



The Bar Council

Pupil survey report

April 2026



About us

The Bar Council is the voice of the barrister profession in England and Wales. We lead, represent and support the Bar in the public interest, championing the rule of law and access to justice. Our nearly 18,000 members – self-employed and employed barristers – make up a united Bar that aims to be strong, inclusive, independent and influential. As the General Council of the Bar, we're the approved regulator for all practising barristers in England and Wales. We delegate our statutory regulatory functions to the operationally independent Bar Standards Board (BSB) as required by the Legal Services Act 2007.

Introduction

This report is based on our 5th survey of pupils. The first (in 2021) assessed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the working lives of pupils, while our second in March 2022 was a more general examination of pupils' working lives. After a gap of a year, our third survey (2024) sought to explore any changes to working life for pupils over the previous two years.

This year's survey closed in early February 2026. The survey generated 143 responses, slightly fewer than in previous years. Out of the 600 population of pupils, 472 were sent the survey, equating to a 30% response rate. All responses were anonymous.

Key findings

- 83% of respondents said that their overall experience of pupillage had been positive – more than half (56%) said it was 'very positive'
- Nearly a third (30%) of disabled pupils were 'negative' about their pupillage experience compared to 13% of those without a disability
- 4 in 10 successfully secured pupillage after one application round, 48% took two or three application rounds and 16% took 4 or more rounds
- For the first time, we asked about pupillage induction. The majority (77%) were satisfied, but neurodivergent pupils were twice as likely to indicate that they were either 'not satisfied' or 'neutral' with their induction
- Nearly three quarters of pupils (72%) said that a career at the Bar was 'viable' going forward – a 10% improvement compared to last year
- A lack of work-life balance was the main reason given for a career not being viable. This was raised as an issue more among women and disabled pupils
- Overall incidents of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination appear to be falling. 21 pupils (18%) said they had witnessed or experienced these behaviours, a reduction from 28% in 2025 and 26% in 2024

Pupil profile

The following outlines the demographic and employment profile of pupils responding to the survey, highlighting areas where our dataset differs from the 2025 dataset, and more general population statistics we collect.

Demographic profile

Respondents to this survey were broadly representative of the pupil population¹ as of March 2026:

- 59% were women, more or less the same as the whole pupil population (60%), compared to 62% last year
- 27% were from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds a slightly higher proportion than recorded last year (20%), but the same as in 2024 (28%), and exactly reflecting the whole pupil population
- Three in 10 (29%) were LGBTQ+. This figure is significantly higher than across the whole population of pupils (19%), and those participating in the survey last year (19%)
- 8% (up from 2% in 2025) reported having childcare responsibilities. This figure is similar to that recorded in 2024 when 10% said they had childcare responsibilities
- 10% have caring responsibilities for others, reflecting current data on the whole pupil population
- One in 5 (20%) have a disability² (17% of total pupil population). This is the same number as last year. Of those reporting a disability (n=27):
 - Four in 10 (37%) said they had a mental health disability
 - Four in 10 (44%) said they were neurodivergent, including but not limited to: Attention Deficit Disorder, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia. This figure was lower than reported in 2025 (65%)
 - 15% had other physical disabilities including vision, hearing and mobility impairments

¹ Much of the whole pupil population data collected by Bar Council is missing as not all barristers and pupils answer the monitoring questions during the authorisation to practise process. In calculating the population statistics to assess how representative the survey data is of the population, missing data and 'prefer to not say' has been excluded.

² Disability is defined in the Equality Act as a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It is worth noting that of those who declared they were neurodivergent, a third (29%) also reported a mental health condition. Whilst out of those who declared a mental health condition, 4 in 10 were neurodivergent.

In 2025, educational background was the only area where there was some discrepancy between the survey data and our own records on the whole population. This is no longer the case and nearly half (46%) of our respondents this year said they went to a non-selective state school (compared to 36% last year). Our records show 43% of the whole pupil population went to a non-selective state school (excluding missing data).

