



A GUIDE TO CHAMBERS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (“CSR”)

Purpose of this guide

1. This guide has been written by the Bar Council for barristers and chambers. Its purpose is to explain the concept of social responsibility and how it applies to chambers, and to provide practical guidance including checklists and links to useful resources.

What is Chambers Social Responsibility?

2. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an approach to business that promotes ethical practices and socially responsible behaviour, and contributes to sustainable development. The way it is understood (including what it is called) and the way it is implemented differs according to the relevant industry or profession and the individual company or organisation.
3. At the Bar, we use the term ‘Chambers Social Responsibility’ (which, happily, has the same acronym as the term most often used by our clients). CSR, in our profession, includes topics such as pro bono work, wellbeing initiatives, social justice, promotion of human rights, and environmental responsibility.
4. The Bar has a long history of being ‘socially responsible’, for example, in supporting the communities it serves through pro bono work. Many chambers – often in response to the interests of individual members – already work with schools, contribute to charities, and have energy or paper-saving initiatives to reduce their environmental impact. Many chambers also go above and beyond that which is required with respect to equality & diversity, and have started working on wellbeing.

Examples of CSR activities which you may already be doing

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ✓ Pro bono work | ✓ Equality & Diversity |
| ✓ Chosen Charity / Charity of the Year | ✓ Wellbeing activity |
| ✓ Outreach (working with schools) | ✓ Mentoring |
| ✓ Avoiding single-use plastics | ✓ Recycling |
| ✓ Paying a living wage | ✓ Staff volunteering |

Why should chambers be socially responsible?

5. Many people are convinced by the moral case and consider that acting in a socially responsible way is simply ‘the right thing to do’. There are also very good business reasons for adopting a socially responsible approach to the way chambers operates. Any marketing expert will concur. Operating in a socially responsible way supports chambers’ (and individual barristers’) brand development:

- i. *Competitive Advantage* – CSR can improve chambers’ market positioning - especially in attracting (and retaining) top talent including pupils, and also in client attraction;¹
- ii. *Cost and Risk Reduction* – raising standards in (say) equality and diversity reduces the likelihood of chambers facing costly claims; a focus on wellbeing increases the resilience of members and staff; and high standards reduce the need for regulation to improve practices (and the associated costs of compliance);
- iii. *Reputation and Legitimacy* – sets of chambers and the Bar as a profession come under intense public scrutiny. We need to avoid accusations of greed, elitism or failing to reflect the society we serve; and
- iv. *Win-Win outcomes* – by being socially responsible, a set of chambers gains financial benefits through a more efficient use of resources, and a happier and more effective workforce.

Why should chambers be telling people about the CSR work they are doing?

6. Chambers can increase the return on investment in social responsibility if (i) they are strategic in the selection of activity and initiatives (i.e. what generates the most positive impact for their stakeholders); and (ii) they effectively communicate with their members, staff, clients etc about what they are doing.

What do chambers currently communicate?

In 2018, the Bar Council looked at 201 chambers’ websites. We could easily find information about socially responsible activity on 33 websites, but under a wide range of headings (31 of these reported on community activity; 18 on workplace activity, 16 on environmental activity and just 4 reported on activity relating to suppliers and/or clients).

This suggests many chambers are not taking advantage of their work on this agenda. If your prospective clients and pupils/staff can’t easily see what you are doing, then you – and the Bar as a whole – won’t benefit as much as you/we should.

How can chambers best communicate their CSR activity?

7. Based on experience elsewhere, we recommend a simple structured approach to communicating your social responsibility work. Following this approach better enables others (e.g. clients and prospective pupils and staff) to find the information they are looking for.
8. Chambers Social Responsibility can be considered and reported under four main headings:

¹ Corporate clients are increasingly asking chambers about their policies and approach to social responsibility, and this is becoming increasingly important to government departments and local authorities too.

