JAYNE WILLETTS: 20 YEARS AN AUTHOR

2025 Sees A Change Of Author For The Bulletin's Regulation Report

Jayne Willetts Solicitor Advocate is hanging up her pen and retiring as the author of Regulation Report, the column that she has written for the last 20 years.

She has produced 170 columns in total and never missed a copy date. Her first column was published in 2005 and she has retained copies of each article published in the Birmingham Law Society Bulletin.

Jayne is recognised nationally for her work on compliance and regulation in the legal services sector and is ranked in Band 1 Uk-wide in the Chambers & Partners Directory. Her qualification as a solicitor advocate in 1994 was the first by a woman solicitor for civil cases. In 2000, she was elected President of Birmingham Law Society and was the first woman to be appointed to that office since the Society was incorporated in 1818. She was also the first female Chairman of the Law Society Young Solicitors' Group in 1990. Jayne also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Birmingham Law Society in 2022.

Jayne said: "When I started writing the column, the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors was in charge of regulating the profession. The SRA had not been invented. It was pre Legal Services Board, pre Legal Ombudsman; pre Alternative Business Structures; pre MLR 2007; pre sanctions checks; pre COLPs & COFAs; and pre Transparency Rules as well as many other regulatory challenges that firms now have to face. How times have changed. The effect of all this regulation said to be in the public interest is that the cost of regulation for firms has gone through the roof and regrettably this additional cost has to be passed on to the clients."

The first column in 2014 was concerned with the thorny topic of Costs Estimates and began with the following paragraph:

"Costs Estimates
Providing a costs estimate at the outset of a case is a notoriously difficult exercise. It does not get any easier whether you have been qualified 20 years or 20 months – as human behaviour is impossible to predict. Standard transactions such as residential conveyancing are a little more manageable but a one off unusual corporate transaction requiring a fixed fee estimate needs the assistance of a fortune teller rather than a solicitor."

Complaints handling and Accounts Rules compliance have been recurring themes over the last 20 years. Jayne's columns have not only included the new regulatory developments but also expert commentary on those developments and practical tips and guidance – all straight to the point expressed with humour and empathy with the profession.

In 2013, Jayne launched the annual Top Ten Regulatory Topics for the following year so that the profession could prepare for forthcoming changes in an effort to remain complaint. The Top Ten column has been very well received whereas a Professional Regulation Christmas Quiz in 2010 with a bottle of champagne for the winner was not so popular – with only one entrant.

Also, stepping back from her involvement with Regulation Report is Bronwen Still who is a Solicitor Consultant to Jayne's practice. A former Head of Ethics at the SRA and an expert on SRA authorisations and other regulatory issues Bronwen's assistance with the column has been invaluable.

Thanks are also due to Matthew Moore, Director of Infolegal Limited and expert on AML regulation for his enthusiastic support with the column, especially when inspiration for monthly topics began to flag.

Replacing Jayne will be Rebecca Atkinson, a solicitor and a nationally known expert in risk and compliance. Rebecca is former General Counsel at

London firm, Howard Kennedy LLP and is well known for her training courses, webinars, and books.

Jayne said: " It has been a privilege to write for the Bulletin updating members on current topics and likely pitfalls. It has to be said that my commentary has become more critical of our regulator in recent years as the SRA has become more interventionist; more distanced from the profession and more reliant on the views of politicians and the media as opposed to the views of those who actually practice law and serve clients."

On client service, Jayne's Compliance Top Ten for 2014 included the following which is as true today as it was 10 years ago:

"Top tip for 2014 – continue to focus on excellent client service – the very best riposte to the regulatory challenges faced by all types of law firms".
Jayne will continue in practice with her specialist professional regulation law firm Jayne Willetts & Co Solicitors Limited and also continue as Chair of the Birmingham Law Society Professional Regulation Committee.

On behalf of Birmingham Law Society, we thank Jayne for her 20 years of sterling service and welcome Rebecca to the fold.