Three in 10 respondents (29%) went to Oxbridge, a third (35%) went to a Russell Group university, 11% went to other (non-Oxbridge/Russell Group) research-intensive universities (RIUs) and 23% to another UK university. Four respondents attended university overseas. No data is collected centrally on this parameter to support comparison.

With respect to socio-economic background, three in 10 respondents came from homes where their parents or carers were employed in the traditional professions, including 2% who were barristers or judges. 18% came from backgrounds where the main household earner was a senior manager, 27% from the modern professions and 25% came from homes where the main earner was clerical, administrative (8%) or in technical, craft or manual occupations (17%).³

Employment profile

This year many more respondents (92%, compared to 69% last year) were in their non-practising period (first six) and the remainder (8% or 11 respondents) were in their practising period (second six). Based on the pupil population comparator, 86% of pupils were in their first six and 14% in their second six. Our analysis suggests practising stage impacts results, with those in their first six generally holding more positive views of their pupillage than those in the second six. This was no significant difference by practice stage (first/second six) last year.

- 9 in 10 (89%) were at the self-employed Bar, the remainder were at the employed Bar – the same as reported in 2025
- 6 in 10 (57%) were on the South Eastern Circuit with the remainder distributed fairly evenly across the other regions as in 2025, bar the Wales and Chester Circuit where only 2% were registered
- The four Inns were represented evenly in the response set: Gray's (18%), Inner Temple (28%), Lincoln's Inn (20%) and Middle Temple (34%)

³ For more information on career categories see the [Social Mobility Commission Employer Toolkit](#)

- Approximately a third (30%, 38% in 2025 and 35% in 2024) worked primarily in crime and 63% worked broadly at the publicly funded Bar (crime, civil and family), a slightly lower proportion than recorded in the last two years (70%)

This year the distribution of respondents across key demographic and employment variables very closely match the pupil data we have available for the whole population, notwithstanding there is a substantial amount of missing data in the whole population data set. This suggests that the findings from the survey can be assumed to be highly representative of the whole pupil population.

Findings

Recruitment

Four in 10 respondents (37%) successfully secured pupillage after one application round (in 2025 this figure was 39% and in 2024, 31%). A third of respondents (33%) took two application rounds (compared to 29% in 2025), 15% took three rounds (18% in 2025) and 16% took 4 or more rounds (14% in 2025). This is similar to findings from 2024 and suggests securing pupillage took longer for the 2026 pupil cohort, compared with the 2025 cohort.

46% per cent said the process of securing pupillage was very challenging (50% in 2025) and 44% said it was quite challenging (40% in 2025), just 10% said it was not very challenging or easy. This reflects previous findings.

Findings suggest pupils in mixed areas of practice found securing pupillage less challenging compared to the 2025 cohort (82% in 2026, compared to 96% in 2025).

When asked to comment on what might be done to improve the recruitment process, pupils said they wanted:

1. **Feedback on failed applications:** 76% of respondents wanted better feedback in 2026 (compared to 79% in 2025, and 77% in 2024)
2. **Responses to applications:** This year there was a slight increase (52%) in pupils calling for a response to a pupillage application when compared to 47% in 2025, and 43% in 2024

This is disappointing as chambers have been encouraged to improve their practice in this area – in particular over the last few years. In last year’s report, we found that more work needs to be done to remind chambers to respond/provide feedback to those making pupillage applications. Following the publication of last year’s survey, we wrote to AETOs to remind them of good practice in providing feedback to

applicants during any recruitment process. We continue to work closely with AETOs through our regular engagement to promote good practice in recruitment.

Almost half (46%) of respondents said the 'Pupillage Gateway platform could be improved' (44% in 2025, and 38% in 2024). One in four (24%) said more support from their Bar course provider would be helpful (this is similar to responses in 2025 and 2024) and there was a reduction in the number (17%) of pupils who said they wanted more support from the Bar Council (21% in 2025, and 26% in 2024). We hope this suggests the Bar Council is meeting the support needs of pupillage applicants.

