



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2017

Litigants in Person

BuzzFeed – Popular online news outlet, Buzzfeed, reports that the number of people seeking support in court because they have no lawyer is up 520% since 2011. BuzzFeed News spent three days in Birmingham's courts to find out how these people cope.

Andrew Langdon QC, Chair of the Bar, told BuzzFeed News that leaving vulnerable people to fight their case against qualified lawyers is “simply not fair” and “bordering on disgraceful”.

He said: “Barristers regularly see litigants in person who have no legal training trying to do the job of qualified lawyers in the midst of difficult personal circumstances. It is simply not fair. Not only is there a risk of injustice, litigants in person inevitably, and through no fault of their own, cause delays which of course costs money. They can struggle to follow court directions and adhere to court timelines, they might focus on the wrong points or misunderstand the law, and they might even have completely the wrong idea as to which legal issues are relevant to their case.

“Early legal advice that used to be available through legal aid can avoid the need for costly court hearings in the first place, and where court hearings are necessary, legal representation avoids the unnecessary delays and costs that litigants in person can create.

“We live in a modern, wealthy, and democratic society that prides itself on its system of system and upholding the rule of law. It is disappointing, bordering on disgraceful that vulnerable individuals are treated in this way.”

Bach Commission

[New Law Journal](#) – Further coverage appears in the media of the Bar Council’s response to the publication of the Bach Commission’s report on access to justice, The Right to Justice.

Chair of the Bar, Andrew Langdon QC, said: “Lord Bach makes the important point that the rule of law and legal rights do not mean much unless citizens are able, through the legal system, to have them upheld, and that cuts to legal aid have made that impossible for many, especially the most vulnerable in society.”

Wellbeing at the Bar

[LawCare](#) – LawCare reports that the Bar Council is introducing a Certificate of Recognition to recognise efforts made to promote wellbeing across the Bar, as a way of marking the first anniversary of the Wellbeing at the Bar (WATB) website. Everyone will be able to apply, including chambers, Specialist Bar Associations, Circuits, Inns and organisations that employ barristers. The Certificate will flag good wellbeing practice at the Bar for those who receive it.