



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2019

LASPO review

The Daily Telegraph (print), [BBC News](#), [Sky News](#), The Times (print & online), [The Guardian](#) (print & online), [Financial Times](#) (print & online), [Daily Mirror](#), [City AM](#) (print & online), Press Association, [The Independent](#), [Law Society Gazette](#), [Buzzfeed](#), Yahoo News, [Politics Home](#), New Law Journal, [The Dundee Messenger](#), [Legal Futures](#), [The Barrister](#) – Mainstream & legal print and online media report the Chair of the Bar’s comments on the MoJ’s LASPO review.

The [Ministry of Justice](#) (MoJ) on Thursday announced an £8m funding increase and pledged to review the threshold for legal aid access.

Richard Atkins QC, Chair of the Bar Council leads the criticism in the media, slamming the reforms, saying the money promised was “but a drop in the ocean given the impact Laspo has had on restricting individuals’ access to justice.

He added: “We fully understand that the MOJ is constrained by budgetary limits, but this review provides clear evidence that the Treasury must find a way to properly fund the justice system and reverse a decade of cuts.”

Social mobility & social media

[Legal Cheek](#) – the Bar Council’s #IAmTheBar campaign is mentioned in Legal Cheek’s announcement of the top ten best uses of social media this year, [with the winner to be announced at the Legal Cheek Awards on 21 March](#).

Legal Cheek reports: Last July the Bar Council struck #gold with a social mobility campaign led by the hashtag: #iamthebar. The week-long Twitter campaign, aimed to stamp out stereotypes of barristers fitting into a single mould, celebrating the diversity that exists within the profession – as put by their slogan: “A Bar of all, for all.”

Using the hashtag, barristers were quick to share their own unconventional journeys to the bar. [Many of these tweets went viral](#) – hopefully encouraging the next generation of barristers.

Human rights

[South China Morning Post](#) (print & online) – Chinese media reports that professional bodies of lawyers from six different jurisdictions have expressed grave concern over the jailing of Chinese human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang, who has been sentenced to 4½ years in prison for subversion. The English Bar Council expressed deep concern that the court ruled against Wang despite repeated calls in his defence from the international community.

“We once again urge Chinese authorities to reaffirm and ensure full respect of the fundamental rights of all human rights defenders in China,” said Christian Wisskirchen, head of international policy at its general council.

He said such rights were guaranteed under the Chinese constitution, Chinese criminal procedural law, international conventions, and the UN’s basic principles on the role of lawyers.

Consultations

[New Law Journal](#) - The Bar Council has called for a ‘more liberal regime’ for pregnancy or maternity leave discrimination claims.

Responding to the Law Commission’s [Employment Law Hearing Structures](#) consultation, the Bar Council said maternity and pregnancy-related claims differed from other areas of employment law because ‘an individual may be facing particular difficulties at this point in their life and the commencing of litigation may seem like one battle too many when they are juggling so many issues.

‘With a longer time limit, the individual would be able to focus on the merits of their claim rather than have to balance the decision to make a claim against their wellbeing.’

Pupillage Gateway

[Legal Cheek](#) - Bar hopefuls have taken to social media to vent their frustrations over the Pupillage Gateway’s apparent inability to cope with an influx in online traffic.

Responding to the numerous complaints, the Bar Council said “heavy traffic” was responsible for the slow running of the site and urged users to allow for more time to submit applications.

The Bar Council has since extended the deadline until 11am on Monday, which has been welcomed on social media.

Silk appointments

[CDR News](#) – Further reports of the Chair of the Bar’s comments on the new silk appointments. Commenting on the results, the 2019 chair of the Bar, Richard Atkins QC, said he was encouraged by the results, although there was still more to do.

Atkins said: “There is a greater success rate amongst women applicants (55%) compared to men (42%), but the fact remains under a quarter of applicants (23%) were women. Almost one-hundred years after the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, there is still a lot of progress to be made on securing gender parity in the QC ranks.”

He also noted: “In terms of BAME applicants, the success of those who declared themselves of ethnic origin is on a par with white candidates this year, although slightly down from last year.”

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





The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · 18h

A year ago, we signed our own @TimetoChange pledge in support of our own employees' wellbeing as well as that of the profession. Find resources & info on our #WellbeingAtTheBar website: wellbeingatthebar.org.uk/2018/03/06/bar...
#TimeToTalk



Time to Change @TimetoChange

#TimetoTalk Day is about *everyone* having conversations about mental health, so that people with mental health problems feel less ashamed and isolated. Find out more about the day, and get tips for talking,...

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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Feb 5

Richard Atkins QC, Chair of the Bar, is meeting barristers in #Cardiff today as part of his tour of the Circuits, listening to the profession @ThirtyPP @9parkplace @CivitasChambers @Apexchambers



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