



The Bar Council

Jury Service

Purpose:	To draw barristers' attention to issues relating to this topic.
Scope of application:	All practising barristers
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Status and effect:	Please see the notice at end of this document. This is not “guidance” for the purposes of the BSB Handbook I6.4.

General Approach

1. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 s21 came into force on 5 April 2004. The effect is that members of the Bar are no longer entitled to be excused from jury service as of right.
2. ["Guidance for summoning officers when considering deferral and excusal applications"](#) at paragraphs 5 to 20 governs excusal and deferral. The more likely course is deferral, and it is only in “extreme circumstances” that a person will be excused completely. See also Rule 26 of the Criminal Procedure Rules governing Jurors, particularly rule 26.4 dealing with: ‘a) [the] juror’s availability to try a case expected to last for longer than the juror had expected to serve; (b) any association of that juror with, or any knowledge by that juror of— (i) a party or witness, or (ii) any other person, or any place, of significance to the case.
3. A common problem is likely to be where you are summoned to attend as a juror where you regularly practise and/or sit as a Recorder. It would be inappropriate for a juror to have any special knowledge of any person involved in a trial: that applies not just to defendants or witnesses, but also to members of the

judiciary, and to the legal representatives involved in a trial. Knowledge of the jury bailiff or other court staff in your professional capacity will not be considered a reason to be excused from service.

4. If a member of the Bar receives a summons to attend the court at which you regularly practise and/or sit as a Recorder, you should apply to the summoning officer not to serve at that particular court. If deferral would not solve the problem, the summoning officer should consider whether jury service could be undertaken at a different court. It is to be borne in mind that no juror is expected to travel more than one and a half hours from home in order to serve on a jury.

5. As with any other potential juror, valid professional or business reasons may justify deferral or excusal. However, as the Guidance makes clear, such applications will be "looked at closely and granted only if there would be unusual hardship". If you have a fixture which was arranged prior to receipt of a jury summons, and where it would be contrary to the interests of the client to return the brief, then application for deferral should be made. Such an application should contain sufficient information to enable the summoning officer to make an informed decision.

6. If selected to serve on a jury, it is axiomatic that you do so as part of your duty as a private citizen. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to conceal your profession from other jurors, but nor is it necessary to volunteer such information immediately. You should expect to be treated as equal members of the jury, and should insist that you are not accorded any special status.

7. The most important thing for you to note is that you are sitting on the jury as part of the tribunal of fact, and not in your capacity as a barrister.

8. Where a jury is required to leave court during the trial, you should not offer any explanation as to the reason, and should not give any explanation beyond what the Judge has told the jury, even if asked.

9. You should not express any advice or opinion as to the law, or as to any direction of law given by the Judge, at any time. You may, like any other jury member, send a note to the Judge asking any relevant question of fact or law. However, also like every other member of the jury, you must accept that it is for the Judge, not the jury, to decide issues of law. You must, therefore, accept the Judge's directions as to any issue of the law, even if you consider it to be incorrect.

10. Likewise, if you as a member of the jury have any concerns about anything said or done by other jurors, or anything that happens out of court, you should not remain silent or take the matter into your own hands but, as you will be directed by the judge (and consistent with your duty to the administration of justice), you should raise the concern by sending a note to the judge via the jury bailiff so that, if appropriate, it can be dealt with by the judge during the trial.

Important Notice

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