



Young
Barristers'
Committee

Starting at the Bar: your essential guide



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Advice from us to you

Our guide is here to help you navigate through pupillage and into your first years as a barrister. It's filled with relevant information for various points of your career and practice areas.

Your first 7 years are crucial to building a thriving practice. We know that if you can develop a robust and financially secure practice, with a healthy work-life balance you're more likely to remain at the Bar. Life at the Bar has changed immensely and continues to evolve. While the profession has adapted to new ways of working, this new environment into which you are entering brings its own challenges and opportunities.

We – the Young Barristers' Committee (YBC) – have put this guide together to provide answers to the questions we had when we joined the Bar, and to signpost the resources available to support you throughout your career.

Whether you're starting at the commercial Bar or the criminal Bar, in employed or self-employed practice, this guide will help you navigate the profession and lead you to success in your first years.

If there is any further information we can offer, or you have feedback on this guide, please get in touch. The YBC is your voice, and we're here to help.

You can contact us via email at YBC@barcouncil.org.uk.



Lachlan Stewart
Chair of the Young
Barristers' Committee 2025



Amelia Clegg
Vice Chair of the Young
Barristers' Committee 2025

About the Bar Council



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.

The Bar Representation Fee gives you more

At every stage of your career at the Bar we're here for you.

With your support we can do more to champion access to justice and give the Bar a stronger voice. And when you subscribe to the Bar Representation Fee (BRF) you get more, from **exclusive access to money-saving benefits** to bespoke professional services.

When you complete the annual authorisation to practise process, 71% of the practising certificate fees goes to the Bar Standards Board, Legal Services Board and Legal Ombudsman.

Just 26% goes to the Bar Council, and that covers only 65% of the income we need to effectively support the Bar. The remaining funds are generated by our services, training and events portfolios, generous contributions from the Inns of Court and, importantly, the BRF. All of the income to the Bar Council is invested in services and support for barristers.

[Find out more and subscribe via our website](#) ▶





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The Bar Council



Working at the self-employed Bar

Working in chambers

Roles in chambers

Working with clerks

Building your self-employed practice

Finances and administration



For many of you starting at the Bar this will be your first time being self-employed which comes with its own practical and financial hurdles, such as managing your own pension, which can seem a daunting prospect. Similarly, chambers are unlike most traditional workplaces, each with its own culture. It's important to recognise this when you first start out.

90% of respondents to our survey, report a positive experience of pupillage in our Pupil survey. It's not only the culmination of everything you have worked towards, but it's a unique learning opportunity and chance to finally start practising as a barrister in your chosen area.

Being self-employed has its benefits, including flexibility on working patterns, working with a diverse range of clients and the opportunity to shape your practice.

Working in chambers

The setup of chambers varies and each chambers will have its own structure and culture, so it's important to get to know the set you've joined and how you can thrive within it.

Chambers constitutions and committees

Chambers are typically unincorporated associations meaning rights of members and governance of chambers is done by the contract between the members. Familiarise yourself with your chambers' constitution which will explain these details further.

Members' rent or contributions

Members of chambers are generally expected to make a regular payment towards the operating costs of chambers. This is usually referred to as chambers 'rent' or 'contribution' and varies. Some chambers charge a percentage on money received by that member whilst others charge a fixed monthly sum.

Liabilities on dissolution

Your chambers' constitution will typically set out the liabilities of members if a chambers dissolves. Chambers will typically have entered into long-term financial agreements with third parties – eg lease agreements for premises or contracts for utilities. If a chambers dissolves, sums due under these contracts will still need to be paid and the constitution will determine the amount that members need to pay to cover these costs.

Note: read your chambers' constitution to understand any liability on you

Chambers committees

Within your chambers there may be various committees to help you with different problems and support you in different ways. Possible committees include:

- **Management committee, pupillage committee, finance committee**
- **Familiarise yourself with the committee members and what support they provide**

Roles in chambers

Head of chambers

In some chambers, the head of chambers may be a figure head with limited executive authority. They may take on roles including chairing the management committee. In others they may have a role that's similar to a chief executive.

Pupil supervisor

Your pupil supervisor will be one of your primary contacts within chambers throughout your pupillage. Many of you will have two or three pupil supervisors so being adaptable and flexible to new ways of working is key. Pupil supervisors are an important role from a regulatory perspective. [The Bar Qualification Manual](#) explains the role and what the Bar Standards Board (BSB) expects of pupil supervisors.

Probationary tenancy

You may find yourself undertaking a probationary tenancy, these used to be called 'third six' tenancies. It's important to be aware of your rights as a probationary tenant. We provide [guidance for probationary tenants](#) and chambers that offer probationary tenancies.

Working with clerks

Clerks and practice managers are a vital part of the chambers system. They're responsible for the work coming into chambers, allocating that work to barristers and managing diaries.

Developing positive working relationships with your clerks is incredibly important. It's a clerks job to know the ins and outs of chambers. They're fundamental in helping your practice thrive.

Most clerks would prefer you to liaise with your clerks in their hierarchical order. Going over your practice manager and communicating directly with the senior clerk for example could undermine your designated clerk. You should try to only do this if you have concerns about your clerk/practice manager.

