



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

### 'I am the Bar' social mobility campaign

[New Law Journal](#), [Politics Home](#), [Shropshire Star](#) – The media reports that 10 more barristers have signed up to support the Bar Council's #IAmTheBar campaign as social mobility advocates.

All the advocates attended state schools and non-Oxbridge universities, and have faced a range of challenges on their journey to the Bar. They aim to use the stories of their own careers to dispel the belief that a background of privilege is required for the Bar. Their stories will be shared on Twitter this week.

The Bar Council has also launched a Leadership Programme, offering 36 barristers with between seven and 15 years of practice opportunities to network and gain skills in leadership.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, said: "Contrary to popular belief, members of the Bar come from all walks of life. By sharing their own experiences, the impressive #IAmTheBar social mobility advocates show what can be achieved, no matter what your background. The Leadership Programme provides a practical way for barristers who don't currently see themselves reflected in leadership positions to change that in future."

### Judicial diversity

**PA Media, Yahoo News, MSN, Shropshire Star, Surrey Comet, Express and Star, Herald Scotland, Stourbridge News, New Law Journal, Bristol Post, Stoke Sentinel, Belfast Telegraph, The Northern Echo, Dudley News, ThisIsLocalLondon, Halesowen News, News Shopper, ThisIsMoney, Oxford Mail, Milford Mercury, Somerset County Gazette, News and Star, Bridport News, Evening Telegraph, Alloa Advertiser, ThisIsWestCountry, ThisIsOxfordshire, Daily Echo, Richmond & Twickenham Times + 190 other media outlets** – There is widespread media coverage of the news that people from black, Asian and minority

ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are less likely to be successful when applying to become a judge, and only 9% are senior barristers, official figures show.

A Ministry of Justice (MoJ) report said BAME people are “over-represented in applications for judicial appointment” but are “less likely to be successful”. Women also remain under-represented in the judiciary, particularly in courts, according to the findings.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, is quoted across all media channels. She said the industry must “have a far better reflection of society” so members of the public can be confident in the legal representation they receive.

She added: “I feel extremely strongly that the Bar must diversify. We must reflect the society that we serve.

“We aren’t a niche, out-of-touch profession, we’ve got to be a profession that is open to anybody that is good enough and has the desire, and frankly the staying power, to make a career.

“Without diversifying, the industry is missing out on a “huge amount of talent”, she warned, adding: I absolutely believe that we’ve got to change the types of people that come in, that’s not just privileged people, they’ve got to be people from all sorts of walks of life with all sorts of backgrounds.”

### **Bar Council AGM**

**The Observer (front page), [Daily Mail](#), [Sky News](#) x 2, The Guardian (print and [online](#)) x 2, The Times, [The Independent](#) (print and online), Yahoo News, MSN, Belfast Telegraph, Business Telegraph, Business Fast, Capital FM, Manx Radio, Love Sport Radio, The News** - The media reports that the Attorney General was questioned by barristers at the weekend’s Bar Council meeting and AGM over their concerns about the government’s intention to break international law with its Internal Market Bill.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, discussed the issue on Sky News and was quoted in other media. She says: “It should not need to be said that this country is built on, and subject to, the rule of law.

“Undermining this vital principle will fatally puncture people’s faith in our justice system, both at home and internationally. Someone committing a crime in a ‘specific and limited way’ nonetheless commits a crime and an admitted breach of international law in a ‘specific and limited way’ is nonetheless a breach.”

## Lord Chancellor

[The Guardian](#) – The Guardian reports that the Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland, is facing calls to resign over government plans to override international law after another senior law officer, Lord Keen, quit rather than continue to support the policy.

Downing Street confirmed Keen's departure as advocate general for Scotland. In his resignation letter, he said he "found it increasingly difficult to reconcile what I consider to be my obligations as a law officer with your policy intentions".

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, said: "No government should put before parliament a bill that deliberately encourages the legislature to breach international law. This is especially so where neither the circumstances nor the signatories have changed from when the government originally signed the treaty a few months ago.

"The role of each law officer is to uphold and defend the rule of law, even when it is unpopular with the government."

## Sentencing

**Sky News, [The Guardian](#) (print and online), New Law Journal** – Media coverage of the Government's new sentencing plans appear in the media. Many of the proposals include tougher sentences for certain offences.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, appeared on Sky News and in other media. She said the move was "not the answer to restoring the public's trust in the justice system".

"If the government truly is the party of law and order, it must invest in the whole criminal justice system. Not just picking parts and ignoring others," she said. "Simply investing in the beginning (police numbers) and the end (longer sentences) of criminal justice will not address the problem.

She said significant cuts to the justice budget over the years caused a large backlog of cases, long before Covid-19. "As a result, witnesses, victims and defendants now have to wait years before their case gets to court. What message does that give the British public? Investment in the entire system, including the court process, is now critical."

## Pupillages

[Legal Futures](#) - Commercial set, Keating Chambers has put up £20,000 to fund a pupillage that a criminal set has had to withdraw because of the impact of Covid-19. The move has been hailed by the Bar Council and barristers as emblematic of the spirit of the Bar while pointing out that it would not have been necessary had the government provided proper support during the pandemic.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, said: "Keating Chambers' outstandingly generous offer to fund a pupillage is the mark of a truly unified and supportive profession where those in more robust practice areas are prepared to support the future of another part of the Bar which is struggling to survive, let alone expand. What an example of solidarity.

"The wider private Bar cannot always be expected to bail out a vital public service that should be properly funded by government."

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



Pinned Tweet



**The Bar Council**  @thebarcouncil · Sep 14

Covid-19 has brought challenges & threatened the future of social mobility at the Bar. It's crucial to raise visibility & provide support.

This week we reveal 10 new Social Mobility Advocates joining our [#IAmTheBar](#) campaign, & launch our Leadership Programme.

Watch this space.



The Inner Temple and 8 others

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