



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 23 JUNE 2017

Queen's Speech

[Politics Home](#), [Solicitors Journal](#), [Legal Technology Insider](#), [The Justice Gap](#), [The Brief \(premium\)](#) - Using a smartphone to plead guilty to a criminal offence may seem convenient, but the Bar Council has warned that Government plans to roll out online pleas, outlined in today's Queen's Speech, risk down-playing potentially serious consequences for defendants.

Responding to Government plans to introduce a Courts Bill, similar to the Prisons and Courts Bill which fell at the end of last parliament, **Chair of the Bar Andrew Langdon QC** said: "Defendants must be offered a genuine choice about how they enter their plea. They must also be made aware of their right to consult a lawyer. Inviting defendants to use an online procedure to indicate a plea risks trivialising potentially serious consequences for those accused of committing offences."

McKenzie Friends

Solicitors Journal – Further coverage appears of the recently published research into paid McKenzie Friends, which was commissioned by the Bar Council. The study found that most paid McKenzie Friends carried out their work outside court.

BPTC

[Legal Futures](#) – Legal Futures reports that a senior lecturer, William Ralston, a former barrister based at Northumbria University, has warned that Bar students are struggling to understand ethical values because of the "massive memory test" awaiting them in the examination room, a senior lecturer has claimed.

He also questioned why anti-money laundering training does not feature in the Bar professional training course (BPTC) exam. The Legal Futures article also reports that new figures from the BSB have shown that the proportion of students failing the BPTC has fallen sharply in the last two years, from 20% to only 11%. The figures also show that the proportion of students judged 'outstanding' on last year's course rose in the same period from 7% to 13.5%. However, only 37% of BPTC students who enrolled between 2011 and 2015 secured pupillages.

Andrew Langdon QC, Chair of the Bar, said that while competition at the Bar was as tough as ever, the profession was becoming increasingly diverse.

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