A third of our respondents (32%) said they would like to see more 'access to professional networks and networking opportunities'. A similar number (31%) wanted 'more or better pupillage information in recruitment literature'. Whilst 19% wanted to see 'more chambers or employers recruiting via the Pupillage Gateway'. On this (recruitment via the Gateway) second six pupils (46%) were more than twice as likely to cite this as an improvement than those in their First Six (17%).

Induction (onboarding)

This year we asked new questions about pupils' views of the induction process at the start of their pupillage. Nearly half (45%) were 'very satisfied' with their induction, a third (32%) were 'broadly satisfied'. Whilst 23% were 'neutral' (17%), 6% weren't satisfied'.

There was a practising stage correlation with these responses. Second six pupils were both more likely to say they were 'very satisfied' (55% compared to 44% of first six) and also more likely to say they were 'unsatisfied' or 'very unsatisfied' (27% compared to 4% of those in their first six).

Those pupils who declared they were neurodivergent were twice as likely to indicate that they were 'not satisfied' or 'neutral' about their induction, 43% compared to 21% of pupils who did not declare they were neurodivergent. There was also a difference between pupils from non-selective state schools (55%) and non-Oxbridge universities (52%) who were more positive about their induction than those from other secondary schools (36%) or Oxbridge (34%).

When we asked what their induction had involved, around 9 in 10 were introduced to members and other staff at their chambers or employer (one in 10 were not given an introduction). More than 6 in 10 had been told about their chambers/employers' code of conduct, anti-harassment policies and equality and diversity policies (4 in 10 had not). Around half were briefed on allocation of work, complaints procedures and dress codes for different situations. Fewer than 4 in 10 received information about

time billing and charging, applying for reasonable adjustments, or insurance and other regulatory requirements.

We are incorporating more guidance into our Starting at the Bar guide and other support we offer pupils as they begin their pupillage. In March 2026, we published a new neurodiversity guide which includes advice for chambers as well as for pupils and barristers.

Supervision

There were high levels of satisfaction in relation to pupils' experience of in person and online supervision.

Seven in 10 respondents (70%) said they had in-person or remote supervision with their pupil supervisor at least once daily (compared to 72% in 2025). A further 23% said they received supervision at least weekly and 6% received supervision less than once a week.

Supervision for pupils in their second six, as might be expected, appeared to be less frequent than for those in their first six. 27% of second six pupils reported that they received daily supervision compared to three quarters (74%) of first six pupils. For second six pupils, contact appeared to be less frequent than in 2025, when 52% were in contact daily. The 2026 contact rates are down for first six pupils too, where 81% of first six pupils were supervised daily in 2025.

There is some evidence that pupils educated at Oxbridge received more frequent supervision than other pupils (92%) when compared to 62% of those who went to other universities.

Most (76%) said the supervision was mainly in-person. This is slightly higher than the response in 2025 (71%). And again, there is a distinction between first and second six pupils. One in four (27%) of second six pupils said their supervision was 'mainly' or 'all' in-person compared to 80% of first six pupils. This reflects findings in 2025 when 50% of second six pupils said they mainly received supervision online.

Levels of satisfaction amongst pupils is high and broadly unchanged. Seven in 10 pupils (69%) were 'very happy' with their in-person supervision (this compares with 72% in 2025, 67% in 2024). A further 23% (19% in 2025) were 'broadly happy', just 3% were unhappy (5% in 2025). Remote supervision was viewed only slightly less positively, with 58% saying they were very happy (compared to 59% in 2025 and 57% in 2024), whilst 24% were broadly happy (compared to 20% in 2025). The numbers who indicated they were unhappy are too small to provide insight into differences between groups of pupils.

