



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER

Advocate for the bereaved

[The Times](#), [Law Society Gazette](#) – The Times and Gazette report that the Bar Council has said a public advocacy service to represent bereaved families at inquests will not be sufficiently independent and will have funding problems.

The Ministry of Justice announced plans last September for the creation an independent public advocate, designed to help members of the public understand and engage with investigations into accidents and disasters.

Responding to the ministry's consultation, the Bar Council said that "the interests of survivors are often less well represented than those of the bereaved" at present.

The Bar Council added that the term 'Independent Public Advocate' is an 'inherently misleading' title because the advocate is acting as an intermediary between the victims and the statutory bodies. It suggests 'Independent Public Adviser' would be better.

The Bar Council's response also stated: "There has been extensive media coverage of the challenges facing core participants in public inquiries who are unable to obtain legal aid to fund independent representation. Given this context, it is likely that those who are introduced to an "Independent Public Advocate" following a disaster will find it difficult to understand that the IPA is not in fact able to advocate on their behalf in legal proceedings and that the role has not been created in response to demands for the provision of funding for legal representation for victims."

Online courts

[Law Society Gazette](#) – The Gazette report on the recent International Forum on Online Courts at which **Chair of the Bar, Andrew Walker QC** spoke on HMCTS's plans for online courts.

The Gazette reports that the Chair of the Bar called for a 'reality check' on HMCTS's plans. "Will we really do all this? Or will expediency take over?" he asked of lofty proposals to make online justice fair and transparent."

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



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Following



Giving bereaved families an independent public advocate to help them participate in inquests and inquiries does not address the fact they still need [#legalaid](#), the Bar Council has told the government.



Advocate for bereaved won't fill the legal aid gap, says bar

Bar Council says families need independent legal services to participate fully in inquests and inquiries.

lawgazette.co.uk

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The Bar Council ✓

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