

THE CIRCUITEER

INSIDE

03

Leader's Report

08

The Kalisher Trust

14

Release Provisions of Offenders - A Summary

17

In Memorial

18

Bar Mess Reports

THE SOUTH EASTERN CIRCUIT PUPILS' EVENT

On 24th October 2025, pupils from across the SEC gathered at Gray's Inn to attend this annual event, designed specifically for those at the very start of their careers at the Bar.



Page 6

The Value of Casework at Advocate

Learn more about the work done by the Bar's pro bono charity, Advocate.

Page 5



RACHEL'S TOP TIPS

For Those Just About to Start on their Feet.

Page 12



Constitutional and Administrative Law Bar Association (ALBA)

Discover ALBA, the specialist Bar Association representing the interests of barristers practising in this area.

Page 17

Advocacy for Children in Conflict with the Law (ACCL)

Learn more about the work of this group of handpicked experts and practitioners, who have developed a bespoke advocacy training course for the Bar.

Page 11

BRIEF EATS

Details of local eateries (and sources of much-needed caffeine) close to some of the courts that we frequent.

Page 23



EDITOR'S COLUMN

This edition of the *Circuiteer* celebrates those who are embarking upon their career at the Bar. It recognises their bravery, as they get on their feet for the first time and their commitment justice in what are, for some areas of practice, uncertain times. The passion and enthusiasm that they bring to their work is inspiring, driving them to engage with (in addition to their mandatory training) fantastic initiatives, such as "Advocacy for Children in Conflict with the Law" (ACCL), to ensure that they are ready and well-equipped to represent some of the most vulnerable members of society. The SEC continues to play an important role in supporting the development of young practitioners, from the annual pupillage event, early during pupils' first-six months, to educational lectures and the useful tips and advice (practical, ethical and gastronomic) contained within this copy of the *Circuiteer*.

The pupils getting to their feet for the first time and the manner in which we will support them, individually and collectively, on that journey reminds us of the unusual, perhaps unique, manner in which members of the Circuit conduct themselves, notwithstanding that a significant proportion of us are self-employed. There is a friendliness and generosity of spirit towards other members of the Bar and prospective members, epitomised by the wonderful work done by the Kalisher Trust, which is celebrating its 30th year of ensuring "merit, not means" dictates the future make-up of our profession. Knowledge isn't guarded selfishly, but shared, from the provision of casual advice in robing rooms across the Circuit, to formal events for the sharing of information organised by the South Eastern Circuit and specialist Bar associations, such as the Constitutional and Administrative Law Bar Association (ALBA). We are also incredibly grateful for the time taken by two members of Church Court Chambers to provide a comprehensive article on release provisions, which will be of enormous assistance to all criminal practitioners.

In terms of professional development, Harry O'Sullivan (Recorder of the South Eastern Circuit) and I were delighted to be inundated with offers from potential mentors for the South Eastern Circuit's not only cross-Chambers but cross-specialism and cross-disciplinary mentoring scheme (although we will always welcome further volunteers). In fact, perhaps typically, barrister members have been far quicker to offer help than to seek it for themselves and we would actively encourage anyone who feels themselves in need of professional guidance or that they are at a professional cross-roads to come forwards, to be matched with an appropriate mentor.

The generosity and desire of members, of all ages and at all stages in their career, to help others extends beyond other barristers and legal professionals to the most vulnerable members of society. In addition to those working tirelessly on publicly-funded cases, there are also those undertaking work on behalf of Advocate and other charities, providing free legal advice and advocacy to those who need it most.

Overall, it is a joy to be part of this Circuit and to highlight the best things going on within it. For the next few weeks, I hope that the "best things" will include friendly smiles to new, perhaps slightly apprehensive-looking, faces and offers of reassurance and advice from more senior strangers.

Laura Kenyon

• Red Lion Chambers
• Editor of *The Circuiteer*

If you wish to contribute any material to the next issue of *The Circuiteer*, please contact:
Laura.Kenyon@18rlc.co.uk

LEADER'S REPORT

Claire Davies KC
LEADER OF THE SOUTH EASTERN CIRCUIT

I am delighted to welcome Laura Kenyon as the new Editor of The Circuiteer. I would like to congratulate her on an excellent first edition. Producing these articles relies entirely on the generosity of our contributors and we are grateful to those who take the time to share their expertise. I hope you enjoy our new 'Brief Eats' column. I would particularly encourage you to support both The Kalisher Trust and Advocate.

The start of the year saw change on the committee, with Danielle Bucket taking over as junior, Faye Rolfe as first junior and Lily Hines moving into the role of second junior.

I belatedly welcome Kirsty Brimelow KC into her role as Chair of the Bar Council and Heidi Stonecliffe KC as Vice Chair, both of whom have had a very busy first 3 months of their tenure. Our thanks to Barbara Mills KC for her dedication to the Bar during her year as chair.

I welcome Richard Honey KC as chair of ALBA (he has already kindly contributed an article to this edition) and Leslie Samuels KC, who has taken over the position of Chair of the Family Bar Association.

There is soon to be a change of chair for the London Bar Association. I wish Adam Baradon KC well upon the completion of his tenure and thank him for his support and welcome Sanjay Patel KC, who takes over.

The start of the year saw a visit to Woolwich Crown Court along with Kirsty Brimelow KC, which gave a good opportunity for members of the Bar to meet the Chair and raise matters of concern. We were made very welcome by the Bar and Judiciary and my thanks to all.

I am now well into the second year of my tenure, and the pace has been busier than ever as, since the last edition, we have now had Part 2 of the Leveson Review, much of which is to be supported by the legal profession to ensure the system runs efficiently.

As many of you will already be aware, the Courts and Tribunal Bill has been laid before Parliament. It reflects some of Part 1 of Leveson but goes even further to remove the right to elect in either way cases and creates a Crown Court Bench Division, with Judges presiding alone. The Circuit stands alongside the Bar Council and CBA in their objections to the proposals. I am grateful to those who have volunteered to be part of the Circuit's working group on the proposals. When I began in post, I didn't expect to be spending time at the Houses of Parliament and in Portcullis House meeting MPs, so it has been an interesting experience. My thanks to all those of you who gave your evening up to join me lobbying MPs on 3rd February 2026 and to those who met your MPs at various court centres.

On 25th March 2026 Kirsty Brimelow KC, Riel Karmy-Jones KC, Caroline Goodwin KC, Sam Hillas KC and myself all gave evidence before the Public Bills Committee who are scrutinising the Bill. It is very unusual for so many members of the Bar to be invited to give evidence.

The Bar Council have now appointed the Commissioner for Conduct, Dame Maria Miller DBA, following the recommendations in the Harman Review and I look forward to working with her on improving matters for all in practice.

I continue to have my meetings with the Chief Crown Prosecutors, although we have seen the retirement of Jaswant Narwel, with Lisa Ramsarran taking over London North, Emma Davies moving from East of England to Thames Valley, Lionel Idan leaving London South for the Midlands, with Tracy Easton taking over his role and, finally, Hannah Von Dadelszen will be the CCP for East of England.

Please do let the CPS/SEC liaison committee know of any issue you encounter when prosecuting, no matter how small or large. That is what we are there for. Please contact c.witcher@churchcourtcourtchambers.co.uk or Tim Hunter thunter@2br.co.uk

Congratulations to the new silks who were sworn in on 23rd March 2026 and good luck with your next stage of your career. Please do consider mentoring and contact Arabella if you wish to mentor or would like a mentor, contact arabella.womersley@southeastcircuit.org.uk

As well as the hard work there was time for fun along the way and I wish to thank the Family Bar Association for their kind invitation to their annual dinner, where speeches were given by Leslie Samuels KC and President of Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane.

The Family Bar will need our support as they continue to recover from the cyber attack but also as they fight for an increase in their remuneration for legal aid work.

I was honoured again this year to be a Judge in the Finals of the Young Citizens Mock Trial scheme at the RCJ. The talent demonstrated by these students from, 15-18 years of age, shows that the future of the bar will be in safe hands. If you wish to get involved with mentoring a team, please do get in touch with Colin Witcher.

Last autumn saw the launch of the Circuit's cross-specialism mentoring scheme for tenants. It continues to thrive. If you would like a mentor, especially in the earlier years of practice, do think about contacting mentoring@southeastcircuit.org.uk

Thank you to those who have mentored for the Circuit.

The Bar Messes continue to thrive and hold events throughout the year, as is seen in their reports. I would like to thank the Bar Mess Chairs and their committees for their continued support of the Circuit and all that they do. Please do consider joining your local Bar Mess and getting involved. The social events are legendary.

The Messes act as the essential link between Bar, court staff and Judiciary. The Court user meetings are a vital link between these groups, which I strongly encourage you to attend, either in-person or remotely. The judiciary are committed to addressing your concerns, but they rely on your input to understand the issues.

This year has already seen the Central London Bar Mess support WICL's "Women's Faces Project" at Southwark Crown Court.

Fiona McAddy continues to lead our excellent SEC Education programme, offering a wealth of exciting opportunities, ranging from online lectures to residential courses. Key up-and-coming dates include the SEC Florida Civil and Criminal Trial

Advocacy courses in Miami and Florida, followed by the SEC Tim Dutton CBE KC Advanced International Advocacy course at Keble College, Oxford in late August. Scholarships are available for these courses.

