



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 21 APRIL 2017

Prison and Courts Bill

[The Law Society Gazette](#), [Solicitors Journal](#) – House of Commons leader David Lidington confirmed in parliament that the Prisons and Courts Bill has been abandoned.

The prime minister's calling of a snap general election has led to the government scrapping controversial legislation that would reform the personal injury sector and overhaul the courts.

Solicitors Journal quoted Peter Dawson, director of the Prison Reform Trust, saying "although the bill was far from perfect, it did contain valuable measures to make prisons fit for the 21st century. 'With levels of safety, decency and fairness continuing to slide, the fall of the bill as a result of the election must not derail the vital job of prison reform. The next government, whatever its political complexion, should reintroduce a prisons bill as a top priority'".

Meanwhile the Gazette reported "Law Society president Robert Bourns said: 'We are pleased this decision will provide a chance for a re-think on the misguided whiplash reforms which would deny people access to justice and clog up the court system.'"

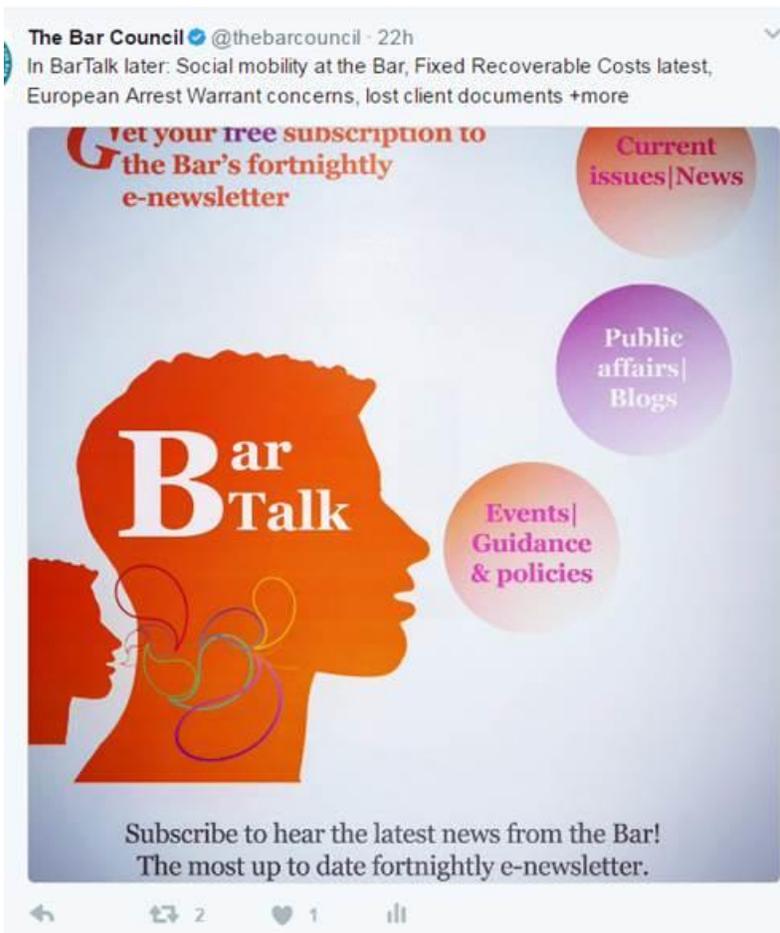
Court hearings

[Law Careers](#) – Plans by the government to extend the hours at which courts are open have been met with resistance from across the legal profession.

A pilot scheme is due to commence at six courts in May, in order to assess the viability of this way of working.

As the *Law Gazette* reports, “the scheme will see crown courts open until 6:00pm, civil courts open until 7:00pm and magistrate’s courts open until 8:30pm”. However, the Criminal Law Solicitors Association (CLSA) has expressed concerns that the plans discriminate against solicitors with childcare commitments and that defence solicitors were not properly consulted by HM Courts & Tribunals Service, which is overseeing the pilot.

Read more [here](#).





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