



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 14 AUGUST 2017

Flexible Courts Pilot

[New Law Journal](#) - Further coverage appears of the Bar Council's warnings over plans by HMCTS to pilot flexible court operating hours.

A [letter](#) from Andrew Langdon QC, Chair of the Bar, in response to Fulford LJ on the issue of the pilot is quoted in the media.

NLJ reports that in a tersely-worded response this week, however, Andrew Langdon QC, notes that the misunderstandings and ill-informed comments were “understandable, given that there was no consultation paper setting out the proposals in any detail, and they have been developed in a somewhat piecemeal fashion”.

He points out that barristers are in a better position to understand the impact of shifts in court than anyone employed by HMCTS and asks that their concerns be addressed. Despite repeated requests to HMCTS, he says he has not been provided with the evaluation criteria and therefore is not able to be reassured that it will adequately measure the consequences barristers fear. Moreover, he says there is doubt that the criteria will be available before the first pilot commences in Newcastle.

Langdon warns that the pilot may be distorted by “sympathetic listing”, excluding cases where parties object. He reiterates concerns that barristers with caring responsibilities, who are mainly women, will be adversely affected.

He concludes: “I hope you did not mean implicitly or otherwise to criticise the Bar Council, or for that matter the CBA [Criminal Bar Association], in raising these concerns, and doing so vocally and vehemently.

“I wonder if, on reflection, you would be prepared, publicly, to make it clear that you did not mean to suggest that the Bar Leaders who have been grappling with this had been ill-informed or misunderstood?”

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