

# LawCare News

## Welcome

to our new look quarterly LawCare News, and a very happy new year 2017 to all. Before we turn our attention to the year ahead, I would like to recap on the very busy, and exciting, year LawCare has just had.

I was recently in Dublin to meet with the Bar of Ireland, which has launched a wellness committee, in order to explore opportunities for greater collaboration to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing, and the supportive role of LawCare. I also met our Law Society colleagues, and Consult a Colleague to hear about their activities. It was enlightening to hear how Consult a Colleague supports the legal profession, and some of the issues they encounter.

We have been driving collaboration on mental health and wellbeing in other jurisdictions through the launch of the Legal Professions Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce in England and Wales, and Legal Wellbeing Scotland. These groups are made up of organisations across the legal profession representing professional bodies, regulators and legal educators. We have joined together and pledged to raise awareness of, and help break down the stigma associated with, mental health issues in the legal community. We very much hope to see this type of collaboration in Ireland, as there is evidence already that awareness is growing as a result.

We took on a communications expert in April, Yvette Murphy, expanding our team to six. Yvette has a background in journalism, PR and communications, and we now have a strategy and plan in place to continue raising awareness of LawCare and the support we provide.

We are engaging more with the broader mental health and wellbeing agenda in the UK, actively supporting organisations such as the City Mental Health Alliance, MIND, and Time to Change, as well as working more closely with our partners in the legal community to support their mental health and wellbeing programmes. We are starting to develop these relationships in Ireland, and look forward to updating you on this.

One of the most exciting developments last year was the launch of our new website. We have a brand new logo and livery, revised factsheets, plenty of new resources and an easy-to-navigate site. One of the new features is a bank of true life case studies, positively showcasing how people in the law have overcome mental health and wellbeing concerns. We also have regular blogs on a range of topics, including why one of our Irish Trustees supports LawCare. I hope you enjoy them.

Last, but not least, we welcomed a new Chair to our Board, Bronwen Still, at the beginning of December. You'll be hearing from Bronwen about her plans later in the year. 2017 is a very special year for us as it's our 20th anniversary. We will be marking this later in the year, and we look forward to working more closely with our partners and stakeholders to get good mental health and wellbeing firmly on the legal community's agenda.

Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO



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### Support for In-house Community in Dublin

LawCare's Coordinator for Ireland, Mary Jackson, recently addressed over 200 solicitors at a conference organised by the Law Society In-House and Public Sector Committee in partnership with Law Society Professional Training.

The theme of the Annual In-House and Public Sector Conference, held at the Education Centre in Dublin, was Leadership – Opportunities and Challenges Facing the In-house Solicitor. The in-house sector represents 19 per cent of Irish solicitors, and this year's conference explored the unique opportunities and challenges in-house solicitors in Ireland have, and to show leadership in a time of unprecedented change for the profession and the country.

"There were opportunities to network with the panel members and speakers, as well as the chance to mix with the delegates, which generated a great buzz," says Mary Jackson. "We have recently relaunched the LawCare brand, and our new factsheets were available to delegates, the most popular of which were those on Sleep, Worried about A Colleague? and Alcohol."

The keynote presentation, *Leading in Uncertainty*, was delivered by Steven D'Souza, International Executive Educator, advisor and author. The main aim of his session was to explore the concept of 'not knowing', and how this relates to the current challenges of being an in-house lawyer. It was a humorous and provocative session that got the delegates exchanging views on solving workplace problems.

There was also a joint presentation from Antoinette Moriarty and Sean O'Tarpaigh, who are psychotherapists, and they spoke about Leader Wellness, concentrating on motivation, mental resilience and stress management.

The LawCare presentation picked up on these themes with an overview of the service, examples of the type of calls to the Helpline, and thoughts and pointers on the importance of working well and staying well. There was emphasis on the confidentiality and independence of the service and the work of the volunteers and peer supporters, who are there to encourage, befriend and empathise.

"I reminded the audience of what makes a good leader, as well as what is special about being a lawyer and what is tough about it too," concludes Ms Jackson. "I talked about our wish to break down the stigma of talking about mental health issues and asking for help, and how we put wellbeing firmly at the heart of our agenda."



### LawCare Upskills Helpline Volunteers

LawCare held a helpline training day for Irish volunteers in Dublin during the summer. As well as the trained staff who answer helpline calls, there is a valued network of volunteers in each of the jurisdictions who also have a background in the legal profession and who provide their services free of charge.

LawCare provides helpline training to all volunteers, giving detailed background to the charity itself, its purpose, how the helpline works, and how volunteers can best support callers.

The volunteers also learn how to answer the phone, reassuring the caller that everything said is completely confidential, and then listening empathetically, asking open questions and discussing the problem. Calls are normally limited to one hour, and are summarised at the end of that time, with an invitation to the caller to call back at any time.

"The helpline training day was facilitated by the Law Society of Ireland through Louise Campbell, who is one of our two Irish trustees," explains Mary Jackson, LawCare Coordinator for Ireland. "We had three volunteers on the day, who asked excellent questions and provided reflections and suggestions throughout."

