



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2017

### Wellbeing at the Bar

**The Times (The Brief)** – The Times reports that chambers are to be awarded gold stars for schemes aimed at looking after their barristers' wellbeing, the profession's leaders announced yesterday.

Certificates of recognition will be given to sets which are able to demonstrate that their wellbeing policies involve innovative education, training and mentoring schemes along with other "supportive mechanisms".

The [Wellbeing at the Bar](#) website has had more than 100,000 hits since its launch last year, the Bar Council said. Those chambers that win the certificates will be asked to post details of their wellbeing schemes on the site.

### Flexible operating hours pilot

**The Times (The Brief), [Politics Home](#), [The Barrister](#)** – News that HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has postponed its flexible operating courts pilot was welcomed by the Bar Council in the media.

**Andrew Langdon QC, Chair of the Bar, said:** "Whilst plans for flexible courts have not been dropped, it is encouraging to see HMCTS not only take on board the Bar Council's concerns about the plans, which include the impact they will have on barristers with child and other care responsibilities, but they also commit to ensuring robust evaluation measures are in place before proceeding with the pilot. Past experience shows that rushing into decisions can backfire on the government, employment tribunal fees and the impact of LASPO on vulnerable people being just two examples. We will continue to talk with HMCTS, who are in listening mode, on this issue."

### QC appointments

**[The Barrister](#), [Politics Home](#), [The Times \(The Brief\)](#)** – The media report on the Bar Council's response to new findings from the Work Foundation which shows that, despite efforts already made to ensure that the Queen's Counsel (QC) appointment

system gives all qualified applicants a fair chance of appointment, more action is needed to encourage applications from women.

**Sam Mercer, Head of Equality & Diversity at the Bar Council**, said: “It is important we regularly review the Queen’s Counsel Appointments (QCA) appointment process to identify any barriers and bias which may deter women and others from applying for Silk. We are delighted that the QCA has identified some very practical steps it can take to remove barriers identified without lowering the high standard – excellence in advocacy – that is required in any Silk award.

“Ensuring we support women to stay at the Bar, and to progress their careers, is already at the heart of much of our work and we have a range of innovative programmes to try to assist women in the profession (including mentoring, assisting chambers in complying with rules on fair allocation of work and better practice management etc.). There are, however, wider economic factors behind any individual’s decision to make a Silk application and this includes making a calculation of the impact on their practice and chambers. We must recognise simply revising process, while both sensible and helpful, may not – in the current environment – necessarily significantly increase the pool of women candidates.”

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Chair of the Bar, Andrew Langdon QC, encouraged by HMCTS pause on flexible operating hours pilot. Full statement [barcouncil.org.uk/media-centre/n](http://barcouncil.org.uk/media-centre/n) ...



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