



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 29 OCTOBER 2021

Budget

The Daily Telegraph (p7), The Guardian, [Law Society Gazette](#), Politics Home, [Legal Futures](#), [New Law Journal](#), MSN News, Scottish Legal News, Irish Legal News, Police Professional, Business Fast – The Daily Telegraph and other media outlets report on the Bar Council's reaction to the Budget statement, which saw extra funds for the Ministry of Justice and for tackling the backlog in the courts.

Derek Sweeting QC, Chair of the Bar, is quoted in media reports. He said: "The announcement by the Chancellor today is a step in the right direction but there will still be a shortfall of funding to tackle the justice crisis, restore public confidence and reduce the backlogs in our courts and tribunals. Moving forward the Bar Council will be engaging with the profession, courts service and Ministry of Justice to rebuild our justice system."

Criminal justice funding

[BBC News](#), Financial Times, [Daily Mirror](#), [Daily Mail](#), PA Media, Oxford Mail, Shropshire Star, Barry and District News, The Argus (Brighton), Today UK News, Richmond & Twickenham Times, Times & Star, Denbighshire Free Press, Rhyl Journal, St Albans Review, Falmouth Packet, Epping Forest Guardian, Penarth Times, Halstead Comet, Ikley Gazette, Dorset Echo, Telegraph & Argus, Worcester News, Police Professional, Barrhead News, This is Money, Express & Star, Witney Gazette, Redditch Advertiser, Enfield Independent, Halesowen News, Chorley Citizen, Evening Express, Press & Journal + 130 other media outlets – The BBC, national and local media report that the backlog of cases waiting to be dealt with by criminal courts will "remain a problem for many years", severely affecting victims, Whitehall's spending watchdog has warned.

The number of cases waiting to be heard in crown courts in England and Wales could be between 17% and 27% higher than pre-pandemic levels by November 2024, according to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) estimates highlighted by the National Audit Office (NAO).

By the end of June, official figures indicated there were record highs of nearly 61,000 outstanding crown court cases and more than 364,000 in magistrates' courts.

The media report on the Bar Council's reaction to the report. **Derek Sweeting QC, Chair of the Bar**, is quoted. He said the findings showed the criminal justice system "is at breaking point", adding: "Ahead of next week's spending review, the Bar Council is calling for spending to be increased by an extra 22p per person to tackle the enormous backlog and allow the Government to meet its bold ambitions around law and order whilst supporting victims of crime and reducing delays."

Social mobility - #IAmTheBar

[LawCareers.net](#) – The media continues to report on the new Bar Council Social Mobility Advocates, who have joined Bar Council's social mobility campaign #IAmTheBar.

The Advocates aim to inspire a new generation of barristers from a wide variety of social backgrounds by sharing their experiences of becoming barristers.

Bar Course Aptitude Test

[Legal Cheek](#) – Legal Cheek reports that the Bar Council is not in favour of scrapping the BCAT, which came into force in 2013 with the aim of filtering out weaker candidates, who have little chance of securing pupillage, wasting their money on the pricey bar course.

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) had launched a consultation into the exam's future after a report found that just 89 out of the 12,663 candidates who attempted the exam between 2013 and 2019 had failed to make the grade – or 0.7%.

Legal Cheek reports that Nick Vineall QC, Chair of the Bar Council's Education and Training Committee, said: "We do not support the idea of scrapping the BCAT. There are many students chasing a small number of pupillages and as a result many students pay for the vocational stage but never get a pupillage. The BSB's own data shows a good correlation between BCAT score and attainment on the vocational course, and we know that those who do not achieve high grades on the vocational course find it difficult to secure pupillage."

But Vineall did accept some changes may be required in order to make the exam a more effective filter. "The problem seems to us to be that the pass mark is set so low that the BCAT does not exclude many candidates," he said. "That is not a problem with the BCAT, it is a problem with the level of the pass mark."

BAR COUNCIL TWEETS



The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · Oct 26

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Read our new speakers and panellists profiles page to find out who's who at this year's Annual Bar and Young Bar Conference. bit.ly/3CjKGFg



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