



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2020

Budget

[The Sun](#) – The Sun runs an exclusive story on the Bar Council’s budget submission to the Treasury ahead of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s spring budget.

The Sun reports that “the Bar Council claims huge amounts of taxpayers’ cash is being splashed by staff who aren’t qualified to make the spending decisions.”

The Sun reports: “Now, in a paper to the Treasury ahead of the upcoming budget, they are demanding changes to how civil servants are hired and say it could help prevent mammoth overspending.

Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC, said: “Over-stretched staff with insufficient training are making life-changing decisions and getting many of them wrong. In appeals to tribunals dealing e.g. with benefits, tax, housing and immigration detention, the success rate can be over 60 per cent simply because officials have got it wrong or failed to follow due process.

“We should all be very concerned that the Department for Work and Pensions loses two thirds of Personal Independence Payment appeals brought by citizens. There’s major inefficiency in the way government departments make important decisions, and it comes with a hefty price tag.”

The Bar Council say the bad decisions are leading to expensive legal cases against the government which could be avoided.

They point to a raft of cases, including wrongfully arguing over disability payments, asking for tax when it’s not due, and local authorities refusing to recognise a child’s special needs.

Now they are demanding a cross-departmental review of decision making by civil servants to save costs.

Reshuffle

The Observer, [The Guardian](#), [Yahoo Mail](#) - Further coverage of the Bar Council's response to the Prime Ministers' reshuffle. The Observer reports specifically on the appointment of Suella Braverman MP to the post of Attorney General.

Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, is quoted in The Observer. She said: "The independence of our judges is fundamental to ensuring the rule of law remains the foundation of our justice system. No one is above the law."

"The Bar Council expects the government to uphold the rule of law in this country. Both the attorney general and the lord chancellor have important roles in guaranteeing those principles are upheld."

Sexism

[Legal Futures](#) - Some 58% of women in the legal profession say they or women they work with have received inappropriate comments from male colleagues relating to their gender, new research has found.

Almost half (46%) reported that either they or one of their colleagues had not complained about discrimination for fear of the impact on their careers.

In line with similar research in recent years, the survey exploring the reality of life for women working in the legal profession, conducted by the First 100 Years project, found there were still considerable barriers to progression and equality.

The survey of 741 solicitors, barristers and other women working in the legal profession showed that a mere 2% thought there was "true equality" in the legal profession, with 80% predicting it would take 20 years or more to achieve equality. A third considered that, at the current rate of progress, it would take 100 years.

Dana Denis-Smith, founder of The First 100 Years, said: "Self-regulation doesn't work and will only take us so far. I believe change sometimes needs to be forced."

"I would like to see all parts of the legal profession coming together to work on this diversity problem. We need the legal regulators along with the **Bar Council**, Law Society and Chartered Institute of Legal Executives to form a profession-wide taskforce to come up with solutions that tackle it head on."

Television cameras in court

Gravesend Messenger – Kent’s media outlets report on **Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC’s** cautious response to plans to televise sentencing in the Crown Courts. Former Canterbury Crown Court judge, Andrew Prentice, also urged caution.

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