



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 4 MARCH 2019

Harassment reporting

Sam Mercer, Bar Council Head of Equality and Diversity, writes in [today's Times](#) about the pilot of a reporting waiver scheme which is designed to make it easier for members of the Bar to talk about incidents of harassment.

She says: “Part of the problem the Bar has had so far in tackling this issue is that sexual harassment is regarded as serious misconduct under the barrister’s code of conduct. This brings with it obligations to the Bar Standards Board (BSB) that mean if barristers witness harassment by other barristers, they are required to report incidents to the regulator.

“Recognising that we need to make it easier for members of the Bar to talk to each other about incidents of harassment, the BSB is piloting a reporting waiver scheme. This effectively sets aside the reporting obligations for named individuals who are now able to advise and support victims of harassment while they consider their options. It is too early to assess success - there are just four pilot waiver schemes in place to date, for the Western, Midland, and South Eastern circuits and the Criminal Bar Association - but it is encouraging to see groups across the Bar recognising this is an issue.

“As well as enhancing our helplines, the Bar Council is also providing training and guidance to chambers on having conversations about behaviour, on managing complaints and in providing the right type of support to those making or facing complaints. Discussing harassment and other issues in chambers is proving a great way to start difficult conversations over behaviour and attitudes and we hope this will encourage victims to step forward and colleagues to speak out.”

Former Lord Chancellor

Several regional publications including [Dundee Born and Read Evening Telegraph](#), [The Craven Herald](#), the [South Wales Argus](#), the [Boreham Wood Times](#), and the [Runcorn and Widnes World](#) have run a syndicated article summarising the ministerial mis-fortunes of former Lord Chancellor Chris Grayling.

It reads: “He introduced new fees for employment tribunals, banned people from sending books to prisoners, and brought forward court fees which the then chairman of the Bar Council warned could incentivise innocent people to plead guilty.”

Justice Week

The Brief - [T]he powers-that-be have binned justice week for this year, with some saying good riddance as they claimed the event had been "hijacked" by the usual talking heads.

Nonetheless, the Law Society of England and Wales, one of the big players behind last year's justice week, is considering pressing on.

"The public has an enduring interest in access to justice and the inaugural justice week was a resounding success," said a spokeswoman, before adding that the organisers have "decided the week would sit better at a different time in the year, with a longer planning lead time. So we are looking, provisionally, at holding the second justice week in spring 2020."

Over at the Bar, the tone was a little less positive. "Justice week was a success in many ways," agreed a spokesman. "But the legal sector has a long way to go in helping the public see the importance of investment in our justice system. Justice week has its role to play in raising the profile of the importance of access to justice and the rule of law, but it was never going to be a panacea that would garner swathes of public support after one week."

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Thank you, Sarah. This is hugely valuable to us.

Sarah Crowther @sarahcrowtherqc

I've renewed my practising certificate. I've paid my BRF so that @thebarcouncil can fund its representation work. And I have also donated my #ProBono30 to Advocate because providing access to justice could not be more important right now.

1:47 PM - 1 Mar 2019

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Wellbeing
at the Bar



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Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus | Happy St David's Day!

We'll be taking our Bar Council meeting in July this year on the road to the Wales & Chester Circuit. Barristers - join us in Cardiff if you can.



Wales&ChesterCircuit

