

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.

Our annual thank you e-mail to our members started going out last week. As part of our work to target our communications, members with less than five years PQE, private client, property, large firm and in house members will receive tailored messages about our member offer.

Here are some highlights from our week.

Influencing on behalf of the profession and promoting the profession

The Law Society's media profile this week:

Head of justice Richard Miller was on the Today programme on Monday talking about the impact legal aid cuts have had on access to justice. You can listen to the story [here](#) from 48:40. The issue was also covered on [BBC News online](#) with a report, which drew heavily on Law Society information, showing cuts to legal aid have created "deserts" of provision across England and Wales. The story was also covered by [Yorkshire Post](#), [Bolton News](#), [Norwich Evening News](#) (p.4), [Dereham Times](#); [Eastern Daily Press](#). While BBC Surrey, BBC Cornwall, BBC Cumbria, BBC Leeds, BBC Humberside & BBC World carried portions Richard Miller's Today interview as part of rolling coverage of the legal aid crisis.

Meanwhile the government this week put down legislation paving the way for an additional £23m on criminal defence advocacy fees. The Ministry of Justice has announced it will embark on a wider review of criminal legal aid payments. Full report in the [Gazette](#) plus a [comment piece](#) from justice minister Lucy Frazer. More coverage in the [Times](#) (£).

The [Times](#) (£) also ran a story on "a near clean sweep of women leaders in the legal profession's regulatory and representative bodies". The report picks up on a comment I made saying that in contrast, "the pace of change within the profession is "glacial".

I raised concerns about employment law in a letter to the [FT](#) (£). I wrote: "The High Court ruling in the Deliveroo case illustrates a broader issue with employment law in the UK. It has not kept pace with people's work habits in the modern economy."

Lawyers must never be persecuted for defending human rights, I said in a statement to mark Human Rights Day. "It is our duty to speak out clearly whenever we see this happening and we will continue to do so without fear or favour. Threats to the independence of the legal profession undermine the rule of law and impede access to justice for all, especially the most vulnerable." Report in the [Times](#) (£).

Digitising the divorce application process and hoping for the best isn't enough to reform the legal requirements for splitting up, the Law Society has warned, telling the government to restore legal aid so that separating couples can receive early advice. Coverage in the [Gazette](#) & [Times](#) (£).

A [Guardian](#) feature on the story of an immigrant working in the UK includes a comment from Max Winthrop, chair of the Law Society's employment law committee.

The government's long-awaited review LASPO will no longer be published by the end of this year, the Ministry of Justice has confirmed. The department admitted the review is not yet complete and will be published instead 'early in the New Year'. Coverage in the [Gazette, Times](#) (£).

Junior lawyers have warned that they could be adversely affected by proposals to roll out early morning and late-night sittings in some civil proceedings, after the government agreed to ditch similar plans for criminal cases. Writing for the [Gazette](#), justice minister Lucy Frazer says she hopes the pilot will 'alleviate some of the stress' that is associated with attending court by allowing people the opportunity to fit attendance around their everyday lives.

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:

Parliamentary

On Monday, Jonathan Smithers gave evidence on behalf of the Law Society to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry on leasehold reform. Jonathan's evidence focused on the role and independence of conveyancing solicitors, while also highlighting the Society's concerns around the potential use of retrospective legislation and its impact on the rule of law.

Vice president, Simon Davis, hosted a dinner in Parliament with the Industry and Parliament Trust on trade in services. It was attended by a number of parliamentarians and other stakeholders from the services sector.

Speeches

Deputy vice president David Greene spoke at the Law Society's annual Graham Turnbull lecture and essay competition. The keynote speaker was Dr Gus Hosein from Privacy International.

To celebrate International Human Rights Day, David also spoke at a seminar on human rights defenders and at a reception with keynote speaker Corey Stoughton, advocacy director at Liberty. There was also a seminar on modern slavery earlier that day.

