



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – THURSDAY 9 APRIL 2020

Covid-19 & the Young Bar

New Law Journal – Chair of the Bar, **Amanda Pinto QC**, writes a piece on how the Bar has been working in the interests of all barristers including junior barristers and pupils during the COVID-19 crisis.

Amanda Pinto QC addresses the different measures the Bar has pushed for in a short amount of time and the support which is available for all members of the Bar, including the Young Bar.

She writes: “We know the government measures secured so far are not enough for many practitioners, especially for pupils, the junior bar, those returning to practice after a break or moving over into the profession from employment. It is neither right nor fair that the most vulnerable and newest members of our profession are ineligible for the scheme. We know the measures do not support many hard-working barristers. We are pressing hard for more.

“We are well aware of the particularly vulnerable position pupils find themselves in, even in ordinary times. In this crisis, they are more at risk, in terms of going to crowded court hearings in person, security in chambers and financially. The Bar Council, with our Young Barristers’ Committee (YBC), have their interests at heart. Practically, we offer online training and advice on remote completion of pupillage. I know at least one Circuit has ensured that every existing pupil’s contract will be honoured. I applaud them, hoping that becomes a cross-Circuit strategy.”

Financial issues and government support for the Bar

Financial Times, The Times (print and online), Legal Futures, New Law Journal, LawCareers.Net (x2), Law Gazette – Further media report on how many chambers won’t survive Covid-19 without further government support.

The results of a Bar Council survey of heads of chambers painted a bleak future for the Bar if the current conditions persist. The Bar Council has been urging the government to introduce further targeted financial support to ensure the sustainability of the Bar, in light of the coronavirus crisis. Despite the recent announcement by the Chancellor of Exchequer of measures for the self-employed, many barristers will not be eligible for existing government support.

Amanda Pinto QC, chair of the Bar Council, has also described existing measures as having “little impact” on many barristers whose livelihood depends on conducting criminal trials.

Justice committee

PA Media – Campaigners have hit out at plans by MPs to grill Robert Buckland behind closed doors on how the justice system is coping during the coronavirus outbreak.

The decision to hold Tuesday’s Commons Justice Select Committee hearing in private was branded ‘suspect’ and promoted calls to reverse the decision amid concerns decisions by ministers could be escaping public scrutiny.

Amanda Pinto QC, chair of the Bar Council, said: “We question why this Justice Committee evidence session is being held in private when the technology to access it online is clearly available. We know that other select committees are broadcasting their evidence sessions live this week. It is crucial that evidence like this is freely and easily accessible to all at this significant point.”

Education & training

The Guardian, Yahoo News – Law graduates training to become barristers have called on regulators to cancel face-to-face exams, which have been delayed until August, and to swiftly move assessments online instead.

The Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) is one of the last remaining courses where students must still sit exams in person, as regulators insist they are needed to uphold the “high standards and integrity” of the degree.

[..], the **Bar Council** says it sees “no reason” why exams must be face-to-face in August and that it is “concerned” that this is “not the best solution”.

“It creates delay and uncertainty for students. It means students will be sitting exams long after their teaching has finished, and very close to the time when their pupillages would start. And it is unclear how resits can be accommodated,” Nicholas Vineall QC, Chair of the Bar Council’s education and training committee, says.

“It ought to be possible to arrange for these exams to be taken online.”

COVID-19 and courts

The News (Portsmouth) - The national crisis has led to the government advising people - including those with symptoms of Covid-19 or who are in the high risk category - of the circumstances where they do not have to attend court.

Despite the pandemic opening up a potential loophole for non-attendance from defendants, the Bar Council insists ‘all court users are working constructively’.

Chair of the Bar, **Amanda Pinto QC**, said: “This is not something we have come across as an issue (defendants using coronavirus as an excuse not to attend court). In the current public health crisis, the safety of all court users is paramount and where it is possible and appropriate to do so, hearings should be conducted remotely.”

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



The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · 13h

Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC, on COVID-19 & the young Bar
[@NewLawJournal newlawjournal.co.uk/content/covid-...](https://www.newlawjournal.co.uk/content/covid-19)



  13  13  



The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · 18h

Barristers & chambers: Keep up to date with the latest Covid-19 related developments for your practice, plus more, via BarTalk.

Latest edition available now r1.dmtrk.net/4CGD-T9F8-32/s...

Subscribe free: Email BarTalk@BarCouncil.org.uk



↻ 10

♥ 5





The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · Apr 8

Financial relief for #legalaid barristers confirmed by @LegalAidAgency: Hearings that are dealt with by email/phone or video will attract payment by the LAA as if they were in person.

More information @ [gov.uk/guidance/finan...](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-relief-for-legal-aid-barristers)



 1

 33

 31