My thanks also go to Emma Price (5 Essex Chambers), Emma Louise Fenelon (1 Crown Office Row) and Rebecca Tuck KC (Cloisters) for their talk on 'Baby at the Bar' to celebrate International Women's Day. This is available to watch on the website.

The SEC Dinner will return in the autumn, so do look out for the announcement coming soon.

To all those of you who are starting your second six this month, do have a read of the top tips by Rachel Chan in this edition and the very best of luck!

My thanks as ever to Paul Cavin, our treasurer, who does on occasion say yes to funding requests, ensuring we can support our Bar Messes and celebrate the Circuit with the dinner.

Aaron Dolan continues to be a stalwart, without whom the Circuit would not function, as he works tirelessly behind the scenes.

Last but not least, I welcome to the Circuit, Arabella Womersley, my PA, who may be contacted on arabella.womersley@southeastcircuit.org.uk

Please enjoy this issue of the Circuiteer - and of course if you have an idea for an article you would like to write, or read do contact Laura laura.kenyon@18rlc.co.uk

Claire Davies KC

- Farringdon Chambers
- Leader of the SEC



The Value of Casework at Advocate

Many readers will be familiar with the Bar's pro bono charity Advocate.

I was not, until I joined the team – first as a volunteer, and then as a full-time Caseworker. It was through working at Advocate that I had a real insight into how many people end up in court alone, representing themselves, in systems which seem impenetrable to the uninitiated. This experience also opened my eyes to the values which still lie at the heart of the Bar and how many people were willing to give up their time for Advocate cases, even in the midst of their own busy practice.

One of the advantages of the increased use of CVP, which I hadn't previously contemplated, was the ability of more applicants to gain support, even if the volunteer barrister could only appear via video-link. Judges are very receptive to requests for CVP if it means that an applicant will be represented at all.

Whether it was a last-minute push for urgent assistance that helped a vulnerable applicant avoid conceding a significant claim for damages, or writing an advice which gave the applicant a clear path forward, the generosity of Advocate's panel members will stay with me. I hope to be able to continue that generosity in my own future practice.

My time at Advocate was really valuable in taking my pupillage applications to the next level and for developing my own personal skills. When I started a criminal pupillage at Crucible in October 2025, it was immediately apparent how useful those skills would be. With my first day on my feet now right around the corner, I consider myself extremely lucky to have had such a strong grounding in clear and constructive communication with so many different types of people.

Get Involved

There are a variety of ways to get involved with pro bono work through Advocate for barristers at all stages of their careers. Barristers with a practising certificate, from their second six all the way to KC, can sign up to browse pro bono cases, which are sent via a weekly case list.

All Advocate's cases have had their merit and need approval by skilled senior barristers, so volunteers can be confident their time is being directed where it is truly needed. The process is hugely flexible, as the cab rank rule does not apply, meaning it is completely your choice as to which cases to take and when.

In addition to the opportunity to make a tangible difference to someone in genuine need of legal support at what is often one of the most stressful moments of their life, taking on Advocate cases can have professional advantages. For those earlier in their careers, Advocate cases can provide valuable exposure to areas of work in which you may not yet be regularly instructed, helping to build both experience and confidence from the beginning of your career. During my time at Advocate, I also saw how senior practitioners benefitted professionally from working on pro bono cases, expanding their practice into areas of particular interest, building their professional connections by working alongside other barristers or taking on cases of greater complexity, such as those involving novel points of law.

When working with Advocate, barristers also have the opportunity to work in areas of law outside of their usual practice, and there are opportunities to receive mentoring from senior barristers for pro bono cases through Advocate's Collaborate mentoring scheme.

Recognition of your contributions

There are a number of opportunities for barristers and chambers to receive recognition for their pro bono work. Barristers who complete 25 or more hours of pro bono work in a calendar-year are eligible to appear on the Pro Bono Recognition List, receiving public recognition and a Recognition List logo that can be displayed on their Chambers' profile. Advocate also host the annual Bar Pro Bono Awards, which celebrate outstanding pro bono contributions across nine award categories for both individual barristers and chambers.

If you would like to find out more about how to get involved with Advocate, please do head to their website:

<https://weareadvocate.org.uk/>

or contact Faye, Engagement Manager, at f.pauffley@weareadvocate.org.uk

Evelyn Snow

• Pupil at Crucible Law



THE SOUTH EASTERN CIRCUIT PUPILS' EVENT

At first sight and early on in pupillage, the concept of an evening of encouraged socialisation and career guidance may read as daunting forced fun. The South Eastern Circuit [SEC] Pupils' Event proved to be anything but.

On 24th October 2025, pupils from across the SEC gathered at Gray's Inn to attend this annual event, designed specifically for those at the very start of their careers at the Bar. The evening brought together pupils from different practice areas, chambers and Inns to hear from members of Circuit about how to approach pupillage and the early years of practice, whilst also offering the chance to meet others in the same position.

Most of us arrived straight from court or chambers and were grateful that drinks and the opportunity to chat with other pupils was first on the agenda. For those attending as the sole pupil in their chambers, it was especially reassuring to meet others facing the same steep learning curve. The benefits quickly became apparent in the days that followed, as we bumped into those we had met, offering a friendly face in unfamiliar robing rooms.

Following the initial reception, we heard from four speakers, at different stages of their careers, each offering practical insights into pupillage and the early years of practice. These speakers included:

- Ellie Horan, a pupil at 2 Bedford Row, practicing in criminal law;
- James Hoile, a first-year tenant at 42 Bedford Row, practicing in property and family law;
- Chatura Saravanan, a first-year tenant at No5, practicing in planning and environmental law; and
- Claire Davies KC of Farringdon Chambers, Leader of the SEC.

Hearing candid accounts of the highs and lows from those who had recently navigated pupillage was particularly helpful and all in attendance came away armed with an arsenal of tips. If you take nothing else away from this article, know that apparently only a fool would fail to find an accountant before starting their second-six.

A reassuring theme ran throughout the evening: no one ever feels entirely prepared for their first time doing anything at the Bar. It isn't only us pupils who are constantly asking ourselves, and our friends, "*what on earth is going on?*" Whether it is your first hearing, first client conference, or first trial, there will always be a degree of uncertainty. The key, as one speaker neatly put it, is to become comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Some of the more practical tips that have been essential to surviving first-six were to take the train before the one you think you need, always have a packed lunch or a snack with you (essential when you are then stranded somewhere at 8pm), and never be scared to ask that 'stupid' question. However, knowing who to ask that question is a valuable skill in itself, so make use of the friends you made at this event!

We were also given an overview of the role that the SEC can play in shaping our experiences at the Bar, supporting us both in these early stages and as we progress through our careers. We are lucky to be members of a circuit that provides help in so many forms, from advocacy training to professional development and networking opportunities.

As we rapidly approach getting on our feet, we can see now more than ever how accurate the advice to make the most of your first six was. It goes much more quickly than you think! The transition is not going to be an easy one, but we are grateful to have known from the start the benefit of keeping a bank of written work (including feedback, good or bad). You never know when you are going to be asked to turn work around in

a short amount of time, so having a starting point for drafting may well save you from a crisis. Similarly, take advantage of shadowing as many different advocates as possible and keep a record of techniques that you can incorporate into your own style, you will quickly figure out what may work for you.

The event was both enjoyable and helpful, standing us in good stead for getting on our feet. We were able to make friends at the Bar early on and to learn what support is out there for pupils. Knowing that there was a plethora of people to ask for help during the more challenging moments of pupillage has made the experience far less daunting. It has also given us the space to step back occasionally and recognise what a great achievement it is to have started our careers at the Bar.

Lucy Curran

• Pupil at Great James Street

Sophie Upton

• Pupil at 5KBW



The Kalisher Trust



Thirty years ago, Anne Rafferty QC, John Nutting QC, Steven Kramer QC, Richard Carey-Hughes and Peter Doyle began as the first trustees of this trust.

Since then, the trust set up in Michael Kalisher QC's name has seen a series of volunteers from the Bar, the judiciary and beyond work to provide financial, educational and mentoring assistance to people of exceptional promise. Those volunteers should all be rightly proud of their work to achieve greater social mobility and diversity at the criminal bar.

The trust has four main aims:

- To help broaden the ethnic and social representation of the criminal bar by supporting those who, despite their potential, have faced multiple challenges as they strive to achieve their career ambitions.
- To provide training, mentoring and assistance to encourage and inspire young people from all backgrounds to achieve their potential through the development of advocacy skills.
- To encourage and support young people who would not otherwise consider a career at the criminal bar.
- To provide training and mentoring, as well financial & career support through internships and scholarships, to recently qualified barristers to help them develop sustainable and successful careers at the criminal bar.

In addition to the funding of internships and scholarships Kalisher also conducts significant outreach work in primary and secondary schools to help educate students about the Bar and the Courts.

There are any number of success stories over the last thirty years, people now at the criminal bar who Kalisher has been privileged enough to be able to help. Their achievements however are entirely their own, because of their outstanding ability and industry – all they needed was a level playing field, which the Trust works to provide.



We are supported entirely by donations – if you are able to contribute you can do so here:

<https://www.thekalishertrust.org/donate/donate-form>

If your set of chambers wishes to join the sets that make an annual contribution to further Kalisher's work, please get in touch.