- a) **Workplace** (what you do for members of chambers & staff)
- b) **Community** (what you do for your local community/the wider public)
- c) **Suppliers/Clients** (what you do/how you treat suppliers and clients)
- d) **Environment** (what you do to reduce your impact on the environment)

See Appendix 2 for more detail on what kind of activity sits in each category.

9. By considering your approach in this way, you can better explain your CSR activity, establish your priorities, and identify gaps and opportunities. This approach will be familiar to corporate clients of chambers, who will take a similar approach to reporting their own CSR activity. Here's how to get your CSR work out there:

Steps	Activity	Future ideas:
Step 1: What do you do already?	List/map current CSR activities. You may need to check with members and staff to find out about anything they do that you could count (e.g. speaking in schools, pro bono work, etc.) Appendix 1 contains a checklist of common CSR activities.	Think about putting in place ways to capture CSR activity undertaken by chambers or members.
Step 2: Categorise CSR activity	Once you have a list of things that you do as a set of chambers and/or your members do individually, put these CSR activities into the four categories (see Appendix 2). List them under the four headings (workplace, community, suppliers/clients, environment).	Think about any areas where you don't have any activity – how easily could you do something in this area?
Step 3: Measure if you can	Where you can do so without dampening people's enthusiasm for CSR, try to measure what activity is being done (e.g. how many hours of pro bono work has been done; how much money has been donated/raised; who has been given an award or recognised externally for their pro bono work; how much paper has been saved).	Explore ways to measure impact and build these into e.g. partnership agreements with charities. Try adapting your case management software to track pro bono work.
Step 4: Communicate	Under each of the headings, list the activity with any measures you have been able to identify. Work out what channels you can use to communicate your CSR activity; e.g. your website, LinkedIn, Twitter, Juriosity, legal press etc.	If you don't have measures, think about what you could measure in the future.

Doing more CSR – what are your blind spots?

10. Many barristers are surprised when they realise that their sets have “blind spots”. For example, if chambers has a contract with a supplier of cleaning services, it may well have selected the cheapest option which provides the necessary services. To keep costs down, cleaning services companies are likely to pay their workers as little as the market will allow (possibly minimum wage). However, it is well-established that the minimum wage is not sufficient to live on. Many employers – and, increasingly, chambers – now have a policy to ensure their cleaners (and other staff and contractors) are paid a “living wage”, independently set by the Living Wage Commission. To find out more, see the links in Appendix 3.

Thinking strategically about CSR

11. Taking social responsibility to the next level – and really unlocking the benefits both to society and chambers – means thinking about developing a Chambers Social Responsibility strategy. This will help you establish and then focus on initiatives that give the greatest return on investment (energy and time, as well as resource). What do your members of chambers/staff want chambers to do? Are you sharing ideas within chambers, so that people who don’t currently participate can do so easily in future (if they wish)? Do some things require a lot of effort for little return (reputation, cost savings, motivating members/staff)? If so, can you divert resource into something that has more impact?

TIPS

- ✓ Focus on activity that has a logic to it. You could choose an activity, such as pro bono work, which barristers can most easily apply their skills to, and which has a great personal impact, as well as practice development opportunities and business development benefits. You could also consider CSR activity that meets a need in chambers, for example, wellbeing. These would come under the headings of “community” and “workplace” respectively.
- ✓ If you are choosing a charity to support, and your chambers has a specialist practice area, you may want to select a charity that is relevant to that specialism.
- ✓ If you wish to see marketing and brand benefits from a donation, you could join a scheme such as the Bar Pro Bono Unit’s “Pro Bono Patrons” scheme.
- ✓ Try to take a strategic approach to selecting CSR activity, rather than leaving it solely to individual members to pursue their personal interest (but do also recognise in your strategy that enabling and supporting individual members in an area for which they have a passion is extremely important – so don’t stop an activity or make it more difficult for a member to do something they feel passionately about).
- ✓ Look at what your peers are doing. How are they describing their CSR work? What do they see as the most important issues? How well are they communicating it?

