Leader Message
6 June 2021

Dear Circuiteers,

I hope that you have time to enjoy some sunshine. Please see the latest updates below. Thanks to Ellena Pearson for assistance with compiling this bulletin.

Requests for help are in bold!

**ROADMAP FOR RETURNING TO CHAMBERS**

The Bar Council have released a new Roadmap for Returning to Chambers [guidance document](https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/resource/roadmap-for-returning-to-chambers.html)  which is accompanied by a template risk assessment. It is designed to help chambers’ leaders and managers with the return process and includes information relating to risk assessment and management, employees in the workplace Covid testing and other considerations such as travel to and from chambers and long-term IT requirements.

**TRAINING**

Circuit’s RASSO course took place on Saturday 24th April with over 80 criminal practitioners attending, with thanks to our training director Anna Vigars QC for organising.

NPP Criminal Advocacy Part 2 was completed on the weekend 7th and 8th May with Jo Martin QC, Richard Shepherd and Adam Feest QC leading the course – thank you.

Two practical seminars have been held on making judicial/silk applications, first on 5th May hosted by SW Tribunals judiciary (with thanks to Judge Sutherland Williams, President HESC for organising) and secondly on 13th May organised by the Western Circuit Women’s Forum. A reminder that if you would like to talk privately about a QC or judicial application Circuit can provide confidential advice, as well as free assistance with your application form and interview. Email me or Rachel Goodall for more information.

New Practitioner Family Advocacy is running at full capacity with 13 junior practitioners on the weekend of 11 and 12 June, with thanks to Rachael Goodall for leading this training.

Pupil Supervisor training will be held on Thursday 24th June at 5.30-7.30pm on zoom – please contact Charlotte for a place.

New Practitioner courses in Civil Advocacy (17th and 18th September) and Ethics (16th October) are also in the diary and on the website – again, email Charlotte to register.

**DATES FOR THE DIARY**

Dependent on forthcoming announcements on the next steps to ease social distancing restrictions, we are making tentative arrangements for the following events:

-      9th July, 5pm, The Great Hall, Winchester – a Memorial Service for Matthew Jewell QC

-     16th July – Venue TBC - Junior Bar Drinks in Bristol

-     12th and 13th November – Derek Sweeting QC Bar Chair visit to Bristol chambers Friday 12th, with Bar Council meeting at Mercure Brigstow Hotel 11am Saturday 13th November

-     26th November, 7.30 for 8pm, Black Tie – Grand Night at The Custom House, Plymouth

**If you have a garden and are willing to host a covid-compliant gathering of the local Bar and Bench please let Charlotte know - we can provide the wine!**

**CRIME**

Crown court work is back around pre-pandemic levels (2,000 cases a week), and most Circuiteers have busy diaries- although the pressure on courts means that there are often listing difficulties which result in advocates preparing cases (unpaid) which are then listed for trial on dates when they are unavailable. I am not sure that there is much of an answer to this at the moment, given the unprecedented situation which we are in, but if you face a particularly egregious situation please don’t hesitate to contact me. The constructive dialogue which Circuit has had with Resident Judges and others throughout the pandemic continues, and many issues can be resolved at a local level.

*Criminal Legal Aid Review*

Sir Christopher Bellamy is visiting Bristol as part of his evidence gathering exercise for the Criminal Legal Aid Review.  In meetings with Sir Christopher and his team I gain the impression of a genuinely open process. There will be a meeting at Guildhall Chambers, Bristol at 5.30pm on Wednesday 23rd June, if you would like to attend please liaise with your head of crime team.  The previous evening (Tuesday 22nd June) Sir Christopher will hold a remote meeting for practitioners in the west and east of circuit, at 5.30pm, again please liaise with your head of team if you would like to attend. **Help, please! I need the assistance of two Circuiteers to lead on Circuit’s response to the Review: a junior, and a senior junior or silk.**It will not be too onerous, and we may well need to discuss things over a lunch or two.

*S28 YJCEA cases*

As of October 2020, s. 28 was rolled out to all vulnerable witnesses. It is not yet available for intimidated witnesses.

The Resident Judges have given guidance on the listing of section 28 cases in the letter which can be [seen here](https://westerncircuit.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Western-Circuit-letter-re-section-28-cases-.docx). It is hoped that such arrangements will avoid commitment clashes and/or difficulties with listing for both the Bar and the Courts. Please let me know if you have other practical suggestions: our Resident Judges acknowledge the difficulties which s28 creates for advocates and want to work with us to ensure that this new process runs smoothly.

*SouthWest CPS Forum*

At a recent SouthWest CPS Forum attended by Sarah Regan the Bar was encouraged to keep up with robust case management. The Southwest are in a ‘good place’ compared to the rest of the country. The Crown Courts currently stand at a 14% increase in pre-Covid levels compared with 75% in London. That has been achieved by the case management and resolution work that has been undertaken which has put us in a good position in relation to the rest of the country- well done to Circuiteers for their invaluable part played. Do please if you are prosecuting complete the Bar Standard Form, and let CPS know if the case can be compromised or if there isn’t a case at all.

