



January 2024

Dear Colleague

What a dreadful winter we have been having. I really would prefer snow to the continual rainfall. I've been looking back into our archive of topics looking for a little inspiration and found a folder of postcards. Not too long ago this letter would arrive by post, in a real envelope and with a stamp on it. We included a postcard; often amusing; but this one, featured below, is how I feel at present. You may find me presenting on Zoom from Fiji!

Notary Training is entering its fourteenth year of presenting '*quality cpe to you*'. Founded out of new regulations to ensure that notaries keep up to date with changes in law and practice, the three of us, Anne, Sanjay and myself saw an opportunity to bring the skills we had developed on the University of Cambridge course to the wider profession. We believe that we have delivered. We have many familiar faces joining us year in and year out. Your enthusiasm for your professional work and our courses keeps us engaged to return to deliver more and better courses. Thank you to all of you.

Anti-money laundering is a thorny issue. Most of us do not handle clients' money as notaries. However, the Faculty Office are requiring a minimum of one hours AML training per year. I can't blame the FO; they have their own regulator on AML to answer to! You will see that we have an element of AML in every course this year. They are different, covering different aspects of AML, reporting and sanctions. We appreciate that regurgitation the same points would be tedious. We aim not to be!

AML does remind us that we are gatekeepers. A deliberate hurdle placed into a process to ensure that signatures are genuine and the parties understand the intent of their actions. We aim to uphold the highest ideals. Later this year I will have been qualified as a solicitor for 40 years (*deep sigh*). It is with sadness that I listen to the sub-postmaster's plight over the Horizon scandal; and knowing that implicit in this injustice were some solicitors. I am proud to be a notary because we are educated to have a duty to, and we strive to be responsible to, all parties to a transaction, whether known to us or are total strangers on the other side of the world. Long may it remain so.

I fell ill with covid for the first time in December. I was reminded that the pandemic may be over but we are not going to revert back to the old ways of working and we are going to have to be flexible in the future in how we deliver our services. Personal attendance will always be the cornerstone of our services but there will be times when we have to adopt a different approach.

This raises two points I want to mention. First, a digital signature, which may or may not be applied in your presence. We have not yet had a course covering this topic. It is of interest to many but we have asked around the profession and it is not yet making an impact on most of our professional lives. So, we have delayed discussing this topic until next year.

Second, we have invited Tom Sharkey back to talk about diversity and inclusion. His first talk last year had a mixed reception. Values and how we approach people and topics are changing quite quickly. Due to a medical condition, I took part in a drugs trial for my covid. For a week I was swallowing bright pink anti-virals. The questionnaire for the trial had the question '*gender at birth*'. I looked and thought, how is that going to affect my professional life. What do we do should a document state one gender but the birth gender is different. How far do we go in investigating this and is a gender recognition certificate valid overseas? Interesting times.



Once again, we will be promoting events early in the year and encourage you all to obtain your CPE points in the Spring. We still have a few people seeking points at the end of October, often because they have had to cancel attending a course earlier in the year. So, book early. Our website booking page can be found here www.notarytraining.co.uk.

Finally, I, Anne and Sanjay wish you well and hope to see you again this year.

Simon P. Alliott