Building rapport

Ask early on who is responsible for clerking your work, and how best to work with your clerks eg are you clerked by just one person or a team? Do you email the whole team about something or a specific person if you need a listing? It helps to remember that your clerks usually have many barristers to manage.

Your clerks need you to:

- **Be reliable and punctual**
- **Give feedback and advance warning of any problems you foresee with your diary or workload**
- **Keep them well informed**

The more they know, the better they can manage the immediate, future and prospective workload and expectations of client(s).

What you can expect from your clerks

As with anyone you work with at the Bar, you should expect to be treated fairly and respectfully. If you have any concerns about how you're being treated, spoken to, or managed, you should speak to your designated clerk or practice manager in the first instance. You can speak to the senior clerk or head of chambers if this is more appropriate.

Clerks should be managing your practice professionally and objectively. Your work allocation should be based on, but not limited to, availability, practice area and experience. Your clerks are required to make judgment calls based on their knowledge and experience.

[See page 10](#) for information about practice reviews.

Building your self-employed practice

Building and developing your practice will be a continual process. Shaping your practice so that it works for you will come with time. There are some important steps you can take in your first years to ensure that you're building your practice in the way you want, as well as working collaboratively with your chambers.

Working with solicitors

The self-employed Bar relies on instructions from professional clients for much of its work. As such, building a strong relationship with your solicitors is key to ensuring you build a robust and sustainable practice.

When starting out most of your work will come through chambers and clerks. To build a good rapport and working relationship with professional clients consider some of the following:

- **Acknowledge a piece of work as soon as you receive it and copy in your clerks when doing so.** Your instructing solicitor will be glad to know you've picked up the papers – even if your message is simply to tell them you'll get back to them once you've had time to read them. It ensures the solicitor is on top of what's happening and enables them to speak with confidence to the client.
- **Don't sit on papers.** If you need longer to do a piece of work, make sure you let the solicitor know so they can manage the client's expectations. It's better to be realistic and deliver on time than overpromising and failing to deliver.
- **Check the instructions on receipt of the papers and, if necessary, ask for further information or documents.** If a conference is required, let your instructing solicitor know from the outset it may be difficult to arrange a convenient time for the client and/or the expert.
- **If asked for your opinion, give it.** Try not to defer giving your opinion while further information is obtained (unless it is crucial). Remember that your instructing solicitor has to assess the strength of any claim on an ongoing basis usually with only partial information.
- **After attending a hearing, message the solicitor with any highlights.** Give the solicitor a report and attendance note which can be passed onto the client with minimal change needed. Include action points in numbered paragraphs or bullet points. Depending on the area of law and the client they represent, they may not want lengthy advice on detailed points of law (if they do, they'll usually ask for them).
- **Think about proportionality and the costs which the solicitor will be able to charge or recover.** If the case is a modest or fixed fee case a long list of actions is unlikely to go down well. And remember, solicitors want practical solutions, usually the client does too.

Practice reviews

58% of our Barristers' Working Lives survey respondents felt they had significant control over the content and pace of their work. (IES/The Bar Council, Barristers' Working Lives 2025 (to be published autumn 2025)).

Whether you're first starting out or you've been practising for a few years, you should have regular practice review meetings with your clerks. Our [Practice review guide for barristers and clerks](#) is there to help you navigate your practice review meetings and explain the kind of things you're likely to discuss.

In your first couple of years as a tenant these meetings should take place regularly - quarterly is our recommended best practice, reduced to 6 months, then yearly once you're more established. Depending on how your chambers is set up, these meetings may include your clerk and a more senior clerk or practice manager.

The Bar is a demanding profession, but that doesn't mean burnout should be considered the norm. While it can be difficult to have conversations around your wellbeing, it's vital that your clerks know if you're struggling so that you can be given the right support.

Allocation of work

There are rules governing how work is allocated within chambers. Rule rC110 of the BSB Handbook on 'allocation of unassigned work' means if unallocated briefs come into chambers, they are supposed to be allocated in a way which is fair to barristers who are qualified and available to do the work. We offer training to chambers' staff on work distribution and monitoring. This means you should get a fair chance at work, but it doesn't always work out like that.

One reason is much of the work is already allocated as solicitors and clients know who they want to use. That's why marketing yourself and your practice, and becoming known to other members of chambers and solicitors is so important. Read more about this on [page 24](#).

Finances and administration

As a self-employed barrister you will have to give some thought to how you are paid, the expenses and additional administrative duties that come with being self-employed.

Costs of practice

There are practical costs to consider to practise as a barrister, such as:

- **Chambers fees**
- **Insurance**
- **Practising certificate fee**
- **Equipment, clothing and software**
- **High-speed stable internet for remote working**
- **Income tax and National Insurance**
- **Specialist Bar Association fees eg the Criminal Bar Association, Commercial Bar Association or Circuit membership fee**
- **Bar Representation Fee**
- **Training and professional development**
- **Travel card for public transport or the costs of running a vehicle**
- **Accountant and/or financial advisor fees**



“Juniors will greatly benefit from building an open and transparent professional relationship with their clerks. Maintaining regular communication is key, as it allows clerks to raise concerns promptly, manage client expectations regarding deadlines, and identify the right opportunities at the right time. In short, collaboration with clerks isn’t just helpful; it is essential to developing a successful and thriving practice at the Bar”

Young Barristers’ Committee member

Note: All the below points are for general information only and are not intended to constitute advice which you should seek independently.

