



**BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE –
FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2021**

New Chair of the Bar

Daily Telegraph (p10), [Daily Mail](#), PA Media, Yahoo News, Morning Star, News Chain, Herald Scotland, The London Economic, Express and Star, The National, Central Fife Times, Border Telegraph, Chester Standard, Shropshire Star, Salford City News, Alloa Advertiser, Glasgow Times, The Gazette, Cumnock Chronicle, Irvine Times, East Lothian Courier, Wandsworth Guardian, News and Star + 350 other media outlets – The Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail and several hundred other media outlets report on an interview with the new Chair of the Bar, Derek Sweeting QC.

The media reports: “It is “unacceptable” to simply suggest diversity among the bar may improve in the future, according to a leading barrister, who argues it needs to be addressed “sooner rather than later”.

Derek Sweeting QC, the new chair of the Bar Council, said the numbers of barristers from different backgrounds must increase, and more action is needed on inclusion. Work is needed to ensure people feel comfortable working in the profession and committed to staying, he suggested.

In an interview with the PA news agency, Mr Sweeting, who was called to the bar in 1983, said he had seen changes during his career, including an increase in the number of female barristers.

But he added: “In terms of race, we’re still, on any view, some way behind”. He said in absolute terms the figures show that the bar is not lagging too far behind, citing figures from a report published last year, which he said showed 3.2% of the bar are from a black British ethnic group, compared with around 3.7% of the working-age population.

Mr Sweeting went on to say in relation to people from black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, the profession is “still a little bit under-represented in terms of UK working age”, adding “and then it gets worse as you go up the profession”.

“Only just over 1% of QCs are from black British backgrounds, and that plainly ought to change,” he said.

Mr Sweeting said he believes the “forgotten twin” of diversity is inclusion.

Giving an example, he said the fact that around half of those in a barristers’ chambers are women, “doesn’t actually mean they feel comfortable there”.

“It doesn’t mean they feel it’s a comfortable environment when they have to take time off to have children and then come back to work and so on,” Mr Sweeting said.

Courts and the lockdown

[The Times](#), [Law Society Gazette](#), [Oxford Mail](#), [Belfast Telegraph](#), [Yahoo News](#), [The Oldham Times](#), [Bury Times](#), [Bournemouth Echo](#), [Barry & District News](#), [Surrey Comet](#), [Enfield Independent](#), [Free Press Series](#), [Gazette News](#), [The Gazette](#), [Richmond & Twickenham Times](#), [Leigh Journal](#), [Shropshire Star](#), [County Press](#), [Ayr Advertiser](#), [Somerset County Gazette](#), [Chester Standard](#), [Hillingdon Times](#), [Messenger Newspapers](#), [South Wales Argus](#), [Border County Advertiser](#), [East Lothian Courier](#), [Warrington Guardian](#), [Leader Live](#), [Western Telegraph](#), [Clydebank Post](#) + **60 other media outlets – The media reports that the Lord Chief Justice and Chair of the Bar have reacted to the latest lockdown and its impact on the courts.**

The LCJ said the number of people in courts should be “kept to a minimum” amid a surge in coronavirus cases, whilst Derek Sweeting QC, Chair of the Bar, is quoted across all media. He said: “We are in a different position from last March and must keep the justice system functioning where it is possible to do so safely.

“We continue to press for the maximum use to be made of remote attendance and hearings on a consistent basis across England and Wales.

“It is our clear expectation that judges in all jurisdictions will move to the remote hearing of cases wherever possible and as soon as possible.”

The Courts and Tribunals Service had been “making the case” for court users to be vaccinated once priority groups had been given the jab, he said, adding: “Clearly, there will be a range of other critical workers pressing for early vaccination, but we will continue to push for as much as possible to be done to keep court users safe.”

Covid Operating Hours

The Daily Telegraph – The Telegraph reports that the Ministry of Justice is expected to announce that it will roll out the shift system across England and Wales with morning and afternoon sittings.

The Telegraph reports that the Bar Council and CBA are opposed to the moves.

Brexit

The Times – The Times speaks to Hugh Mercer QC, Chair of the Bar Council's Future Working Relationship Working Group about the UK-EU trade deal.

Mercer told The Times that the deal was “great for tariffs” but more about damage limitation for UK lawyers working in Europe, says Hugh Mercer, QC, chairman of the Bar Council's Brexit working group.

English lawyers who had been given a “massive home market” by the EU, Mercer says, are now dependent on the trade deal, which gives only the possibility of a future arrangement for mutual recognition.

“Unless you qualify as a frontier worker under the withdrawal agreement, then you depend on the country you travel to as to whether you have a right to provide legal services,” Mercer says.

Compared with the pre-Brexit provision, Mercer says the deal on services is “tiny”. However, he insists that “it hasn't burnt [lawyers'] bridges completely” and that “there is room for some optimism”.

After an attempt to remove UK lawyers from membership of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe was defeated, Mercer is hopeful that the Bar and Law Society, which represents solicitors, can build on the government's deal.

BAR COUNCIL TWEETS <https://twitter.com/thebarcouncil>



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Latest crackdown in #HongKong is "an assault on democracy itself," says @BarCouncilChair Derek Sweeting QC.

Full statement here: barcouncil.org.uk/resource/bar-c...



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