

The legal industry is one of the oldest and most traditional to exist. The hit of a global pandemic has, in some ways, forced it to modernise and push its traditional boundaries. COVID-19 encouraged courts to consider the possibilities of remote justice and forced law firms to adapt to remote working. Law firms are typically slower to embrace societal developments due to their old-school ways; COVID changed all of this.

I think that the legal industry could bounce-back to its comfortable, old-fashioned ways. However, there is no denying that COVID has reshaped the way in which all elements of the legal sector operate; even if for a couple of months. Adaptations post-COVID will be made, however slight. In discussing this topic, 2 elements of the legal industry must be explored: civil and criminal.

Firstly, I think that the impact of COVID has opened the eyes of all employees to the remote working world. Solicitors are starting to notice the way in which they can efficiently work from home without having impact on billable hours and thus, for those employees that have enjoyed being at home, more will be demanded from current/future employers. Law firms, dependent upon feedback, are likely to adapt to the remote working lifestyle to some extent; whether that be employees working remotely one day per week or permanently.

Due to this, lawyers will not be required to travel to court therefore clients will be paying fewer disbursements. If remote hearings are implemented as we think they will be, fees will be at an all-time low therefore justice will be more accessible due to the fact that individuals and companies will more likely be able to afford reasonable representation. Resources will readily available and will allow claimants to litigate civil wrongs/defendants to challenge inadequate claims.

During COVID, non-urgent criminal work has been adjourned which might make prosecutors question what really is important in the future and what offences perhaps need not be taken to trial. This could mean less cases making it to the criminal courts and therefore lifting the pressure on the criminal justice system.

Remote trials may be here to stay post-COVID and, even if fully remote trials are simply not feasible, hybrid trials may exist in which only some parties need to attend court in person. However, this could potentially mean lots of appeals relating to Article 6 (right to a fair trial) as it can be argued that criminal cases are usually personal and thus require a human element.

Furthermore, it is evident that criminal trials requiring a jury are the most difficult to manage during a pandemic. Due to this, it is possible that the number of jurors required post-COVID may be reduced.

In conclusion, it is clear that COVID has forced the legal industry out of its comfort zone and has had a huge impact on the way that justice will be delivered going forward. The legal sector will adapt to life in multiple different ways, however slight, post-COVID.