- ✓ Listen to what your staff and clients say is important to them and consider how significant those issues are to you.
- ✓ Take a step back, and review the financial, reputational and strategic importance to your chambers of each of the issues and initiatives you have identified.

WARNING:

Watch out for something called '*Greenwash*' - this is where an organisation talks about their social responsibility (to secure positive publicity) but fails to translate activity into action. You need to be authentic to benefit from activity on this agenda.

12. You might want to establish a committee, or extend the remit of another committee, and/or find someone to be responsible for driving this agenda within chambers. Some of your colleagues are likely to be passionate about social justice, and happy to help take things forward. Many chambers have appointed Pro Bono Champions who work with the Bar Pro Bono Unit to encourage and direct pro bono work internally. They would be an integral part of your committee.
13. Developing a written policy can be helpful. Your policy could outline your vision/approach (e.g. '*chambers has social responsibility at the heart of its approach*'), and establish any criteria by which chambers decides to implement or support an initiative or a new way of working. Usually a good rule of thumb in choosing CSR activity is to establish what your people can do which will have the most material benefit to the highest number of your stakeholders, in a field that makes sense for the profession (e.g. focussing on access to justice/rule of law). Your policy might also cover process, e.g. the way ideas are submitted, how they are agreed, who is responsible, and how information is collected, measured and reported.

TIP:

Think about joining a group (the Bar Council will be developing a CSR Network for CSR leads from chambers to come and learn from each other and experts).

14. Like any business strategy, it can be useful to have set objectives, and targets against which you measure progress and demonstrate your commitment/success. For example, you might state the intention to reduce your carbon footprint by X% by 2020, by working with suppliers in their operations to minimise any negative impact on the environment.

EXTERNAL ENDORSEMENT/USE OF LOGOS

Considered use of the brands of campaigns or organisations can be useful to quickly communicate your support for, or commitment to, an issue (but beware of over-use or not '*walking the walk*').

Some initiatives that can easily be communicated by incorporating logos on chambers websites include:

- Living Wage
- Bar Pro Bono Unit “Pro Bono Patrons” scheme, and “Champions” appointment
- Free Representation Unit
- Pro Bono Connect
- Wellbeing Recognition Certificate
- London Legal Walk
- FreeBar
- Stonewall Diversity Champion

15. Make use of tools and sources of information available (often these resources come at no cost). Some SBAs² have already established resources to support their members (See Appendix 3).

OTHER SOURCES OF ADVICE & SUPPORT

<https://theheartofthecity.com/> - access to seminars and advice (at no cost).

<https://legalsustainabilityalliance.com/> - support on environmental initiatives.

<http://givx.org/> - a free and simple tool used by companies engaging in pro bono and community giving to measure their impact so they can communicate it to their stakeholders.

For further support and advice on developing a CSR strategy and communicating about it, contact the Bar Council smercerc@barcouncil.org.uk

July 2018

² Specialist Bar Associations

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE AUDIT/CHECKLIST

Establish what you already do – and communicate it. The list below may help you identify some of your existing CSR work:

Do you communicate the CSR activity you are already doing?	Yes/No
<u>WORKPLACE</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality & Diversity policies (including e.g. sponsorship of BLAGG, FREEBAR, AWB; and or use of ‘disability confident’) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing (e.g. Certificate of Recognition) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring within chambers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for barristers and staff 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying the Living Wage 	
<u>COMMUNITY</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity of the year (any nominated charities; how much raised) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity Fundraising (which charities, how much raised, and how) e.g. London Legal Walk; Pro Bono Patrons, Friends in Law, Great Legal Quiz etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members volunteering: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Via BPBU (including day schemes e.g. CLIPS, ELIPS) – numbers & hours 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Via FRU – numbers and hours 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other Pro Bono – numbers and hours 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono Costs orders (amount secured for Access to Justice Foundation) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other volunteering e.g. school governors, trustees of charities via Bar in the Community etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach and social mobility (e.g. Bar Placement Week, Bar Mock Trials, speaking in schools) 	
<u>SUPPLIERS & CLIENTS</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints process 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Fairtrade products 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt payment of suppliers 	
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Transport Initiative 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle to work 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced energy use 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house filtered water systems 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco paper 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 	

