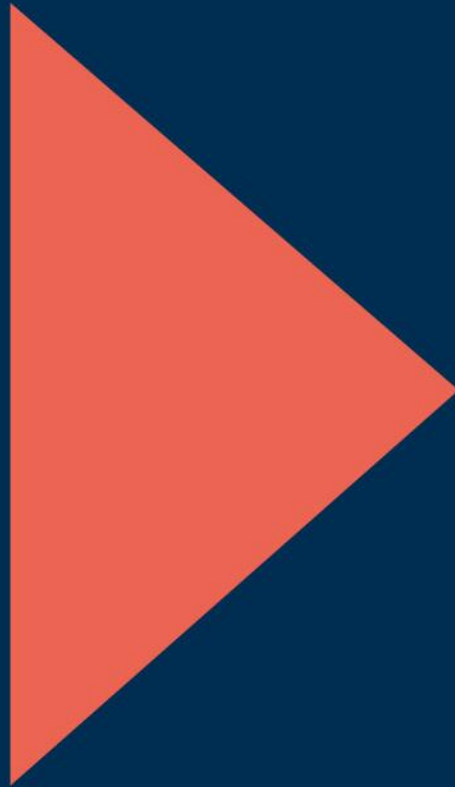




Young  
Barristers'  
Committee



# Starting at the Bar: your essential guide



The Bar Council

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# Welcome

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Congratulations on starting your journey as a practicing barrister, and welcome to the Bar of England and Wales.

The Bar Council's Young Barristers' Committee (YBC) is the voice of all barristers who are under seven years' practice; we represent and promote junior practitioners' interests and advocate on their behalf. We do this by liaising with stakeholders including young lawyers' groups in other jurisdictions, the government and MPs, the Junior Solicitors' Network, and the Bar Standards Board (BSB).

Your first seven years are crucial to building a thriving practice. We know that barristers who can develop a robust and financially secure practice with a healthy work/life balance are more likely to remain at the Bar than those who do not. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, life at the Bar has changed irrevocably, and the profession is still adjusting to new ways of working that bring their own challenges and opportunities.

We have therefore put this guide together to provide answers to the questions we had when we joined the Bar several years ago, and to signpost the vast resources available to support you.

We are acutely aware that these last few years have been difficult for many. We hope this guide is useful in helping you to navigate the profession and succeed in your first years at the Bar.

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 are ready to offer help wherever and whenever it is needed.

You can contact us by email at [YBC@BarCouncil.org.uk](mailto:YBC@BarCouncil.org.uk).



**Michael Harwood**  
**Chair,**  
**Young Barristers' Committee**



**Amrit Dhanoa**  
**Vice Chair,**  
**Young Barristers' Committee**

# Establishing your network

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No matter the type of organisation or chambers you have joined, or the practice area you have chosen, getting to know the culture and what is expected of you in the first few years of practice is vital. Finding allies in senior practitioners, members of chambers or senior individuals in your organisation is essential, as is talking to people who are a few years ahead of you to hear advice and share experiences.

Since Covid-19, the nature of networking has changed. More is taking place online, and often in-person encounters are reserved for flagship events. So it's harder to bump into people.

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.** Increasingly, your online presence matters and can shape your professional opportunities. A good way of identifying how you might improve your profile is by understanding your [Social Selling Index](#).
- **Be open about your situation.** If you have caring responsibilities, or a disability, this will no doubt have been discussed with your employers or chambers. But this should never prove a barrier to your development; if people know your situation, chances are they can take it into account if any opportunities come up in the future.
- **Come in to 'the office' when you can.** Being seen in chambers and the workplace is a great way of getting your face known and provides opportunities for you to meet people face to face.

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 a 'hybrid' network

The pandemic has changed the way many of us work. Being at work does not necessarily mean being in chambers or the office, and people may have been working for a long time having never met any of their colleagues in real life. When it comes to networking, consider:

- Attending meetings whether they are online or in person. If there is an in-person event and you are available, consider taking the opportunity to meet people face to face. This is often where the spontaneous conversations happen.
- Check in with people regularly - even if you're not in the office - a call to your clerk, a quick video chat with other members, a Teams message to check-in with your supervisor are all good ways to maintain relationships.
- Social networks like LinkedIn are a great way of keeping up to date with what's happening in the profession. Most chambers, Inns, Specialist Bar Associations (SBAs), and The Bar Council have their own profiles with related news, updates and events. Try to keep your own profile relatively up to date.
- Make an extra effort to take part in Inn, SBA and network activities, join committees as they are great ways of building a network beyond chambers. You could also join a Bar Council Committee – [vacancies are advertised here](#).

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:

### **Inns of Court**

The Inns of Court provide support for barristers through a range of educational activities, lunching and dining facilities, access to common rooms and gardens, mentoring and counselling schemes. Activities and events at your Inn provide opportunities to build your network.

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

### **Specialist Bar Associations**

The 24 [Specialist Bar Associations](#) (SBAs) are dedicated to the interests of groups of barristers within specific practice areas and geographical regions. The SBAs can help to promote their members' interests, for example responding to proposals for changes to regulations, and offering support to their members through networking events and mentoring schemes.

There is an annual fee to join, and the fee differs between each SBA.

## **Circuits**

The Bar in England and Wales is divided into six geographical regions, which are more commonly known as [circuits](#). The circuits provide important sources of support, advice and representation for barristers practising in those areas. They provide a range of services to their members, maintain lines of communication with all parts of the legal system, including the courts, and are represented on the Bar Council through the Circuit Leaders. The circuits also provide training and social events for barristers which are great networking opportunities.

There is an annual fee to join, and the fee differs between each circuit. Read more about Life on circuit at page 15 of this guide.

## **Special interest networks**

There are lots of forums across the Bar which have been set up to support barristers and increase opportunities. These forums provide support, raise issues and concerns on behalf of members, provide networking and socialising opportunities and some have mentoring schemes. Many barristers find these networks incredibly useful as they are a way of meeting people from different chambers, practice areas or with different experiences.

We provide a full list of special interest networks at the back of this guide.

# Working at the Employed Bar

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Almost a fifth of barristers in England and Wales are employed barristers. 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, as well as describing their experiences of working in employed settings through a series of focus group discussions.

The report reveals that:

- Employed barristers report high levels of wellbeing at work, with 86% stating there is a sense of collaboration and co-operation in their workplace.
- Half (49.9%) of employed barristers currently have a flexible working arrangement in place. Yet there is a desire for more flexible and remote working, with many at the employed Bar wanting to work part-time.
- More than half (51.4%) of employed barristers work in the public sector and nearly a quarter work in solicitors' firms.
- The employed Bar is more ethnically diverse than both the self-employed Bar and the working-age population of England and Wales, with 19.1% of employed barristers identifying as being from an ethnic minority or mixed-race background.

This [article from the Chair of the Employed Barristers' Committee](#) explains more about the history of the employed Bar, and how it may develop and grow in the coming years.

Employed barristers work for a range of different types of organisations including but not limited to:

- Government Legal Department e.g., working for a central government body such as HM Treasury
- Local authorities
- Regulators such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Financial Conduct Authority, the Pensions Regulator, the Health and Safety Executive, UK Athletics or the Financial Reporting Council
- Solicitors' firms
- Litigation boutiques
- Investment banks

- Energy companies
- Technology companies
- Insurers
- Pharmaceutical companies
- Asset Managers
- Sports clubs and associations
- Retailers

### **Building a practice as an employed barrister**

Senior members of staff in an organisation will generally determine work allocation, and as a result an employed barrister's progress promotion and/or development in the organisation. Where possible, understand how work is allocated, salary scales, promotion and training and development opportunities in your organisation. Building effective relationships with senior individuals in your organisation so that you can get the best exposure to internal and/or external clients is vital. You might do this by way of formal meetings, mentoring schemes, or by asking questions and/or proactively reaching out to have an informal meeting over a coffee or tea.

### **Dual practitioners**

Barristers can practice at both the self-employed and employed Bar. To do this they need a Dual Practising Certificate and to follow the [Dual Capacity Practice Protocol](#) and the BSB rules.

### **Secondments**

It is 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 of the 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 is worthwhile making clear from the start the applicable terms and the kind of work you will be undertaking.

### **Secondment from employed practice to chambers: a young barrister's experience**

As a CPS barrister, my pupillage covered a broad spectrum of criminal law, but as



an in-house prosecutor, I was only seeing part of the picture. I decided to do a secondment to chambers, a first for the CPS, in order to experience defence work. There are inevitably issues with a seconded prosecutor defending in cases brought by the same prosecution authority, so there were regulatory challenges which had to be settled with the BSB.

In chambers, I shadowed a junior barrister defending across the South East. I learned about the additional considerations that arise from working for a single client who you must take instructions from, give advice to, and at times pacify. I was reminded that the system involves interacting with people at their lowest point – they are often vulnerable themselves. The experience helped me to appreciate why defence advocates are there to ensure that their client’s best interests are protected.