The training day was split into two: LawCare gives an overview of its service and its method of working, and there's an opportunity for volunteers to try out their skills via four case studies. The second half of the day was run by Sarah Hill of the Helplines Partnership, the membership body for organisations that provide helpline services in the UK and internationally. This section focusses on the practicalities of working on a helpline, with emphasis on the tone of voice, words used, active listening skills, questioning techniques, how to end calls, and how to cope with difficult ones.

"We also added two new words to our vocabulary," adds Ms Jackson. "These were 'soundscape' and 'verbal nods', such as 'mm mmm' to encourage the caller and let them know we are still listening to them. There was a great sense of camaraderie, and we're confident the Irish helpline is in safe hands."

**LawCare's free, independent and confidential Helpline provides a space for you to talk about anything that may be worrying you**

**Call our advisors on 1800 991 801 or visit [www.lawcare.ie](http://www.lawcare.ie)**

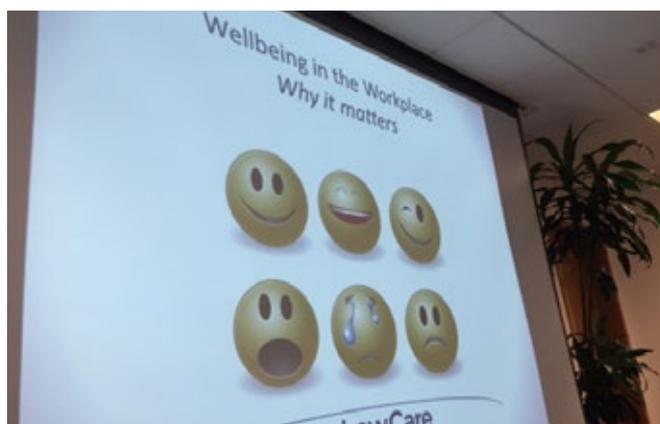


## Supporting the Irish Legal Community

Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO of LawCare, was in Dublin on January 23 to discuss Law Care's role in supporting the Irish legal community.

She met with the Bar of Ireland, which has recently launched a wellness committee, to explore opportunities for greater collaboration to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing, and the supportive role of LawCare.

Together with Law Care's Irish Trustees, Valerie Peart and Louise Campbell, Ms Rimmer met with the Committee of Consult A Colleague, the helpline service provided by the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association, for solicitors throughout Ireland. "This was a good opportunity to find out more about how LawCare and Consult a Colleague can work to support solicitors experiencing professional and personal difficulties," she says.



## Why Wellbeing Matters in NI

Trish McLellan, LawCare Co-ordinator for Scotland and Northern Ireland, presented the first wellbeing seminar at the Law Society of Northern Ireland [LSNI] in Belfast on Thursday 8 December.

The seminar, Wellbeing and Work...Why It Matters, had 34 solicitor attendees, and was run as part of their formal CPD programme. The CPD year end is December in Northern Ireland, and practitioners there were adding to their CPD for the year.

"I saw the evaluation sheets LSNI handed out and the responses were all very positive," says Ms McLellan. "I spoke with several people afterwards, who approached me for our literature."

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

## Blog: The Bar of Ireland Wellness Week



In the first term of the 2016/17 Law Year, to coincide with World Mental Health Day on 10 October, and as a direct response to member feedback, The Bar of Ireland ran a comprehensive Wellness Programme for its members. Vice-Chairman Seamus Woulfe SC opened the event with LawCare's Co-ordinator for Ireland, Mary Jackson.

The programme consisted of a wide range of talks and workshops, from pilates to meditation, health checks and mental wellbeing, mindful eating, financial planning, exercise, general fitness, raising emotional intelligence, work/life balance and much more. Thus began The Bar of Ireland's initiative to place member wellbeing at the heart of its focus for 2016/17.

Did we hit the mark? Attendance would suggest not. A full week of events across three locations may have been too much. Wellness Week coincided with a very busy time in member's calendars. However, we believe the simple truth is that it is still seen as an admission of weakness to express an interest in mental health promotion in a profession that is very competitive and still quite conservative.

What did we learn? That our focus must shift. We need to find other ways to reach our members, and that includes incorporating a mental health programme into standard programmes of education, rather than labelling it and discouraging those who are reluctant to be seen to ask for help. We need to assist our members with the integration of wellness into their daily lives.

Our members are not unique in the stressors they face, and similarly they are not unique in their denial. It is a cultural denial that is endemic in our national psyche. We have a long way to go, but the success of Wellness Week was that it highlighted this perception of our members, and this will enable us to take more effective measures. The week of events was just the start: it was the recognition of a need, it was the recognition of an essential element missing from our membership programme, and it was the inception of a new way of thinking - 'wellness by stealth'. This year every CPD programme run by The Bar of Ireland will incorporate an element of wellness; we will endeavour to roll out a Consult a Colleague scheme in 2017, and a Wellness Committee has been established to ensure that wellness remains on the forefront of the agenda across the organisation.

We took our first steps with Wellness Week, and we took stock. The Bar of Ireland remains committed to raising awareness, to breaking down barriers and to facilitating discussion. We work towards breaking down the stigma associated with mental health issues. We remain committed to fostering an environment where our members embrace their mental health and physical wellness, and where those with difficulties can speak with a colleague and be treated with dignity and respect. An environment where our members' surroundings offer them friendship, confidential advice, hope and a positive future.

**Samantha de Paor,**  
Member Services, The Bar of Ireland