



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 3 JANUARY 2020

### Women at the Bar

PA Media, *The Daily Telegraph*, *i paper*, [Global Legal Post](#) - The media reports that Lynne Townley, a barrister, academic and chair of the Association of Women Barristers (AWB) has said that women at the Bar are still grappling with sexism, harassment and "pockets of lad culture" on the centenary of women entering the legal profession.

December 23 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 becoming law - legislation which allowed women to become solicitors, barristers and magistrates, as well as serve on juries.

Townley said that while the ratio of men to women entering the profession is relatively equal, women disproportionately leave after between five and 10 years in the field and that several factors contributed to this failure to retain female lawyers, including women's caring responsibilities as well as sexism, harassment and bullying at the Bar.

The media report that an International Bar Association (IBA) survey conducted earlier this year found 62% of women and 41% of men from the legal profession in the UK said that they had been bullied at work.

PA Media reports that in September, the Bar Council launched the Talk to Spot app which enables anonymous reporting of harassment and bullying.

The Global Legal Post reports on how the Bar Council and other organisations marked the centenary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. The Post reports that incoming Bar Council Chair Amanda Pinto QC has identified improving diversity within the Bar as one of her key aims.

"Currently, some 50% of entrants to the Bar are women," she said in her [inaugural speech](#) on 3 December. "But regrettably, less than 16% of QCs are. But progress is being made. Next year, as well as having a female chair of the Bar Council, I am

pleased that almost half the Bar Council committees and, for the first time ever, a third of the circuits, will be led by a woman, as well as many of the specialist bar associations.”

She announced the launch of a new Future Leaders of the Bar programme to identify talented practitioners who do not see themselves in that light and help them “raise their abilities, expectations and horizons”.

## Courts

[The Daily Telegraph](#) – The Telegraph reports that up to 40% of crown courts in England and Wales are sitting idle as criminal cases have plunged to record lows despite rising crime.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has cut the number of days on which it will fund judges to sit by more than 15 per cent this year because of a slump in cases coming before the courts. It has resulted in between 25% and 40% of courts sitting empty on any one day as police forces solve fewer cases and crown prosecutors bring fewer to trial, according to data seen by The Daily Telegraph.

The Telegraph points to correspondence between the Bar Council and Lady Justice Macur, the senior presiding judge for England and Wales, which prompted debate on the issue last year.

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The [#NewYear2020](#) also sees a new Chair of the Bar Council take office. Amanda Pinto QC takes over from [@AtkinsQC](#) following his successful year as Chair. Follow us in [#2020](#) to see Amanda's year as Chair take shape



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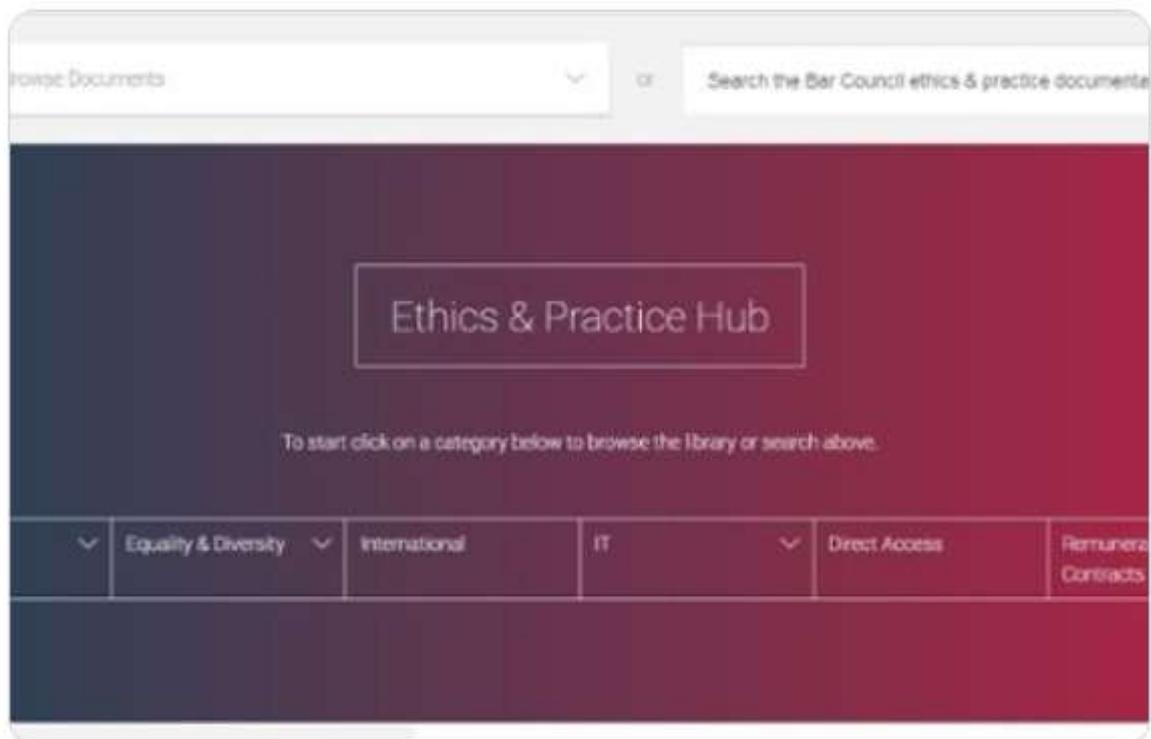
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