

The Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State
The Ministry of Justice

30 June 2015

Dear Lord Chancellor,

We are disappointed to note that we have not even had the courtesy of a response to our letters dated 23 June, 24 June and 29 June.

As of course you will be aware, solicitors and barristers have been meeting all over the country in order to discuss not working at the proposed new rates commencing tomorrow, 1 July.

Unity between solicitors and barristers, both Silks and juniors, lead us to believe that from the 1 July there will be very limited coverage across the country in police stations and Courts, and over a period of time the situation will deteriorate further.

We know that individual solicitors who have come to this conclusion have taken this decision with a very heavy heart indeed. We also understand that officials at the Ministry of Justice will be briefing the press as to the terrible consequences of this action which no doubt you will try to dress up as being caused by this protest.

However, the reality is as follows: -

1. The criminal justice system is heading towards melt down as a result of these cuts, and if we do not take this desperate action now access to justice will be decimated by your proposals with very many vulnerable and young people exposed to miscarriages of justice.
2. We do not accept that you have properly reviewed the importance of solicitors in implementing the Leveson reforms and nor do we consider that you have properly reviewed ongoing crime spend which we understand from recent figures continue to plummet.
3. In all of the letters referred to above we have sought a proper process of engagement and review with solicitors and we believe that not proceeding with this cut and allowing such a review to take place over a period of time considering whether further cuts are necessary and the 2 tier proposal will ultimately lead to greater efficiencies, greater savings, and a better and more robust criminal justice system, the one that we believe you seek following your recent speech.

As well as barristers all over the country joining forces with their solicitors in Liverpool, Manchester, Cardiff, Birmingham, London, Leeds, Newcastle and many other cities. We understand that the Criminal Bar Association Executive are meeting

tonight to review their position, although, of course, in any event you will appreciate that many of their members have already decided to vote with their feet.

| We are disappointed that you have failed to respond to our letters. We can assure you that our only desire is to engage properly with you. The only way in which you will succeed in reforming a 'creaking and outdated system' is by engaging with those at the heart of it. Without engagement or indeed acknowledgment individual solicitors and barristers feel that they have no choice but to pursue their action designed in the long-term to save the criminal justice system. It is most unfortunate that your actions will cause short-term pain for many when ultimately our only aim is to secure an effective, efficient, robust and accountable justice system. As it stands there is a clear dichotomy between your words and your actions. In your speech you describe and deplore a two-tier justice system, i.e. one for the rich and one for the poor, but in implementing the cuts without proper regard to the consequences you are widening that gap and moving further away from the 'one nation' that you describe.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Waddington
Chairman of the CLSA

Jon Black
President of the London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association