



Law Society South West regional review (September 2012)

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News

New Law Society website

It should now be easier for you to source the information you need on the Law Society website. Some of the changes you'll find when using the new website include:

- improved usability - we've redesigned our page layouts
- easier to find content - filter **news** and **consultation responses** by particular areas of law
- **all practice advice** is in one section of the website, including the latest articles, practice notes, helplines and more
- new **A-Z pages** pull together content from across the site on legal topics such as anti-money laundering, conveyancing and legal aid
- a **new communities section** - providing tailored support for practitioners
- a **new accreditation section** - information about accreditations in specific areas of law
- our **representation section** highlights what we're doing to represent members' interests, including consultation responses, campaigns, public affairs, international work

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-the-website/website-introduction/>

Lender Panels – calling for a long term solution

Law Society Chief Executive, Des Hudson, discusses changes to residential conveyancing panel membership that have affected members for at least the past two years. Whilst the Society has been working closely with individual lenders, Mr Hudson has invited Dr Vince Cable to mediate a dialogue between the Society, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the banking regulator and the lenders themselves in order to reach an amicable, long-term solution that is in the best interests of consumers, lenders and solicitors.

Followers of this area will also have noted Santander's decision to inform existing panel member firms that those without Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS) accreditation must secure the quality mark by 31 March 2013. Those with CQS and who are already Santander panel members need not take any action.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/stories/lender-panels--society-calls-for-long-term-solution/>

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/stories/santander-update-on-panel-membership/>

Caution urged over calls for separate representation

Following the conveyancing theme, Mr Hudson also warns that pressing for separate representation in conveyancing could reduce the solicitors' profession's market share and hand residential conveyancing to other sectors on a plate. 'If the Solicitors Regulation Authority, rather than the Legal Services Board, were to make separate representation compulsory for solicitors, it would not apply to non-solicitors or any professionals not regulated by the SRA'.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/press-releases/law-society-urges-caution-over-calls-for-separate-representation/>

PC renewal date

The 2012 round of Practising Certificate renewals will commence on Thursday 1 November, with a closing date of Friday 14 December. Extensive work has taken place over the summer months to implement a programme of improvements to the IT infrastructure supporting online renewals, and to the application forms and related guidance. The improvements include:

- Making applications simpler and easier to complete



- Making it possible for organisational contacts in each firm to process the bulk applications on behalf of colleagues, giving firms greater control over the way they complete the PC renewal exercise
- Enabling one-click 'record complete', allowing multiple records to be confirmed as correct during bulk renewal applications
- Improved searching and sorting of an individual's records to make viewing and editing easier
- Increasing the support available within the SRA Contact Centre

The SRA is urging those remaining individuals and firms who have not yet activated their mySRA accounts to do so before 1 November. If the SRA does not hold current work emails there is a danger that individuals will not receive important communications about regulatory requirements. Some individuals have simply supplied an administrative mailbox address as their personal email, which is not sufficient, whilst others have not activated at all.

The practising certificate fee for 2013 has increased by 5 per cent, from £328 to £344, following a reduction of 23 per cent from 2011 to 2012. The 2013 compensation fund levy, used to cover uninsured losses faced by clients, will increase by £32 (per individual) and £568 (per firm), to £92 and £1340 respectively. Contribution rates in the two preceding years were set substantially lower than recent historical averages, partly in preparation for the introduction of alternative business structures.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/stories/2013-pc-fees-and-compensation-fund-levies-confirmed/>
<http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/pc-registration-renewal/fees/fee-policy-2012-2013.page>

Keeping of the roll

The keeping of the roll (KR) process commenced on 3 September. This is a paper exercise, and the SRA should have written to all individuals eligible to stay on the roll during the three-week period commencing 3 September, enclosing the application form. The SRA made the decision to continue with a paper process as it is focusing its efforts on delivering an improved online system for PC renewals. There will be a fee of £20, which for this year only, will cover both 2011 and 2012. Completed forms and payment have to be made by 16 November.

Diversity reporting requirements

The Solicitors Regulation Authority plans to make unannounced visits to 100 'randomly selected' law firms to assess their compliance with mandatory diversity reporting requirements. The visits are in addition to a two-stage profession-wide survey of firms. By 4 September 2012 7,131 firms, out of some 11,000, had completed questionnaires reporting that 186,084 people work for them.

Second-stage questionnaires are to be given to each individual member of staff inviting them to provide information about their ethnicity, age, disabilities and caring responsibilities. Data will also be collected on sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender reassignment.

The drive to collect diversity data arises from a statutory requirement, laid down by the Legal Services Board in August 2011, that all law firms and chambers should publish statistical information on the diversity profile of their staff. The SRA will publish the survey's findings next year, but in subsequent years firms and chambers will be required to publish their own data.

