



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 20 MARCH 2020

Courts & COVID-19

[Evening Standard](#) (print and online), [LBC](#) (online), [CityAM](#) (print and online), [The Daily Telegraph](#) (print and online), [The Times](#) (print and online), [The Mirror](#) (online), Express & Star (print, p2), [MSN.com](#), [Thisismoney](#), [iNews](#), [Asian Image](#), [Law Gazette](#), [Legal Cheek](#), [Legal Futures](#), [Law360](#), [Yahoo News](#), [The National](#), [Gloucestershire Live](#), [Nottingham Post](#), [Portsmouth News](#), [Berkshire Live](#), [Leeds Live](#), Birmingham Mail (print), [MyLondon.News](#) + 30 more local media outlets

Further reports of Bar Council's regular statements and messages to the profession on how COVID-19 impacts the Bar.

The Bar Council, which represents around 17,000 barristers in England and Wales, has called for a 30-day suspension of all civil, family and criminal hearings where proceedings are conducted in person. However, it said the proposed suspension would not apply to the "very exceptional circumstances" where a video link or phone hearing is unable to take place.

Lord Burnett later said in a statement that "the operation of the courts has been under constant review" and that steps were being taken to continue most hearings as normal online, by phone or by video-link.

However, he added: "Given the risks of a trial not being able to complete, I have decided that no new trial should start in the Crown Court unless it is expected to last for three days or less. Trials currently underway will generally proceed in the hope that they can be completed."

The announcement came after pressure mounted on the Government to make clear its strategy for courts, amid growing concerns about the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on court business.

Chair, Amanda Pinto QC, said in her next message to the Bar: "Nor do we consider that short jury trials present less of a risk to the health of those involved than longer ones - quite the opposite."

The Bar Council said all proceedings conducted in person, and particularly jury trials, are inconsistent with the government's current health advice. However, it expressed concerns about the capacity of video links to meet increased demand if they are used more extensively for evidence.

Pinto said the Bar Council is pressing the government to include the bar in any financial support package and is exploring tax and rent breaks.

Meanwhile, lawyers are calling for them to be granted "key worker" status as schools shut down but courts are set to remain open. The Bar Council said its chairwoman, Amanda Pinto QC, has been in direct contact with Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC, calling for barristers to be classified as "key workers" in order to keep justice system running.

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

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 **The Bar Council**  @thebarcouncil · Mar 19

UPDATE FOR BARRISTERS: Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC, has been in direct contact with Lord Chancellor, calling for barristers to be classified as 'key workers' in order to keep justice system running when schools shutdown. Decision expected later today.

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 **The Bar Council**  @thebarcouncil · 17h

One of Britain's first female barristers says 'It's impossible for anyone to go to the Bar who hasn't got a rich daddy' @TimesLaw @legalhackette. These 21 barristers have very different stories to tell #iamTheBar

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The Bar Council  @thebarcouncil · 18h

#BarTalk is now out. Find out the latest on #COVID19 in today's edition, including a guest blog from @CEOofHMCTS and the latest financial support measures for the Bar:

r1.dmtrk.net/t/4CGD-SVSI-79...



HMCTS and Ministry of Justice



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