

MTYBA Members Message

Dear Members,

We understand that this is a very difficult and uncertain time for you for a number of reasons. From financial insecurity, to members who face uncertainty after applying for pupillages which are no longer being offered, as well as those who may feel under pressure to attend court and unable to refuse to do so because of their junior positions.

We would like to remind you that you should not feel alone as we are here to support you during what is a difficult time for our members and the junior Bar as a whole.

We note that the Bar has long had a 'soldier on' culture whereby members often turn up for court even where they may feel unwell in order to see that justice is done. At this time such a culture needs to be forgotten and those suffering with any of the symptoms as described by [Public Health England](#) should not attend Court and should self-isolate. Information about the situation in courts around England and Wales is being updated regularly by the [Bar Council](#).

We strongly believe that the current requirement for barristers to attend non-essential hearings in criminal cases such as mentions or 1st appearances where a client is on bail, and civil hearings which do not involve life changing emergencies, is unsustainable and irrational. Even when such urgent hearings need to take place, we hope that efforts are made for this to happen by video-conferencing or telephone. A sensible approach would also be to adjourn even short jury trials for a brief period.

We hope that this situation can be resolved sensibly by the Judiciary and Government.

As stated, our members may feel particularly vulnerable to pressure to continue working when they feel unwell or when they feel that it is unsafe to do so. This must not be the case and MTYBA stands ready to support you if you are suffering from this problem.

We fully appreciate the precarious financial position faced by many of our members, who are self-employed and do not have large savings, and given that there has been no proper support put in place for the self-employed so far. In order to mitigate this, we will be offering small hardship grants for those in the most need. To apply for a grant please email enquiries@mtyba.org with the subject Hardship Grant and a short explanation of the position in which you find yourself. All applications will be treated confidentially. We are also looking to develop a scheme working with the Hall Committee whereby our members can assist more senior members of the Inn with research and written work. Please also let us know if you have any other ideas, such as opportunities for our members, which could help during this difficult period.

A further problem faced by our members at this time is for those who have applied for pupillage and have to undertake stressful interviews by video call. Many members have spent a significant time applying for pupillage to find that these opportunities are no longer available given the difficult situation faced by many Chambers. We will be working with our Inn and other organisations to seek solutions to this.

For those who have just finished the first six months of pupillage we will hold our annual event, Surviving Second Six, which explains how to make the most of being on your feet in Court, online using Zoom video conferencing. Please save the time and date, 6.30pm on 26 March 2020 and a link will be sent out on Thursday for you to access this event.

We will also be looking at other ways, such as online socialising and networking to keep in touch until this situation has passed. More details will be released at the end of this week.

Please be reassured that when things get back to normal we intend to carry out our full range of planned activities and we look forward to seeing you all there.

In the meantime please do get in touch with us if you are suffering from any of the above problems or if there is anything else with which we can help you. We are available to assist in preparation for interviews over Skype, to provide any support needed, and welcome your suggestions as to how MTYBA can help you at this difficult time.

Please feel free to contact me personally (m.polak@churchcourtchambers.co.uk) and confidentially if you wish about anything above or anything else.

Kind regards,

Michael Polak

President MTYBA