Managing your money

The best way to manage your money is to start by keeping your own detailed records of how much you're owed, a rough idea of when money will come in, and what you owe (to chambers, tax etc). Having a system in place from the start and devoting time to managing your money will help you feel more in control.

Use a spreadsheet to keep track of your income and outgoings. Some practitioners find it useful to set reminders 6 to 8 weeks in advance of certain payments being due eg renewal of their practising certificates so they can organise their finances accordingly.

When a brief fee has been agreed for a piece of work you or your clerk should keep a written record of the date that agreement was reached and who agreed that fee - you may need to refer back to it. Check out our [Ethics and practice hub](#) for how to record fee notes.

Your clerks will bill your work for you. Billing for work is dependent on you reporting your hours or the completion of a piece of work to the clerks. Some chambers have a form that you complete. In others it's up to you to tell your clerks either by email or in-person. It's important to keep your clerks up to date so they can bill work on your behalf. You must keep records supporting the fees that you are charging to comply with rC88 of the BSB Handbook.

Ensure that all your billing information is sent to the clerks on time. It's best practice to try not to let billing build up. Billing should ideally be sent after the piece of work or attendance is completed.

If solicitors or other clients don't pay you promptly, your clerks will chase the payments on your behalf. Chasing payments is usually the role of a fees clerk.

If you have a problem with cash flow and aged debt, your fees clerk will be the best person to speak to. You can discuss the situation with them, and they'll let you know what is going on. We also have our '[Fee notes and records](#)' available on our Ethics and practice hub

Keep all bank details and relevant reference numbers up to date, including Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and VAT Number. If chambers don't have up to date information this could lead to a delayed or no payment.

If you're VAT registered, VAT is billed on a case and your VAT number is missing, some clients will refuse to discharge the fees. Similarly, if you work on publicly funded cases, the LAA will not release the payment without your LAA number.

You should not accept any payments from clients directly. If a client insists for any reason, you should let your clerk(s) know immediately.

Accounting, tax and pensions

Consider using an accounting firm that specialises in advising members of the Bar. They'll be able to provide guidance on allowable expenses, Income Tax, Capital Gains Tax, and VAT, and will work with other sector specialists such as financial advisors and mortgage firms.

It's also important to keep on top of your tax returns. Specialist tax accountants can advise you on the best way to set up your bank accounts and help you manage these. Tax legislation regularly changes - a tax accountant is best placed to advise on any developments.

Consider setting up a pension as soon as possible. It may be difficult when you're starting out, and hard to see that far ahead, but investing in a pension now will help you build resource for later in life. Your pension contributions are tax deductible.

Income protection

You should ensure you have income protection, in case you're unable to work in the future due to long-term illness or disability.

There are restrictions on how much income protection cover and individual can have but it's important to ensure any protection can cover ongoing expenses. It can include a further sum that can be invested to help meet retirement expenses.

Some income protection providers have clauses within their contracts that nullify cover for those that work long hours. Some chambers operate their own group schemes, which may or may not be cheaper than individual cover.

Life assurances paying out upon death

There may be a number of reasons you might need life assurance, such as:

- **Covering a joint mortgage**
- **Providing income to a spouse and/or children**
- **Providing for childcare**
- **Meeting future school fees**

If you'd be looking to pay off a mortgage or other debts, you may want to consider an assurance that pays out a lump sum.

However, if you are looking for an assurance to pay out an income – potentially one that increases each year to counter inflation – think about an income assurance.



Financial wellbeing

Sometimes there can be financial stressors, particularly at the start of your career and it can impact your practice and your wellbeing. When that's the case, it's important to remember that you're not alone.

Ask for help

If you're struggling financially, it can be worthwhile speaking to your practice manager, clerks, employer or **assistance programme**. Sometimes an interest-free bridging loan may be available to you through your Inn, or a grant maybe available from a benevolent association like the Barristers Benevolent Association (BBA). The BBA supports members of the Bar in England and Wales and their dependents who are in need, in distress or in difficulties.

2

Working at the employed Bar

Working in an organisation
Building your employed practice
Finances and administration



An employed barrister is paid a salary agreed in an employment contract or another contract for the provision of services. Most employed barristers still hold practising certificates and represent their end client, which is their employer.

Our **Life at the Employed Bar report** analyses data on the demographics and working lives of employed barristers in England and Wales. Our report describes the experiences of working in an employed setting through a series of focus group discussions.

The employed Bar overall reports higher levels of wellbeing than the self-employed Bar. Similarly at the junior level because of the collaborative nature of the employed Bar, it's often the case that you have access to high quality work very quickly, which makes the employed Bar an attractive option for some barristers.

Working in an organisation

Working at the employed Bar is often more equivalent to other workplace environments that you may already be used to. You won't have to deal with your own taxes and will have access to the benefits that come with employment, including paid annual leave and parental leave.

However, as a barrister - as well as an employee - you could still face unique challenges. Being a barrister in employed practice, particularly if you're a member of a small team, has often left some feeling isolated from the profession. Getting involved with your specialist Bar associations, your Inn, your circuit and the Bar Council are all good ways to stay connected to the profession.

