



# 9 BEDFORD ROW

## **9 Bedford Row's Response to the Recent Ministry of Justice**

### **Announcement**

The recent announcement by the MoJ to suspend all fee cuts to the AGFS scheme until after the Jeffrey and Leveson reviews represents a significant victory for the Bar as a whole and the junior Bar in particular. We are grateful to those solicitors who have supported our action against the proposed cuts which, if implemented, would have led to a drastic deterioration in the quality of representation at court.

We recognise, however, that the bigger battle to secure a criminal justice system in which the public retains confidence, securing fair access to justice for all continues. Importantly, the MoJ has not reversed the cuts already imposed on solicitors, nor have they revoked the 30% cut to VHCC fees. We have been, and continue to be, fully supportive of those solicitors up and down the country who continue to fight these cuts and who oppose the introduction of a 'two-tier' legal aid contract, which will destroy the solicitors' profession.

We are also fully supportive of the proposed action by the CLSA and the LCCSA on 31<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. Our members, in line with the protocols, will not accept instructions in magistrates courts on those days. In addition, on those



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days, members of chambers will not accept instructions in Crown Courts 'returned' by Higher Courts Advocates.

Furthermore, each member of Chambers has decided to continue to refuse instructions in all VHCC cases at the new reduced rate.

Chambers calls upon the CBA and the Circuits to continue to engage with the MoJ to ensure that there is fair access to justice for all. Whilst the concessions made by the MoJ so far are welcome, the principle of fair access to justice for all cannot be safeguarded whilst solicitors are expected to litigate the most serious of criminal allegations in the face of these dangerous and unsustainable cuts.

Anthony Berry QC

28 March 2014