During two months in chambers, I experienced a wide variety of cases and I completely recommend the experience. All of my preconceptions were shattered and the opportunity helped me in becoming a more well-rounded criminal practitioner.

The framework that was created has since been formally adopted to facilitate similar secondments between the CPS and the self-employed Bar – with Crown Prosecutors now approved to accept defence instructions. Employed or self-employed, I would encourage you to take a chance and see how the other half lives.

### **More information**

There is more information about the [employed Bar](#) on the Bar Council website and a recently updated section on the [employed Bar on the ethics and practice hub](#).

# Working in chambers

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Most self-employed barristers work in chambers, although some will practice as sole practitioners. The setup of chambers varies enormously, so it is important to get to know the set you've joined and how you can thrive within it.

## Chambers constitutions and committees

Barristers' chambers are typically unincorporated associations. Even if chambers operates via a company, typically, the shares in that company are held by trustees on behalf of the membership of the unincorporated association. As an unincorporated association, the rights and liabilities of members as well as the governance of chambers is governed by the contract between the members. This will be in form of a written constitution.

The things to look out for are:

- **Members' rent or contributions**

Most chambers' constitutions will impose an obligation on members to make a regular payment towards the operating costs of chambers. This is usually referred to as chambers 'rent' or 'contribution'.

How rent is calculated will vary between sets of chambers. Some chambers charge a percentage on money received by that member (referred to as the member's receipts). Others charge a fixed monthly sum payable regardless of a member's receipts. Others may have a combination of the two. Many sets will charge members a percentage on their receipts in a given time period (typically a calendar month) and room rent e.g., a fixed sum that will be determined by the size and/or desirability of the room occupied by a member.

The constitution may not prescribe the details of any rent scheme. Usually, it will leave that to be determined either by the members of chambers or by a committee or officer of chambers. Some chambers will also offer new members a 'soft landing' in the form of a more generous rent structure for the first few months or years of membership.

- **Liabilities on dissolution**

The constitution will typically also set out the liabilities of members in the event that chambers dissolves. Chambers will typically have entered into long-term financial agreements with third parties – e.g., the lease of the premises occupied by chambers, contracts for access to electronic resources, contracts for the supply of photocopiers. If chambers dissolves, sums due

under these contracts will still need to be paid. The constitution will usually determine the amount that members are to pay in these circumstances. Some constitutions will provide a strictly equal division of liabilities. Others may divide liabilities on a sliding scale based on a member's receipts over a certain time period, and others may have a sliding scale of liability dependent upon the length of membership.

Often the constitution will provide that members remain liable for chambers' debts for a period after they have ceased to be a member.

Many constitutions will make it a term of membership that members enter into an indemnity, by which they agree to indemnify those members of chambers that, for example, have taken out the lease of chambers premises or have agreed to guarantee that lease. It is important to carefully read any indemnity you are asked to sign and be sure that you understand the liability it imposes.

- **Notice period and notice monies**

Given that chambers will be required to enter into long term contracts it is quite normal for chambers to require those who wish to terminate their membership of chambers to have to give notice of their intended departure. The length of notice members must give before they leave will usually be set out in the constitution. Typically, this is about three to four months.

A lengthy notice period, e.g., in excess of six months or more - may amount to an unlawful restraint on trade or possible breach of the Code of Conduct. It is also worth checking the financial obligations of departing members during any notice period.

### **Questions to consider when looking to leave chambers:**

- Are departing members obliged to work out their notice or can they leave chambers during their notice period?
- Do the financial obligations of departing members during their notice period vary depending upon whether the departing member works out their notice?
- What are the financial obligations of a departing member during their notice period?

Many chambers constitutions will require a parting member to work out their notice period or to pay a sum equivalent to that which might have been paid to chambers if the member had worked out their notice. Some constitutions may also require a member that does not work out their notice period to pay to chambers 'rent' for work done at their new set.

The governance of chambers will be in the constitution too (or at least it should be). Historically, each set of chambers had a Head of Chambers who was responsible for making all of the decisions as to the running of chambers. Over the last 40 years the Bar has moved away from this model of governance. Albeit most chambers still have a Head of Chambers, there is no regulatory requirement to have one and some chambers have removed that office altogether. Typically, a chambers will have:

- **Head of Chambers**

Their functions are usually in the constitution. In some chambers the Head of Chambers will function as a figure head and may chair the management committee but will have little executive authority. In others, they may be invested with powers and functions that makes the role more akin a chief executive.

