



Confidential Report

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The tone at the top is key

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Timeline

Apr 22, 2025 12:42 AM	Reporter created a report
Apr 22, 2025 12:42 AM	Incident added: "The tone at the top is key"
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Incident #1: The tone at the top is key

In your view, why is bullying, harassment and sexual harassment a persistent problem at the Bar?

The perpetrators are often men. Senior management in chambers are usually men or are controlled by men. They are often simply not prepared to deal with it. One senior member of Chambers said "I can't control him" so washed his hands of an incident. Some women assimilate by becoming one of the boys and don't help either. Clerks have a poor attitude to women who speak up and speak to them in ways they wouldn't speak to man, this may be more out of fear that more senior men would support a man I suppose but not a woman. Women who do speak up are then victimised and labelled as trouble causers. So the cycle continues.

Are there particular dynamics or working practices at the Bar which allow for bullying, harassment and sexual harassment to persist?

Limited regulation of fair allocation of work policies and in my chambers no monitoring of the allocation of unassigned work, led work or marketing opportunities. The senior usually male members back the clerks who provide them with work. The clerks get to behave how they like. They keep the people they see as important happy and do what they like with everybody else. They pay lip service to equality.

Are the relevant standards of behaviour relating to bullying, harassment and sexual harassment known, clear, accessible, and sufficiently robust?

Yes but difficult to report for fear of repercussions particularly from Chambers who have a habit of making the victim feel that they are the problem.

Are the relevant standards of behaviour relating to bullying, harassment and sexual harassment sufficiently mainstreamed within barristers' professional obligations? Should they, for example, be included within the Core Duties set out in the BSB Code of Conduct?

No and yes please.

What is the impact of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment on those subject to such misconduct?

It affects confidence. I took far longer to apply for silk as I was belittled by two male members of Chambers and a clerk. It makes people feel really unhappy and has led to several women leaving my Chambers or thinking about leaving.

Is there a wider impact upon barristers' staff, clients, or the justice system more broadly?

Women do not progress in the same way that men do or they leave the profession entirely. That leads to a profession at the senior end where the proportion of females is far lower than the proportion of females in the working population.

What are the barriers to reporting incidents of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment?

Chambers management closing ranks. EDOs not wanting to rock the boat as no real power given to them/their own desire to protect their own position. Those who report being victimised.

What mechanisms could be put in place to mitigate any repercussions against a complainant who has reported bullying, harassment or sexual harassment

A strict policy that under no circumstances should complainants be victimised or made to feel like the problem is them.

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) rules place a duty on barristers to report to the BSB in circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to believe there has been serious misconduct (with an exception set out in <a href="https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/the-bsb-handbook.html?part=E3FF76D3-9538-4B97-94C02111664E5709&audience=&csrfToken=&q="

target="_blank">guidance for victims, rC66 of the BSB Code of Conduct). Is this duty to report known, understood and implemented in practice?

Yes

Is there sufficient support in place both for complainants and persons accused of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment? Do the existing mechanisms appropriately balance the need for confidentiality and transparency?

Not sure.

Should there be interim measures which permit a person accused of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment to be subject to a precautionary exclusion from Chambers, their employer, or from practice during the adjudication of a complaint?

No

Are investigations into complaints (by the BSB, Chambers or any other relevant body) concerning bullying, harassment or sexual harassment sufficiently independent, prompt, robust, and fair?

I do not know.

Following an upheld complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, are the sanctions imposed appropriate and fair? Is enforcement action sufficiently robust to act as a deterrent?

Yes

Are there any preventative steps which can be taken to tackle bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment? In particular, what could be done in the court room, in Chambers, at the Bar more widely to assist in preventing such misconduct?

Communications in written form and meetings with Judges and Chambers spelling out that it will not be tolerated and that if seen it should be reported.

What improvements could be made to existing reporting mechanisms and support services?

Talk to Spot is a brilliant service. However there is still fear associated with reporting and being branded a trouble causer. It should be make clear that this absolutely will not be tolerated and support should be provided to the complainant.

In what ways could the judiciary, clerks, and chambers professionals work together with the Bar to bring about change?

By gaining understanding of the effects upon victims of harassment and bullying and making a commitment to stamp it out and to check each others behaviour.

Are there any other comparable professions which can offer examples of best practice in tackling bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment?

The medical profession

Other details

Thank you for taking the time to set up this survey. It is good to know these important issues are being considered at a high level.

Stay anonymous?

I wish to remain anonymous.

Your details

No response provided

Consent for evidence downloaded and submission

Yes

Consent for publishing

Yes