

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.

Here are some highlights from our work last week.

Influencing on behalf of the profession and promoting the profession

The Law Society's media profile last week:

National and regional BBC bulletins covered our concerns about the criminal legal aid means test. Those reports were followed with [Guardian](#), [Gazette](#), and [About Manchester](#) coverage of our submission to the MoJ review of the 2012 Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act. Meanwhile, the FT Weekend Magazine had access to justice on its front cover as part of a detailed report which drew heavily on Law Society information.

My article for the [Barrister](#) magazine highlights the ubiquity of algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) whether in the GPS in our smartphones or medical diagnostics and how their role is growing in the justice system.

One in three law firms was targeted by cyberscammers in 2017-18 and while only 6% of scams resulted in a data breach and just 3% led to financial loss we warned firms not to be complacent. The data which comes from our latest PII survey, was reported on in the [Gazette](#), [Times](#) (£) & [Legal Futures](#)

A fully interconnected international legal profession is an essential part of a globalised world, I said as legal dignitaries marked the opening of the legal year. Report in the [Gazette](#).

Every couple in England and Wales will in future be able to choose between a civil partnership and marriage when they formalise their relationship, the prime minister has announced. Responding I said: "The law needs to catch up with, and reflect, the multiple ways in which people choose to live their lives today." Coverage in the [Guardian](#), [Gazette](#), [Times](#) (£) & [FT](#) (£)

Solicitors from less affluent backgrounds are struggling to move up the ranks in their firm because they try too hard to fit in to the culture, for instance, by toning down their accents, social mobility research by the Bridge Group suggests. Commenting on the report, Simon Davis, the Law Society's vice president, said the potential advantages of increased socio-economic diversity in the law will never happen without a corresponding commitment to inclusion. Report in the [Gazette](#) and in [Today's Conveyancer](#).

Just one third of small firms are aware they are approaching a cliff edge in relation to long-term run-off cover, and they are the part of the profession most likely to suffer if they have not arranged a suitable substitute. I commented: "We have been warning about the potentially serious implications of the loss of SIF for many years." Coverage in [Insurance Times](#), [Today's Conveyancer](#) & [Inside Conveyancing](#).

Law firms face a tight turnaround to publish price and service information for consumers and small businesses, the Law Society of England and Wales has warned after the Solicitors Regulation Authority [published guidance on regulations](#) coming into force in December. Details in the [Gazette](#).

Any hope the Supreme Court would quickly tackle outstanding questions surrounding legal professional privilege were dashed this week when the Serious Fraud Office said it would not appeal last month's Court of Appeal judgment in *Director of the Serious Fraud Office v Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation*. The Law Society successfully intervened in the appeal to protect the principle of legal professional privilege. Mark Paulson, the Society's head of public and criminal law, said: "It can surely be only a matter of time before *Three Rivers* is tested. In the meantime, this was an important win." Report in the [Gazette](#).

Don't forget you can read all Law Society press releases by clicking on this [link](#). For live updates follow us on [Twitter](#).

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

Conservative Party Conference

The Law Society hosted a reception for around 80 representatives of the legal profession on the Monday evening. Lord Chancellor David Gauke, chair of the Bar Council Andrew Walker QC and chair of the Society of Conservative Lawyers, Victoria Prentis MP, gave short speeches alongside our vice president Simon Davis. Also in there were Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP, chair of the Justice Select Committee Bob Neill MP, and co-chairs of the APPG on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Jonathan Djanogly MP and Lord Hunt of Wirral.

I held five meetings on the Tuesday of conference, including with Justice Minister Lucy Frazer QC MP, CBI director General Carolyn Fairbairn, Tory member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Bob Seely MP, director of the think-tank Justice Andrea Coomber, and officers of the Birmingham Law Society.

I also took part in three fringe events on the Tuesday, focusing on:

- Technology, and the legal and ethical implications of artificial intelligence
- The fundamental components of a fully-functioning justice system (with Lucy Frazer)
- Brexit, foreign policy and global Britain.