Leon Kazakos KC

- 2 Hare Court
- Vice Chair, The Kalisher Trust



A Kalisher Scholar's story

A celebration of the Kalisher Trust is a celebration of the best parts of the Criminal Bar, and so in Kalisher's 30th year I offer the following (true) short story for your consideration.

It was late October. Two first-six pupils stared at the confidential waste bin in the 'Lady Advocates' robing room at the Old Bailey. The contents of the bin were audibly...vibrating.

'How did you even do it?' Pupil One asked.

'I honestly don't know' Pupil Two replied, 'I went to put it on top, but I missed and I guess it went inside.' She paused, her face betrayed her as the stupidity of the words leaving her mouth hit home.

Meanwhile, the contents of the bin continued to vibrate.

'That will be my pupil supervisor calling.' Pupil Two commiserated 'We are about to start speeches'.

'What's the offence again?' Pupil One asked.

'Double murder' Pupil Two replied.

'I suppose they'll want a note on that' remarked Pupil One.

'I suppose they will.'

Resigned, Pupil Two said 'Security said it's £380 to get the confidential waste company out to open it up. £380. I can't afford that.'

'£380 is insane. Maybe you could ask chambers to pay it?' Pupil One canvassed.

'I think I'd be better off just selling my wig, and giving up properly' Pupil Two commiserated 'I think there's marginally more dignity in that.'

'Marginally' laughed Pupil One 'But I don't think you should give up.'

And then, as was perhaps inevitable given where they were, a steady stream of some of the shrewdest legal minds in the country

filtered in the room. The phone ringing in the bin was difficult to ignore and offers of help came in thick and fast.

'Don't worry, we will sort it.' One eminent silk authoritatively assured the two, then sharing her pupillage war-story of having to conduct a day of hearings at Inner London without any shoes.

In due course, with pulley and hook systems devised from hangers and odd items left around the robing room, the phone was liberated. And in its liberation, two things were made clear to those pupils. First, the profit margins for confidential waste disposal must be huge. Second, this profession and those in it were special in their appetite to help, without judgment, those aspiring to its ranks. And it's regarding this second point that the Kalisher Trust really takes centre stage.

What I hope that story illustrates is that this profession, the Criminal Bar, is special. The Kalisher Trust, often termed *the* charity of the Criminal Bar, is then *inherently* special. Merit, not means, Kalisher insists should be the only determinative factor influencing access to this singularly special profession. And Kalisher has at its core, the objective of materializing systemic, practical support, in the same spirit of all those who helped in the robing room that day. But with much wider impact.

I am proud to be known as a 'Kalisher Kid.' Growing up in poverty, on a council estate which struggled with high levels of crime, being kicked out of secondary school aged 15 and not knowing anyone who had even gone to university (let alone studied law) a career at the Criminal Bar seemed unlikely. But ever since learning at age 13 that 'Barristers get paid to argue' I'd never considered another option.

Most of my young life I was told that I aimed too high. But in 2019 the Kalisher Trust changed the trajectory of my life by offering me a scholarship to study for my Masters at Oxford University. I was certain they'd made a mistake. Every day of my first few weeks at Oxford I waited for them to realise their error and kick me out. But they never did and I thrived. Far from treating my background as a disadvantage, Kalisher took the view it was a strength. No one else had seen it that way before. I certainly hadn't. In addition to providing essential funding, without which I could never have afforded post-graduate study, the scholarship also connected me to my Kalisher mentors; HHJ Richard Marks KC

(Common Serjeant) and Professor Mary Bosworth. Suddenly I was not alone. More than that, I was supported. As barristers we know better than most that words can be lifechanging. And suffice to say that a single question from HHJ Richard Marks KC changed everything '*Elsbeth, what can I do to help you?*' The sincerity of the question was striking. We were effectively strangers, but as my mentor he did everything in his power to help me get the experiences and give me the encouragement my circumstances had previously denied. Suddenly all of the doors opened.

Writing this I am proud to be a tenant at 2BR with a busy practice in criminal defence, whilst also in the final stages of my DPhil. It is right that I worked very hard to be here but the simple truth is this: hard work is not enough when it is you vs The World and I simply would not be here if it wasn't for the Kalisher Trust. I would not be here without those who donate money to the Kalisher Trust. I would not be here without those who volunteer their valuable time with them.

In a world increasingly characterised by division and conflict, helping those with 'exceptional promise but limited means' to access this special profession by supporting the Kalisher Trust is surely a cause we can all get behind. If you agree, please consider supporting the Kalisher Trust.



Elspeth Windsor

- Kalisher Scholar
- 2 Bedford Row

Advocacy for Children in Conflict with the Law (ACCL)

"...when sentencing children and young people...an entirely different approach to sentence is required than that which courts routinely apply to adult offenders..."

ZA [2023] EWCA Crim 596

In 2020, a working group of handpicked experts and practitioners began to develop a bespoke training course for the Bar for the Inns of Court College of Advocacy (ICCA), targeting the representation of children in the criminal justice system. The course recognises the critical need for a child-focused approach, as is set out in specific Sentencing Guidelines for Children, overarching guidelines and the Child defendants in the Crown Court bench book. The ICCA working group set out to draw together myriad resources to better equip practitioners to fulfil their duties in what many consider to be a specialist area of practice; there is too much at stake for those who are poorly represented, which leads to unjust and life-altering outcomes that can be averted.

In developing this course - 'Advocacy for Children in Conflict with the Law' (ACCL) - we wanted to highlight the need for specialist psychiatric and psychological reports, an awareness of the growing body of research into brain development and trauma, and issues relating to racial disparity in sentencing and outcomes. The course tackles issues of maturity as well as the impact on children and young people of lived-experience, care-experience, mental health issues and educational setbacks, which contribute to their criminality. The ACCL course was fully developed long before the decision in the important case of ZA. As is now well known, this appeal concerned the correct approach to sentencing children and young people where the court found that there had been a failure to have regard to the Youth Robbery Guideline and the overarching Youth Guideline. As to the issue of maturity and what drives young people to offend, it was emphasised that it has long been recognised that young adolescent brains are not fully developed until the age of 25. The court went on to acknowledge that adverse childhood experiences, educational difficulties and mental health issues can negatively affect the development of thought processes, including the ability to appreciate the consequences of one's own and others' actions. All of these elements the course was designed to target. The ACCL course has the endorsement of the senior judiciary in England and Wales.

The course is centred around a case study concerning four children who come before the Youth Court (three of whom progress to the Crown Court) who have committed the offence of 'Robbery in a Dwelling' - for which there is a specific child sentencing guideline. We take learners through out of court

resolutions, preparation for Youth Court hearings, bail, remand, remittal, PTPH in the Crown Court, welfare notes and sentence. We also tackle difficult cliff-edge sentencing exercises for those over 18 recognising the principle that, "Full maturity and all the attributes of adulthood are not magically conferred on young people on their 18th birthday" [R v Clarke [2018] EWCA Crim 185].

The course includes a Legal Overview Paper to arm practitioners with key principles, and includes guidance on intermediaries, applying for adjustments and applications for certificates for assigned advocates. Delegates are taken on an e-learning journey from charge through to sentence, working through a realistic set of papers before being asked to prepare a Welfare Note - a requirement on the PTPH form few are aware of - and crucially, a Sentencing Note designed to draw all of the learning together. Preparation takes up to two days (depending on the learner's prior knowledge); there is then an in-person element, delivered by highly trained and experienced barrister tutors.

We believe that this course is fundamental training for anyone who prosecutes or defends children. It remains the case that children are regularly tried in the Youth Court for the most serious of offences and they are often represented by the most junior advocates. That said, children also appear regularly before the Crown Courts, often tried with adults, as in ZA.

To date the course has been delivered to over 200 pupils in London, Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester with the help of an exceptional cadre of volunteers, some of whom were members of the original working group. We are currently working on extending the course into the Western Circuit. Feedback has been excellent with Pupils telling us that without this training they doubt they would have been properly equipped to undertake this work. This year we plan to begin the rollout of training for the practising Bar.