Women in Leadership in Law

This week we have had the final two men's roundtables on 2018 this week with 45 attendees from the following firms: BCLP, Blake Morgan, Capsticks, Citi Group, Clarke Wilmott, Clifford Chance, CMS CMNO, Cooley, DAC Beachcroft, Dentons, DWF, EY, Financial Ombudsman Service, IBA, Mason & Cook, Maurice Turnor Gardner, Mills & Reeve, New Law Solicitors, Open Cosmos, Osborne Clarke, Sherman & Sterling, Standard Chartered Bank, Stone King, Stevens & Bolton, Sullivan & Cromwell, TLT, Travers Smith, Uber, Wedlake Bell, Wikborg Rein, Veale Wasbrough Vizards and Womble Bon Dickinson. Owing to popularity, two further roundtables will be scheduled in London in January as well as in Birmingham and Cardiff.

Our influencing work internationally:

On 10 December, the Brussels Office hosted a roundtable event: Women in Leadership in Law, followed by a drinks reception. In these discussions (which are under Chatham House rules), participants discussed their experiences of unconscious bias, the gender pay gap, flexible working and best practice in their workplace. The data collected will be presented in a report, to be published in 2019 which is intended to highlight steps to be taken regarding the major areas of improvement for gender equality in the legal profession.

At the invitation of the UK government, I travelled to New Delhi with Holly McKenzie to participate in the FutureTech Festival - the flagship conference under the UK-India tech partnership, announced during the Indian prime minister's visit to the UK earlier this year. I chaired a dedicated legal tech session from 14:00-15:00 on Wed 12 December as part of the Festival. I also held Women in the Leadership in Law roundtable, and attended meetings with Indian law firms, judges and the government of India.

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. A [simple summary](#) of our member offer is also available.

LGBT+ History Month events

In February our LGBT+ Lawyers Division committee is looking to support as many [regional events](#) as possible. If your firm or organisation is arranging something for History Month and would like a committee member or Diversity & Inclusion team member to attend or be on a panel, please [contact](#) the team.

LGBT+ Lawyers Division essay competition

The LGBT+ Lawyers Division has launched its inaugural essay competition, with a first prize of £750. Closing date is 28 February 2019 and the title is 'What remaining legal barriers exist for the LGBT+ community in terms of equality, including any issues with the application of the current law?' More information can be found [here](#).

Changing career direction - options for flexible working

This event will be hosted by Adaptive, the flexible resourcing model from Simmons & Simmons. Adaptive was created to respond to the shifting legal landscape of Law, by providing clients with technically excellent first-rate lawyers, who are available to work on defined contract assignments and projects. The model is designed to strengthen client relationships by providing a commercial solution that meets both the needs of our clients and the firm. This event has been designed in partnership with Adaptive and the Law Society, specifically for those who are interested in finding out more about how they can adopt a flexible working pattern and the benefits of doing so. As the legal marketplace evolves, clients are also actively seeking flexible resourcing solutions to meet the changing demands. The flexibility of working through a model like Adaptive, lets you keep control over when and how you work: you can choose your assignments in terms of work content and the defined periods you choose to undertake them.

JLD forum: Helping you to secure a training position

The Junior Lawyers Division is holding a free one-day skills event in partnership with the Merseyside JLD to assist LPC students and graduates with their search for a training position.

Supporting practice excellence

Some of our upcoming events are:

LawWorks Carol concert

The LawWorks Carol concert, held jointly with Advocate, is on 18th December at Temple Church. There will be readings by Stephen Mangan, Lady Hale and Gyles Brandreth and performances by Rob Burton, winner of the woodwind category final of BBC Young Musician 2018 and the Collegium Musicum of London Chamber Choir. There is also an incredibly good raffle. Please do spread the word! Further details can be found [here](#).

Online training: GDPR for Managers: An Introduction

In this course training is given on key aspects of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) data protection regime and first steps for compliance.

Podcast: Facial recognition technology - Who is watching us?

In this podcast, Olivier Roth speaks to Big Brother Watch's Griff Ferris about Facial Recognition Technology. Facial recognition has long been feared as a feature of a future authoritarian society, with its potential to turn CCTV cameras into identity checkpoints, creating a world where citizens are intensively watched and tracked. However, facial recognition is now a reality in the UK – despite the lack of any legal basis or parliamentary scrutiny, and despite the significant concerns raised by rights and race equality groups.

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

Kind regards,

Christina

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