Overall pupillage experience

Overall figures have not really varied year on year. This year, 83% of respondents said that their overall experience of pupillage had been positive (with 56% saying 'very positive'). There was some difference between those working in crime compared to other areas of practice where experience was more extreme – crime pupils were more likely to either say 'very positive' or 'negative'.

Although numbers are small, pupils in their second six (55%), were much less likely to say they felt 'positive' overall about their pupillage, than pupils in their non-practising period, first six (86%).

There was a significant difference between those with a disability and others. Nearly a third (30%) of disabled pupils were 'negative' about their pupillage experience compared to 13% of those without a disability. Neurodivergent pupils (36%) and those with a mental health condition (40%) gave more negative feedback on their pupillage experience.

Nine in 10 (91%) respondents said that the courts/tribunals as a workplace met their needs, for example accessible courtrooms or a safe environment. However, negative comments that were received were strongly worded, and included:

- The infrastructure of the Crown and magistrates' courts being in a poor state, too hot/cold, leaks, dirty, general disrepair, and lack of running water
- Shortage of facilities, conference rooms, technology not working, and lack of resource in general
- Shortages of staff and judges

Career prospects

Nearly three quarters of pupils (72%) responding to our survey said that a career at the Bar was 'viable' going forward. This is an improvement compared to 2025 (62%), and 2024 (65%). A quarter (23%) of our 2026 cohort felt a career was 'somewhat viable' (this compares to 35% in 2025). This change in response from 2025 may, at least in part, be a result of the change in practising stage mix. Twice as many first six pupils (75%) felt a career at the Bar was viable going forward, but significantly fewer (36%) of second six pupils agreed.

Disabled pupils are less positive, especially those who are neurodivergent. Just 26% of respondents who are neurodivergent thought a career at the Bar was 'viable' (compared to 77% of all other pupils). None stated a career 'wasn't viable' but they were much less confident than other groups.

Women were also less sure a career was viable (65%) when compared to men (84%). Again, though only small numbers (8% of women, no men) thought that a career was not viable.

Factors influencing response

Work-life balance

A lack of work-life balance was the main reason given for a career not being viable. With 24% of the 2026 cohort citing this as the main reason, this is however down compared to previous years (34% in 2025 and 26% in 2024). Second six pupils were twice as likely as first six pupils to cite work-life balance, suggesting that more experience of life at the Bar leads to greater concern about work-life balance.

Twice as many women (29%) cited work-life balance as an issue when compared to men (14%).

Pupils working in crime and publicly funded areas of practice were more likely to cite work-life balance than pupils in other areas. For example, this year 31% of those working in crime and 33% of those in civil practice cited work-life balance issues; no one working in commercial practice mentioned work-life balance.

Those with a disability were also more likely to mention work-life balance (43% of those who are neurodivergent, 40% of those with a mental health condition and 31% of those with other disabilities, compared to 20% of respondents without a disability).

Remuneration

Earnings were the next most frequently cited issue ('insufficient remuneration'), but notably the figure is far lower than in 2025 (11% in 2026, compared to 26% in 2025) and is much more in line with responses in 2024 (14%). The profile of respondents (first six vs second six) may account for some of these differences (36% of second six cite earnings vs 9% of first six pupils).

Pupils mainly working in crime were significantly more likely to mention remuneration than all other pupils (21%) compared to 11% of those working in other practice areas, and no one in Chancery, commercial or family practice mentioned earnings as a barrier to a viable career.

Recommending the Bar as a career

Just a third (36%) said they would 'definitely' recommend the Bar as a career path to others (this is up on 32% in 2025); a further 45% said they possibly would. There is, yet again, a big difference between first six (38%) and second six (10%) pupils

‘definitely’ recommending the Bar as a career. Six times as many second six pupils would not recommend a career at the Bar (30%) compared to 5% of first six pupils.