For further information please contact info@icca.ac.uk

Lynda Gibbs KC (Hon)

• Dean of ICCA

Marie Spenwyn

• Libertas Chambers

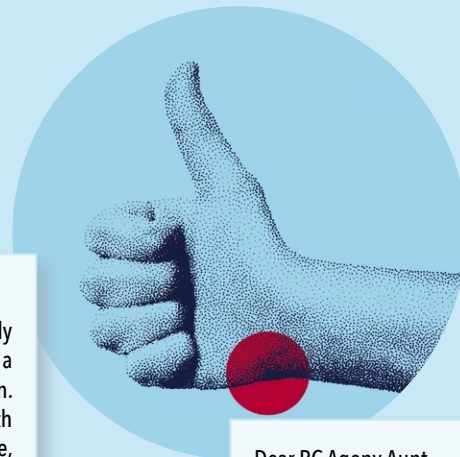


...for Those Just About to Start on their Feet

- 1** Know your papers. Sounds silly right? But you'll be surprised at how many advocates are under-prepared or don't know their clients' case. Sometimes this is hard, especially practising in crime, where sometimes you don't have access to any papers until you get to court. If that is the case, get to court early, grab the Prosecutor and papers as soon as you can and take time to read them. Magistrates' courts are often so busy they won't call the matter on until you're ready.
- 2** Turn up to court early. Familiarise yourself with the court. Take a moment to settle before your client attends. Sometimes being late is unavoidable. Make sure you keep everyone informed of your movements and apologise when you get there.
- 3** Be nice to **everyone**; the ushers/legal advisors/clerks/security/your opponents. It doesn't hurt to be kind, and if you're rude or mean, be sure to know it will get back to the judge/tribunal/magistrates. The Bar is a small place, word gets around there too. Don't be that person that everyone dreads being against.
- 4** Don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't know everything. No one does. Not even the judge. Asking for help is a strength and shows that you want to improve as an advocate. Obviously try to find the answer yourself first before running it past someone, rather than asking for the answer.
- 5** Learning to be a good advocate takes time. Rome wasn't built in a day. Learn from your mistakes, move on. Watch other advocates, soak everything up, like a sponge. Always learning is a great little motto to have.
- 6** Be realistic in your advice to clients. Often managing client expectations is half the battle.
- 7** Always report back to your solicitors as soon as practicably possible after the hearing, whether by phone or by email. You are a business after all. Good solicitor client care is important.
- 8** Bring snacks, keep hydrated, look after yourself. Lunch times are often spent taking instructions or the local shops are too far away. Barristers often report having headaches at the end of the day from being dehydrated. Barristering is hard work!!
- 9** Talk to your clerks. They are there to look after you. If you're given a case with insufficient time to prepare it or you're being asked to deal with two cases in different courts at the same time, it will be a difficult conversation for sure, but it is much better than you muscling on and them having to deal with a complaint later on. It's also negligent/dangerous/ a breach of our core duties.
- 10** You are good enough. Chambers don't want you to fail. They took you on for a reason and invested a lot of time and money training you in pupillage. So lose that imposter syndrome!

Good luck! And remember, help is always given at the Bar to those who ask for it.

RC Agony Aunt is here to help with common issues junior practitioners find in the early days.



Dear RC Agony Aunt

I have just started on my feet and my clerks want me to do a 'really short' hearing in [redacted- one side of London] in the morning and a hearing in [redacted- the other side of London] in the same afternoon. What do I do? I am not sure I have enough time to prep them both properly (the clerks tell me the briefs will get here when they get here, whatever that means). I am worried that I can't do two cases in a day, that I am not going to get there in time but also worried about the clerks' (and Chambers' reaction) if I say no. Can I say no? Or will that affect my chances of getting tenancy? Help!

Yours, Terrified Second Six

Dear RC Agony Aunt

I was in a hearing when the judge just started shouting at me. It was a case where I was instructed last minute to cover for trial counsel (they had gone part-heard) and so naturally I couldn't tell the court which witnesses I needed and how long they would be XX. I'm feeling rubbish at the moment. What could I have done to make things better?

Yours, Stressed Second Six

Dear Terrified

First of all, congrats being on your feet and well done getting this far. I am sorry you have been put in a position where you are terrified and worried about being able to do the work and getting to court in time. I also absolutely understand about your worry about your clerks and Chambers' reactions if you say no.

So, the first point of call would be your pupil supervisor. Do they know what a) you have been asked to do and b) your worries? I think you need to have that conversation with them first and foremost. You are under their supervision and you need to be able to speak to them honestly about your worries; they may share your concerns and will be able to liaise with the clerks.

Your fallback position of course is the Bar Standards Board handbook. Remember your core duties and in particular, 2- You must act in the best interests of each client, possibly 5- You must not behave in a way which is likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in you or in the profession (by being late/ill prepared), 7- You must provide a competent standard of work and service to each client and 10- You must take reasonable steps to manage your practice, or carry out your role within your practice, competently.

Also bear in mind the following conduct rules:

rc15 Your duty to act in the best interests of each *client* (CD2), to provide a competent standard of work and service to each *client* (CD7)

rc20 Where you are a *BSB authorised individual*, you are personally responsible for your own conduct and for your professional work. You must use your own professional judgment in relation to those matters on which you are instructed and be able to justify your decisions and actions. You must do this notwithstanding the views of your *client*, *professional client*, *employer* or any other person.

rc21 You must not accept *instructions* to act in a particular matter if:

.1 due to any existing or previous *instructions* you are not able to fulfil your obligation to act in the best interests of the prospective *client*; or

.9 you do not have enough time to deal with the particular matter, unless the circumstances are such that it would nevertheless be in the *client's* best interests for you to accept; or

In short, you are entitled, even without the support of your supervisor, to tell your clerks that you can't do both hearings. Also, a word of warning, clerks may something is 'really short' but often, they don't have a clue. Most of the time, things never go according to plan anyway. I know this is a really difficult conversation to have with your clerks who you rely on later to send work your way but it's much better than having to explain to your sols why things went to pot and definitely better than being hauled up before the Bar Standards Board later!

Good luck!

RCAA

Dear Stressed

First of all, I am sorry you were shouted at by a judge. That should not happen and you should talk to your supervisor and consider talking to Spot. Talk to Spot is an online tool, where you can register your concerns about inappropriate or abusive behaviour confidentially - <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/support-for-barristers/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/talk-to-spot.html>

Second, I know it must have been hard to have been instructed last minute. These things happen all the time. Best practice would be to get hold of trial counsel and ask them to give you a heads up re. who they want, why and how long they are likely to be in chief or XX. You might not be trial counsel but you are counsel instructed so it's important that you prep properly. Do read my answer above re. your core duties. If you can't get hold of trial counsel for whatever reason, you might want to prep it like you are but tell the court that's what you have done and you'd like some time for trial counsel to confirm their position. Always over-estimate if you are putting time estimates down for someone else.

I hope you feel better soon. I find that a cuppa tea and a jammy dodger lifts the spirits after a tough day at court.

RCAA

Rachel Chan

• 42 Bedford Row

Release Provisions of Offenders - A Summary



This is an update to our article from last year on the release provisions for offenders. That article came about following a hearing where an 18-year-old was sentenced for manslaughter. D had been acquitted by the jury of murder. At the time of the offence, D was 17 years old.

The Judge imposed a determinate sentence of 7 years detention in a Young Offenders' Institution for the offence of manslaughter. When pronouncing sentence, the Judge indicated that D would serve half in detention and half in the community, on licence. Reliance was placed on wording in the Crown Court Compendium Part II that "*all children are released having served no more than half their sentence.*"¹

This pronouncement was incorrect. Maria rectified the position and all parties, including the Judge, agreed that D would, in fact, serve two-thirds of this sentence in detention with one-third on licence. As Maria and I later discovered, by researching the matter, the above reference in the Compendium needed to be updated in line with recent legislative changes on release provisions.

As a result of writing last year's article, we are pleased to see that the Compendium has now been corrected. However, upon further research this year, we have discovered another inaccuracy in the Compendium – again, relating to the release provisions of children. As set out below, youths convicted of certain terrorist offences will not be released until at least *two-thirds* of their sentence. The Compendium currently states that they will be released upon serving the *whole* of their custodial term. Having brought this issue to the attention of the editors, we are told that it too will be corrected in due course.

This article sets out the current position on the release provisions for offenders. We hope this will provide some assistance to busy practitioners, and indeed judges, as release dates are proving to be complicated and ever-changing in the current climate. Release provisions will be altered yet again – and imminently – when the Sentencing Bill is fully implemented by Parliament this year. We

will then provide another article setting out those provisions and so watch this space....

GENERAL RULE: release after serving 40% if requirements are met

It is s.244 Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA 2003) that imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to release a fixed-term prisoner on licence and that general duty is to apply once the prisoner has served half of the sentence. Urgent changes in shorter sentences were introduced in 2024 by the government's SDS40² policy to overcome the cumulative issues with prison overcrowding; under most circumstances where a sentence aggregates to less than five years and subject to certain date restrictions, a prisoner will be released on licence after serving only 40% of their sentence rather than one half³.

This comes only a few years after legislation was enacted to keep prisoners in custody for more time rather than less time. The Release of Prisoners (Alteration of Relevant Proportion of Sentence) Order 2020 amended s.244 CJA 2003 such that for sentences of seven years or more for a relevant violent or sexual assault, two thirds of the sentence would be served in custody rather than one half. The relevant offences were those in Schedule 15 CJA 2003 which carried a potential life sentence, and the provision would only apply to adult offenders.

SENTENCES COVERED BY S.244ZA CJA 2003

The 2020 Order was fully repealed by s.130(9) Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSCA 2022) and the PCSCA 2022 amended CJA 2003 by replacing the provisions of the Order with a more complex matrix of conditions⁴ that consider not only the nature of the offence, but the offender and the sentence. This was achieved by inserting a **new section into CJA 2003, section 244ZA.**

¹ July 2024 version, paragraph 4-8

² The Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024

³ The SDS40 provisions are beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴ S.130(1) PCSCA 2022

General applicability of the new section is to prisoners on a fixed-term sentence that have not been released on licence, that are not of "particular concern"⁵, not on an extended sentence⁶, and not a terrorist prisoner⁷; see below for provisions relating to these categories. S.244ZA(1) requires the Secretary of State to release a prisoner on licence once they have served the requisite custodial period for their fixed-term sentence. The section then goes on to list three sets of circumstances where the provisions of the section apply, and where they do apply requires that the requisite custodial period is two thirds the sentence rather than a half⁸. The exceptions to the general rule created by s.244ZA are described below.

