

LawCare News Ireland

Welcome

to the summer edition of *LawCare News Ireland*.

We have had a very busy quarter, and I myself was in Dublin in April, speaking to the Irish Women Lawyers Association (IWLA) about mental health and wellbeing in the legal community. The IWLA strives to encourage and support women in the legal profession in Ireland, by facilitating professional, social and educational networking between women lawyers. They also advocate for, and advance, the interests of Irish women lawyers. You can read about the event in our news piece below.

Mary Jackson, our Coordinator here in Ireland, attended a couple of Law Society Professional Training cluster events, one in Portlaoise on 5 May and the other in Limerick on 16 June. LawCare had stands at each of them, displaying all our materials, and Mary was available to discuss anything people wished to know about LawCare. You can read about the Portlaoise event in the news piece below.

We have also been providing our regular article to the Law Society of Ireland e-Zine, and the current piece, written by Mary Jackson, explores how we can better look after ourselves, and take a real break, during the summer holidays. Mary stresses that it is really important to take a complete break, explaining that by their very nature, Type A personality solicitors are driven, aspirational, impatient professionals focusing brilliantly on the client work, but often neglecting their own plans. Taking a holiday is about planning in advance.

Our blog in this edition of *LawCare News Ireland* is written by Antoinette Moriarty, Law School Counselling Service Manager. She talks about switching roles within the Law School of the Law Society, and being surprised that trainee lawyers would enjoy short-term counselling. While trainees had always had access to counselling with a consultant student counsellor, this was the first stand-alone Law School Counselling Service on-site. Antoinette writes that the stigma so often cited in relation to mental, or emotional, health had no currency among her progressive professionals. We can only guess at the ripple effect these forward-thinking lawyers will have on the future of the Irish legal profession.

We are excited to be well into the planning stages for our 20th anniversary, which we will celebrate in style on World Mental Day, Tuesday 10 October. The theme this year is Mental Health in the Workplace, which is very fitting for us at LawCare with our goals of raising awareness and tackling stigma. We are organising a half-day conference and birthday celebration, and I look forward to welcoming our volunteers, funders and other stakeholders from across the jurisdictions.

I hope you have a good quarter, and a great summer. Do visit our website www.lawcare.ie to access details of the support we provide and the information and resources we have available.

Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO



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Wellbeing in the Irish Legal Community

The Irish Women Lawyers Association held a seminar for members, 'Wellbeing in the Legal Community' on April 27 in Dublin. The Irish Women Lawyers Association strives to encourage and support women in the legal profession by facilitating networking and advocating for interests of women. Elizabeth Rimmer, LawCare CEO and Antoinette Moriarty, Head of the Law Society of Ireland's Counselling Service, were the guest speakers.

Ms Moriarty shared her experience as a psychotherapist, and spoke about why professional wellbeing for women matters, while Ms Rimmer highlighted the role of LawCare in supporting the legal community and what it is about the culture and practice of law that can compromise wellbeing. There was a thought-provoking and open discussion, in which participants shared their personal experiences of the particular challenges women face in managing their legal careers.

'The group discussion was wide ranging and honest, we could easily have talked for another hour,' said Ms Rimmer. 'We talked about combining motherhood with a legal career, the



importance of work/life balance, the aspects of Irish culture that can impact on women, and the lack of role models for women in the law because often the previous generation didn't have professional careers. We also shared tips on how to manage the competing obligations placed on women.'

Raising Awareness with New Audiences in Ireland

Mary Jackson, LawCare Co-Ordinator for Ireland, manned a stand at the Skillnet cluster organised as part of the Law Society Professional Training (LSPT) Programme 2017 on Friday 5 May. The event, Midlands General Practice Update, was held at the Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise, a new venue and audience for the team.

"There was a good turnout at the event, around 100 delegates," says Ms Jackson. "We had our posters, factsheets and leaflets on display, and our Top Ten Tips for Good Mental Health and Wellbeing booklets proved popular as usual.

"We appreciate the opportunity to raise awareness of what we do with new audiences, and hope to meet many more delegates during the Skillnet Cluster Programme."

LawCare also attended Skillnet cluster event at the Strand Hotel, Limerick on 16 June.



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

Blog: Great Success for Law School Counselling Service

"There must be some mistake! I've never failed an exam in my life!" This was the common refrain used to describe our trainees' discomfort and bewilderment with failure. I would have believed that too until, in January 2014, I switched roles within the Law School of the Law Society of Ireland and started to see students for counselling.

In hindsight it should hardly have come as a surprise that trainee lawyers - with their bright curious minds, and well-honed capacity for thinking and talking - would enjoy short-term counselling. However, nothing had prepared me for the extent of their interest and engagement. While trainees had always had access to counselling with a consultant student counsellor, this was the first time we took the plunge and established a stand-alone Law School Counselling Service on-site.

I feared that high-achieving students might be reluctant to admit they were struggling. Or that they would be too self-



conscious to seek support in their training environment. After all, who would want to be seen as vulnerable among peers or senior colleagues, or even Law School staff? Nothing could have been further from the truth. We quickly learned that the stigma so often cited in relation to mental, or emotional, health has no currency among this bunch of progressive professionals. What began as a small service – ie, me! – began to grow rapidly in response to student demand.

We quickly outgrew our counselling room and were fortunate enough to be given a discrete professional space beside the Law Society's beautiful playing fields. It is a welcome place for students to come and download whatever is causing them angst or anxiety. More importantly, it is a safe place, and is used by over a third of all trainee solicitors. We have seen 500% growth in three years, six times the national average of counselling uptake for this level of professional education. Our team has grown to fill the new rooms, and we are now a diverse group of five Student Counsellors.

What would I say was the single success factor of our Counselling Service? From the start we introduced educational modules on psychological and emotional wellbeing within the Professional Practice course. Our course, entitled 'Shrink Me; psychology of a Lawyer', resonated with students, unmasking and normalising common but hidden fears, while offering a new perspective on the role of counselling in professional development.

The journey does not stop on qualification: emotional health must be nurtured throughout our professional careers. We now also offer a range of programmes for qualified members of the profession. Our annual Professional Wellbeing conferences in Dublin and Cork, held in conjunction with LawCare, and our annual Executive Leadership Programmes, are a welcome way of including and supporting senior practitioners.

It continues to be an absolute pleasure, as well as a challenge, to lead this busy service. My team and I are energised as we watch our clients turn old perceptions about counselling and professional wellbeing firmly on their head. We can only guess at the ripple effect these forward-thinking lawyers will have on the future of the Irish legal profession. I for one am looking forward to seeing how it unfolds!

Antoinette Moriarty

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