Disabled pupils also had a less positive view of a career in the profession with 12% of disabled respondents saying they ‘probably’ would not recommend a career at the Bar compared to just 5% of pupils without a disability. While only 19% of disabled respondents would ‘definitely recommend’ a career at the Bar when compared to 40% of those without a disability. On this, there is little difference by practice area and other demographic and employment variables.

Legal aid work

More than half of respondents (55%) ‘definitely’ envisage doing legal aid work but this is down on previous years (57% 2025, and 60% in 2024). A further 12% said they ‘probably⁴’ would. Eight in 10 of those working in crime (78%) and family (86%) practice say they ‘definitely’ intend to do legal aid work

Pro bono work

Just over half (52%) up from 46% in 2025, said they ‘definitely’ intend to do pro bono work while 42% said they ‘probably’ will (up from 38% in 2025). There were no differences by practice area in numbers intending to do pro bono work.

Awards, debts and financial hardship

The median pupillage award this year was £40,000-49,999, up from £30,000-39,000 in 2025 and 2024, and £20,000-29-999 in 2022. The median anticipated debt⁵ level for pupils has remained the same as in 2025 and 2024 at £50,000-59,999.

It remains the case that pupils mainly working in crime are nearly twice as likely as those working in other areas to have lower awards (67% of those working in crime had awards under £40,000 compared to 34% of those in other practice areas). Furthermore, in the broadly publicly funded areas of work (crime, civil, family) just 8% (same as in 2025) held awards of £60,000 or more, compared to 46% of those not in publicly funded areas of practice, up from 41%. Eight in 10 (83%) of pupils in commercial practice had awards of £60,000 or more compared to 70% of pupils

⁴ This year the response option to the questions about legal aid and pro bono intention was worded ‘Yes, probably’ as opposed to ‘Yes, possibly’ in 2025.

⁵ Approximate anticipated level of debt on completion of pupillage. This includes debt to the Student Loans Company (SLC) for undergraduate degree, debt incurred for postgraduate courses including the Bar course to the bank, family or friends and personal or credit card debt incurred for living, training expenses and other costs.

working in Chancery practice areas and 7% of those working in all other areas of practice.

Pupils who went to Oxbridge (61%) are 15 times more likely to have obtained awards of £60,000 or more, when compared to pupils who went to all other universities (4%). This is the first time we've asked pupils which university they went to so we can't make comparisons with previous years.

Although there is still a difference between men and women in pupillage awards, the gap appears to have narrowed a little this year (17% of women obtained awards of £60,000 or more, compared to 29% of men).

Pupil debt was most strongly correlated with the occupation of the main household earner when respondents were aged 14. Nearly half of those respondents (47%) who came from homes where the main earner was in a traditional profession or a senior manager had debt levels of less than £10,000, compared to 6% of those who came from homes where the main earner was from a modern profession and 10% of those from a home where the main earner was from a clerical or manual occupation. Of those with debts in excess of £50,000, 38% came from homes where the parent/carer had a traditional professional background compared to 79% of those from modern professional background, and 62% from clerical/manual home backgrounds.

Pupils at the employed Bar were more likely to have debt levels in excess of £80,000 (40%) compared to just 11% of self-employed pupils. But 7% of employed pupils also had debts of less than £10,000, compared to 28% of self-employed pupil respondents.

Despite these debt levels, there appears to be a reduction in the number of pupils who feel they are in some kind of financial hardship at present. One in four (24%) cited financial hardship and unpicking this, 15% cited 'a little hardship' and 9% 'a lot of hardship'. This is a significant drop (24%) compared to 45% in 2025 and 39% in 2024.

There was a difference in response by practising stage. One in four (27%) pupils in their second six said they were in 'a lot' of financial hardship compared to just 9% of those in their first six.

This year there was little difference between men and women, though those who attended state/non-selective schools were more likely to report financial hardship (58%) when compared to 39% of others.

