



## JUSTICE Press Release

### JUSTICE publishes '*Law for Lawmakers*' – a new guide to the law for MPs

JUSTICE has long worked on a cross-party basis to build a bridge between Westminster and the legal community. In that spirit, we today publish *Law for Lawmakers*, a short introduction to some key legal and constitutional principles confronted by MPs, Peers and their staff in their work. This guide is designed to provide basic information and signposts to sources of legal advice and support.

Whilst the legal profession is well-represented in politics it has never dominated the House of Commons. For example, of Parliament's 650 current MPs, only 88 practise law in England and Wales.

This is no bad thing. A Parliament full of lawyers would not only be deprived of the wider experience of our community, but could also be deeply dull.

As the makers of our laws, as our representatives, and in holding the Government to account, MPs and Peers wear many hats. Each of these roles requires MPs to grapple with the law every day. However, for over three-quarters of all first-time MPs this may be a very new experience.

This Parliament is set to consider constitutional questions ranging from the scope of surveillance powers for the security services to the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union; from a new devolution settlement for the Union to the repeal of the Human Rights Act 1998. This guide doesn't set out to answer those questions, but it may help to inform discussion and debate.

#### **Lord Hope – former Deputy President of the Supreme Court – writes in his foreword:**

*"We all depend on the rule of law for the moral and ethical well-being of our country. Upholding the rule of law is not, however, just a matter for the judges. It is the responsibility of Parliamentarians too, as the laws which they make are underpinned and given primacy in our courts by the theory of the sovereignty of Parliament. The role that Parliament plays in upholding the rule of law itself is therefore crucial to its existence."*

#### **Andrea Coomber, Director of JUSTICE said:**

*"For decades, JUSTICE has worked closely with politicians from all parties, focusing on access to justice and the rule of law."*

*"This Parliament will tackle difficult constitutional problems from Brexit to EVEL (English votes for English laws). Beyond the acronyms, we thought the time was ripe to revisit the basics and to start a conversation about access to independent cross-party legal support at Westminster."*

This project has been kindly supported by Allen & Overy, the Law Society of England and Wales, the Bar Council and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives.

**Andrew Denny, Partner at Allen & Overy, said:**

*"We are aware that MPs and their staff have to grapple with important legal and constitutional issues on a daily basis and so this guide has been designed to support them in navigating this potentially challenging landscape. Lawyers from across our Human Rights Working Group and UK Public Law Team came together to work on this project and so we are thrilled to see it come to life today in the JUSTICE guide."*

**Vicky Purtill, Head of Qualifications, Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, said:**

*"This helpful guide will be invaluable in assisting Parliamentarians in identifying the potential implications of the legislative decisions they make. We are very proud to have been involved, and offered our expertise in legal education and training."*

Notes for editors:

1. *Law for Lawmakers: A JUSTICE guide to the law* was published on 7 July 2015. It was launched at the House of Commons at a reception hosted by the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP and Emily Thornberry MP.
2. A copy can be provided on request, or downloaded from [www.justice.org.uk](http://www.justice.org.uk) from 8 July 2015.
3. To request a pdf or hard copy, contact [apatrick@justice.org.uk](mailto:apatrick@justice.org.uk) or 020 7762 6415.