



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2020

Backlogs

Evening Standard (front page) [& online](#), PA Media, Mid Wales Journal, Newport Advertiser, Bridgnorth Journal, South Shropshire Journal, Market Drayton Advertiser, Sunderland Echo, Hampshire Chronicle, Basingstoke Gazette, [Politics Home](#), MSN – Evening Standard reports that the Bar Council and barristers have warned that victims of crime could “lose faith in our justice system” when faced with years of delays and a backlog of court cases set to reach 50,000 before Christmas.

The Government is under mounting pressure to invest heavily in the justice system as trial dates are set for 2022 and courts are restricted on the number of trials able to be held in the pandemic. Boris Johnson faced ridicule last week after he blamed court delays on “Leftie lawyers” and “do-gooders”, prompting a backlash that the system has been decimated by budget cuts and the sale of courthouses.

Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, is quoted. She said: “It would be no surprise if victims and the public were losing faith in our justice system.”

The Standard gives examples of long delays to cases, some for serious crimes.

Elsewhere, the Welsh local media reports on local concerns that a decision to move magistrates’ court cases out of Shropshire will force people to travel through areas that are the subject of coronavirus lockdown rules.

The articles look at the wider issues faced by the criminal justice system, quoting **Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**. She said the criminal justice system was “already in severe difficulty” before the pandemic. She added: “We’ve seen what lack of funding for law and order achieves - rising crime, low detection rates, long delays to cases with many collapsing before they get anywhere near a court, victims of crime denied justice, and all because government after government has failed to invest in justice.”

Other publications report on the latest backlog figures which show the backlog in the Crown Courts rising. **Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, said: “These latest figures make depressing reading for the British public, victims of crime and those involved in the justice system. The government must focus its energy on what is, or is not, happening in our courts; rather than blaming others it must take responsibility and do what is necessary to rescue the whole system now by injecting the significant investment it needs.”

Internal Market Bill

Financial Times (p2 and [online](#)) – The Financial Times reports that lawyers have said the Internal Market Bill is a challenge to rule of law and threat to Britain’s reputation.

In an article looking at the legal profession’s reaction to the Bill, the FT quoted **Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar**, as saying: “It is a very seriously held concern – I don’t know of a lawyer who isn’t worried about it. The biggest worry is if the government is prepared to break international law it will undermine the reputation of our country on a number of levels – one of which is its negotiating position in the world with other trading partners, if it cannot be trusted to comply with the terms of a contract.”

Prime Minister and Home Secretary

The Observer (front page and online), The Independent (print and [online](#)), The Times, The Guardian, The i Paper, LBC Radio, [New Law Journal](#), East Anglian Daily Times, Law Society Gazette, The Barrister, Inside Time, Politics Home, MSN, Yahoo News, Irish News, Legal Technology Insider – The Observer and other media outlets report on the Bar Council’s reaction to news of a violent knife attack at a law firm in September following inflammatory statements made by the Home Secretary about lawyers.

Subsequently, both the Prime Minister and Home Secretary continued to criticise lawyers in their respective party conference speeches.

The escalating rhetoric prompted **Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC** to write to the PM to demand an apology.

Pinto said: “There should never be a situation when a British Prime Minister, Home Secretary and other government ministers need to be called upon to stop deliberately inflammatory language towards a profession simply doing its job in the public interest.

“Shockingly, we've arrived at that point. Even if it was never the intention of this government to incite violence against members of the legal profession, the fact the personal safety of lawyers is now at risk demands an immediate retraction of the ill-judged comments made in recent weeks by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, as well as a public apology.”

I am the Bar

[LawCareers.net](#) – LawCareers.net reports that 10 new barristers from across England and Wales joined #IAMTheBar – the Bar Council’s award-winning social mobility campaign, which is now in its third year – as social mobility advocates.

Despite the advocates’ unconventional journeys to the Bar and the additional challenges that covid-19 has presented, their passion and commitment to the profession aims to inspire other aspiring barristers and improve awareness of the opportunities and challenges for those from underprivileged backgrounds contemplating a career at the Bar.

Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar said: “Contrary to popular belief, members of the Bar come from all walks of life. In this way we better represent the society we serve which is crucial to keeping public confidence in our justice system. We want that inclusiveness to be a reality from top to bottom in the profession. Regrettably many barristers from different backgrounds have found themselves adversely affected by covid-19 and without any government support. The Bar Council is leading the charge and bringing together work across the profession to shape the Bar of the future.

“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. That is not just great for the individuals and the profession, but for the public too.”

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

Law Society Gazette, [New Law Journal](#), [Legal Futures](#), [Legal Cheek](#) – The legal media reports that bullying and harassment is still ‘endemic’ in some areas of the Bar, a report has found, as barristers demand new ways to report complaints.

A BSB [study by YouGov](#) found that harassment, bullying and discrimination is ‘widespread and in some place endemic at the bar’ and is perceived to be tolerated because of the profession’s ‘macho and competitive’ nature.

Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, is quoted. She said: “This report is a helpful reminder that everyone at the Bar needs to keep shining a light on bullying, discrimination and harassment.

“The BSB’s findings reflect our own experience of work on this behaviour which has long-term negative consequences for individuals and the profession as a whole.”

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



The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Oct 11

Chair of the Bar's letter to PM urging him to withdraw his anti-lawyer comments reported in @ObserverUK in front page article about shocking incident at law firm.



Lawyers claim knife attack at law firm was inspired by Priti Patel's rhetoric
London firm blames recent violent assault on home secretary's remarks that 'activist lawyers' were frustrating the removal of migrants
theguardian.com

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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Oct 13

Calling journalists: The 29th Bar Council Legal Reporting Awards is now open for entries.

More information and entry details:
barcouncil.org.uk/resource/who-w...



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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Oct 12

Barbara Mills QC, Co-Chair of our Race Working Group, will be doing a live Q&A on Race at the Bar & the work of the RWG, answering all questions.

Send us your questions via DM on Twitter/Instagram and join her next Monday 19th Oct at 2pm on our Instagram [instagram.com/thebarcouncil/](https://www.instagram.com/thebarcouncil/)

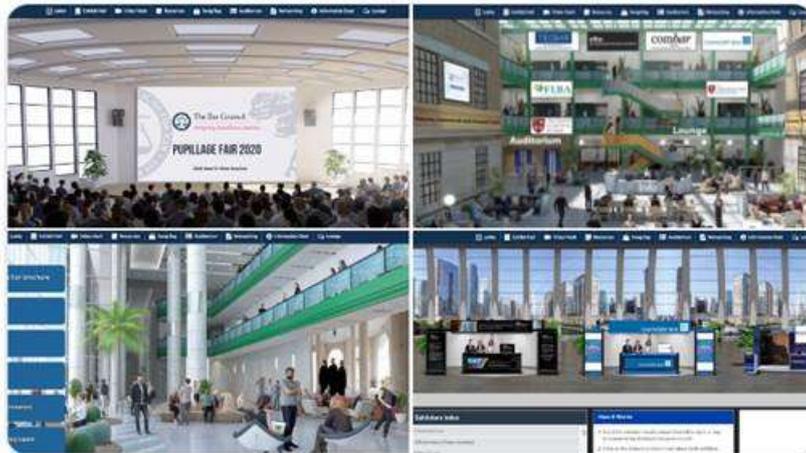
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The Bar Council @thebarcouncil · Oct 13

A sneak preview of what Saturday's virtual Bar Council Pupillage Fair will look like. #PupillageFair2020

Still time to register for free: barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-bar...



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