Opening of the Legal Year

The Opening of the Legal Year was attended by more than 100 international representatives from over 30 countries. In addition to the ceremony at Westminster Hall, presided over by the lord chancellor and lord chief justice, the Law Society and Bar Council hosted a series of joint events including:

- A roundtable discussion which I hosted for international bar leaders on the topic of diversity in the legal profession. Panellists included representatives from Malaysia, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the International Bar Association.
- A formal dinner at which I spoke, for all international bar leaders and key national stakeholders including Bob Neil MP and shadow lord chancellor Richard Burgon MP.
- A seminar for international bar leaders and members on the topic of future skills for the profession chaired by the deputy vice president, David Greene. Panellists included Michelle Bramley, global head of knowledge, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Chris Howard, director of professional legal education, Kings College London, Morry Bailes, president, Law Council of Australia, Professor Wolfgang Ewer, former president, German Bar Association (DAV), Francesca O'Neill, barrister, 1 Chancery Lane Chambers and Robert Bourns, chair, Law Society Board and consultant at TLT solicitors.

During the Opening of the Legal Year, I was delighted to renew our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Law Society of Singapore (LSS) which the LSS president,

Gregory Vijayendran, signed. We first signed a MOU with the LSS in 2003. This MOU provides a way for us to reaffirm and continue our engagement with the LSS, which is an important international partner. During the meeting, the president of the LSS and I discussed a number of developments in both our regions and the potential for collaborative activities. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the LSS.

I was also grateful of the opportunity to renew our Friendship Agreement with the Dai-Ichi (Tokyo) Bar Association. I met the executive vice president of the Dai-Ichi Bar Association, Tsuyoshi Dai, and member Ms Emiko Maki. We first signed a friendship agreement with the Dai-Ichi Bar in 2003, which we renew every five years. The agreement forms the basis for our cooperation. We have a long-standing relationship with the Dai-Ichi Bar Association and its member firms, allowing us to offer increased networking opportunities for our members, particularly those without a presence in Japan. Vice-president Dai and I discussed a number of issues in both jurisdictions, including the Law Society's Women in the Law roundtables and current corporation legislation in Japan. I also met with the president of the Hong Kong Bar Association, Melissa K Pang, over the Opening of the Legal Year weekend to discuss the UK and Hong Kong government bilateral trade review known as the 'Strategic Dialogue on Trade Partnership'. The legal sector is one of the sectors the UK government has focused on in-depth to identify and address any remaining barriers to the bilateral trade in services. We look forward to working together with the Law Society of Hong Kong and our respective governments on this initiative.

Speeches

I spoke at a Global Law Firms Conference on women in leadership at HSBC and at a LawShare Conference in Manchester on Thursday. On Friday, I spoke at the Legal Aid Practitioners Group Conference and hosted an event at the Law Society to celebrate Black History Month.

Meetings with stakeholders

On Wednesday, I met with the president of the Supreme Court, Baroness Hale, to discuss diversity in the legal profession and judiciary, court modernisation and England and Wales as a Global Legal Centre. I also met with the senior presiding judge, Lady Justice Macur on Wednesday.

AGFS

We are formulating a response to the AGFS consultation, having secured an extension to the consultation deadline of 12 October. We have engaged Professor Adams, who drafted a report which helped with the LGFS JR, to conduct research to inform our response. She has been analysing the data provided by the LAA. We have already released her initial findings about the £15m investment in the AGFS which garnered significant coverage on social media. The head of justice and I, together with a small group of criminal practitioners, attended a round table meeting with the Legal Aid Minister Lucy Frazer, to discuss the AGFS and the broader challenges facing the criminal defence profession.

LASPO

We have submitted our evidence on the review to the MoJ. It includes our LASPO 4 Years On review plus further reports on civil and crime means testing, our LASPO focus group's findings and proposed amendments to the domestic violence regulations.

Legal professional privilege: ENRC v SFO

The SFO has withdrawn its application for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. We are pleased that the SFO has accepted the Court of Appeal's ruling and that the arguments put forward in our intervention have prevailed.

