



Young Legal Aid Lawyers statement on direct action in protest against changes to the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS)

Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) stands in solidarity with colleagues who have made the difficult decision to take direct action in response to changes to the way in which criminal legal aid work by advocates is remunerated under the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS).

YLAL recognises the pressures that have been placed upon our colleagues at the criminal bar over the past decade through successive cuts to legal aid, and notes that 90% of barristers surveyed by the Criminal Bar Association said they wanted to act to secure proper investment in the criminal justice system.

We believe that the implementation of the reformed AGFS is the latest attack upon our criminal justice system, which has been left fragile and at breaking point. The system is currently propped up only by the goodwill of barristers and solicitors who are forced to work for free.

This is unsustainable, and reforms are desperately needed in order to repair the broken criminal justice system and ensure that it is fit for purpose – protecting the society which it purports to serve.

YLAL wholeheartedly supports the position of the Criminal Bar Association and those chambers which have made the decision to take direct action in protest against the reformed AGFS, which comes into force on 1 April 2018.

YLAL recognises that, as junior criminal barristers, our members are likely to be amongst those most affected by this direct action. YLAL has been pleased to note that numerous silks have called for senior members of the profession to support the most junior members, for example by representing them, pro bono, if faced with wasted costs orders.

This support will enable junior members of the bar to participate in this direct action and unite with their colleagues to protect the future of our criminal justice system.

YLAL urges the whole legal profession to stand in support of each other at this critical moment in time for this vital public service, which must be protected at all costs.

YLAL joins the Criminal Bar Association in calling on the Ministry of Justice to delay the implementation of the reformed AGFS pending further consultation as to its impact on the criminal bar and the criminal justice system.

For press enquiries please contact ylalpress@gmail.com

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