



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 11 JANUARY 2019

New Chair of the Bar

The Times (Print, [online](#) and [the Brief](#)), [Legal Cheek](#) – Richard Atkins QC, Chair of the Bar for 2019, gives an interview to the Times covering a range of subjects.

Richard Atkins QC, says that he has been out there taking part in strike action, and would do so again. “I don’t want to see, if at all possible, barristers on picket lines,” he says. “But sometimes it’s the only thing that works. I’ve taken action in the past.”

He also said that the culture of round-the-clock emails was damaging to family life and wellbeing.

“There is a danger that we are expected to be on parade 24 hours a day, seven days a week and that isn’t good for anybody. It’s not good for wellbeing, nor for diversity at the bar, and many people have caring responsibilities,” he said.

LASPO

[New Law Journal](#) - The Bar Council has published a video on the tragic story of Nicholas Harry’s struggle to fund legal representation for the inquest into the death of his 19-month old son, Sam, as part of a series on real-life examples of hardship caused by legal aid cuts.

The videos are part of a series by the Bar Council and media platform openDemocracy showing the cruel realities of LASPO on [openDemocracy’s Voices for Justice pages](#) this month. The project includes interviews with charity workers and MPs such as Bob Neill and Bambos Charalambous and addresses a range of issues including custody disputes, disability rights and benefits, homelessness, Windrush and early legal advice.

QC appointments

[Law Society Gazette](#), [Legal Business](#) - The Ministry of Justice and Queen's Counsel Appointments website yesterday published the official list of the 108 lawyers to be made Queen's Counsel (QC) this year.

Legal Business reports that two White & Case partners were among the solicitor-advocates taking silk.

Male appointees far outweighed successful female applicants: 78 to 30. Women were more successful on average though, with 55% of female applicants making the cut compared to 42% for men. Ethnic minority representation remained sluggish, with 13 out of 30 non-white applicants taking silk compared to 18 out of 33 last year.

Sir Alex Allan, chair of the Queen's Counsel Selection Panel, commented: 'We remain concerned that the number of female applicants remains comparatively low, but I am pleased that of those women who did apply, well over 50% were successful. I was also pleased to note that the number of BAME applicants appointed was in proportion to their representation amongst applicants, and amongst the relevant cohort of the profession.'

Dipen Sabharwal, of White & Case added: 'The Queen's Counsel Appointments and **the Bar Council** have been making strenuous efforts in improving diversity in recent years. Why the needle isn't moving in the right direction is a complex story, but perhaps it's a case of laying the groundwork now for a better result in a few years' time.'

Court reform

[Law Society Gazette](#) - The justice committee of the House of Commons announced today it will conduct an inquiry into the reform programme, concentrating on implications for access to justice. MPs will look in particular at two elements of the changes: increased use of digital and video technology and the closures of courts and tribunal hearing centres.

Written submissions are being welcomed until 11 March, with the committee requesting evidence on the effects on different areas of civil and criminal justice, and asking specifically whether online processes and video hearings can be an effective substitute for access to courts.

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