



YLAL STATEMENT ON THE RESUMPTION OF JURY TRIALS

YLAL acknowledges the importance of ensuring that our criminal justice system is able to continue, and that the resumption of jury trials is essential for access to justice. YLAL believes that a key tenet of our justice system is that justice must be delivered promptly whilst ensuring fairness is maintained.

However, in response to the statements from the [Lord Chief Justice](#) and the [Lord Chancellor](#) that jury trials in some courts will resume as early as the 18 May, we call for guarantees that our members and other court users will not be put at risk when jury trials resume.

The reality is that junior lawyers often travel significant distances by bus, tube and national rail to attend hearings. If jury trials are to resume safely, careful consideration must be given as to how all participants in a criminal trial are expected to travel to court. Pressure should not be put on our members to risk their safety by using public transport.

We welcome efforts by HMCTS and the Judiciary to ensure appropriate social distancing is maintained at all times, however we note that the cleanliness of many courts has been a significant concern to our members even before the pandemic.

Hundreds of people will be entering the courts, using the same spaces, door handles, seats, etc. Each court must be certified as safe with appropriate hygiene measures put in place, including increased and routine cleaning of surfaces, adequate soap, water and dryer facilities in the bathrooms, the availability of hand sanitiser and the provision of personal protective equipment.

Finally, while we realise there may be good reasons for variation in practice between geographical centres, we call for a commitment that proper safety measures have been implemented in every court where a jury trial resumes, and a clear national message in support of putting safety first.

YLAL is collecting evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the justice system and we encourage all young legal aid lawyers to complete our [survey](#).

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**WE
ARE
FOR
JUSTICE**