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**RE: THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CRIMINAL BAR OF ENGLAND AND WALES IS AT IMMEDIATE MORTAL RISK**

I write this short letter on behalf of the Criminal Bar of England and Wales with a request for your urgent attention. Please take the opportunity to watch the attached short video clip where 8 junior barristers set out what the future holds. The real future.

[Access the Video Clip Here.](#)

The Criminal Bar has been described as a “substantial National asset which the public has as much of a stake as the legal profession” Sir Bill Jeffrey, senior Permanent Secretary on the provision of criminal advocacy.

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE, SUSTAINABILITY AND THE LEGALLY AIDED BAR**

Covid-19 has caused a level of disruption unprecedented in recent history. Already fragile, the survival of the Criminal Bar as we know it, is now at stake. The sudden cessation of criminal trials has cut us off at the knees and the vulnerability of individual barristers is now compounded by the growing danger to the infrastructure in which we operate, namely Chambers. This is a national issue for barristers, practicing from Newcastle to Cardiff, to Bristol to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham and the remainder of the country. Put simply, as a profession we cannot work and there is no income.

We are a bespoke, niche, publicly funded market. A practice area, publicly funded, recognised as key workers. We are however suffering during these times. Due to the regulatory framework under which we operate many of the government financial packages are not accessible to us as individuals or chambers. We need to survive, and we need help.

Post Covid-19, barristers will be needed to operate in the criminal courts; there needs to be a pool of qualified individuals from which the great prosecutors and defenders can be drawn. Today’s fledgling barristers are tomorrow’s judges. The rule of law is central to our social fabric. A failure of our system will result in a failure of society. This is about access to justice. The sustainability of our profession and public confidence in our justice system, your justice system is vital for our democratic society.

We have been trying to make our case as to why we need help and what the fallout would be if we did not survive. I am not going to rehearse those arguments here. If you are so inclined there is a link below to a document drafted April 28th 2020, "The Monday Message". It sets out the devastating effects that Covid-19 and the recent financial cuts are having.

[Access the Document Here.](#)

Every single word is a fact. I challenge you after reading it to say, "well they are all right" and believe that to be the case.

But I am writing to correct the common misconception that the legally aided Bar is naturally cushioned by virtue of personal background and wealth. That is not the case. The Criminal Bar is the most diverse part of the profession, with great strides having been made in social mobility and diversity. This is under threat. **WATCH THE VIDEO** please.

Those junior barristers are speaking from direct personal experience, they are the future, they are the public servants and judiciary of tomorrow.

If nothing is done to help save our profession, then it will indeed become an elitist and socially narrow profession. Social mobility, equality and diversity will face serious and irreparable setbacks. Do not let the myth become the reality.

Please support the Criminal Bar and with it the justice system. As the late Sir Henry Brooke noted 'This is not about money for lawyers. It is the liberties of England that are at risk'.

Please act now because once it is gone, it will be gone forever.

Yours,

Caroline

Caroline Goodwin QC  
Chair of the Criminal Bar association

Sent by email to:

Suella Braverman MP
Michael Ellis QC MP
Robert Buckland MP
Robert Neill QC MP
Karen Buck MP
Lord Bach
Lord Falconer
Kier Starmer QC MP
David Lammy MP
Karl Turner MP
Alex Chalk MP
Anneliese Dodds
Lucy Frazer MP
Jelena Lentos
John Heavens
Fiona Rutherford
Priti Patel MP
Boris Johnson MP
Rishi Sunak MP
James Bowler