



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 8 MARCH 2019

International Women's Day

[Politics Home](#) – Politics Home reports that the Bar Council has said that it is crucial to public trust in the justice system that the most senior and experienced among the Bar and on the bench are reflective of the society that they represent.

Published to coincide with International Women's Day (today), Politics Home reports that the Bar Council says: "Promising equal entry rates to the Bar drop off towards the senior levels, revealing a reality, whereas of 2018 figures only 15.8 per cent of QCs are female.

"The significance of such a disparity reaches beyond the profession itself. Barristers play a key role at the forefront of the administration of justice and in upholding the rule of law, providing the best quality of service possible to clients both domestic and international. Many barristers also go on to become judges, and it is crucial to public trust in the justice system - and to the reputation of our legal system more widely - that the most senior and experienced among the Bar and on the bench are reflective of the society that they represent.

"Progression as an issue is not unique to the Bar, or even the legal profession as a whole. While Britain has the highest proportion of female bosses of all major European economies, this still equates to barely one in 20 bosses being a woman. The nature of the largely self-employed Bar renders unique challenges for female barristers; aside from progression, retention, wellbeing and harassment have come up as issues recently, and all of this is also affected by the wider context of the external and financial pressures upon our justice system. The considerations are widespread, and the support needs to reflect that."

Politics Home also points to the Bar Council's [Next 100 Years](#) campaign.

Harassment

[The Times \(online\)](#) – The Times re-publishes an article by Sam Mercer, Bar Council Head of Equality and Diversity, on 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.”

Mercer also points to what the Bar Council is doing to tackle harassment at the Bar, including training.

Regulation

[Legal Futures](#) – Legal Futures reports on responses from the Bar Council, Law Society and CILEx to the oversight regulator, Legal Services Board’s, business plan.

Legal Futures reports that the Bar Council said it believed that the proposed ‘single digital register’ of legal services providers was unnecessary.

In its consultation, the Bar Council said: “The Bar Council already has its own register of barristers and a single register would to some degree duplicate this. We think the improvements made to the Legal Choices website and measures being undertaken by regulators and representative bodies are sufficient to enable consumers to make an informed choice about legal services.”

The Bar Council said that, if the LSB went ahead with its review of section 51, it wanted to emphasise “the importance of this funding to the delivery of activities by the Bar Council” in the public interest.

“Examples include its law reform and public legal education work as well as its delivery of ethical and practice management guidance to barristers and chambers.”

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This year's [#IWD19](#) theme, [#BalanceForBetter](#), speaks to the noticeable disparity between men and women's progression to the highest echelons of the barristers' profession, says [@thebarcouncil](#) [#Next100Years](#)



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If it ain't broke, don't fix it: in his March column, Bar Chair Richard Atkins QC discusses how the Bar's current representative/regulatory model works and why it's essential to preserve. Read more at bit.ly/2ESzWme @thebarcouncil



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