Pupils working in crime are more likely to report financial hardship (19% reporting a lot of hardship compared to 8% of other pupils), while 45% said they did not face financial hardship compared to 61% of those working in other areas of practice.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the different debt levels amongst pupils from homes with different types of occupational background, there was little difference in their views of their financial hardship.

Working conditions

Hours

The median working hours for pupils remains between 41-50 hours per week (as in 2025, 2024 and 2022). Four in 10 (36%) said they work 41-50 hours per week. This is slightly fewer than in 2025, in 2024 (44%) and 2022 (48%). Just 21% (same as in 2025) work fewer than 41 hours and 43% worked more than 50 hours per week, more or less the same figure as reported in 2024. As in 2025, there were no differences between groups of pupils or areas of work.

Stress

Eight in 10 (81%) of respondents characterised their work-related stress levels as 'moderate' or 'high' (this compares with 88% in 2025 and 82% in 2024). This represents a decrease in work-related stress levels reported by pupils.

pupils were much more likely to say that their stress levels were high (46%) compared to 21% of first six pupils. In 2025, there was little difference in reported levels of stress by stage of pupillage, although second six pupils were slightly less likely to report low levels of stress. Again, there is little to suggest differences between demographic groups or areas of practice.

Support

Eight in ten pupils said that they felt 'well supported' by their chambers/employer (52% 'very' well supported and 34% 'quite' well supported). This represents a slightly more positive response when compared to last year (in 2025, 43% felt very well supported). There was no difference by practising stage.

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As in previous survey findings, incidents of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination appear to be falling amongst pupils, especially when compared to the Bar as a whole.

Answering this question was optional on the survey (119 out of 143 opted to respond). Of the 119 who responded, 16 (13%) reported personal experience of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, either in person or online (this compares to 17% in 2025, 18% in 2024 and 19% in 2022). If we include witnessing or observing bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, this figure increases to 21 people (18%) but is still

a lot lower than the 28% reported in 2025 and 26% in 2024. As in the previous surveys, pupils are much more likely to report that the incident took place in-person than online.

One in 11 (9%) indicated personal experience of bullying and harassment (compared to 12% in 2025 and 8% in 2024) and 8% indicated they had personally experienced discrimination (10% in 2025 and 15% in 2024).

Second six respondents were more likely to have experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination. Amongst our 11 second six respondents, 40% said they had personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination, compared to 11% of those in their first six.

Nearly half of those who reported a negative experience of their pupillage said they had personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination when compared to just 6% of those who had a broadly positive experience. Looked at it the other way, nearly two thirds (62%) of pupils who reported personally experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination said their overall experience of their pupillage was a negative one.

Disabled pupils are much more likely to report bullying, harassment and/or discrimination (30%) compared to (9%) other pupils. This is however down from 2025 (36% of disabled pupils vs 12% of other pupils).

Although there was no significant difference this year between men and women when we asked what their experience of bullying, harassment or discrimination related to, the most frequently cited response was gender: 9 out of the 21 respondents cited this answer, equating to 43%.⁶ This compares to 57% in 2025, and 39% in 2024.

Furthermore, out of the 21 people who said they experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, 6 (or 29%) cited sexual harassment (this compares to 18% in 2025, and 7% in 2024). This is an alarming percentage increase.

The other significant type of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination cited was race at 27% (this compares to 32% in 2025 and 30% in 2024) and disability at 14%, this is the same as 2025 and lower than 25% reported in 2024).

Significantly, a quarter of respondents (24%) cited bullying, harassment or discrimination in feedback or work (this compares to 18% in 2025 and 16% in 2024).

Most often responsibility for the bullying, harassment or discrimination was another barrister (59%) this is comparable to 2025 (61%). Of those who had experience of

⁶ Only 21 cases cited any bullying, harassment or discrimination, experienced or observed so further analysis is not possible.

bullying, harassment or discrimination, one in four (24%) said it was their pupil supervisor (this compares to 18% in 2025, 21% in 2024), and 33% said it was a member of the judiciary, whilst 10% said it was a head of chambers or a practice manager (this compares to 18% in 2025).

