

# The legal week in 60 seconds

For our weekly news, head to [www.solicitorsjournal.com/news](http://www.solicitorsjournal.com/news)

## INSURANCE

**Irrevocable changes:** Whiplash reform is on the agenda for the newly-appointed president of the Forum of Insurance Lawyers (FOIL), Nick Parsons. Discussing the year ahead, Parsons, pictured below, said: "The insurance sector has seen a huge level of reform in the last couple of years. Regardless of the outcome of the next election, I do not anticipate that coming to a halt. At the same time, there have been irrevocable changes in the legal services sector both in terms of ownership and the way in which legal services are provided." Parsons heads the insurance and public risk department at Browne Jacobson, having qualified as a solicitor at the firm before becoming partner in 1994.

## DIVERSITY

**Diversity champion:** Barrister Tunde Okewale has won the Black Solicitors Network's coveted award for Diversity Champion at the network's annual diversity awards. The aim of the awards is to recognise and promote excellence in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion across the profession. They are the only legal industry awards that have a dedicated diversity focus. Okewale practises in crime, extradition and human rights from Doughty Street Chambers.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Early conciliation:** Acas has participated in 37,000 cases since its early conciliation (EC) scheme was introduced in April this year.

The organisation's figures show that of these 37,000, some 1,000 were multiple claims, covering around 8,000 potential claimants. The figures also showed that 3 per cent of EC requests came from the employer, and that 10 per cent of both employees and employers declined to participate in EC when Acas contacted them. Preliminary findings show that 18 per cent of ECs resulted in a COT3, and of those that did not result in a settlement, over two-thirds had not progressed to a tribunal claim at the time of survey.

## REGULATORS

**Insolvency regulation:** The SRA has launched a consultation on a proposal to stop regulating solicitors who act as insolvency practitioners under the Insolvency Act 1986. The SRA believes regulating insolvency practitioners should be taken up by appropriate alternative regulators. The proposal follows initial discussions with the Insolvency Service.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**Firm confidence:** UK law firm business confidence has reached an eight-year high, a market survey has found. The research revealed that investment in growth is a strong strategic priority for the UK's top 250 firms, and that practices are planning to invest in technology, new service lines and office space in the coming year. "The only time we have seen business confidence surpassing the current level was in 2006, when it

reached 98 per cent, just when the economy was peaking before the onset of the recession," commented Giles Murphy, head of professional practices at Smith & Williamson, which conducted the research. "But while firms are scaling up and planning to invest - as demonstrated by the two-thirds of practices who are planning to increase investment in IT, almost half (42 per cent) who are planning to set up new service lines, just under a third expecting to take on new office space - there are a raft of economic dangers on the horizon."

## TAX

**Global cooperation:** The president of the European Commission (EC), Jean-Claude Juncker, has called for global cooperation and coordination in battling tax evasion. However, the EC president is currently under pressure himself as he stands accused of presiding over the creation of tax-break schemes for multinational companies for almost two decades, while he was the prime minister of Luxembourg from 1995 to 2013. Luxembourg is currently under investigation by the EC for providing 'sweetheart' deals to over 340 multinational companies, which allowed them to drastically reduce their global tax bills.

## PERSONAL INJURY

**Anti-fraud training:** A north-west personal injury solicitor has called for the introduction of anti-fraud training for all

claimant personal injury solicitors. **Hilary Meredith**, CEO of **Hilary Meredith** Solicitors, says the time is right for claimant solicitors to proactively tackle insurance fraud. Meredith argues that, after witnessing the debate on the SARAH Bill at the House of Lords this week, it was clear that the government was focusing on the number of fraudulent and exaggerated personal injury claims and the effect that this has on motor insurance. "Claimant firms are no longer allowed to offer inducements to potential claimants but I believe the time is now right for claimant solicitors to go on the front foot and proactively stamp out fraud. It damages our credibility as claimant lawyers and impacts on the reputation of the whole profession," she said.

## CRIME

**Clarification on offences:** Offences related to kidnapping, false imprisonment and child abduction must be clarified, the Law Commission has recommended. The Commission has said the offences must allow for the prosecution of parents who keep their children overseas in contravention of a court order, or without permission of the other parent or guardian. The report recommending the reforms can be found online. **SJ**

Trending on Twitter:  
#SJPoulter attends  
#hjainnovation in law  
report launch



Virtual courtrooms,  
telephone helplines?  
Is there a place for  
face to face advice  
still? #hjainnovation  
#SJPoulter  
Following #Jackson 58%  
of legal professionals  
agree that compliance  
with court orders  
take precedence over  
justice #hjainnovation  
#SJPoulter  
69% of lawyers would  
not recommend  
legal profession as a  
career, #hjainnovation  
#SJPoulter

Is law becoming a second  
class career? No, says  
@FionaBawdon, but "only  
rich people can afford to  
be poor people's lawyers"  
#hjainnovation

Follow us on Twitter  
@SJ\_Weekly



Nick Parsons



### Sir Bob

Geldof has described  
himself as a pleb at  
the High Court while  
giving evidence in  
support of Andrew  
Mitchell. Mitchell is  
suing News Group  
Newspapers for libel  
over the 'plebgate'  
incident in September  
2012.

Sir Bob said the  
two were "an unlikely  
pair of friends" and  
became so because of  
Mitchell's qualities as  
a leader and advocate  
for the less fortunate,  
which led the 'Do They  
Know It's Christmas'  
hitmaker to think of  
Mitchell as a "good  
man".

In a written  
statement provided to  
the court, Sir Bob said:  
"I came from a poor,  
Irish, not particularly  
well-educated  
background and he  
does not. I am in fact 'a  
pleb' and he is not."

The praise  
continued: "He is  
open, frank, truthful,  
even when at times  
you wish to hear  
something other."

Sir Bib did add,  
however, that  
Mitchell perhaps had  
a justified reputation  
for swearing a bit.



The president of the EC  
has called for global  
cooperation



Personal injury solicitors  
should undertake  
anti-fraud training