**FAMILY**

Guidance on the need to protect victims of domestic abuse during remote and hybrid hearings has been published [here](https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Safety-from-Domestic-Abuse-and-Special-Measures-in-Remote-and-Hybrid-Hearings-Family-Justice-Council-guidance.pdf)

HHJ Wildblood QC is providing training of the PubLWG’s Final Report published on 01.03.21. The session will take place by Microsoft Teams, [here](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3Ameeting_ZGUxYTFkM2UtZjMyYS00YzU3LWE5MDMtNzBlZDY1YTYzMmRi%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22c6874728-71e6-41fe-a9e1-2e8c36776ad8%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2291127d64-50f9-446f-8aec-8d671d51d063%22%7d), on 28 June 2021 at 16:30 and will last 1.5 hours.

An online session about managing vicarious trauma by FLBA and Resolution is to be held on 24 June: sign up [here](https://resolution.org.uk/event/spotlight-series-vicarious-trauma/)

**CIVIL WORK IN DORSET**

Civil justice in Dorset will no longer fall under the responsibilities of the DCJ in Hampshire but is now under the DCJ for Devon and Cornwall. Concerns of civil practitioners have been raised with our Presiding Judges. Mrs Justice Cutts has reassured us that there will be little, if any change, and that there is no plan to transfer cases from Dorset for hearing in Devon. If you have concerns about particular cases do please raise them with the Designated Civil Judge.

**MENOPAUSE AND THE BAR**

The Chancery Bar is running a webinar on 9 June at 5pm exploring issues about how menopause affects barristers. Register [here](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VvfNv7nHSzeDWhh7WzXfxw).

The menopause remains a silent issue in many workplaces, including at the Bar. It is an extraordinary taboo, given that it affects half of the population. We have done so well on the Western Circuit to talk about some uncomfortable topics: can we add this one to the list? Many industries and trade bodies are calling for greater awareness in the workplace, and it seems high time that the Bar took a similar step forward. A [recent survey](https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/menopause-at-work#gref) noted that more than half of women experiencing the menopause report increased stress, decreased sleep and a range of symptoms which make working harder. To know more about what your colleagues or employees or witnesses may be going through, may I ask you to read paragraphs 33-38 of the [Equal Treatment bench book](https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Equal-Treatment-Bench-Book-February-2021-1.pdf)? It suggests adjustments which could be made to assist witnesses, and indeed advocates.

An article in Counsel magazine is [here](https://www.counselmagazine.co.uk/articles/let%27s-talk-about-menopause-at-the-bar).

A [TUC Guide](https://www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-work) about menopause in the workplace is full of useful information.

**BAR NONE**

BarNone has been busy working to improve access and encourage applications for BAME and state school educated entrants to the Western Circuit. This is a long-term project committed to encouraging the best applicants to our Circuit, regardless of background. The programme has been varied and substantial with the assistance of so many circuiteers, of all seniorities. I am so proud of Western Circuiteers for tackling this problem head on: well done all.

Anjali Gohil has kindly provided the following summary of recent sterling work which she and others on the steering committee have undertaken.

*Mentoring:*Circuiteers have stepped up and volunteered significant numbers to be mentors. As a result, all mentees have been paired with mentors. Many have provided positive feedback and we look forward to sharing their success stories with you. This year’s scheme is coming to an end this summer and we look forward to launching the 2021/2022 programme in early autumn. Special thanks to Ethu Crorie and Ellen McAnaw who have taken the responsibility of running this programme so successfully.

*Schools Outreach:*We have devised a presentation and crib sheet which can be easily delivered by members of the circuit to local schools either virtually or in person.  The programme has been successfully trialled in Hampshire as the presentation has already been delivered to 9 schools virtually in the last 5 months.

Some of the responses from teachers:

*“Absolutely buzzing after that fabulous talk. Thank you so much again! I really look forward to working with you in future. I have no doubt the pupils would have taken heed of those important messages that were highlighted.”*

*'This afternoon's talk was fantastic and it was great to see lots of lovely questions at the end. I'll share the recording as soon as I get it. In the meantime I've posted the seminar on the Google Classroom. Thanks so much for being such an inspirational speaker!’*

The outreach team is now extending the programme beyond Hampshire and to other Wessex state schools.  At present, **we are looking for individual barristers to head up the school's project in specific areas on the Western Circuit including Cornwall, Wiltshire, Bristol and on the Isle of Wight. We are also looking for volunteer barristers to deliver these talks – there are 11 talks in Devon and Cornwall for the summer and autumn 2021 and more to be arranged in other areas of Circuit**.

If you are interested in being involved in running the schools project in a particular area on Circuit or wish to be involved in delivering these presentations, please contact Sunyana Sharma. We would like to thank Emma Southern (Head of Hampshire (mainland) and Dorset Schools) and Emma Cross (Head of Devon Schools) for all their assistance and support so far

**FINALLY**

I only look at nice things on Twitter, and enjoyed a recent thread which started with a barrister Sian Beaven at Pump Court Chambers, who had done a trial in Bournemouth, writing:

‘*the Western Circuit is just such a lovely place. People are so friendly, strangers buy you coffee and judges stop for a chat*’.

Others from off-Circuit joined in to add: ‘*genuinely lovely! I am happy in my normal patch but delighted when asked to go Westwards. I have never had a bad experience there*’

and

‘*the Western Circuit is lovely. I attend courts there occasionally and always have a lovely time. My opponent in Gloucester even stopped his car and wound down his car window to wish me a good day. That doesn’t happen elsewhere*’.

Despite the huge difficulties you have all faced over the last 18 months you are clearly as kind and welcoming as ever, and we are right to feel so proud of being Western Circuiteers,

very best wishes

Kate

Kate Brunner QC
Leader of the Western Circuit