

*Speeches and meetings*

I met two Department for Exiting the EU ministers, Robin Walker MP and Suella Braverman MP, to discuss mutual market access and civil justice co-operation.

On Wednesday, I visited Coventry Law School and spoke to law students about my experience in the law. I spoke at our law management conference on Thursday.

Today, vice president Christina Blacklaws opened our conference on AI and Ethics and will speak at the Junior Lawyers Division Conference on Saturday.

**Our influencing work internationally:**

On 23 April we hosted a roundtable with the Colombian human rights lawyer Luis Guillermo, lawyer in the *José Alvear Restrepo Lawyer's Collective* (CCAJAR) and currently serving as the general secretary for the Americas for the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Topics discussed included the limitations of the peace jurisdiction in Colombia; ways in which civil society can advocate before respective governments, the EU and the UN; upcoming elections in May; role of public participation in implementing the peace agreement; the relationship between economic development and human rights; use of social media in the electoral process and the role of human rights lawyers globally in supporting the peace process. Luis Guillermo Perez presented a submission sent by CCAJAR and the European Centre for Rights and Freedoms to the International Criminal Court to define the current repression of human rights defenders as a crime against humanity.

From 23-25 April, we participated in a trade visit to Kazakhstan to promote the use of English law, our members’ expertise and England and Wales as a jurisdiction of choice. The visit was part of the UK government’s Legal Services are GREAT Campaign which aims to promote English law internationally.  As part of the visit, we participated in an English Law Summit conference in Astana and Almaty co-organised by the Law Society, the Bar Council, and the UK Ministry of Justice. Deputy vice-president Simon Davis spoke at the panel on “update on Brexit and its implications for dispute resolution and capital market sectors in the UK” in both cities.

On 24 April, Rita Giannini, EU policy adviser, and Ben Boss, trainee solicitor on secondment, attended a seminar on the Hague Judgment Project organised by the JURI Committee in the European Parliament. There were presentations by the Hague Conference and the European Commission, which represents the Member States of the European Union in the negotiations. The position of the UK was brought up by MEPs in the discussion (no British MEPs were present). Contact was renewed with MS Ning Zhao, senior legal officer of the Hague Conference, and a future meeting agreed

Also on 24 April we hosted the 4th Invest Africa-Business Council for Africa Annual Debate and gala dinner, continuing our strategic partnership with IA-BCA. The event was attended by over 200 investors and businesses active in Africa, including several law firms. Speakers included Liam Fox MP, secretary of state for international trade and I welcomed guests to the dinner on behalf of the Law Society.

On 26 April we participated in a roundtable with European Bars in Brussels to exchange information on the latest developments relating to the legal profession in each jurisdiction.

On 27 April, Helena Raulus, head of office and Eoin Lavelle met with Niels Junker Jacobsen, councillor, Danish Permanent Representation, to discuss our Brexit agenda.

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

Offering a mix of keynote speeches, practical breakout sessions and networking opportunities, the [JLD annual conference](http://communities.lawsociety.org.uk/junior-lawyers/events/jld-conference-and-ball-2018-book-your-place-now/5062557.article) and ball took place last weekend. It provides invaluable guidance on taking control of your career.

The conference and ball is aimed at all members of the Junior Lawyers Division. Membership of the JLD is free and automatic for LPC students, LPC graduates (including paralegals looking for training contracts), trainee solicitors, and solicitors with up to five years’ post-qualification experience.

**Supporting practice excellence**

*Changes to the evidence requirements for legal aid funding in Private Law Family cases (domestic violence gateway)*

This [practice note](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/practice-notes/changes-to-the-evidence-requirements-for-legal-aid-funding-in-private-law-family-cases/), which outlines the changes to the evidence requirements for legal aid funding in Private Law Family cases (domestic violence gateway), is essential reading for all legal practitioners, legal support staff and frontline advice workers dealing with those affected by domestic abuse and child abuse. To access the full practice note, you’ll need to register for a [My Law Society](https://account.lawsociety.org.uk/registration.aspx) account.

*Proposed changes to our National Conveyancing Protocol*

We are [seeking](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/stories/proposed-changes-to-national-conveyancing-protocol/) views on proposed revisions made to our National Conveyancing Protocol. The suggested amendments arise from:

* changes in the law or regulations
* issues that we know can create difficulties in practice
* matters that may be the subject of change in the future.

Government recently published their [response](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-home-buying-and-selling-process-call-for-evidence) to the call for evidence on improving the home buying and selling process. You will see from our summary of the [proposals](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/stories/government-response-to-call-for-evidence-on-home-buying/) the government’s intentions are wide ranging. One aspect includes the provision of time limits on some parts of the transaction including searches and leasehold information, so we are suggesting including some time limits in the protocol. If you use the protocol, or have an interest in its use, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions. The primary consultees are members of the Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS) who agree to use the Protocol as a term of membership. The consultation closes at 23:45 on 14 May 2018.

*Preparing for the GDPR: A guide for law firms*

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into effect on 25 May, with a [corresponding](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/gdpr-preparation/preparing-for-the-gdpr-a-guide-for-law-firms/) Data Protection Bill currently working its way through parliament. The GDPR has been described as an evolution rather than a revolution, but it does contain important changes to how firms process and retain data.

All of our GDPR support and guidance is [here](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/gdpr-preparation/gdpr-resources-and-support/).

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

[Private Client Section: IHT and Death - A tax update, 2 May](https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabId=37&id=2049&orgId=1)

This one-hour seminar will provide an update on the deemed domicile changes, UK residential property look through, AMRL 2017 registration requirements and relevant outputs from the Spring Statement in March.

[Mental Health First Aid Champion Training - Manchester, 8 May 2018](https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabId=37&id=2086&orgId=1)

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England’s one day mental health awareness and skills course qualifies you as an MHFA Champion. Through a mix of group activities, presentations and discussions, each session is built around a Mental Health First Aid action plan. Everyone who completes the course gets an MHFA manual to keep and refer to whenever they need it, and a badge and certificate to say they are an MHFA Champion. You’ll also get a copy of the Line Managers' Resource, an invaluable source of advice on how to support an employee experiencing mental ill health.

[Future of Law lecture series - Smart Contracts with Sir Geoffrey Vos, Chancellor of the High Court](https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabId=37&id=2104&orgId=1)

The Future of Law lecture series invites subject matter experts to explore the most pressing legal questions facing the profession, and aims to bring together leaders from across the legal profession, members, policy makers and key stakeholders to discuss how to maintain a successful legal services sector for the future.

 [Doing legal business between Malaysia and the UK](https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabId=37&id=2014&orgId=1)

To gain more insight into practical experiences of doing business between the UK and Malaysia, we will hold a panel discussion with expert speakers from UK and Malaysian law firms, who will each present a different perspective.

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

Kind regards,

Joe

**Joe Egan**

**President**

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