



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 14 AUGUST 2020

Fixed fees

[Law Gazette](#) & [PoliticsHome](#) - The Lord Chancellor is to revoke a controversial fixed fee regime for immigration and asylum appeals work after one of the country's biggest legal aid firms commenced judicial review proceedings.

The Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020, which came into force in June, introduced a £627 fixed fee.

Amanda Pinto QC, chair of the Bar Council, said the Ministry of Justice had made a 'commonsense decision'. She added that the lord chancellor's willingness to listen to representative bodies and other organisations' concerns 'is a positive sign and shows what a collective and collaborative effort can achieve'.

Sentencing

[The Times](#) – Reduced jail sentences for early guilty pleas could be abolished, setting justice ministers at odds with senior lawyers.

Robert Buckland, QC, the justice secretary, is understood to have had discussions about ending the system of offering sentence discounts to defendants who plead guilty before a full trial.

Amanda Pinto QC, the chair of the Bar Council, which represents 16,500 lawyers in England and Wales, said: "A significant discount for an early guilty plea has enormous benefits for the whole criminal justice system."

Bar exams

[Legal Futures](#) (x2) & [Roll On Friday](#) - Barristers have offered to support the dozens of Bar students who have so far reported major problems with taking their exams, including having to urinate into bottles and buckets in front of their computers.

Bar Council chair Amanda Pinto QC added to the pressure on the regulator with a letter pointing out that its education and training committee wrote in early July to

express concerns and to request that the BSB consider a short comfort break during the lengthy exams.

“It is disappointing that this was not progressed. The Bar Council also cannot understand why students in test centres are not permitted water on their desks, especially bearing in mind the hot weather.”

Chambers

[Law Gazette](#) & [Legal Futures](#) - One in 10 chambers has given partial notice on its lease in a bid to relieve financial pressure, according to a survey which backs up the Bar Council's prediction of a profession-wide move to flexible working.

Carolyn Entwistle, head of services at the Bar Council and chair of the Covid-19 working group, said chambers have seen ‘very little increase’ in the number of members returning to the office and ‘some sets may never return to their previous model’.

Writing on the Bar Council’s website, Entwistle said: 'A reduction in the space available to chambers’ members and staff heralds the beginnings of change, with those same sets presumably planning to maximise on the reductions to their square footage and introduce "work smart" policies which offer greater opportunity for flexible working.'

BAR COUNCIL TWEETS <https://twitter.com/thebarcouncil>





The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Aug 12

Scrapping immigration and asylum appeals fixed fee regime is a "common-sense decision", says Chair of the Bar, a Amanda Pinto QC



Immigration appeal fees U-turn a "common-sense" decision
barcouncil.org.uk



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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Aug 12

We are monitoring the issues that faced students sitting their centralised BPTC assessments yesterday. We have been liaising with the BSB to raise issues on behalf of specific students over the last few weeks and will continue to do so.



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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Aug 12

LATEST: Cambridge Crown Court, Manchester Civil Justice Centre (Civil and Family Courts) & Swansea Civil Justice Centre all now using the ID cards scheme. @HMCTSgovuk



The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Jul 31

UPDATE: Plymouth Combined Court, Lincoln Magistrates and Lincoln County (using Lincoln Magistrates' entrance) are the latest courts now also operating the ID cards scheme. [twitter.com/thebarcouncil/...](https://twitter.com/thebarcouncil/)



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Pinned Tweet



The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · 18h

Chair of the Bar Council, Amanda Pinto QC, has written directly to @barstandards today, seeking answers on problems faced by students & on what's being done to ensure those who encountered difficulties during exams are treated fairly.

Read her message:



Chair of the Bar Council steps in over BSB exams issues
barcouncil.org.uk



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