



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 19 JUNE 2020

### Jury trials

[The Independent](#), [The Guardian](#) - The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett, has backed the restriction of the right to trial by jury to avoid an “uncontainable” backlog of cases building up during the coronavirus pandemic.

Lord Burnett said a judge and two magistrates could decide guilt or innocence instead of jurors in “either-way” cases.

The Bar Council, which represents barristers, said juries were “an essential part of the criminal justice system”.

**Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC**, is quoted. She said: “The need to address the backlog of cases built up over years must not be allowed to override the need for victims of crime and those accused of crime to see and feel that justice is being done in all cases, serious cases included.

“A panel of three is not the same as a jury of randomly-selected men and women from different backgrounds and of different ages, who bring their collective life experience to bear when evaluating the evidence.”

### Diversity

[The Times](#) – Times Law focuses on diversity in the legal profession, pointing to low representation of BAME lawyers across the whole sector, particularly Black lawyers.

Looking at the Bar, The Times reports that: “Among the 17,300 practising barristers and pupils in England and Wales, 512 are black, but only 20 are Queen’s Counsel. The Bar Council has never had a black leader and only two sets with ten or more barristers have black heads of chambers.

**“Elaine Banton, co-chair of the Bar Council’s Equality and Diversity Committee,** warns that because there is a concentration of black barristers doing publicly funded work, cuts to legal aid are likely to cause numbers to fall.

“The small number of black lawyers in the senior echelons of the legal professions means that black people are poorly represented among the judiciary. Only 1.1 per cent of court judges in England and Wales are black. There are no black people in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal or on the full-time High Court bench, although there are three black deputy High Court judges.”

Elsewhere in The Times, [Leslie Thomas, QC](#), the former joint head of chambers at Garden Court Chambers and first black Gresham College professor of law, says the first step is to acknowledge the problem — something the profession has belatedly done.

He says the Bar is “not particularly welcoming to black people.... I’d like it recognised that in the legal profession and in our society we have a problem. If you can’t see there’s a problem you’re part of it.”

## UK legal sector

[The Global Legal Post](#) – The Global Legal Post reports that there has been relatively good news for the UK legal sector when the Office for National Statistics reported that revenue in April only fell by 4.7% in comparison to March.

That compared to a contraction of more than 20% for the economy as a whole as the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic bit deep.

When compared to the previous year, the £3.3bn of legal services revenue recorded in April was down a little more (5.5%).

However, legal leaders, were cautious about the optimistic outlook.

**Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar** said that while revenues looked strong overall, her side of the profession faced very different challenges.

She said Bar Council surveys suggested “53% of barristers cannot survive six months and 74% cannot survive a year because of the financial impact of Covid-19 on their practices”, noting the particular impact of a decline in publicly funded work on junior barristers.

## Treasury

[Politics Home](#), [Legal Futures](#) – Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar Council, has commented on the recent Treasury Committee report 'Economic Impact of Coronavirus: Gaps in Support'.

She said: “This report mirrors the experience of thousands of barristers across England and Wales. Too many people are locked out of government support measures. We have been making this point repeatedly for months now, publicly, directly to government ministers and officials and, in the last couple of weeks, by hundreds of letters flooding into constituency MPs’ inboxes from barristers who are struggling to stay afloat as their work has disappeared.

“One of the Bar Council’s recommendations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer is aimed at the same, particularly vulnerable people whom the Treasury Committee report identified - those newly self-employed who, through no fault of their own, don’t have a 2018-19 tax return.”

## Pride

[New Law Journal](#), [Legal Cheek](#) – The legal media reports that the Bar Council, The Law Society and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) will celebrate Pride events virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a ‘Home and Away’ theme.

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**Professor Leslie Thomas QC**

@\_lesliethomas



"I'd like it recognised that in the legal profession and in our society we have a problem. If you can't see there's a problem you're part of it." Fair comment?

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Leslie Thomas, QC: 'If you can't see there's a problem, you're part of it'  
Leslie Thomas, QC — until this year the joint head of London's Garden Court Chambers — is the first black person to become a professor of law at Gresham ...  
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