1) SENTENCES OF 7 YEARS OR MORE: OFFENDERS 18 OR OVER: entitled to be released after two-thirds if requirements are met

The first set of circumstances refer to Schedule 15 CJA 2003; where this is the case only Parts 1 (Specified Violent Offences) and 2 (Specified Sexual Offences) are relevant to s.244ZA.

Subsection (4) applies for a sentence of 7 years or more imposed after 1st April 2020 where the offence is one specified in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 15 and where a life sentence could have been imposed at the time of sentencing. The subsection can apply to adult offenders as well as those of age 18-21 serving detention under s.262 SA 2020.

2) SENTENCES OF FOUR YEARS OR MORE, BUT LESS THAN SEVEN YEARS: OFFENDERS 18 OR OVER: entitled to be released at two-thirds if requirements are met

Subsection (5) applies for sentences of at least 4 years but less than 7 years, imposed on or after the 28th June 2022⁹. It applies to adult offenders as well as those of age 18-21 serving detention under s.262 SA 2020 (detention in a young offender institution for offender at least 18 but under 21). Perhaps because it applies to shorter sentences, the subsection does not apply to the same broad range of offences in Schedule 15, but instead only to those listed in subsection (7). The violent and sexual offences included in the list are:

- (a) manslaughter;
- (b) soliciting murder;
- (c) wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm;
- (d) ancillary offences in connection with (a)-(c);
- (e) inchoate offences in relation to murder; or
- (f) specified in Part 2 of Schedule 15 (Specified Sexual Offences), and for which a life sentence was available at the time the sentence was imposed.

In the above circumstances, the offender is entitled to be released at the two-thirds point of the sentence. In multiple offence cases, this applies only where the individual sentence is seven years or more (and not to shorter consecutive sentences each less than seven years but where the cumulative total is more than seven years)¹⁰.

3) SENTENCES OF 7 YEARS OR MORE: OFFENDERS UNDER 18: entitled to be released at two-thirds if requirements are met

The final set up circumstances, set out in subsection (6), apply to those sentenced under s.250 SA 2020 (sentence of detention: offender convicted of certain serious offences), i.e. youth

detention for an under-18-year-old. S.250 is only available for certain offences: those where the corresponding adult sentence is at least 14 years' imprisonment, a handful of sexual offences, and some firearms offences listed in Schedule 20 SA 2020. For subsection (6) to bite, the sentence must be 7 years or more, must have been imposed on or after 28th June 2022, and there is a further restriction to the types of offence covered, on top of those prescribed by s.250 SA 2020, as the offence must also be listed in subsection (7), as previously described.

OTHER SENTENCING TYPES

CJA 2003 provisions contain other types of sentence and these have their own particular defined requisite custodial terms.

1) EXTENDED SENTENCES: consideration for release at two-thirds, not entitlement, if requirements are met

S.246A CJA 2003 deals with offenders serving **extended** sentences imposed under ss.254 (under 18), 266 (18-20) and 279 (over 20) SA 2020 who will serve two-thirds of the custodial term before being considered for release by the Parole Board. The offender must be released at the expiry of the custodial term. The balance of the sentence will be served on licence. This is subject to the below exception in relation to certain terrorist offences.

2) OFFENDERS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN (OPC): consideration for release at two-thirds, not entitlement, if requirements are met

S.244A CJA 2003 deals with offenders **of particular concern** serving sentences imposed under ss. 265 (18-20) or 278 (over 20) SA 2020 who will serve two-thirds of the custodial term before being considered for release by the Parole Board. The offender must be released at the expiry of the custodial term. The balance of the sentence will be served on licence. This is subject to the below exception in relation to certain terrorist offences.

3) TERRORIST OFFENDERS: consideration for release at two-thirds, not entitlement, if requirements are met

The general rule is also subject to an exception created by the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020, which inserted s.247A into the CJA 2003. This applies to offences listed in Parts 1 or 2 of Schedule 19ZA of the CJA 2003 and will include offenders under 18 sentenced under s.252A SA 2020. Unless the offender's sentence was:

- (a) an extended sentence or serious terrorism sentence;
- (b) imposed on or after 29 June 2021; and
- (c) imposed for an offence specified in Part 1 of Schedule 19ZA, or Part 3 and determined to have a terrorist connection,

the offender must serve two-thirds of the custodial period before consideration for release by the Parole Board and must be released at the expiry of the custodial term: s.247A(2A) - (8).

4) SERIOUS TERRORISM SENTENCE OFFENDERS: no eligibility for release

For offenders who are serving serious determinate sentences for offences listed in Part 1 of Schedule 19ZA CJA 2003 or offences listed in Part 2 of that Schedule in respect of which the court has determined a terrorist connection, under ss.254 (under

⁵ S.278 Sentencing Act 2020 (SA 2020)

⁶ SS.254, 266 or 279 SA 2020

⁷ SS.254, 266, 268A, 279 or 282A SA 2020

⁸ S.244ZA(8). Where there is a single custodial sentence. Where there are two or more custodial sentences then the period is determined under sections 263(2) and 264(2B) or (2E).

⁹ The day that the PCSCA 2022 came into force.

¹⁰ AB [2021] EWCA Crim 692; [2022] 1 Cr App R(S) 13; [2021] Crim LR 706, decided in relation to SI 2020/158

18), 268A (18-20) or 282A (over 20), there is no eligibility for release; release is automatic at the expiry of the custodial term: s.247A(2A) and (7).

5) LIFE SENTENCES: no eligibility for release

Offenders serving life sentences in respect of which the court imposed a minimum term order will be considered for release by

the Parole Board at the expiry of the minimum term. There is no entitlement to release. If released, the offender will spend the remainder of their life on licence: s.28 Crime (Sentences) Act 1997.

In summary, the special release provisions for the various sections of the Sentencing Code are shown in Table 1 below:

SECTION	SENTENCE TYPE	RELEVANT AGE	SPECIAL RELEASE PROVISION
S.233	Detention and training order	<18 on conviction	N/A
S.250	Sentence of detention: offender convicted of certain serious offences	<18 on conviction	N/A
S.252A	Required special sentence of detention for terrorist offenders of particular concern	<18 on conviction	s.247A CJA 2003
S.254	Extended sentence for certain violent, sexual or terrorism offences	<18 on conviction	s.246A CJA 2003 s.247A CJA 2003
S.258	Required sentence of detention for life for offence carrying life sentence	<18 on conviction	s.28 C(S)A 1997
S.262	Detention in a young offender institution for offender at least 18 but under 21	18-20 on conviction	N/A
S.265	Required special sentence for certain offenders of particular concern	18-20 on conviction	s.244A CJA 2003
S.266	Extended sentence of detention in a young offender institution for certain violent, sexual or terrorism offences	18-20 on conviction	s.246A CJA 2003
S.268A	Serious terrorism sentence of detention in a young offender institution	>18 when offence committed, <21 on conviction	s.247A CJA 2003
S.275	Life custody	18-20 on conviction	s.28 C(S)A 1997
S.278	Required special custodial sentence for certain offenders of particular concern	21+ on conviction	s.244A CJA 2003
S.279	Extended sentence of imprisonment for certain violent, sexual or terrorism offences: persons 21 or over	21+ on conviction	s.246A CJA 2003
S.282A	Serious terrorism sentence of imprisonment: persons 21 or over	>18 when offence committed, >21 on conviction	s.247A CJA 2003
S.285	Life sentence	21+ on conviction	s.28 C(S)A 1997

Table 1: Practitioners need to be aware that where determinate sentences are at least 7 years then these extended requisite custodial periods are likely to apply for a wide range of violent and sexual offences, and may also apply for sentences of just 4 years for the most serious offences within those categories. The provisions can also apply to youths, again where the offences are of the most serious types.



Maria Karaiskos KC
• Church Court Chambers



Guy Cecil
• Church Court Chambers

Constitutional and Administrative Law Bar Association (ALBA)

The Constitutional and Administrative Law Bar Association (ALBA) is the specialist Bar association for those practising in public law. This includes administrative law, constitutional law, judicial review, and other areas of practice concerned with regulating the exercise of public powers. ALBA represents the interests of barristers practising in this area, including on rates of pay for those on the AG's civil panels.

Our members are barristers in independent and employed practice, including government, local authority and NGO lawyers. Judges, solicitors, legal academics, and law students can be associate members. We aim to collaborate with other SBAs and the Circuits where possible, and are delighted that Catherine Brown of 6KBW College Hill is now the SEC rep on the ALBA committee.

One of ALBA's principal objectives is to provide a forum for exchange of knowledge and ideas about the development of public law. We seek to nurture the next generation of public law practitioners, by actively welcoming law students and pupil barristers to participate fully in all our events. As well as a mentoring scheme, we run an annual seminar series specifically for new practitioners, a webinar for those seeking pupillage in public law, and the Catherine Callaghan KC moot in the Supreme Court for students.

We have a busy programme of events. In July each year we hold our annual conference, alternately a weekend in Cambridge and a day in London. The conference this year is on 10-12 July at St John's College, Cambridge. We also organise multiple

seminars throughout the year about topical public law issues. Seminars in the first half of 2026 include artificial intelligence and automated decision-making in judicial review, the gender pay gap, Parliamentary privilege, constitutional law in Wales (held in Cardiff), and an update from the lead judge of the Admin Court.