Hear from others at the employed Bar:

- **Pupillage at the employed bar: Day in the life of a Crown Prosecutor**
- **Pupillage at the employed Bar: demystifying the process**
- **Pupillage at the employed Bar: life at Browne Jacobson**
- **Pupillage with a difference: life at the employed Bar**

Building your employed practice

Employed practice varies enormously; the Crown Prosecution Service will differ from a boutique law firm and government will differ from a small non-governmental organisation (NGO). The important thing is to get a feel for how your organisation works and how you – as a barrister – fit into the structure.

Building your profile within your organisation is important for success. Although generally there will be more formal and linear progress in terms of professional development within an organisation, it's important to get involved in work and to take part in workplace culture.

Teamwork and collaboration working are an integral part of the employed Bar and improving and demonstrating soft skills, as well as your legal expertise is an important part of development across the Bar.

Senior members of staff in an organisation will generally determine work allocation. Where possible, understand:

- **How work is allocated**
- **Salary scales**
- **Promotion and training and development opportunities**

Building effective relationships with senior individuals in your organisation so that you can get the best exposure to clients is vital. You might do this through formal meetings, mentoring schemes, or by asking questions.

Practice reviews

You should have regular review meetings with your line manager or supervisor. Your organisations should have a system in place for setting objectives and ensuring progress against them to ensure you are meeting your targets. If these aren't taking place, do request them and be proactive in setting them up.

In our [Life at the Employed Bar report](#), barristers reported that they sometimes feel their skillset is underutilised in their employment, particularly around oral advocacy. If this is the case for you, it would be worthwhile exploring in your review meetings whether there would be greater opportunities to use your advocacy within your employment.

If opportunities for oral advocacy aren't readily available at work then you might consider pro bono work as a means of exercising your oral advocacy. If you do take this route, have a look at our guide on [Employed barristers working pro bono](#).

Finances and administration

One of the benefits of employed practice is that you're paid a regular salary and you don't have to grapple with tax returns or chambers rent in the same way as if you were self-employed. Nonetheless, there are still costs associated with practising as a barrister that you should be aware of:

- **Practising certificate annual renewal**
- **Insurance**
- **High speed internet for remote working**
- **Specialist Bars association fees eg the Criminal Bar Association, Commercial Bar Association or Circuit membership**
- **Bar Representation Fee**

While many employers will cover your practising certificate annual renewal and insurance, some won't. It's important to understand what costs will be covered by your employer and what you'll have to pay yourself.

Dual practitioners

Barristers can practice at both the self-employed and employed Bar. You'll need a dual practicing certificate. Find out about dual capacity practice protocol and [BSB rules on the BSB website](#).

It's sometimes the case that barristers who enter into consultancy arrangements can find themselves – from a regulatory perspective – falling under the definition of an employed barrister for the purposes of the BSB Handbook. Please consider our guidance on non-standard work arrangements if you're entering into a contract or a short-term retainer with an organisation.

More information

For more information, [please visit our employed Bar webpage](#) home to our employed Bar content including information about our Employed Barristers' Committee and links to relevant guidance on our [Ethics and practice hub](#).





Working well

Wellbeing

Establishing your networks at the Bar

Advice for court

Parenting at the Bar



The Bar is a demanding profession. It can involve working long hours, managing difficult clients, unrelenting pressures, dealing with emotionally charged material and high expectations.

In this next section we highlight some resources and information available that will help you to thrive in your career.

Wellbeing

Your wellbeing is paramount. Maintaining your wellbeing should be as crucial to your practice as continuing professional development or having an accountant. It should be embedded into your practice and be an integral part of your CPD.

Our recent [Wellbeing at the Bar report](#) shows that overall barrister wellbeing is rising. However, women, barristers from an ethnic minority background, and those who are younger and more junior reported lower levels of wellbeing.

Successful practice takes support. If you are struggling, please consider the following advice:

- **Raise it with your chambers or employer.** Making someone aware is the first step to addressing the underlying problems that are affecting your wellbeing. This may be a daunting prospect, but it's important to share information with the relevant people so that steps can be taken to support you.
- **Our [Wellbeing at the Bar website](#)**, has a range of information, resources and top tips for managing your wellbeing, including a 24/7 helpline for self-employed barristers.
- **Consider professional development or coaching.** Wellbeing should always be a priority. Rather than waiting until we're unwell to act, barristers should have regular support to talk and reflect.
- **Being a barrister is full of highs and lows.** There is no high quite like winning a case, but it would be naive to say it will all be smooth sailing. Make sure you actively put aside time to celebrate your successes and wins (however small).

Our certificates of recognition are given to chambers, SBAs, Circuits and Inns that are making strides on wellbeing. The certificates acknowledge the huge effort across the profession to support everyone's wellbeing. [Find out more.](#)

Establishing your network at the Bar

No matter the type of organisation or chambers you've joined, or the practice area you've chosen, getting to know the culture and what's expected of you in the first few years of practice is vital.

Top tips:



Introduce yourself: say hello whenever you can, via email, social media, Microsoft Teams, or indeed in person. You never know, saying 'hello' to someone could change the trajectory of your career.



