



The Law Society

## From the President

12 September 2014

Dear colleague,

### Update on the Law Society's access to justice campaign

Earlier this week I launched the Law Society's campaign to protect and promote access to justice, alongside the Lord Chief Justice. Now that the campaign has commenced I wanted to update you on our next steps and to offer you the opportunity to help shape this important campaign.

In our speeches both I and the Lord Chief Justice emphasised the crucial inter-relationship between access to justice and the rule of law. For the rule of law to be meaningful all citizens must be able to access justice, by which I mean effective access to legal advice and representation. It is this relationship which the campaign aims to raise public awareness of and persuade policy-makers to protect.

I set out the campaign's main objectives in the remainder of my speech (available on the campaign's pages on our [website](#)). Briefly, however, our core aims are to:

- **Raise public awareness of the necessity of lawyer-aided access to justice and promote the means by which it can be obtained.** To achieve this we will pro-actively place stories in the local and national media, make use of our social media channels and seek to work collaboratively with other legal bodies and organisations assisting people facing legal needs (such as advice centres, housing charities and organisations assisting victims of domestic violence);
- **Persuade policy-makers of the need to amend parts 1 and 2 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act** – using high quality evidence we will seek to persuade policy-makers of the need to look again at civil legal aid funding for welfare advice and family cases, call for the abolition of the residence test and seek amendments to the evidence requirements for obtaining legal aid in domestic violence cases. We will also call on Government to review the civil funding reforms; and
- **Encourage and support our members to make their services more accessible to the public.** We will lead a discussion among the profession on innovative ways by which solicitors can make their services more accessible.

The launch event was well attended and received excellent coverage in the national and trade media (including in [The Guardian](#) and [The Times](#)). However, this is just the beginning of a major campaign that will last throughout my presidential year and beyond.

As a local representative of the profession I am keen to hear your views and thoughts for areas we can focus on over the coming months. Please also inform your members of the work we're doing and extend my invitation to them as well. You can email me at [Andrew.Caplen@lawsociety.org.uk](mailto:Andrew.Caplen@lawsociety.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Andrew Caplen