



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019

### Queen's Speech

[The Guardian](#), [The Times](#), [PoliticsHome](#), [New Law Journal](#) – Bills that aim to beef up sentences for serious and violent offenders, create a statutory definition of domestic abuse and make it easier to deport foreign national offenders were in Monday's Queen's Speech. The government claimed its latest legislative menu aimed to strengthen public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Richard Atkins, QC, chair of the Bar Council, which represents the 16,500 barristers in England and Wales, welcomed the acknowledgment that public confidence needed to be restored in the criminal justice system after cuts of 40 per cent of the Ministry of Justice's budget since 2010.

He said: "Justice must stay high on the priority list of any government. We will be watching closely to see whether the repairs that our crumbling justice system so desperately needs will be delivered."

### Court reform

[Legal Futures](#) - HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has come under fire for failing to assess the impact of its court reforms and adopting a "carry on regardless" approach.

Giving evidence to MPs on the public accounts committee (PAC), barrister Sam Townend said that not only were the "overall impacts" of the reforms not being properly assessed, but there were "not even measures in place" to assess them. Mr Townend, a member of the Bar Council's legal services committee, said everyone knew that HMCTS "had trouble with staff churn" and this was partly to blame for the lack of consultation on court reform.

Mr Townsend said the Bar Council did not believe "overall impacts" were being properly assessed. "There seems to be a decision to carry on regardless."

## Rule of law

**House Magazine (print), [PoliticsHome](#)** – Lord Falconer is interviewed by Tony Grew about the importance of upholding the independence of our judiciary.

Tony Grew writes:

Miller 2 refers to the recent ruling that prorogation was unlawful. Miller 1 was in 2016, when Gina Miller went to the High Court to prevent the government triggering Article 50 without getting the consent of parliament.

The judgement led to a *Daily Mail* front page so infamous it has its own Wikipedia page. "ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE" was the *Mail's* own verdict. Their readers were informed that one of the justices was an openly gay ex-Olympic fencer. The headline was above a story by James Slack, who is now the prime minister's press spokesman.

Liz Truss, then the lord chancellor, was slow in recalling her oath to protect the judiciary. Only after **the Bar Council** had requested it did she release a three-line statement about the "rightly respected" independence of the judiciary. Lawyers throughout the country were unimpressed.

"You don't need to be a lawyer in order to understand that the judges need defending," says Lord Falconer.

## Women in law

[Bustle.com](#) – Lauren Sharkey writes:

As the paper [Telegraph] reports, new findings from legal ranking company Chambers and Partners show that less than a quarter of UK-ranked barristers are female. This figure has increased by only five percent since 2010.

Yet another problem arises when women decide to have a family. Amanda Pinto QC, vice-chair of the Bar Council, told Sky News: "[The Bar is a difficult profession](#) because you don't necessarily know if you're going to be working a very long day or get home to pick up your children. It's that uncertainty that makes it hard."

The Bar Council have a helpline [and mentoring initiatives](#) to help female progression, though it will take time to measure any impact they may have.

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Richard Atkins QC, Chair of Bar Council, said "For the last decade, the Ministry of Justice has been in dire need of rescue as it has buckled under the strain of greater budget cuts than any other Whitehall department."

Full #QueensSpeech reaction here: [barcouncil.org.uk/media-centre/n...](http://barcouncil.org.uk/media-centre/n...)

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Delighted to be chairing the session on social mobility #iamthebar at the Pupillage Fair. Please do come and speak to the social mobility advocates. We would be happy to answer your questions. [barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the...](http://barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the...)

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