The Law Society published a practice note in July (see Practice Notes below) to help firms comply with the new requirements to collect diversity data. President Lucy Scott-Moncrieff said the new requirement 'will help the Law Society better meet the needs of our diverse membership and promote greater diversity in the profession.'

The Law Society is holding a **Diversity Forum in Bristol on 23 October** to help members better understand the Diversity requirements. <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55636>



Members can also join the Law Society's new Equality & Diversity (E&D) Section aimed at giving specialist support for law firms. Membership isn't restricted to solicitors only, and diversity partners, HR practitioners and procurement professionals are also welcome to join the section.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/communities/equality-diversity/>

Promoting solicitors services campaign

Every year the Society runs a major campaign to raise the profile of solicitors in the public eye. The theme for this year's campaign is Ask a Solicitor, and running from 1st October, it will encourage people to use a solicitor to help with common legal issues. The campaign will include:

- advertising and editorial features in 40 top regional papers
- advertising on 220 railway stations across England and Wales
- advertising inside 5,000 buses
- PR coverage in the regional and local media

You can capitalise on the publicity from this campaign by ordering free campaign materials, including posters, postcards and online banners, and by booking an advertising slot in our regional press supplements.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Representation/Promoting-the-profession/#one>

Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates – Solicitor advocates urged to notify the SRA

Solicitors wishing to undertake criminal advocacy from January 2013 will have to notify the SRA under the new Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates (Crime) (QASA) arrangements.

The notification process is the first step in becoming recognised under the Scheme which is due to be launched early in the New Year. The Scheme will introduce a system of accreditation for criminal advocacy work in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts.

<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/qasa-notify-sra.page>

<http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/accreditation/quality-assurance-scheme-advocates.page>

To help solicitor advocates to prepare for QASA, we encourage all to join the Advocacy Section, which provides provide mentoring, training and networking opportunities on a circuit and national level and create the framework to provide the level of support delivered to barristers by their Inns of Court.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/communities/advocacy/>

New Family Section

The new **Family Section** is targeted at family and children law practitioners. From legal aid solicitors working on public care cases to mediation specialists, divorce lawyers, CILEx professionals and family court advocates, this section will also benefit members of our Family Law, Family Law Advanced, Children Law and Family Mediation accreditation schemes.

The first Family Section networking event in the South West is in Bristol on 14 November

<http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55554>

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/accreditation/specialist-schemes/family-law/>

New South West social media engagement

To help members keep abreast of news and events, we now have a south west presence on LinkedIn and Twitter. The LinkedIn group (The Law Society South West) also provides members with a regional platform to share comment and thoughts. Please do join the discussions, and also sign up to

@thelawsocietySW on Twitter.



http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4539678&trk=hb_side_g

Excellence Awards – shortlist announced

Congratulations to the following south west firms and individuals shortlisted for this year's Excellence Awards:

- Porter Dodson – Excellence in Innovation
- Michelmores – Excellence in Learning & Development
- Coodes – Excellence in Conveyancing Practice
- Catherine Reynolds (Michelmores) – Chartered Legal Executive of the Year
- Tony Cherry (DAC Beachcroft) - Solicitor of the Year
- Paul Rumley (Withy King) – Solicitor of the Year

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Representation/Excellence-awards/Shortlist/>

South West Events

Legal Aid Roadshow (16 October in Plymouth, 24 October in Bristol)

In this free roadshow, the Law Society's Richard Miller will talk about the practical implications of LASPO. What changed as the Bill was going through Parliament? What is in and out of scope under the new rules? How will the exceptional funding test work? What impact will the supplementary legal aid scheme have on damages claims? How will the telephone gateway affect you? What changes are there to eligibility? What will the new processes look like? This is your opportunity to find out from someone who has been working at the heart of the issue.

<http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55063>

<http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55067>

Equality & Diversity Forum (23 October in Bristol)

For anyone interested in Equality & Diversity in the workplace, this event will provide an overview of the importance of the diversity and inclusion agenda and will give an insight into the benefits of having a positive and proactive approach to diversity and inclusion. It will also provide a review of the Equality Act 2010 and the implications for your firm in practice. <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55636>

AML workshops – Embedding a culture of compliance

These two hour seminars help MLROs to further develop:

- a framework in which fee earners can confidently spot and respond to a wide range of financial crime and reputational risks; and
- their acumen for managing competing client and fee earner expectations, as well as a range of legal obligations in the broader context of everyday legal practice.

6 November in Cheltenham (3pm – 5pm) <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/54965>

28 November in Exeter (3pm – 5pm) <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/54968>

7 March in Bournemouth (3pm – 5pm) <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/54973>

Trainee Solicitor Forum (10 November in Bristol)

This free one-day skills event aims to equip trainee solicitors in a training contract with the skills necessary to help them during their training period through to qualification.

