

# LawCare News

## Welcome

to the Winter edition of *LawCare News*.

The LawCare team have had a busy start to the year preparing for our first volunteer training day at the end of January in Birmingham. We are bringing together all our Helpline Volunteers and Peer Supporters, both experienced and new, along with our staff, to get to know each other, share experiences and learn more about the work we do in LawCare. The day will explore the common issues that can affect lawyer mental health and wellbeing alongside some specialist training to support our volunteers in their roles. We are delighted that 25 of our volunteers will be joining us.

I am very excited to announce our new partnership with the Open University (OU) to develop educational materials on lawyer emotional health. To kick start the project, focus groups facilitated by the OU will be taking place throughout February to get input from across the profession. This work is being part funded by a grant from the Wesleyan Foundation of £7,000 which we were delighted to receive at the end of last year. Whilst on the topic of money, I want to say a big thank you to Baker Botts who made us their charity for the last quarter of 2017 and raised just over £2300 for LawCare. One of our wonderful volunteers Sarika Lynch works at Baker Botts and this was her initiative.

You may have come across the recent decision from the Solicitor's Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) in England and Wales, published this month, where a junior lawyer was not struck off for her dishonesty. The Tribunal took account of her mental health, the pressure she was under to meet her billing target and the toxic environment within the firm. This case provides much food for thought and raises some fundamental questions about the culture and practice of law and how this can compromise lawyer wellbeing. We all need to work together to challenge working environments where staff don't feel able to be honest with colleagues about their health, or that they are struggling with their workload, or making a mistake. We need to shift the culture from a fear of making mistakes or being found out to one where when something goes wrong the question is 'how did that happen and what can we do about it?' Had this young lawyer had better support and felt able to be honest she may not have found herself and the firm being scrutinised by the SDT.

We said goodbye to Yvette Murphy at the end of last year, who developed our communications over the last 22 months in a consultancy role and we have said hello this month to Gemma Matthews, who has joined our staff team as Communications Manager. Gemma will be building on the work done over the last few years to raise our profile so that more lawyers know we are here for support and to raise awareness about why mental health matters in the legal community. Although we saw a 11% increase in calls to the helpline in 2017, not enough people know about us - and we need to do something about that.

We are looking forward to 2018. This year we particularly want to work more closely with our stakeholders and volunteers, as well as developing new partnerships to champion mental health in the legal community.

**Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO**



[facebook.com/LawCare](https://facebook.com/LawCare)



[@LawCareLtd](https://twitter.com/LawCareLtd)

## Callers to helpline at record high

Our figures for last year show an increase in callers of 11% on the number of callers in 2016. Nearly half of those who called in for help cited depression (17%) and workplace stress (27%) as the reason. Other issues included disciplinary concerns (8%), financial problems (4%) and bullying and harassment (4%). Issues which made up the remaining 40% included chronic illness, alcohol and drugs, career development problems and relationship issues.

The helpline staff and volunteers are here to help anyone in the legal profession 365 days a year. No problem is too small. You can reach us on **0800 279 6888** 9am-7.30pm Monday- Friday and 10am-4pm on weekends and bank holidays.



## Online support with the Open University

We are very excited to embark on a project this year with the Open University, part funded by a grant of £7,000 from the Wesleyan Foundation. We want the input of the legal community to ensure these resources are developed in response to your needs. The OU will be facilitating focus groups across the jurisdictions as follows:

**LONDON** Tuesday, 6th February 3.30-5.30pm  
**BELFAST** Thursday, 8th February 4 - 6pm  
**EDINBURGH** Monday, 12th February 4-6pm  
**CARDIFF** Friday, 16th February 3-5pm

If you are a legal professional at any stage of your career, we would be really pleased to have you participate, please email Anna Buttimore at [Anna.Buttimore@lawcare.org.uk](mailto:Anna.Buttimore@lawcare.org.uk) to register your place.



## Thank you for voting

We are delighted to have been selected by the new Wesleyan Foundation to receive a grant of £7,000. Thank you to everyone who voted for us. The Wesleyan Foundation has been set up by the specialist financial service provider for lawyers to support good causes across the UK.



## Volunteer training day a success

Over 20 of our helpline and peer support volunteers attended a training day in Birmingham at the end of January. It was a fantastic opportunity for us to spend time with our supporters as well as talk about how to best support our helpline callers. If you would be interested in volunteering for LawCare click here to see which volunteers we are currently looking for.



## Taskforce member awarded prestigious research fellowship

Congratulations to Professor Richard Collier FAcSS of Newcastle University, and a member of the Legal Professions Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce. Richard has been awarded a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship for 2017-18 to conduct a research project entitled Wellbeing, Law and Society: Politics, Policy and Practice - A Socio-Legal Study. The research project commenced in November 2017 and will run until November 2018 - we'll keep you posted on the results which are sure to be fascinating.



### Volunteer to receive MBE

We are absolutely thrilled that one of our helpline volunteers, Trish Thomas, will receive a much deserved MBE this March for all her work for the charity SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide). Well done Trish!



### Awards Season!

Our CEO Elizabeth Rimmer was delighted to be asked to help judge the new wellbeing category of the Lexis Nexis Legal Awards. The full shortlist is here and the winners will be announced at a ceremony on 15th March. We are also sponsoring the work life balance award at this year's Legal Cheek Awards. Good luck to all nominees!



### Welcome Gemma

The team have welcomed on board a new staff member this January. Gemma Matthews joins us as our new Communications Manager, with a background in charity communications and PR. Gemma works Monday-Wednesday and is looking forward to meeting many of you over the coming months. Her email address is [gmatthews@lawcare.org.uk](mailto:gmatthews@lawcare.org.uk)



Read more of our news at [www.lawcare.org.uk/news](http://www.lawcare.org.uk/news)

**1 in 4 of us will experience mental health problems.**

**Having a colleague in your corner can make all the difference.**

