

Subject: President's Weekly Local Law Societies Update 16.03.2020

President's Update



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.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

We know members will have questions about the implications of Covid-19 for their clients, their businesses, their professional obligations, their own well-being and that of their employees.

The Law Society is keeping the Coronavirus situation under review and monitoring the advice we receive from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Public Health England. Our [Coronavirus web pages](#) will be kept up to date with the latest information.

We have also published information for visitors to 113 Chancery Lane and our other offices on our [website](#).

The Law Society's media profile this week

Chancellor Rishi Sunak this week unveiled the UK's 2020 budget, which, among other things, included a £23 million cash injection into the wider justice system, comprised of a £5m trial of specialist courts for domestic abuse cases, £15m for victims and £3m for the Royal Commission on criminal justice process. The [Gazette](#) reported my comment that additional resources were a "drop in the ocean" compared to "the hundreds of millions cut from legal aid".

"It is positive to see the recognition of the trauma experienced by those affected by domestic abuse and we welcome the commitment in the Budget to early intervention and rehabilitation measures for perpetrators. However, this needs to go hand in hand with proper investment in legal aid services. The 2012 legal aid cuts have left the legal aid system in crisis."

Also in the [Solicitors Journal](#) and [New Law Journal](#).

Cris McCurley, a member of our access to justice committee, appeared on the BBC's [Victoria Derbyshire](#) programme (36.50) to discuss the government's pledge to use £5 million to trial specialist courts for domestic abuse cases and £10 million to tackle high risk domestic abuse perpetrators through early intervention.

In a letter to the [Independent](#), I wrote on the 'enhanced' Domestic Abuse Bill which extends protections to ensure victims are not questioned by their alleged abusers in court. "As the bill progresses through parliament, we urge the government to expand this ban and put the necessary funding into legal aid for both sides, support services, education and wider government policy – giving victims the access to justice they so deserve."

It was also revealed in the Budget that lawyers will face a levy to help fund government action to tackle money laundering and ensure delivery of its economic crime plan, [Legal Futures](#) reported. I highlighted that "solicitors play an important role in the battle against money laundering and the Law Society – as the named supervisory body – shares the government's objectives in having a robust regime in place".

Anna Bradshaw, a member of our EU committee, was on [BBC Radio Northampton](#) (from 22:13:26), discussing proposed coronavirus legislation aimed at tackling its spread across the UK.

Gary Rycroft, member of our digital assets working group, spoke to [BBC Three Counties](#) (from 15:26) about consumers' rights following the collapse of Flybe and what rights you have if you had pre-booked a holiday to northern Italy and are looking to cancel due to coronavirus fears.

The [Independent](#) reported on an immigration loophole which would deny thousands of people information which proves their right to remain. They cite our warning that people may also be unable to view files about themselves.

The [FT](#) (£) covered how to start a career in the law as a mature student and advised prospective solicitors to attend one of our open days or workshops.

The [Solicitor's Journal](#) covered the CMA report on leaseholds. Sarah Dwight, a member of our conveyancing and land law committee said: "It is important to remember that clients do not always know the difference between freehold and leasehold; and there is now a specific requirement to ensure that the client is aware of the difference between freehold and leasehold ownership."

[Legal Cheek](#) reported that the Law Society increased the recommended minimum salary for trainee solicitors to £22,541 in London and £19,992 elsewhere — an uplift of 1.9%, but adds that almost a third of rookie solicitors were being paid below those levels - up 5% compared to last year

The [Gazette](#) covered the Law Society's upcoming roundtable discussion on criminal legal aid fees, and also noted that a [consultation](#) on the proposals, which were unveiled in February, closes on 27 March. I said: "The stakes are high, and without urgent intervention, the defence profession could fall apart. It is important the government receives feedback from the profession on the accelerated proposals in order to understand how serious the position is for practitioners and clients - and how the current offer falls well short of what is needed."

[Lawyer Monthly](#), [Manchester Evening News](#), [Northern Echo](#) and five other publications reported on women in the law for international women's day. They cited our research that women now make up the majority of practising solicitors.

The [Times](#) (£) provided insight into equality in the profession, citing that women make up 51% of practising solicitors and 62% of entrants. However, only 30% of law firm partners are women. I. Stephanie Boyce, deputy vice president of the Law Society said: "For this picture to change, businesses and law firms must hold themselves accountable for gender equality in their workforce, adopt policies – such as blind recruitment, flexible working and fair work allocation – to drive equality up to the most senior levels."

[LawCareers](#) examined what the legal profession looks like in 2020, while [LexisNexis](#) also cites International Women's Day's Each for Equal campaign.

Immediate past president Christina Blacklaws said: "For future female solicitors to reach senior leadership positions at an equal rate to men, the work culture of law firms needs to adapt to suit both men and women. As a profession which strives to uphold justice, the legal sector needs to be at the forefront of the fight for equality in the workplace."

