

LawCare News Ireland

Welcome

to the Winter edition of *LawCare News Ireland*.

We at LawCare have had a busy and exciting start to the year and we're all looking forward to a productive and successful 2018.

Our Irish co-ordinator Mary B Jackson has had a busy few months. Towards the end of November she presented to Meath Bar Association at their annual CPD day before attending the final LSPT cluster event in Kilkenny. Both gave Mary the chance to engage with the membership and forge better links with the profession. Mary was back in Ireland this month to attend the Medico-Legal Conference which she reports on below – she also took the time to meet with the Solicitors' Benevolent Association and a large Dublin firm who are putting mental health and wellbeing at the heart of their firm.

Our first volunteer training day for all our UK and Irish volunteers took place last weekend in Birmingham. We brought together all our Helpline Volunteers and Peer Supporters, both experienced and new, with our staff, to get to know each other, share experiences and learn more about the work we do in LawCare. The day explored the common issues that can affect lawyer mental health and wellbeing alongside some specialist training to support our volunteers in their roles. We were delighted that 25 of our volunteers joined us. If you would like to volunteer for us then email admin@lawcare.ie

I am very excited to announce our new partnership with the Open University (OU) to develop educational materials on lawyer emotional health which will be available on our website later this year. We want the input of the legal community to ensure these resources are developed in response to your needs. The OU will be facilitating a focus group in Ireland – more details below.

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 that they have made 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 in this situation.

We said good bye 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 an 11% increase in callers to the helpline in 2017, not enough people know we are here – 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 and develop new partnerships to champion mental health in the legal community. We are always interested in hearing from you so do get in touch by emailing me at erimmer@lawcare.org.uk

Elizabeth



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LawCare speaks at Medico-Legal Conference

2018 has got off to a good start with an invitation for our Irish co-ordinator, Mary B Jackson, to speak at the Academic Day of the Medico-Legal Conference at the Honorable Society of King's Inns in Dublin on 3 February. The theme for the day was highly topical, Occupational Safety & Health: Medicine and the Law. The conference was chaired by Mr Justice Peter Kelly, President of the High Court with a turn-out of some 120 delegates. Mary spoke on Health and Wellbeing, Support in the Legal Profession concentrating on the support service that we provide and using examples of people LawCare has helped in Ireland. Other workshops and presentations included Leadership and Resilience in the Professions, Professor Ciaran O'Boyle RCSI, & Mental Health Issues in the Professions, Dr James Anderson, NHS Practitioner Programme London.

What is clear is that the mental health and wellbeing of our professions is moving up the agenda and that as such it is increasingly important to highlight this and indicate how those affected may be helped and supported.

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 **1800 991801** 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 holding a focus group on Thursday 22 February 4-6pm at The Law Society of Ireland Blackhall Place, Dublin 7, D07 VY24.

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 to register your place.



We'd like to thank Liz Doyle Fleming, President of the Medico-Legal Society of Ireland for the kind invitation and warm welcome and hospitality. The conference was truly a day of information, inspiration and a great opportunity to share ideas across the medical, legal and associated professions.



**The Open
University**

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 email us on admin@lawcare.ie.



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 grandparents hail from Naas, County Kildare and she is looking forward to visiting Ireland this Spring. Her email address is gmatthews@lawcare.org.uk.



Read more of our news at www.lawcare.ie/news

