



## BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 24 APRIL 2020

### New crime statistics

[The Daily Telegraph](#) – Knife crime and robbery has hit a new high as the proportion of offences solved by police including rape and theft fell to a record low of just one in 16, official figures show. The number of knife-related offences rose by seven per cent to 45,627 in the year to December, the highest since records began in 2010/11.

**Amanda Pinto QC**, Chair of the Bar Council, said: “These appalling figures should be front and centre in the minds of all those with an interest in law and order. How much longer can we ignore where all the signs are pointing: that the public is less safe today than they were five years ago?”

“Charging rates for rape are particularly shocking, at 1.3 per cent of all allegations made and domestic burglary at only 3.4 per cent. We cannot sit back while charging rates, along with prosecution and crime detection rates, slip even further.

“The big picture is that the criminal justice system was in desperate need of help long before COVID-19 took over our attention, and the pandemic will only make it harder for justice to be delivered.”

### Key workers

[Evening Standard](#) – Barrister Michael Newport writes about the challenges the legal profession is facing during the coronavirus crisis. It is highlighted that barristers are key workers, yet they are facing financial risks and require further support from the government.

He notes: “**The Bar Council’s** recent survey of barrister’s chambers neatly sums up the position of the criminal bar: 67 per cent of criminal chambers cannot survive three to six months without financial aid and 90 per cent cannot survive 12 months without additional financial support. The situation could not be bleaker for a profession that is essential to upholding the rule of law and access to justice for the public.”

## Impact of remote hearings

**BBC Radio Wiltshire** – Chair of the Bar, Amanda Pinto QC speaks to BBC Radio Wiltshire about a case in Wiltshire that was adjourned due to technical difficulties, and the wider effect that social distancing is having on the justice system.

Amanda Pinto QC makes a plea to government at the end of the interview to “put investment in the system and put it in now, before the backlog gets any bigger.”

**PA Media** reports that jury trials are the "clearest example" of what will be difficult to get back to normal in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, according to the most senior judge in England and Wales.

Lord Chief Justice Lord Burnett said it is not "realistic" for a jury to be in a different place, and he expects a slow return to trials involving jurors. He told the PA news agency that this could involve trying some out in "very big courtrooms" and developing it from there, in line with government guidance.

**Amanda Pinto QC**, chair-of the Bar Council, said: "Many court users, claimants, defendants, lawyers, judges and witnesses, are adapting and using the available technology to access justice.

"It is not perfect but, in the interests of maintaining our justice system, and with so much at stake in doing so, it is essential that the Government and judiciary do not move to a culture of delaying hearings to some post-Covid-19 era, creating an ever greater backlog in the process.

"Justice should not be delayed unless absolutely necessary."

[New Law Journal](#) reports that Susan Acland-Hood, CEO of HM Courts and Tribunals (HMCTS), in a Bar Council blog, said she was proud of how the legal profession has united to keep the justice system running. Senior judges have made decisions to ensure the most urgent cases are prioritised while continuing less urgent work by other means, she noted, while HMCTS had increased the number of teleconferences it can run using BTMeetMe and videoconferences using Skype for Business.

## Judiciary working party

[Law Gazette](#) - The prospect of jury trials restarting has come closer with news that the judiciary has set up a working party to consider how they can be brought back as

soon as it is safe to do so. The news comes shortly after Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said he wanted jury trials back up and running as quickly as possible.

The Law Society, **Bar Council** and Criminal Bar Association have joined the working party, which will report to the Lord Chief Justice through its chair, Mr Justice Edis.

### Self-employed government support

**The Times** (print and [online](#)), [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 indicated that without financial help during the lockdown, 55 per cent of chambers would not survive six months. 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.

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



**The Bar Council**  @thebarcouncil · 20h  
Crisis could put diversity drive into reverse, says Bar Council



Crisis could reverse diversity efforts, says Bar Council  
Study shows that barristers from diverse backgrounds are worst affected by the pandemic.  
[lawgazette.co.uk](https://www.lawgazette.co.uk)

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**The Bar Council**  @thebarcouncil · Apr 22

UPDATE: Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, drafted in to join new judiciary working party which will consider ways of starting jury trials as soon as it is safe to do so. The working party will report to the Lord Chief Justice through its Chair, Edis J.



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