Build a good profile on LinkedIn: your online presence matters and can shape your professional opportunities. It's also a great channel for keeping up to date with what's happening in the profession. Most chambers, Inns, and specialist Bar associations (SBAs) have their own profiles to share news, updates and events. Try to keep your own profile relatively up to date.



Be open about your situation: if you have caring responsibilities, or a disability, this will no doubt have been discussed with your employer or chambers. But this should never be a barrier to your development. If people know your situation, chances are they can take it into account if any opportunities come up in future.



Come into your workplace when you can: being seen in chambers and the workplace is a great way of getting yourself known and provides opportunities for you to meet people face to face.



Talk to other junior tenants and pupils: the Bar has a real sense of community, and you will likely not be the first person to have had a certain experience or be feeling a particular way. Everyone starts somewhere, nobody is perfect and you will learn and improve as you go (probably faster than you realise).



Robing rooms can be incredibly supportive places: If you're at court engage with with other members of the bar and your fellow pupils. Try to be as active as possible and take as many opportunities as possible to talk to your peers.

The contacts you've made through university and law school, through your Inn and during pupillage could be essential to your network. These connections may be able to support you, provide a sounding board, be a mentor or recommend you for work.

Developing your hybrid network

The pandemic changed the way many of us work. Being at work doesn't mean being in chambers or the office, and people may have been working for a long time having never met any of their colleagues face to face.

When it comes to networking, consider:

- **Attending meetings whether they are online or in person:** if there is an in-person event and you're available, consider taking the opportunity to meet people face to face.
- **Check in with people regularly:** even if you're not in the office, a call to your clerk, a video chat with other members, or Teams message to check-in with your supervisor are all good ways to maintain relationships.
- **Make an extra effort to take part:** joining in with Inn, SBA and network activities, are great ways of building a network beyond chambers or organisation. Our committees are ideal for getting involved in different causes. Have a look at [our current vacancies](#) to join a committee you're interested in.

A benefit for you: **DoctorLine**

Get access to a GP service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, anywhere in the world for £40 a year.

You and your family can speak to a doctor whenever and wherever you need them with DoctorLine.



Subscribe to DoctorLine today
barcouncil.org.uk/doctorline



An exclusive
benefit for Bar
Representation
Fee (BRF)
subscribers.



The Bar Representation Fee gives you more

If you ever feel isolated or want to talk to someone with a similar background to you, have a look at our [further support page](#) at the end of this guide for other networks open to you.

- **There are informal and formal networks across the Bar:** all of which can be essential in helping you to build a thriving practice and an enjoyable career. These networks include:

Circuits of England and Wales

Your circuit is an important source of support, advice and representation for those practising in the geographical area. Each circuit has a leader and junior. The European Circuit also brings together barristers whose practice covers Europe. Do get involved in your circuit events, meetings and training where possible.

Inns of Court

The Inns of Court provide support through a range of educational activities, lunching and dining facilities, access to common rooms and gardens, mentoring and counselling schemes.

The Inns have young barrister groups - sign up to their mailing lists to hear about events and resources to help you build your practice and widen your network.

Specialist Bar associations (SBA)

SBAs are dedicated to specific practice areas and geographical regions.

They can help promote their members' interests, for example responding to proposals for changes to regulations, and offer support to their members through networking events and mentoring schemes. There is an annual fee to join, and the fee differs between each SBA.

Developing a personal brand and identity

It's important to consider what your brand is. The most successful brands have a clear purpose and value – they provide a consistent service which customers can reliably return to.

As you work toward establishing a network, you should consider how you might market yourself to potential clients, colleagues, and peers.

You can start by asking yourself 'why would someone want me to represent them?' Think about:

- **Reflecting on what makes your services unique:** what can I offer that others can't? What makes me stand out as a barrister?
- **Maintaining consistency in your communications:** how can I showcase my skills in my writing? Is my approach to managing my emails consistent with the quality of my other work? Do I need to change the way I communicate?

- **Engaging and expanding my network:** what can I do to stay on people's radars? How can I update people who I don't regularly work with?

Data protection

All self-employed barristers are data controllers for the purposes of UK GDPR and need to be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. [Our GDPR guide](#) has all the information you need regarding this.

It's essential to take data protection seriously. Make sure you know the rules, follow your chambers' policies, and look after personal information properly to avoid hefty fines.

Advice for court



Always check the opening time of the court you're attending. You should scout out the nearby coffee shops if you do get there early



Make sure you know where you need to go for each case – check whether you're at the court or at an annex



Pack your bag with the small things – packets of hairbands, plasters, and tissues are always needed



If you don't have a security pass, queues on a Monday are always the longest – **get your ID card** to reduce the time spent going through court security

Parenting at the Bar

There are a lot of parents practising at the Bar in every practice area and many have a thriving career. But the Bar is behind in offering effective flexible working models. It's often left to individuals to work it out for themselves, juggling parental leave with part-time work and negotiating with chambers on rent breaks and payment holidays.

We know there is work to do but many chambers and organisations have introduced improved flexible working policies, and there are rules to ensure new parents can take proper leave, have rent holidays, and ways to help you 'keep your hand in' while on leave. Download our [family career breaks advice pack](#) for more information, including our [parent mentoring scheme](#).