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

Regulation

Meeting with SRA on Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE)

On 4 March, the chair of our Education and Training Committee, Alan East, and Law Society staff met with counterparts at the SRA for the first of a planned series of meetings to discuss key issues outstanding with the SQE. The discussion covered; the background to the SQE, SQE 1 assessments and the skills element of this assessment, qualifying work experience and how to support the profession and those entering with this, and briefly touched on transitional arrangements. An agreement was reached to work closely on developing guidance for qualifying work experience. The Law Society will also be feeding back on skills within the SQE 1 assessment and further queries around transitional arrangements. Further meetings are planned for April and May, which will cover other key issues, including equality and diversity and the results of the SQE 2 pilot amongst others.

Justice

On Wednesday 04 March, we co-hosted a means test focus group in Bristol with the Ministry of Justice.

On Thursday 05 March, Richard Atkinson's (co-Chair of the Criminal Law Committee) article about the Criminal Legal Aid Review "accelerated items" was published in [The Times](#).

Speaking Engagements

Vice president David Greene spoke at the Association of South Western Law Societies winter meeting on Tuesday 10 March.

Deputy vice president I. Stephanie Boyce spoke at an in-house conference hosted by Bristol Law Society on Thursday 12 March.

On Wednesday, I presented the Halsbury Award for Rule of Law at the LexisNexis Legal Awards 2020, speaking on the importance and value of the rule of law and access to justice.

On Thursday, I attended in Leeds and spoke at the AGM of Union of Yorkshire Law Societies and then attended and gave a short speech at the annual dinner of the Leeds Law Society.

Clients needed for 2020 Solicitor Brand advertising campaigns

The Solicitor Brand Campaign 2020 will promote the value of solicitors to members of the public, business owners and decision makers right across England and Wales, featuring photography and testimonials from satisfied solicitor clients and highlighting the good work that solicitors do and the positive outcomes achieved.

We need your help! We are looking for solicitor clients from varying ethnic, social and economic backgrounds to ensure the people featured in the campaign are as representative as possible of society as a whole.

Do you have a client who is not camera shy and who would be happy to promote the value of using a solicitor in our national advertising campaign?

Check the [solicitor brand campaign page](#) for more information and to get involved.

Our International Work

On Tuesday 10 March, the Brussels Office hosted and chaired a BBUKOO (Brussels-based UK organisations and offices) legal issues task force meeting.

Supporting members at every stage of their career

[Judicial appointments: interview training for solicitors - Friday 20 March 2020](#)

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

In view of increasing competition for judicial appointments, this interactive course will equip delegates with the skills to help enhance your application and interview performance. This workshop has been developed specifically for solicitor applicants but the content is relevant for anyone serious about submitting a credible judicial application.

[Unpausing the conversation on menopause - Tuesday 24 March, 2020](#)

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

Join us on Tuesday 24 March to challenge taboos and erase the stigma around the menopause. We will be joined by a line up of fantastic speakers who will be discussing the menopause from a medical perspective and how the legal landscape is changing in regards to discrimination. [Book your place](#)

[Lexcel consultant training - Wednesday 25 March 2020](#)

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

This course provides an in-depth understanding of Lexcel England and Wales v6.1 and what evidence is required to meeting the Standard requirements.

[Advocacy and the Vulnerable Training, Monday 6 April 2020, Liverpool - Afternoon session](#)

Location: Liverpool Law Society, 2nd Floor, Helix, Edmund Street, Liverpool, L3 9NY

The Advocacy and the Vulnerable Training was developed in conjunction with the Bar to help solicitor advocates and barristers strike the balance between advancing their client's case effectively in court whilst ensuring vulnerable witnesses are not subjected to undue stress.

Supporting practice excellence

[Cyber security update 2020](#) – Webinar 25 March 2020 inclusive to LMS

[The challenges facing small legal practices](#) – Webinar 27 March 2020 what you need to know - 20% discount to LMS and risk and compliance

[Property Section Seminar: The 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive, Manchester -Thursday 16 April 2020](#)

Location: CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP, 1 The Avenue, Spinningfields, M3 3AP

Join one of three seminars to learn more about the 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive. Our expert speaker, Alison Matthews, director of quality and risk at Shoosmiths, will guide you through what it means for firms, the SRA's approach to money laundering and the challenges facing firms.

Keeping members up to date

We have a number of newsletters for members. Below is a list, along with links for signing up to them.

Newsletter	Sign-up method
Advocacy Update	Update My Law Society preferences
Anti-money Laundering Update	Law Society newsletter page
City Update	Contact the City relationship management team
Diversity & Inclusion Update	Update My Law Society preferences
In-house Forum	Update My Law Society preferences
International Update	Law Society newsletter page
Junior Lawyers Update	Law Society newsletter page
	JLD sign-up page
Legal Aid Update	Law Society newsletter page
Professional Update	Law Society newsletter page
Risk & Compliance Update	Join the Risk and Compliance Service
Small Firms Focus	Contact the Small Firms Division
Solicitor Judges Update	Join the Solicitor Judges Division
Campaigns Update	Sign up to the Campaigns Update newsletter
Parliamentary report	Sign up to the Parliamentary report newsletter

You can also register for the Gazette daily update [here](#).

Simon Davis President

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