



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 3 JULY 2020

Jury trials

[The Daily Telegraph](#) (print page 2 and online) - The Government is set to ditch proposals to abandon juries in some trials to reduce the backlog of cases after an outcry from the legal profession and Tory MPs, The Telegraph understands. Lord Burnett, the Lord Chief Justice, first raised the idea of replacing juries with a judge and two magistrates in “either way” crown court trials, where they are on the borderline to be heard by magistrates.

It was one of four measures to tackle the “unprecedented” challenge of maintaining social distancing in court rooms to combat coronavirus and reducing a backlog of crown court cases that has grown from 37,500 to more than 40,000 during the pandemic.

However, a Government source said the move, which would have required new legislation, was now “highly unlikely” [following criticism](#) from the Bar Council, Criminal Bar Association, Law Society, some Conservative MPs and Labour.

Amanda Pinto, chair of the Bar Council, warned it would “undermine the credibility of justice offered by our time-tested jury system” based on the historic right to be tried by “members of the public with a collective wealth of life experience.”

Survey results

[Law Gazette](#) (x2), [Legal Futures](#) (x2), [New Law Journal](#), PA News Wire - A survey of 157 barristers' chambers by the Bar Council found the majority (75%) found their court work had been cut by half since the pandemic because hearings were suspended, adjourned or were not hearing cases remotely. Nearly all of those who took part (99%) had seen a “considerable reduction in work”.

Even with the support of Government measures, a quarter of chambers feared they will not survive more than three to six months and just over half warned they will not last up to 12 months.

The Bar Council has been lobbying hard for the government to change the way the Covid-19 support schemes work so that barristers can benefit, for example raising the threshold of self-employed relief, allowing greater flexibility in the evidence to demonstrate that a barrister is eligible for the self-employed scheme, and including the Bar in the exemption from business rates.

However, to date these have fallen on deaf ears. Chair Amanda Pinto QC said: "Like many others who are self-employed, a lot of barristers do not qualify for government support. Add to that the drastic decline in court work and it is no surprise that so many are expecting the worst.

"The government must act now to ensure that the 86% of criminal barristers' chambers predicting their own demise, can survive to help tackle the growing backlog in our criminal justice system.

"Unless the Lord Chancellor and the Treasury act now to allow more of the self-employed to access government support, who will be there to represent victims and defendants whose cases the government slung in the 'backlog corner' long before Covid-19? The government cannot turn a blind eye any longer."

Investment in courts

[PoliticsHome](#) - Responding to the announcement that the Ministry of Justice will invest millions in the courts system, Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar Council, said:

"Today's announcement of a major investment in our courts is a positive step following years of cuts, in which the courts have been neglected for too long, hindering the delivery of justice as a consequence. The improvements in technology and the court estate that this crucial funding will go towards are particularly welcome as they should help our justice system operate more efficiently at a time when it needs it the most.

"We hope this is a sign that the government is committed to restoring law and order and investing across the whole justice system, because, although this money will help, on its own it cannot undo years of neglect. A commitment to sustained investment is vital if we are to regain public confidence in it."

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



The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · 1h

Chair of the Bar's update: Attending court in person, saying no to extended hours, don't tamper with jury trials, 'Space workers' vs. barristers, QASA through the back door? + more: r1.dmtrk.net/4CGD-V9N9-32/s...



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The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · 18h

Calling all barristers who have been severely impacted by Covid19. We want to hear about your personal experiences - how have you managed to (or not) get through these unprecedented times without further financial support? Please email us your story to campaigns@barcouncil.org.uk.

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The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · Jun 30

We have been and will again [@MaxJLHardy](#)

 **Maximilian Hardy** @MaxJLHardy · Jun 30

Please, please, please @cba @thebarcouncil @secir make urgent representations to the senior judiciary about unnecessary attendance of counsel in person at court. Leicester is back in lockdown because the virus is still in circulation and a second wave generally expected.

[Show this thread](#)

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The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · Jul 1

Lord Keen was asked what assessment the Govt has made of Bar Council research showing that without further support many self-employed barristers will be unable to continue to practice. Here's his answer:

parliament.uk/business/publi...

In other words, no assessment. You're on your own

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The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · Jun 27

A message from Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, on why it's important to mark #LegalPride #LegalPride2020 #GlobalPride2020 #Pride #PrideMonth #PRIDE2020



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