Preparations for starting a family: tips from a young barrister

- **Ask about your chamber's parental leave policy** and the support they provide to tenants who have been on parental leave, both during their leave and on return to work.
- **Be honest with yourself about the impact that having children will have on your ability to work as a barrister, especially if your mainly court based.** The quality of the work you do should not diminish, but the quantity may have to be sacrificed for a time. Supportive clerking is essential to this and without this there is a risk of feeling overwhelmed, and your work and wellbeing could suffer.
- **Find a parenting mentor.** You may have been fortunate to be mentored as a law student. You will have had a pupil supervisor, and as a junior you will have colleagues in chambers ready to answer questions and offer you help. You need the same kind of support network as a parent at the Bar. Try to find someone whose personal circumstances mirror yours.
- **Don't ignore the benefits of the Bar when it comes to having a fulfilled family life.**

As a barrister, you can access special care arrangements with the [Smithfield Nursery](#) and [Tiny Tree Day Nursery](#). Both offer you special rates and more flexible opening hours to accommodate barrister parents' schedules.





4 Training and professional development

Training

Career pathways and planning
Building an international practice
Pro bono work and volunteering



You're never a finished product as a barrister. There is always something new to learn, case-law to understand, new and emerging issues to grapple with, and skills to hone.

Training

As a junior barrister you will undertake the New Practitioner Programme (NPP). This requires barristers under three years practice to complete 45 hours of continuous professional development (CPD) in their first three calendar years. This must include at least 9 hours on advocacy and three hours on ethics.

Your chambers, Inn of Court or circuit may also offer additional programmes for new practitioners that focus on different aspects of your role as a barrister, such as resilience training or training on how to properly bill for your work.

Barristers with over three years practice also need to complete CPD requirements set out in the Established Practitioner Programme (EPP).

Our range of **conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses** help you fulfil your CPD requirements and build your practice:

- **Training in public access**
- **Litigation**
- **Tackling bullying and harassment at the Bar**
- **Handling client complaints**

Training and events newsletter



We keep you up to date with our weekly events listing. Never miss an event or training opportunity and stay on top of your continuing professional development as required by the BSB.



Subscribe today: barcouncil.org.uk/trainingnewsletter

Career pathways and planning

There is no set career trajectory at the Bar. Some barristers specialise in a practice area from the start and stay in that area their whole career. Others start to practice an entirely different area of law many years down the line. The key thing is understanding and building a network and skillset that will give you these opportunities and flexibility.

Our [Returning to the Bar or changing your practice area guide](#) can help if you're considering a move to a different practice area or branch of the profession.

An increasingly common career move for barristers is transferring between the employed and self-employed Bar.

Secondments

It's possible to move between the self-employed and employed Bar. An effective way of 'trying out' employed or self-employed practice is through secondments (short-term placements with employers or chambers).

Secondments can provide opportunities to develop relationships with those instructing you, alongside an on-the-ground understanding of the work and relationship between the employed practitioners and their clients. As a junior member of the self-employed Bar, undertaking a secondment is a great opportunity to get access to good quality and varied work.

But there are also things to think about:

- **How do you continue building your practice whilst outside of chambers?**
- **What about the regulatory, ethical and insurance issues?**
- **How do you keep on top of your advocacy whilst undertaking a secondment?**

Regardless of where you choose, it's worthwhile making clear from the start the applicable terms and the kind of work you will be undertaking.

If you're considering a career move, take a look at the resources available to you:

- [Our movers and returners webpage](#)
- [Our checklist for establishing your practice](#)
- [Dispelling the myths about transferring to different parts of the Bar](#)
- [Middle Temple's talent retention scheme webpage](#)

Building an international practice

Here are some resources that may help you if you're interested in building an international practice:


- [Support webpages for international practice](#)
- [Our international information pack](#)
- [Counsel magazine article with advice from former chairs of our Young Barristers' Committee](#)

International professional and legal development grants programme

Our [International legal and development grant programme](#) is available to you if you're under 7 years practice. It's designed to support early years barristers in attending events and conferences internationally that will help develop their practice.

If you're planning to attend an international event or conference and you meet the requirements, you could consider applying for a grant to cover up to 67% of the cost of attending.

Keep an eye out for ways you can get involved in international business visits run by us, the Inns and SBAs throughout the year.

A portrait of Amelia Clegg, a woman with long blonde hair, looking directly at the camera. The portrait is partially obscured by a dark diagonal shape on the right side of the page.

"Moving to employed Bar has deepened my understanding of the legal industry and has taught me a lot about case management, client handling and the expectations of instructing solicitors."

Amelia Clegg,
Vice Chair of our
Young Barristers'
Committee
2025



Pro bono work and volunteering

Pro bono work and volunteering can provide support to those who aren't able to access legal aid, as well as career benefits for young barristers, for example, the opportunity to gain advocacy experience in the courtroom. If you're looking to develop your practice in another area, undertaking pro bono work can be one of the first steps in gaining experience in that area.

It's up to you to make sure you follow the rules around pro bono work in line with the BSB handbook. The rules differ depending on if you're employed or self-employed. Download our guidance for **employed barristers working pro bono**.

To build on your experience, you can volunteer for Advocate, at a legal advice or law centre, or by providing services free to charities or even friends and family.

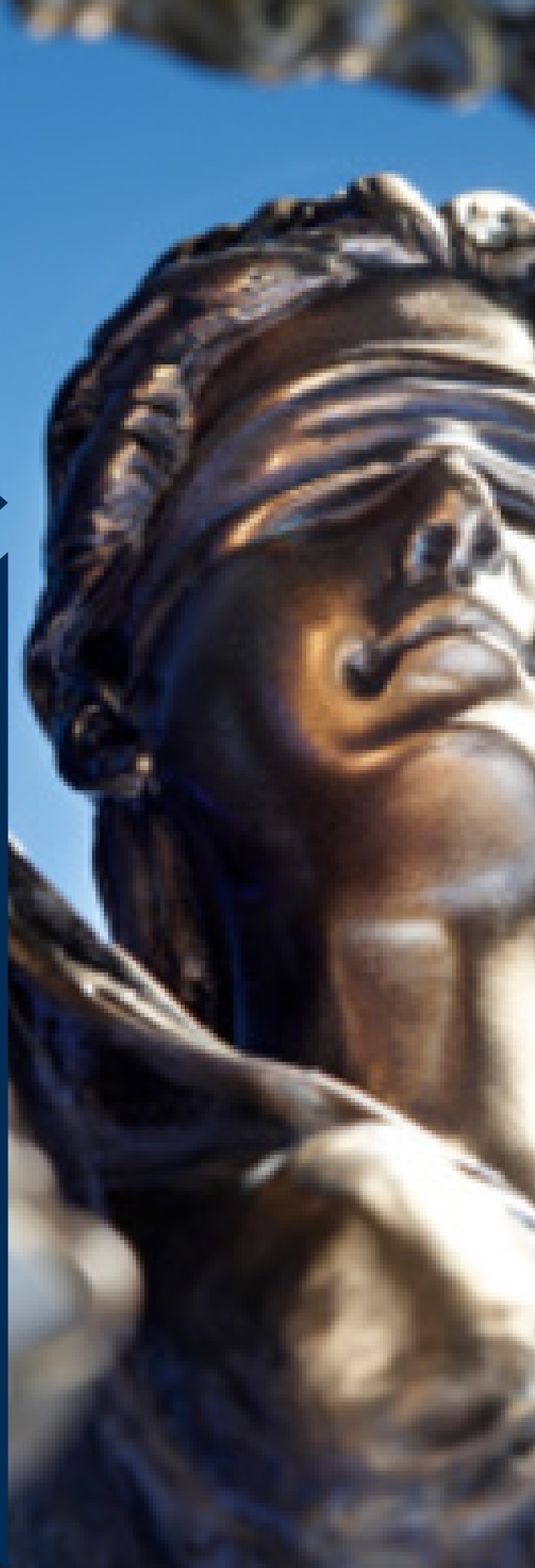
Advocate is a national charity that offers opportunities for you to contribute to the community. It matches members of the public with barristers who are willing to volunteer their time.

The Free Representation Unit provides representation at tribunals in social security and employment cases. Applications are welcome from barristers at any stage of their legal training and early careers.



Ethics and professional conduct

Equality and diversity
Handling complaints and reporting obligations



As a regulated profession there are expectations regarding how you and your colleagues conduct yourselves in the workplace and your personal life.

The **BSB Handbook** contains the rules governing how a barrister must behave and work. This includes the **Code of Conduct** which outlines the core duties barristers are expected to act by. Core duty 8, for example, requires barristers not to discriminate unlawfully against any person in their work.

Similarly, you should expect other members of the Bar, the judiciary or chambers staff to treat you with respect and courtesy.

Our website offers support and guidance on **equality, diversity and inclusion** including specific resources on sex, gender identity, social mobility, race and disability. This includes **Talk to Spot** which is a secure online tool to support anyone working at the Bar to confidentially raise concerns about inappropriate and abusive behaviour.

Our Ethics and practice hub is an online library of documents, guidance and advice packs. **Visit our hub for resources** to help you find answers to your professional ethics questions.

We also provide a confidential **ethical enquiries service** to help barristers identify, interpret and comply with their professional obligations under the BSB Handbook.

Our ethical enquiries service is available from 9.15am to 5.15pm Monday to Friday, and via email at ethics@barcouncil.org.uk.

Equality and diversity

Whether in employed or self-employed practice, all barristers are expected to take equality and diversity rules very seriously. Detailed information on the equality and diversity standards is in the BSB Handbook. You'll also find guidance and supporting information in the BSB Handbook equality rules.

Disability

If you have a disability, you have a right to be properly supported by your chambers or employer, and not to be discriminated against. A fundamental principle is that chambers or employers should not assume, they should ask you what you want and need, and respect your position.

There is no requirement on you to disclose your disability. If you do, then your chambers or employer has a duty to make reasonable adjustments. You should have the opportunity to speak directly to your chamber's equality and diversity officer for advice and support, and you can also contact our Equality, Diversity and Social Mobility Committee.

Reasonable adjustments

The legal duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements:

- **Where there is a provision, criterion or practice which puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled**
- **Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled**
- **Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison**

A failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments is discrimination against the disabled person.

Chambers are required by the BSB to have a reasonable adjustments policy. [Our guidance for chambers and employers](#) gives more information on reasonable adjustments.

[Access to work is a Department for Work and Pension's \(DWP\) programme](#), which covers advice and/or potential financial support for practical measures to overcome work-related barriers based on a disability. The programme is available to employed and self-employed barristers with a disability.

Access to work can help with things such as:

- **Assistive technology**
- **Travel costs**
- **Support workers**
- **Adaptation to buildings**
- **Training**

Race at the Bar

There is a wealth of evidence and data which shows that barristers from all ethnic minority backgrounds, and especially Black and Asian women, face systemic obstacles to building and sustaining a career at the Bar.

Our Race Working Group published a groundbreaking report on [Race at the Bar](#), detailing the evidence and setting out 23 actions aimed at improving career outcomes for barristers from underrepresented ethnic groups.

There are a growing number of networks across the Bar which support barristers from underrepresented groups. Our Ethics and practice hub has guidance including our:

- [Framework for taking action on race equality](#)
- [Race terminology guide](#)
- [Race equality toolkit](#)

You should expect your chambers to follow good practice.

Our court dress guidance gives information on appropriate court dress for counsel. This includes guidance on court dress adjustments for race, religion and faith, gender identity, sex and disability. Should you require additional dispensation, an application for a dispensation certificate can be made using [our online form](#).

Bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour

The BSB's rules make it clear that harassment, bullying and inappropriate behaviour are unacceptable within the profession and policies and procedures must be in place to tackle them if they arise. Sadly, our data shows that almost half of all barristers who replied to our survey said they had experienced or observed bullying or harassment in their professional life.

The Bar is increasingly taking bullying and harassment incredibly seriously. [Baroness Harriet Harman KC's independent review](#) into the subject has already started to shape how we address bullying and harassment moving forward. [Read Lachlan's blog](#).

Support is available if you experience any type of bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour at the Bar.

Some steps you can take are:

- **Speak to someone:** your chambers or employer must have a bullying and harassment policy which will include sources of support and routes to reporting. You may want to speak to your equality and diversity officer in chambers, or someone in human resources if you're employed.
- **Contact our confidential equality and diversity helpline:** available 9.15am to 5.15pm Monday to Friday, a member of our Equality and Diversity team will be able to provide advice and support on what you should do next. You don't have to do anything if you choose not to, you can simply discuss your options. Email: equality@barcouncil.org.uk or call: **020 7611 1426**
- **Talk to Spot:** a secure online tool to support anyone working at and around the Bar to confidentially raise concerns about inappropriate behaviour. Our team can then get in touch and listen, understand and progress in the most appropriate way.
- **Consider reporting the incident to the BSB:** this will prompt a BSB investigation. Harassment constitutes serious misconduct in the BSB Handbook which comes with reporting requirements.

Handling complaints and reporting obligations

Complaints take many forms. A minor issue may be sorted out by you, the client or solicitor, and your clerks and shouldn't need formal procedures. But if the complaint is more serious, approaching it with transparency and a willingness to sort it out will always be the best way.

Your chambers will have a complaints procedure with strict timetables for the process. You must comply with it. Every complaint must be treated seriously. If a complaint comes directly to you, inform your senior clerk or head of chambers straight away to comply with the complaint's procedure. The rules around complaints can be found in the BSB Handbook.

Don't sit on a complaint and hope it goes away. Always respond to letters and emails from the BSB. Failure to do so could constitute a separate offence.

Inform the Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund ('BMIF') as soon as possible. If a complaint is going to a tribunal they should pay for your representation. If for any reason they won't, ask a more senior member of chambers for help.

You must know the rules that govern your professional conduct, not only for your benefit but so that you can recognise if others fall below the standards expected. You will be guilty of serious misconduct yourself if you fail to report a barrister who has committed serious misconduct to the BSB.

If you need to make a report or wish to talk to the BSB about possibly reporting a situation, contact the BSB professional conduct department on [020 7611 1445](tel:02076111445).



6

Further
information
and support

Our pupils' helpline gives confidential advice and support to pupils. We'll put you in touch with an experienced and independent barrister who can help with problems encountered during pupillage. You can contact our pupils' helpline via email at: pupilhelpline@barcouncil.org.uk or by phone **020 7611 1415**

Young Barristers' Committee (YBC): the voice of and representative committee for all barristers up to 7 years' post-pupillage. You can contact them via email for support on everything from career development opportunities to addressing issues around fair allocation of work: YBC@barcouncil.org.uk

Wellbeing at the Bar: a one-stop-shop of information, resources and top tips for managing your wellbeing.

Assistance programme: Self-employed barristers and IBC/LPMA members can contact 0800 169 2040 whenever you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Law Care: the mental health charity for the legal sector. The helpline is available 9am to 5pm every weekday (except bank holidays). **0800 279 6888**

Specialist interest networks

These are just some of the networks that provide support, networking and mentoring for barristers across the Bar:

- **Black Barristers' Network:** promoting the growth of black barristers through support, visibility and community outreach
- **Society of Asian Lawyers:** representing the interests of all Asian lawyers and the communities that they serve
- **Women in Criminal Law:** connecting, promoting, inspiring and supporting professional women working across the criminal justice system
- **FreeBar:** a network aimed at fostering inclusion and support for LGBT+ people working at and for the Bar



Young Bar newsletter

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