

# Continuing prisoner transfer and jury trials putting workers at risk



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GMB, the union for outsourced prisoner transport staff, is calling for the temporary and partial shutdown of the courts service to protect workers in the sector and stop the spread of the virus.

The calls comes as four **criminal justice watchdogs warn** about a 'delay to justice' – while the law society **has called for** courts to be shut to protect lawyers.



As covid infections in the legal system rocket, GMB is calling on the Ministry Of Justice to use measures employed during the first lockdown which included the suspension of new jury trials and video links from police stations for Magistrate hearings.

**“** To keep the justice system at ‘business as usual’ will undermine efforts to stop the spread of the virus and risks staff safety.

### **Nadine Houghton, GMB organiser**

Staff working in prisoner transport have experienced several covid outbreaks in recent months including at Liverpool Crown court which led to trials being suspended.

There is also huge pressure on staff to maintain safe staffing levels which is leaving new starters having to undertake ‘Control and Restraint training’.

#### **Nadine Houghton, GMB organiser said:**

“GMB members will do all they can to facilitate the safe running of the justice system.

“We understand the dangers of any delay to justice, but this must be balanced with the fight against the virus and the lives of our key workers.

“To keep the justice system at ‘business as usual’ will undermine efforts to stop the spread of the virus and risks staff safety.

“We support the call of legal professionals for a partial and temporary shutdown of the courts system including halting new jury trials.

“But, any closure of the courts system must be backed up by a commitment from the Treasury to renew the ‘Covid Supplier Relief’ notes which guarantee public sector contractors continue to be paid as normal during the Pandemic.

“This relief was vital to GMB members in protecting jobs and pay during lockdown.

“GMB members working in privatised prisoner transport provide a vital public service, if there is a way of reducing the risks they face at work this must be done.”



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