APPENDIX 2: CHECKLISTS FOR CATEGORY/ACTIVITY³

CATEGORY	TYPES OF ACTIVITY	IDEAS FOR BAR BASED ACTIVITY
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member communication and representation • Ensuring employability and skills development • Diversity and equality • Responsible/fair remuneration • Work/life balance • Health, Safety and Wellbeing • Responsible Restructuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing-related activity • Equality & Diversity • CPD • Fair allocation of work • Paying all staff at least the Living wage and requiring suppliers (e.g. cleaning companies) to do the same • Mentoring and training programme • Flexible working
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial donations • Volunteering (employee) time • Giving gifts in kind (e.g. computers, office furniture, meeting room space, hosting events) • Being a good neighbour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro bono work • Charity fundraising activity • Access to the profession and social mobility • Access to justice • Access to education • Working with local schools • Bar Placement Scheme • Bar Mock Trials • Mentoring • Volunteering via Bar in the Community
Suppliers & clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible client relations • Product responsibility • Ethical competition • Making markets work for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying suppliers on time • Transparency in pricing • Procuring Fairtrade products

³ Not exhaustive

- Being a fair customer to your suppliers
- Driving social and environmental standards through the supply chain
- Promoting social and economic inclusion through the supply chain

Environment

- Resource and energy use
- Waste management
- Environmental product responsibility
- Transport planning
- Promoting use of public transport
- Going paperless
- Recycling; turning lights off
- Home working

APPENDIX 3 – Sample resources available to all from Chancery Bar Association

<http://www.chba.org.uk/for-members/chambers-social-responsibility/csr-articles-and-further-web-resources/?searchterm=CSR>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Chancery Bar Association website. The page title is "CSR - Articles and further web resources". The navigation menu includes "Home", "About Us", "For Members", "Find Counsel", "Chancery Careers", "News", "Events", and "Contact Us". The "For Members" section is active. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a sidebar with links to "Seminars and Events", "Mentoring Scheme", "Wellbeing", "Social Responsibility", and "Cayman Trainee Placement Scheme". The right column contains the main content, which includes a search bar, a "Search site" button, and a list of articles and web resources. The articles listed are "What CSR means to solicitors' firms and their clients", "Top tips for CSR", and "How 'Heart of the City' can help barristers' chambers develop CSR programmes". The web resources listed are "Bar in the Community", "Do-it Trust", "Living Wage Foundation", "Bar Pro Bono Unit", "Pro Bono Connect", and "Heart of the City". The page also includes a footer with the date and time "15:20 10/06/2018".

CHANCERY BAR

Home About Us For Members Find Counsel Chancery Careers News Events Contact Us

Search site

For Members

Seminars and Events

- Seminars
- New Practitioners' Programme
- International Events
- Annual and Summer Conferences
- Annual Lecture

Mentoring Scheme

- How the Scheme Works

Wellbeing

Social Responsibility

- CSR - Templates
- CSR - Articles and further web resources

Cayman Trainee Placement Scheme

- Cayman Placement Scheme - e.g. Maitland Chambers or Hardwicke

CSR - Articles and further web resources

Articles about CSR

- What CSR means to solicitors' firms and their clients – by Lakhraj Minhas
- Top tips for CSR – by Natalie Hearn, project manager at Matrix Chambers
- How "Heart of the City" can help barristers' chambers develop CSR programmes – by Lakhraj Minhas

Web Resources

The ChBA is developing this list of resources further, and would greatly welcome your own examples and feedback. This is our list of resources to date:

- Bar in the Community (facilitates voluntary work by lawyers).
- Do-it Trust (The UK's national volunteering database).
- Living Wage Foundation.
- Bar Pro Bono Unit.
- Pro Bono Connect.
- Heart of the City.
- The "Responsibility" sections of various Chambers' websites: