

Pride in Practice 2026

Good evening and welcome to the second annual Pride in Practice.

It's great to see Gray's Inn – my Inn – hosting this event and with thanks to the four Inns for supporting this initiative and to the organising committee for their work in putting together the event. Thank you in advance to Pixie Polite – we are very much looking forward to your act this evening.

Global LGBTQ+ Rights

Across the globe, legal rights for the LGBTQ+ community are constantly under threat.

In April, The Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that Budapest's anti-LGBT "propaganda" law is in fact unlawful and should be repealed by the country's next parliament¹. However, a new law in Kazakhstan means anyone who promotes LGBTQ+ "propaganda" in the media or online risks a prison sentence².

There are 61 countries where being gay is illegal. Of those, there are seven countries where same-sex consensual sexual activity risks the death penalty: Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, Somalia, and Uganda.

Same-sex marriage is legal in only 38 countries, and there are only 37 countries where it's legal for same-sex couples to adopt children.

Only 19 countries legally recognise non-binary or third gender identities³.

Barristers work for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. In fact, I have worked and advocated for human rights where there is violation of LGBTQ+ rights from the Maldives to Sri Lanka, including at one point my instructing solicitor in the Maldives who was arrested.

The Legal Profession

The legal profession is committed to justice, but while we seek justice for our clients daily, we must also ensure our colleagues are treated fairly.

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/22/hungary-top-eu-court-rules-anti-lgbt-law-unlawful>

² <https://www.euronews.com/2026/01/08/kazakhstan-bans-lgbtq-propaganda-stirring-local-and-international-concerns>

³ <https://www.equaldex.com/equality-index>

Every two years, the Bar Council produces its Barristers' Working Lives report. The latest figures show 38% of LGBTQ+ barristers had experienced bullying or harassment, compared to 28% of straight barristers.

I am proud to see the work by barristers, chambers and legal institutions to tackle discrimination and there is still more to be done.

Everyone is entitled to a safe space to work and our barristers need confidence that they will be treated with the equality and respect they deserve.

After we commissioned the Harman Report and it was published in September 2025, we have been continuing our work to tackle discrimination, bullying, and harassment across the Bar. This behaviour should not be tolerated in any modern workplace.

The Bar Council runs Talk to Spot, a website and app where barristers can report inappropriate behaviour or discrimination anonymously, as well as the Equality and Diversity helpline which provides confidential support and advice. We also have a newly established Commissioner for Conduct – Dame Maria Miller.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's updated draft code of practice, specifically relating to the provision of single-sex spaces, is causing huge debate within and outside the LGBTQ+ community.

We published our Trans Inclusion statement, formalising our support of trans, non-binary and genderfluid barristers and students, which we continue to stand by. We are considering how best to support the Bar in the light the new code of practice.

I also understand that a lot of work has gone into the establishment of a the first ever European LGBTQ+ Lawyers Association launching at its inaugural conference in London – where else? – on 17 and 18 September which will explore issues which affect the LGBTQ+ community. A very timely initiative in the current climate and I look forward to saying a few words to welcome all delegates to the conference in September alongside my colleagues at the Law Society.

Last month, we called upon the UK government to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer.

The Convention specifically states that Bar Associations must "promote the welfare of lawyers" – and the Bar Council is incredibly committed to promoting inclusion, equality, and wellbeing. Our policy staff, committees, working groups and panels work tirelessly to make the Bar a better place to work, and I thank them for it.

We will keep supporting our LGBTQ+ colleagues and clients – signposting resources, advocating for equality, and listening to and learning from our members.

The Bar Council will do what it can to protect members of the Bar from harassment, discrimination, and inequality. The Bar is a wonderful profession where everybody is welcome.

Enjoy Pride in Practice!