



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2018

Court reform

[The Times](#) has run excerpts from Chair-Elect Richard Atkins QC's inaugural speech, touching on flexible operating hours, the use of technology in courts and the sitting hours protocol.

On **court reform and flexible operating hours**, he said: "The government's plans for court reform will feature prominently [during my year as chairman of the Bar Council of England and Wales], not least flexible operating hours.

"We have though already shown how representations and reasoned arguments can win the day with the government having listened to the submissions made in relation to criminal courts and deciding not to press on with that pilot.

"For my part, I find it difficult to understand how if the arguments were successful in relation to criminal courts, they did not also win the day with regard to family courts, but the pilot is going ahead and so we must make the arguments again, backed up by evidence."

On the **use of technology**, he said: "The use of video or telephone hearings excites strong emotions, but I personally am not automatically against them. They need evaluating, but I have used them both to my advantage, arguing a bad character application over the telephone in one case I dealt with in the magistrates' court. And I have dealt with a number of preliminary hearings at the Old Bailey by remote link from Birmingham crown court in a terrorism case I defended and also in a case I defended at Swindon crown court.

"The technology can be used to the Bar's advantage, but I appreciate that concerns have been raised about its use when sentencing people and further research must be undertaken in that area. We must also ensure that however technology is used it is not contrary to the interests of those we represent."

On the Bar's **sitting hours protocol**, he said: "It is something that has been in existence for some time but has not as yet gained a great deal of traction. That though is something that I hope will change during my tenure, as will the culture of 24-hour emailing which I know is also being looked at by the South Eastern Circuit and the Criminal Bar Association."

Regulation

[The Times](#) and [Legal Futures](#) report on comments made by Chair-Elect Richard Atkins QC in his inaugural speech on the LSB's proposals for more 'independence' for the Bar's regulator.

Chair-Elect Richard Atkins QC said: "I do wonder why the LSB appears to be so keen on pressing ahead with these proposals? Where is the evidence of the need for them? Where is the evidence for the implication that the public does not have confidence in legal services provided by the Bar? Where is the understanding of what the Bar does and how well it is already regulated by the Bar Standards Board?"

The LSB's proposals he said, "could lead to disputes that simply do not exist at the moment and lead to an increase in the costs to the Bar."

"We must fight hard to make the case that we do not need further regulation, further red tape or a super regulator."

Court reform (symposium)

[WiredGov](#) reports on the inaugural international online court forum which took place on Monday this week.

Among other organisations and individuals who attended were Chair of the Bar Andrew Walker QC, and Christina Blacklaws, President of the Law Society.

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Planning to tune in to our live stream tomorrow evening? Here's the link vimeo.com/304355205 - remember to Tweet us your questions on the night with the hashtag **#IAMTheBar** @BarristerSecret @crimlawuk @serjeantsinn

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Delighted to present details of this exciting event - #IAMTheBar Social Mobility Advocates Rachel Spearing @serjeantsinn and Natasha Shotunde @SSAHLaw join @BarristerSecret and @crimlawuk on 5 Dec. Tweet us questions on the night or send...

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Incoming Chair of the Bar, Richard Atkins QC, makes his inaugural speech to a packed Gray's Inn tonight. Key themes for his year include the state of the justice system, Brexit, court reform, equality and diversity & more



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Who said what. Highlights from the keynote speakers at this year's Bar & Young Bar Conference, including the Lord Chancellor, Shadow Attorney General and Attorney General, Chair of the Bar and more r1.dmtrk.net/4CGD-FIGH-32/s... #barconf



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