Apart from the annual conference, our events are usually free of charge for ALBA members. Membership is only £35 a year for barristers (£55 for silks), and is free for pupils and judges. If you have an interest in public law, do consider joining here:

<https://adminlaw.org.uk/membership/join/>



Richard Honey KC

- FTB Chambers
- ALBA Chair

IN MEMORIAM



Charles Burton

Charles was called to the Bar in 1993. He had an illustrious career both defending and prosecuting. He represented the greatest traditions of the Bar. He is described by his colleagues at Rose Court as a "truly outstanding advocate and a special human being".

He will be remembered for his qualities of leadership, kindness and his talent, especially by those who had the pleasure of working with him.

Charles was a founding member of Rose Court Chambers and his commitment and contribution was immense and will never be forgotten. He will be sorely missed

Our thoughts and condolences are with his family, friends and colleagues.



BAR MESS REPORTS

Bar Messes are a vital part of life on the Circuit, both for social and professional reasons.

Please do support your local Mess and get involved with their activities.

Cambridge & Peterborough

Chair: Azza Brown
Juniors: Emma Fielding and Sally Hobson

Central Criminal Court

Chair: Tom Little KC
Juniors: Philip McGhee

Central London

Chair: James Thacker KC
Junior: Emilie Morrison
Woolwich Crown Court: George Penny
Inner London Crown Court: tbc
Central London County Court: Taylor Blair
Southwark Crown Court: Faras Baloch

East Anglian

Chair: Stephen Rose KC
Junior: Joanne Eley

Essex

Chair: Allan Compton KC
Juniors: Marc Brown and Laureen Husain

Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire

Chair: Kevin Molloy
Juniors: March Brown and Laureen Hussain

Kent Report

Chair: Nina Ellin KC
Junior: Stacey-Lee Holland,
Reps: Amy Nicholson and Emin Kandola

North London

Chair: Philip Misner
Junior: Jessica Peck
Harrow Crown Court: John Warrington
Wood Green Crown Court: Shabeena Azhar
Snaresbrook Crown Court: Sonya Saul

Surrey & South London

Chair: William Hughes KC
Isleworth Crown Court: Neil Griffin
Kingston Crown Court: Keith Hadrill
Guildford Crown Court: Ryan Richter
Croydon Crown Court: tbc

Sussex

Chair: Alan Gardner KC
Junior: Sarah Thorne
Criminal: James Hay
Civil & Family: Charmaine Wilson

Thames Valley

Chair: Daren Samat
Junior: Adam Williams
Oxford Crown Court: Kellie Enever
Reading Crown Court: Tom Godfrey

CENTRAL CRIMINAL LONDON BAR MESS

Trial By Jury was presented on 3 nights (14, 15 and 16 January 2026) in the Grand Hall, with the active participation on 2 nights of the Lady Chief Justice.

The opening of the legal year ceremony was held in Court 1 at the CCC on Friday 16 January 2026, attended by the Lady Mayor of the City of London, and City and legal dignitaries, as well as judges, staff and advocates at the CCC.

A well-attended event was held in the Grand Hall at the CCC on Thursday 22 January 2026 in memory of Courtenay Griffiths KC. A framed photograph of Courtenay Griffiths KC now hangs in the Bar Mess at the CCC.

CENTRAL LONDON BAR MESS

Inner London Crown Court

We welcome the new Resident and Senior Circuit Judge, HHJ Evans KC, who has settled in well.

The two doors to gain access to the robing room in the main building are not closing and locking properly. This has been logged to be fixed. In the meantime, please make sure you close the doors behind you.

Woolwich Crown Court

The Mess representative is George Penny, who is happy to help and assist with any questions, comments or suggestions.

We welcome the new Resident and Senior Circuit Judge, HHJ Lees and wish him well in his new post.

Two new judges have just been appointed to Woolwich Crown Court; HHJ Elizabeth Baker and HHJ Anya Lewis KC. They are both most welcome and we wish them well.

The court has made a plea that cases listed for trial are as ready as they can possibly be to help ensure they get on in their listed time.

Two rooms have now been designated for ad-hoc CVP use. These are the two old PVL rooms opposite court 7. The codes presently must be sought from the general office but in short order should be advertised in the robing room. Members are asked to refrain from using these for general conferences, and to vacate them once their CVP is finished, so they can be available to others in need. If this pilot is successful, there may be other rooms made available.

Kirsty Brimelow, Chair of the Bar, visited Woolwich Crown Court on 8 January 2026 with Claire Davies KC, Chair of the SEC. They spoke to the judiciary, court staff and the Bar about concerns and particular measures to improve difficulties, including long delays between preliminary hearings and trial, retention, delays by late prison vans and gaining access for conferences.

The handle to the men's toilet door in the robing room has now been repaired. Consideration is being given to what can be done on the tight budget available about the increasingly worn carpet in the entrance to the robing room, which is now beginning to present a trip hazard.

The robing room notice boards have been reorganised and will be more regularly updated. Members are welcome to post notices of their own on boards marked for counsel's use.

There is likely to be a decorative refresh of the robing room and other areas of the court, with new artworks installed through a charity partnership, given the lack of available budget for decorative improvements.

The pedestrian gate into the court grounds is often closed at present, given security sensitivities around certain ongoing cases; on days when it can be kept open it will be.

For anyone seeking to breastfeed or express milk at Woolwich Crown Court, a procedure is in place to provide a private room and fridge on request. Such requests can be directed to the security team or the court managers Mark Aldridge (mark.aldridge@justice.gov.uk) or Janine Ince (janine.ince1@justice.gov.uk).

Southwark Crown Court

HH Michael Hopmeier and HH Philip Bartle KC retired at the end of 2025. We wish both well as they enjoy their well-earned retirement.

HH Judge Bourne KC and HH Judge Rudolf KC have transferred from Harrow and Inner London respectively.

The Mess representative, Faras Baloch, is chairing a working committee of the Court Users Group to review Southwark Practice Note Np.1/2024. It is hoped the review will complete, with a revised Practice Note, by July 2026.

The Mess welcomed Women in Criminal Law 'WICL' on 9 March 2026. To mark International Women's Day, portraits of several influential women, who have significantly contributed to the Bar and Judiciary and enriched the professions, were unveiled. They hang within the Bar Mess and are an inspiration to us all.

James Thacker KC, Chair

EAST ANGLIA BAR MESS

HHJ Martyn Levett has completed his term of office as resident judge at Ipswich Crown Court. The Leader of the Circuit delivered a warm valedictory address on behalf of the Bar. We will all remember Judge Levett for his energetic leadership, piercing intellect, and unfailing humour. His substantial command of the rulings of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division made for vigorous jousting with counsel. Behind the scenes he gave hours of time to students and encouraged the Bar to keep going and aim high. During the pandemic his court somehow remained open thanks to the extraordinary feats of 'Bob the Screw'. This mysterious handyman performed ingenious overnight feats with cables, cameras, and a measuring tape. The court sat in circumstances everyone else considered impossible. His true identity is now revealed, to no one's great surprise. We are very grateful and we will miss Judge Levett's wisdom and compassion, as well as his screwdriver. We all wish him well.

The Mess was deeply saddened by the sudden death of Charles Judge. Charlie was a popular and familiar face among us. He was an able barrister of great warmth, experience and integrity. He is deeply missed. A good number were able to attend his funeral service in Ipswich in December.

It has been a great pleasure to welcome HHJ Samantha Leigh to Ipswich as our new resident judge. She brings great experience and enthusiasm to the task, together with sweet treats that have suddenly begun to materialise in the robing room for general consumption. We hope that she will feel very much at home among us.

There is also change in the wind at Norwich. The Mess will be sad to say farewell to our resident judge, HHJ Alice Robinson. We will mark the occasion appropriately at a dinner on Friday 24th April 2026.

CAMBRIDGE AND PETERBOROUGH BAR MESS

We are pleased to welcome back HHJ Seeley who has returned from Manchester to sit at Huntingdon Crown Court.

We are holding an AGM on 8 April which is open to all members of our bar mess.

Our annual dinner will take place on Friday 11 September, invites to follow but it is sure to be a fantastic evening and we are hoping for an excellent turn out from our local bar.

ESSEX BAR MESS

The Mess is delighted to report that the Essex Bar Mess November dinner was a huge success. It was held at the Lion Inn at Boreham, which turned out to be a very good venue, one to which we are likely to return.

The event was very well attended indeed, and we are very pleased to have had some non-criminal practitioners attend. This is a welcome development, and a reminder that the mess is there for all practitioners of any discipline who find themselves appearing in our courts.

Attendees were treated to an excellent and very amusing speech from HHJ Collery KC. The bar mess Junior's speech was, however, inaudible at the back. This it seems was due to poor mic technique, and the mess are considering investing in a Madonna style head set for this year's event.

The mess reports that Her Honour Judge Leigh has left her post as resident Judge at Basildon Crown Court and now finds herself in Ipswich as resident Judge. She will be missed.

The Kingdom of Basildon, Canvey and Vange, is now presided over by Her Honour Judge Cohen, and thus far, reports are very favourable (this is, of course, to be expected).

The mess intends to hold a Spring dinner on the 1st May at the Chelmsford Cricket Club. This will present an excellent opportunity to thank HHJ Leigh for her tenure as resident at Basildon, and to welcome HHJ Cohen as new resident.