Law Commission consultation on the Suspicious Activity Reporting regime

We will be responding in due course to this consultation on the reporting of suspicious activity in order to seek a defence against money laundering or terrorist financing offences.

Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill

We have prepared a briefing for the Bill's Second Reading on 9 October.

Migration Advisory Committee report on EEA migration in the UK

We have been considering the implications for the legal sector of the highly-publicised MAC report: the recommendations for facilitating highly-skilled migration, abolishing the cap on the number of 'Tier 2' visas and the resident labour market test, and for maintaining the Tier 2 salary thresholds and the intra-company transfer route are all welcome. There will be very different impacts for other industry sectors.

Our influencing work internationally:

On the 28 September, I attended the Hong Kong Law Society's Second Belt and Road Conference 'The ABC to Building a Smart Belt and Road: Law and Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Cloud'. During the conference, I spoke in a session titled Cloud Stream on the Rise of Cloud and Machine Learning of Law and Regulations where I discussed the benefits and risks for lawyers and clients using cloud, and the challenges against quicker cloud adoption, ethical and practical challenges of big data, and machine learning of law and regulations.

From 2nd to 4 October, Helena Raulus, head of Brussels office and Anna Drozd, EU policy adviser were in Geneva for the WTO Public Forum. Helena and Anna met with the following missions to the WTO: UK, Australia, Mexico, EU, US, Chile and Japan. They also met with WTO director General Roberto Azevedo and with Martin Roy, counsellor in the Trade in Services Division of the WTO Secretariat. On 4 October, the Brussels office with the UK Mission and Argentina Mission to WTO organised a workshop on 'Cross Border Professional Services in the Digital age: Why Domestic Regulation matters?'

Supporting members at every stage of their career

We've now published '[Your professional body – the value of your membership](#)' aligned to the member offer. It clearly shows how we influence for impact and promote the profession. It also showcases the services we offer to support practice excellence, keep members up to date, and as a career companion. All new members will receive a copy in the post.

Bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession

The International Bar Association is conducting a global survey on bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession. To date there have been almost 4,000 responses from over 115 jurisdictions. The survey is anonymous, available in six languages and takes just 5-10 minutes to complete. It closes on the 26 October. You can access the survey [here](#). Every response is valuable and contributes to a better data set.

Some of our upcoming events are:

[The Disappearance of Miss Bebb; celebrity play reading and conference](#)

The Birmingham Law Society, the University of Birmingham, The Kalisher Trust and The Ideas Foundry have united to create a day event inspired by the Bebb v Law Society case.

[London Law Fair 2018: Promoting access to a diverse legal profession](#)

The London Law Fair is the only national recruitment event specifically designed to encourage a more diverse range of entrants into the legal sector.

[Graham Turnbull lecture 2018](#)

Each year, law students, trainee solicitors, pupil barristers and junior lawyers (current, prospective or in between stages) are invited to enter our annual Graham Turnbull essay competition. The title of the 2018 essay is: 'Is technology an opportunity or a threat for human rights lawyers? Does it increase or reduce risks for lawyers in carrying out their duties and in what circumstances might technology be used to mitigate such risks?'

Supporting practice excellence

Competition Section seminar: UK national security and investment law reforms

On November 13th Davina Garrod (Partner, Akin Gump LLP) and a senior director at the UK Government's Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy ("BEIS"), will present on the proposed new UK National Security & Investment Law.

Adopting a paper lite strategy for sustainable business advantage

This webinar is free for all members maintaining compliant legal processing tasks. When systems aren't integrated, case handlers must spend time searching for documents and content, rather than applying that knowledge to handling the case. To overcome these challenges, law firms need to move away from slow and costly paper driven processes and look to automate them through technology.

Local media panels

We are trialling a new initiative in some of our regions, and we'd like our members to get involved. We're working with local media to help raise the profile of the important work solicitors do to assist people in their everyday lives and to help consumers understand their day-to-day legal needs. [Local media panels](#) will be set up in three areas of England and Wales.

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

Kind regards,

Christina

Christina Blacklaws
President

The Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1PL

twitter: @lawsocpresident

www.lawsociety.org.uk