



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2018

Flexible Operating Hours

[The Times](#), [Politics Home](#), [Legal Futures](#) - The Ministry of Justice today (Friday) put flexible operating hours (FOH) for courts back on the table, but its proposed pilots will be in civil and family only.

The six-month pilots should start next spring in Brentford County Court in West London, and Manchester Civil Justice Centre.

Andrew Walker QC, chair of the Bar Council, said he was pleased minister have listened to its objections to FOH in the criminal courts.

He continued: “While the type of work involved in the family and civil court pilots is much more limited than that proposed in the criminal courts, we remain very concerned about the implications of early starts and late finishes, and there are many questions still to be answered about the practicality of these revised proposals.

“Family barristers, in particular, are already working under enormous strain, as are our family courts; and it would be unacceptable and irresponsible to place even greater burdens on them.

“We note that participation in the pilots will be voluntary, that no one will be required to work outside normal court hours, and that the courts involved will seek to give listing certainty.

“However, we cannot ignore the wider implications if the pilots lead to more permanent arrangements, even if these are limited and restricted to only a few courts.”

Frances Judd, QC, chairwoman of the Family Law Bar Association, said: “We intend to work closely with the Bar Council and to monitor the [schemes] carefully, in particular as to the effects upon family barristers who are already working to capacity, and often have to travel considerable distances to court.”

Disclosure

[The Gazette](#) reports on the Bar Council’s response to the Attorney General’s disclosure review.

Although the review recognises that changes must be made to the criminal legal aid fee scheme to ensure effective early engagement and preparation, the Bar Council says this will require the CPS to be funded properly and highlights the absence of any such recommendation.

Bar Council chair Andrew Walker QC said he and his colleagues will continue to 'press hard' for the urgent introduction of a proper fee scheme for reviewing material: 'But recommendations about fee changes will amount to little without a commitment from the Treasury ensure adequate funding for our criminal justice system.'

Welsh language

Tenby Observer - Barristers have called on Chief Constables in Wales not to shirk their obligations when it comes to providing Welsh speakers with the right to use the Welsh language in police interviews.

The Lord Chancellor's Standing Committee referred the issue to the Bar Council of England and Wales' Law Reform Committee, who have rejected the Police Constables' argument that consecutive translation should be provided instead of simultaneous translation.

Wellbeing

New Law Journal - The Bar Council has signed a deal with wellbeing professionals Health Assured to offer its members extra support with the stresses and strains of practice.

The new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides barristers, clerks and practice managers with a confidential telephone support and counselling service (0800 169 2040), as well as wellbeing fact sheets, videos, self-help programmes, interactive tools and educational resources. It is available to the whole self-employed Bar, and can be accessed via the Bar Council website and Wellbeing at the Bar website, www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk.

It offers an additional service to the LawCare helpline, which remains available to all lawyers.

Andrew Walker QC, chair of the Bar, said: 'The findings of our "Barristers' Working Lives" survey in the last year clearly indicated immense levels of stress felt by members of the Bar.'

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Next Saturday (24 November) the Lord Chancellor, Attorney General, Shadow Attorney General and CEO of HMCTS will all be in one place. Get the Bar's voice heard by the key decision makers #BarConf [barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the...](http://barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the-...)



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We were pleased to be at @UoE_Careers Law Fair yesterday along with @TheInnerTemple - thanks to our volunteer barristers! #SXLawFair



The Inner Temple, Essex Law School and Essex Careers

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