Plans are afoot to hold the annual November dinner in London. We will update when we have a firm venue and date. It promises to be an excellent and well attended event, look out for the flyer.

The mess also hopes/intends to hold a 20/20 cricket match in the summer. Usual format. Bar v. Judiciary and court staff. Details to follow.

The Mess also welcomes HHJ Jonathan Bristow to Basildon Crown Court upon his appointment to the circuit Bench.

Finally, the mess is hoping to become more organised. We are working on a formal written constitution, and a rationalisation of the collection of subscriptions. Look out for an email from the leader of the Mess, Allan Compton KC – he is coming for your Moolah. We hope that over the coming year we may be able to provide some CPD lectures.

HERTS & BEDS BAR MESS

St Albans Crown Court:

I'm happy to report the RJ HHJ Lana Wood now has a murder ticket. So that means there are two Judges at St Albans with murder ticket. This time last year there were none.

St Albans now has 7 salaried judges for 7 courts (Wood, Sheridan, Mann KC, Kainth, Siddique, Johnson, Choudhry). They welcomed Judge Kainth back to work after his long sickness absence; he is now well enough to sit four consecutive days each week and is back to hearing trials. Currently the most challenging issue is staffing levels; they are sometimes not able to run all the courts because they are short of staff, ushers in particular. If anyone who is looking for an interesting job, they are recruiting through Brook Street.

Canteen is still not operational, but it is out to tender (again)

Lydia Gomez, the list officer, is back from maternity leave last week. The list office team comprises Lydia and Ronnie, the acting list officer whilst Lydia was off. The CPS recently stated that their analysis showed St Albans' response to accommodating listing requests to be the best in the area. If you need to contact the list office, either ring on their direct line (01727 753245) or email the list office on stalbanscrown.offersandavoids@Justice.gov.uk

The early guilty plea rate has also attracted the attention of the CPS because it is **much higher** than other courts' rates. The RJ remains convinced that the key factor which underpins that success is getting everyone into court for the PTPH. The RJ knows that sometimes it is an inconvenience, but the stats suggest it works, ensuring that cases that can be cracked crack early, saving scarce resources, (CPS, police, defence and court), for those cases which will result in a trial. St Albans continues to follow the Better Case Management (Revival) model, and to list all cases in which they anticipate a trial for FCMH (custody cases just after stage 2, and bail cases at stage 3), and for PTR. A reminder to be in touch: if you have a FCMH upcoming in a case, and Stage 2 has been complied with, no orders are sought of the court which cannot be dealt with administratively, and the possibility of resolution without trial has been considered and rejected, please do liaise with your opponent and email the list office jointly to ask for the hearing to be vacated. Similarly with Pre-Trial Reviews: if the case is ready for trial, no orders are sought of the court which

cannot be dealt with administratively, and the possibility of resolution without trial has been considered and rejected, the case will be taken out of the list if the box on the Certificate of Trial Readiness saying that the PTR can be vacated has been ticked, but even if that hasn't been done, if you and your opponent think that the case is trial ready and the PTR will be a waste of everyone's time, please jointly email the list office and let them know. The court may refuse a request if it is late in the day, so the time in the list has already been allocated, and they think there may be a chance of the trial cracking, but you may strike gold and save yourself an unnecessary trip.

On the CVP issue the RJ stated:

"We continue to try to ensure that the question of whether an advocate can appear at the next hearing via CVP is considered when the hearing date is set; if any judge or recorder doesn't specify, please remind them. The general rule remains that if a defendant attends court in person or is produced at court, his advocate will be required to be present at court as well. We have listened to the complaints about the LCJ's CVP application form for advocates that we were using. Judge Johnson has devised a new form which, if it is completed properly, will give us the information we need to make a proper decision. Many applications are filled in by clerks: it may not surprise you to learn that the quality of those applications is often poor, and a refusal often follows. If there's a particularly good reason for seeking CVP for the advocate, please do think about completing the form yourself so that we have all the information we need."

The court is prioritising custody cases first (they are still managing to list within custody time limits – in part because they have the luxury of being able to access the cells in the Magistrates' Court when they need them, as well as the cells in the main building), then sex and violent domestic context offending. The RJ will also prioritise cases which involve children as witnesses or defendants. For non-priority multi-day bail cases, the earliest listing is currently November 2027, and it's a bit earlier than that for short cases. When they can run all 7 courts, they are almost always getting the listed trials on. When they can't run 7 courts because of staffing issues, heating or cooling issues or other natural or non-natural disaster, the job becomes a lot harder, and not every week, but from time to time, St Albans is having to adjourn listed trials out. When that occurs, they are always trying their best to find an early date for the next listing.

Incredibly the custody lift in the main building hasn't been working for some

time, and has now been deemed unfixable, so the cells staff must walk custodies up the stairs (4 floors up to courts 3 and 4). Money has been assigned to replace it in next year's major works budget, and the plan is that the work will be done over the summer of 2026. Therefore, it is particularly important to now bring any physical issues that defendants have, either those in custody or those who may be going off bail into custody, to the attention of the court at an early stage, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. There is only one flight of stairs from the cells in the Magistrates' Court building to the court rooms, so if the court knows that someone is likely to struggle, the RJ can put the trial over there instead of in the main building. St Albans remain unable to accommodate anyone who uses a wheelchair - medical evidence is required at an early stage to facilitate transfer to the cluster disability compliant court in Cambridge.

Luton Crown Court:

The main additional news would be that, although they have experienced some staff shortages (echoing the issues outlined above for St Albans) of late, especially among clerks, which has impacted the number of courts they could run at times, two new clerks have started this week. Both are fully trained and are transferring from other courts. This will boost the clerking cohort and provide additional support/cover for the listings team. In addition, a second Delivery Manager post has been created to share the burden of leading the staff at Court. This is being filled at Luton by the current Head of Administrative Staff at St Albans.

Further tweaks have been made to the court diary for future trial listing, with guidance from the RJ, which should assist with appropriate priority listing for bail cases that warrant it. Although they would wish to be able to do even better, their general listing of trials (custody and bail, priority and non-priority) in terms of meeting custody time limits and in terms of general waiting times is nonetheless good despite the continuing and unrelenting pressure on the Court.

The comments made last time about the Luton CC's sympathetic approach to requests to delay the start of trials still holds true. Every request is considered on a case-by-case basis taking account of all relevant factors and where it is possible to accommodate such requests, they continue to do so. However, the RJ would emphasise the need for all advocates to treat the trial listing, in effect, as the one chance for the case to get on. This may help to focus minds a tad earlier than the morning of day one. There are still too

many cases which arrive at their long-awaited trial date in a state that means they cannot proceed, forcing the court to find another trial date that would otherwise accommodate a new case.

The RJ HHJ Simon is always open to receiving approaches from advocates on any court-related matter and welcome their feedback.

KENT REPORT BAR MESS

1. Death of Michael Gale KC

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Michael Gale KC.

He was a valued member of our professional community, and his loss will be felt by many across the firm and the wider Bar. On behalf of KBM, we extend our deepest sympathies to his family, friends, and all those who had the privilege of working with him. We encourage members to keep Michael Gale KC and his loved ones in their thoughts at this difficult time.

2. Maidstone Crown Court

HHJ Lee Harris has now been appointed, bringing Maidstone to a full complement of Circuit Judges. The temporary transfer of cases to Woolwich and Southwark will cease at the end of the financial year and is reported to have assisted with the backlog.

On 30th January 2026, Tristan Osborne MP attended the court to meet local barristers. Matters raised included:

- Persistent late arrival of prison vans and the resulting loss of court time.
- Listing concerns and retention of experienced listing officers.
- Ongoing court building issues causing disruption.
- Recruitment and retention challenges at the Criminal Bar, including pay, delayed payments, and listing instability.
- The impact of the Legal Aid Agency cyber-attack on timely payment.
- Potential improvements in IT and future reform proposals.

There was clear support amongst those present for the retention of the jury trial system, with concerns expressed regarding proposed structural changes and the absence of clarity about any appeal process.

Another MP visit has been arranged for the 30th March 2026.

Maidstone Crown Court will hold an Open Day on Saturday 9th May 2026. Members

of the public will have an opportunity to see the inner workings of the Crown Court, observe a mock trial and learn about careers in the legal sector.

In other news, HHJ St John-Stevens will be retiring, and his valedictory will take place on 22nd May 2026.

Those wishing to attend either event, or requiring further details, are asked to email Stacey Holland at stacey.holland@2drj.com.

3. Canterbury Crown Court

HHJ Simon James, Resident Judge, has issued a Consolidated Guidance Note (January 2026), provides updated procedural guidance effective from 1 December 2025.

The guidance covers:

- Reasonable adjustments for court users (including faith rooms, post-natal facilities and access arrangements).
- Procedures for Streeter/Resolution hearings and sentencing.
- Special measures and section 28 cases.
- Standard directions and case management expectations.
- Remote attendance by advocates (CVP).
- Use of Widely Shared Notes.
- Administrative hearings, including bail variations, production orders and amendments to timetables.
- Detailed requirements for investigation and production order applications, with emphasis on proportionality, candour and proper venue selection.

Should anyone wish to receive a copy of this please email Stacey Holland at [Stacey.holland@2drj.com](mailto:stacey.holland@2drj.com).

Practitioners are reminded that the guidance is subordinate to the Criminal Procedure Rules and Practice Directions, but is intended as a practical and up-to-date reference point for court users.