<http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55016>



Family Advocacy (14 November in Bristol)

This half day course (3.5 CPD hours accredited) will include training on advocacy basics, an overview of the benefits of going in-house and an opportunity for delegates to receive feedback on a short practical exercise. Judicial guest speakers will present on the 'do's and don'ts' of family advocacy and answer questions from the floor. <http://services.lawsociety.org.uk/events/node/55554>

Compliance and Regulation Update

SRA location move

From 1 October the SRA's new headquarters will be The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN and its Redditch and Leamington Spa offices will close. The Contact Centre and the Professional Ethics helpline will be closed from 12.00, 28 September until 14.00, 1 October as part of the move.

<http://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/sra-countdown-to-the-cube.page>

COLP and COFA nominations

By now all firms should have nominated a compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) and a compliance officer for finance and administration (COFA). For the avoidance of doubt information on the nomination process can be found here <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/freedom-in-practice/ofr/compliance-officers-colps-cofas.page>

Helping to prepare for COLPs and COFAs

We've responded to the need for compliance officers for legal practice (COLPs) and compliance officers for finance and administration (COFAs) to understand their new roles and implement compliance systems within their firms with the publication of two new titles - [COLPs Toolkit](#) and [COFAs Toolkit](#).

SRA diversity data collection

The SRA will shortly be running a mandatory survey to collect workforce diversity data for every regulated firm, as required by the Legal Services Board. Our practice note (see below) will guide you through the new diversity monitoring requirements.

LeO publishes complaints data

The Legal Ombudsman today published an online list of ombudsman decisions regarding complaints about lawyers. The list, which will be updated on a quarterly basis, shows the collated names of lawyers or law firms involved in complaints, which have led to a formal decision by an ombudsman. This quarter the list contains approximately 920 decisions involving around 770 firms from England and Wales. Information contained in the list includes the number of ombudsman decisions regarding each of the firms featured in the data; the area of law; the date of the decision; the nature of the remedy awarded, and the reason for the complaint.

The Society has opposed the publication of complaints data in this format, and questions how it helps consumers make informed decisions about the quality of service provided by solicitors.

<http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/ombudsman-decision-data/>



New Practice Notes

Accrual of Holiday Pay (18 September 2012)

This practice note advises on the following issues:

entitlement to paid annual leave

how entitlement is affected by working part-time, fixed term or on a temporary contract

the difference between contractual and statutory entitlement

Throughout this advice we look at the Working Time Regulations 1998 (WTR 1998) as currently amended, which implements the Working Time Directive (WTD). This advice also encompasses and updates the advice previously contained in the practice note: Accrual of holiday while on sickness absence - 09 March 2010.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/practice-notes/holiday-entitlement/>

Equality and Diversity Requirements – SRA Handbook (18 July 2012)

This practice note sets out the equality and diversity requirements in the SRA Handbook. It includes examples of behaviours which may enable adherence to the outcomes, as well as examples of behaviours which would not. It also sets out how the Law Society can assist you and your practice in this area.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/practice-notes/equality-and-diversity-requirements--sra-handbook/>

Providing services to deaf and hard of hearing people (17 July 2012)

D/deaf and hard of hearing people can have specific requirements when they use legal services that depend on their personal circumstances, and on the style of communication they prefer. They may also describe their ability to hear and identify themselves differently. This practice note specifically focuses on different ways that you can work with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and offers some practical advice in this area.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/practice-notes/providing-services-to-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-people/>

SRA's equality and diversity monitoring requirements (3 July 2012)

This practice note provides information on the LSB's expectations in relation to measuring levels of diversity and social mobility in the legal workforce. It covers what is expected from both the SRA and individual practices in 2012 and 2013, with details of how the Law Society can assist you and your practice in meeting the expectations.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/practice-notes/sra-equality-monitoring/>

Accreditation Awards

More Practice Management achievements in the South West

Congratulations to the following practices for recently achieving the Law Society Lexcel standard:

Francis Law (Gloucestershire), Stokes Partnership (Cornwall), Brixlaw (Devon), MRW Law

(Somerset), John Boyle (Cornwall), Trobridges (Devon), David Billingham & Partners

(Gloucestershire), Bobbetts Mackan (Bristol), Curtis Law (Devon), Dudman Shaw (Devon), Fasttrac Solicitors (Somerset)

Lexcel is the Law Society's international practice management standard.



<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/accreditation/lexcel/>

More Conveyancing Quality Scheme members in the South West

Congratulations to the following South West practices for recently achieving the Law Society Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS): Rosamund Coppen & Company (Somerset), Davis Wood Solicitors (Bristol), John Hodge Solicitors (Somerset), Beviss & Beckingsale (Devon), Toller Beattie (Devon), Ann Pointer Solicitors (Devon), Lane & Co (Gloucestershire), Kirby Sheppard (Bristol), Beers LLP (Devon), Meade King (Bristol)

The Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS) is the Law Society's quality standard for residential conveyancing practices.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/accreditation/specialist-schemes/conveyancing-quality-scheme/>

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<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-us/regional-work/south-west/>