Pupils' open comments

Pupils participating in the survey were invited to provide information about what's worked well and what's been challenging in their pupillage, 55 responded. The tables below summarise their feedback.

Positive experiences

Theme	
Supervision quality	Some pupils highlighted supportive supervisors who provided regular feedback, guidance, and opportunities to observe and practice advocacy.
Structured training	Some mentioned valuing chambers' in-house training, advocacy exercises, and structured programmes. Training provided by the Inns was praised (with Inner Temple most often cited).
Support networks	Pupils valued supportive junior members, peer networks, and social events that helped them integrate into chambers. Pre-pupillage events also help build relationships.
Court exposure and practical experience	Regular attendance in court and opportunities to observe advocacy were seen as important for developing practical skills and confidence.
Flexibility and personal support	Some chambers demonstrated flexibility around caring responsibilities, health issues, bereavement, and commuting. Study leave for exams and support during personal difficulties were also appreciated.
Preparation and recruitment support	Inns and Bar course providers were sometimes commended for mentoring, mock interviews, marshalling schemes, and application advice that helped candidates secure pupillage.

Negative experiences

Theme	
Recruitment process issues	Respondents highlighted lack of feedback on unsuccessful applications, inconsistent recruitment practices, and limitations of the Pupillage Gateway, including application limits and inability to tailor applications or a requirement an application be used exclusively.

Communication and induction	A few pupils reported insufficient inductions, limited information before starting pupillage, and lack of guidance on administrative issues such as tax, VAT, and professional registration.
Timing and workload of training requirements	There was criticism of the ethics exam and advocacy training taking place during pupillage. Pupils reported stress from balancing training, exams, and work responsibilities simultaneously. They also expressed concern about weekend or evening training sessions.
Clarity of expectations and assessment	Some pupils reported unclear expectations, inconsistent feedback, or uncertainty about how they were being assessed during pupillage.
Supervision gaps and remote working	Some pupils experienced limited supervision, hands-off training, or supervisors rarely attending chambers, reducing opportunities for informal learning.
Workplace culture and wellbeing	Pupillage was described as highly pressured, with long hours, a lack of work time boundaries, with some expressing concern about a '12-month interview' culture. Some respondents reported bullying, fear of raising concerns, and insufficient wellbeing support.
Equality, diversity, and inclusion	Some concerns were raised about lack of support for disability and neurodiversity, weak protections for pregnancy and maternity, and suggestions of negative attitudes toward disability within the profession.
Financial pressures	Low pupillage awards, particularly in publicly funded practice areas, with some pupils reporting financial hardship and work-related expenses not reimbursed.
Legal status and protections of pupils	Concerns were raised about the employment status of pupils, particularly regarding lack of access to maternity pay and other employment protections.

What does the Bar Council do with the findings from this survey?

We track pupils' experience of pupillage and use the information to inform training and guidance provided to chambers/employers.

Specifically, we consider:

- Changes required by AETOs to improve recruitment practices (and associated literature) as well as onboarding, via our training and guidance
- Feedback on the Pupillage Gateway informs development of the platform
- Improvements needed in pupillage supervision (we provide pupillage supervisor training)
- Improving wider pupil support (eg wellbeing services) by the Bar Council and chambers
- Data on bullying and harassment supports the work of the Bar Council's Commissioner for Conduct
- Financial information and perceptions of a viable career informs our work with government and others, specifically on behalf of the publicly funded Bar

We continue to work closely with AETOs through our regular engagement to promote good practice in recruitment. We are incorporating more guidance into our Starting at the Bar guide and other support we offer pupils as they begin their pupillage. We have shared pupils' feedback on the Ethics Exam with the Bar Standards Board.