4. Silk Appointments 2026

We offer our congratulations to all those who were successful in their applications for Silk in 2026. We especially extend our congratulations to Louise Oakley and John Fitzgerald, both of whom are former Kent Bar Mess Juniors and active members of the Mess.

5. Kent Bar Mess - Annual Dinner & Dance

This year's Kent Bar Mess Dinner & Dance will take place on 20th November 2026 at The Old Brewery, Faversham.

Tickets will go on sale in June. Members wishing to attend should email Stacey Holland at stacey.holland@2drj.com.

NORTH LONDON BAR MESS

Harrow Crown Court

HHJ Lodge reports that he is assured, with as many guarantees as can be given, that sittings will resume on the 13th of April. His Court Manager visits frequently. They are hopeful the last operatives leave on the 20th of March. They will then make sure everything is shipshape for a smooth opening. What could possibly go wrong? Nothing else to report.

Snaresbrook Crown Court

HHJ Dean reports the short trials courts is a huge success, and Snaresbrook are extending it into next year with both bail and custody cases. This should mean that the junior bar gets lots of work. It is not a warned list as the trials go into 2 courts we have set aside- but feels like one as Snaresbrook list 30 trials over 2 weeks rather than give a certain day.

They have 40 percent more work coming in than a year ago and so even sitting at close to full capacity, they will struggle to list their cases as soon as they would all like.

HHJ Dean reports that the phones are now working better so hopes that clerks are not in a doom loop. If everyone could use the bespoke email addresses, she hopes that there will be swifter replies

Wood Green Crown Court

HHJ John Dodd KC reports that HHJ Joanna Greenberg KC retired on Friday 28th November. They bade a fond farewell to her and gave a warm welcome to HHJ John Law.

They managed to raise the remarkable sum of £90 from our Christmas carol service.

No harm in saying that they very much hope that they may be allowed to make use of the Hendon courts once Harrow finally return to Harrow!

SURREY AND SOUTH LONDON BAR MESS

Overview

HHJ Nick Wood

The last couple of months have been dominated by the sad and untimely death of His Honour Judge Nick Wood on 15th January 2026. The esteem and affection in which Nick was held has been universally echoed in the many tributes throughout the Bar, Judiciary, Court Service and beyond.

The Valedictory given by HHJ Martin Edmonds KC at Isleworth Crown Court on 19th January was to a packed Court 7

and over 250 attendees online, with many others unable to join due to the event being oversubscribed.

Nick's funeral on 27th February was similarly well attended. The service was both moving and amusing, with eulogies from Nick's son James, his close friend Johnno, Peter Finnegan KC and Selva Ramsammy KC. Underpinning the overall theme was Nick's love of Leeds United FC.

As well as being a Judge who it was always a pleasure to appear before, Nick was a friend to the Bar in general and many others. He will be greatly missed and never forgotten. Like his beloved Leeds United, the Mess and beyond Marches On Together in our affection for Nick.

Isleworth

Recently, the Court was attended by local MPs, to hear from the Bar regarding the Government's proposed curbing of jury trials. There can be no doubt the strong feelings against the proposals were conveyed to those Parliamentarians attending.

Croydon

The Mess welcomes HHJ Connell as the new Resident Judge, after many successful years at Isleworth and looks forward to working with him, particularly at the Court user meetings.

Guildford

Members of the Mess and SEC attending Guildford should be aware that the Court's car park is now available, free of charge, for those appearing at Guildford. The Mess expresses its grateful thanks to HHJ Lees for working so tirelessly to enable this extra facility for the Bar.

Listing & Other issues

The Chair has been in close liaison with all four RJs as regards listing. All RJs are acutely aware of the issues facing the Bar and are very sympathetic to problems those using these Courts encounter with regards to listing.

Any SSLBM member or user of any these Courts should contact the Chair, William Hughes KC or the Secretary Gabriella Lewis.

William Hughes KC, Chair

SUSSEX BAR MESS

The Mess continues to expand the number of members. There is an active drive in progress to encourage participation in events. We are planning another quiz night in the Spring - date to be advised. The garden party date is fixed for 28th June. It will be held at the same venue as last year - The Hove Club. On a sadder note, we lost a

very popular usher from Hove Crown Court last month. The Mess was active in letting members know the news and organised flowers for Tina before she passed away and a donation to Martlets Hospice at the request of her family. Finally, the care baskets in Lewes courts are regularly replenished and proving to be very popular.

THAMES VALLEY BAR MESS

Reading building works now continue. The projected timeline has been subject to several delays so we cannot give an accurate finish date for the works. In the meantime, the Robing room is in a temporary room above the Court office. We also give our thanks to the Reading Judges and Court Staff who arranged for their old books (2025) editions of practitioner's texts to be donated to the Bar, which were distributed to Pupils. As for Reading CC Resident Judge we have heard nothing further.

Aylesbury continues as always with HHJ Restall joining the Judges in late 2025.

Oxford as always continues to run smoothly with no concerns raised or additional news to raise save for the Magistrates' Court is closed for repairs to be done on the roof. This means cases are being sent to other Magistrates' Courts in the cluster. HHJ Emma Nott was given an honorary King's Counsel title. Links and press below:

Her Honour Judge Emma Nott is a Circuit Judge at Oxford Crown Court, Reading Family Court, and the Court of Protection, and a Justice of the British Indian Ocean Territory Court of Appeal. She is a Judicial College Criminal Course Director and a Bencher at Gray's Inn where she trains pupils and students.

She was nominated for her efforts to drive fairness and equality at the Bar, including empirical analysis that exposed systemic gender disparities in work allocation and remuneration. Her evidence-based research prompted internal reviews within the CPS and GLD, reforms to data collection and monitoring, and has been widely cited by professional bodies and the Justice Select Committee.

Source for the above [New King's Counsel and Honorary King's Counsel welcomed by Lord Chancellor](#) - GOV.UK

Press: [Oxford Crown Court Judge Emma Nott awarded title of King's Counsel](#) - This is Oxfordshire

BRIEF EATS

LOCAL EATERIES

Some of us, who commenced pupillage some time ago, will recall an annual handy guide, which contained details of local eateries (and sources of much-needed caffeine) close to each of the courts that we frequented.

With second-six pupils due, imminently, to get on their feet, it seemed an ideal opportunity to begin what we hope will be a regular Circuiteer feature, sharing recommendations for independent establishments, close to Magistrates' and Crown Courts. If you have any hidden gems, please don't keep them to yourselves! Please let us in on the secret for our next edition of "Brief Eats" by e-mailing them in to laura.kenyon@18rlc.co.uk or faye.rolfe@18rlc.co.uk.



COURT

VENUE



**Ealing
Magistrates' Court**

Caffe Terrazzo

1 Manor Road, London W13 0HL

We very much like the look of the savoury bakes, including tomato, mozzarella and basil danish and cheese and spinach muffins.

**Medway
Magistrates' Court**

Mrs Sourdough Bakery

74 High Street, Chatham, ME4 4DS

We are reliably informed that their cinnamon buns are a particular treat.

**Canterbury
Crown Court**

Wave

53 Northgate Canterbury, CT1 1BE

Their range of cakes strike us as a particularly good post-court pick-me-up.

**Folkestone
Magistrates' Court**

HatHats

Cheriton Road, Folkestone, CT19 5AU

Coffee, cake, or even pizza if you find yourself unexpectedly adjourned, there's plenty of choice to meet all appetites.

**St Albans Crown and
Magistrates' Courts**

Nkora Coffee

26 Market Place, St Albans, AL3 5DG.

A good spot for the first (second, or third) coffee of the day.

**High Wycombe
Magistrates' Court**

Django's Speciality Coffee House

Old Library Building, High Wycombe, HP11 1BG

Some tasty breakfast treats, ranging from waffles to rather healthier muesli options.

**Reading Crown and
Magistrates' Courts**

Coffee Under Pressure

7 Belgrave Street, Reading, RG1 1PJ

Serving a particularly stunning matcha.

**Basildon Crown and
Magistrates' Courts**

Basildon Market

Market Service Building, Westgate, Basildon
SS14 1FW

Featuring **Pot Belly's Café** for sandwiches or something more substantial and **Matteus Caribbean Cuisine** for a fantastic curry.

**Southend Crown and
Magistrates' Courts**

Southend Civic Centre Café

Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9SB

Not immediately obvious, buried inside the Civic Centre, but close to the court building, with a good range of home-made sandwiches and cakes.

**Ipswich
Magistrates' Court**

Harmonious House

58 Princes Street, Ipswich, IP1 1RJ

For a selection of coffees and paninis, a short walk from the court,

Ipswich Crown Court

Cool Beanz

15 Russell Rd, Ipswich, IP1 2DE

Coffee, cake and an extension of the Ipswich Crown Court robing room.

**Cambridge Crown
Court**

Kanto Cafe & Bakery

60 Cherry Hinton Rd, Cambridge CB1 7AA

Tasty Filipino and Korean inspired baked goods including kimchi cheese twists and sweet and savoury buns.

**Peterborough Crown
and Magistrates'
Courts**

BE AR Bean Around Coffee

2 Cathedral Square, Peterborough, PE1 1XH

With a large selection of sandwiches, pastries and other sweet treats.





**YOUR CIRCUIT.
YOUR VOICE.**

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