- **Management committee**

Most constitutions assign the supervision of the management of chambers in a management committee (often abbreviated to ManCom or MC). Most chambers will have regular elections for the management committee. The management committee may include within its membership the Chambers Director or Senior Clerk as well as other senior members of staff.

- **Other chambers committees**

Chambers may, in addition to the management committee, have other committees too – e.g., the pupillage committee, finance committee, marketing committee. The composition of these committees and their functions will differ between chambers and may not be spelt out in the constitution. This is especially so if they function or were established as sub-committees of the management committee.

- **Chambers meetings**

Most constitutions will provide for the holding periodic meetings of all members, often held on a yearly basis, and referred to as Annual General Meetings (AGMs). Typically, at these meetings the finances of chambers will be reviewed and important decisions affecting chambers will be made e.g., changes in the rent structure. The frequency and functions of a chambers meeting will vary from chambers to chambers.

### **Probationary tenancy**

You may find yourself undertaking a probationary tenancy; these used to be called 'third six' tenancies. It is important that you are aware of your rights as a probationary tenant. The Bar Council provides [guidance for probationary tenants and chambers that offer probationary tenancy](#).

### **Working with clerks**

Clerks and practice managers are a vital part of the chambers system, they are responsible for the work which comes into chambers, allocating work to barristers and managing members' diaries. Clerks often know everything that's going on in chambers, and they are the people who will be able to support you in making 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.

Developing good, positive working relationships with your clerks is incredibly important.

### **Building rapport**

Ask early on who is responsible for clerking your work, and how best to work with your clerks e.g., 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 are usually under a lot of pressure and probably have many barristers to manage.

Your clerks need you to be reliable and punctual. They also need reliable feedback and advance warning of any problems you may see coming up with your diary or workload. You should keep your clerks well informed. For example, when you finish in court you should inform your clerks of the outcome at the very earliest opportunity. The more they know, the better they can manage the immediate, future and prospective workload and expectations of the client(s).

### **What you can and should expect from your clerk(s)**

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 are being treated, spoken to, or managed, you should speak to your designated clerk or practice manager in the first instance if this is appropriate and you feel able to do so. Otherwise, you can speak to the Senior Clerk or Head of Chambers if this is more appropriate for you.

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 judgement calls based on their knowledge and experience.

## 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. This means all barristers should get a fair shot at work, but it doesn't always work out like that. One of the reasons is much of the work is already allocated as solicitors and clients know who they want to use. That is why marketing your practice and becoming known to other members of chambers and solicitors is so important.

There is a lot of work being done at the Bar to improve allocation of work and make it fairer.

The Bar Council has two toolkits on monitoring work:

- [Monitoring Work Distribution Toolkit: Sex](#)
- [Monitoring Work Distribution Toolkit: Race](#)

## Practice reviews

If you are self-employed, you should have regular practice review meetings with your clerks. In the first couple of years of tenancy these meetings should take place regularly, reducing to six-monthly, then yearly after 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.

If you are employed, you should be having regular review meetings with your line manager or supervisor. If these aren't taking place, do request them and be proactive in setting them up.

The practice review meetings are an opportunity to discuss how your practice is developing, whether you're getting the type and quantity of work you need, how you're managing the workload, your developing relationships with clients, marketing opportunities and relationships. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss work allocation, junior briefs or led work opportunities and fees.

The Bar Council's [Practice review guide for barristers and clerks](#) should help you to navigate these meetings.

## 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](#).

It is essential to take data protection issues seriously. Make sure you know the rules, follow your chambers' policies, and look after personal information properly. The Information Commissioner has fined several barristers heavily for data protection breaches.

Information about the rules barristers should follow is detailed in [GDPR Bar Council guide for barristers and chambers.](#)

# Life on Circuit

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The jurisdiction of England and Wales is divided into regional areas known as circuits. Each circuit has a Circuit Leader, who is a barrister responsible for addressing any issues faced by barristers in their region during their course of practice.

These circuits are:

- **Midland Circuit**
- **North Eastern Circuit**
- **Northern Circuit**
- **South Eastern Circuit**
- **Wales and Chester Circuit**
- **Western Circuit**
- **European Circuit**

There is more information about the circuits on page 5. [You can find out more about the circuits here.](#)

Your circuit is your immediate regional network. For a joining fee you can become a member and benefit from seminars, training, and more general pastoral support. Whether self-employed or employed, you should consider becoming a member of circuit, as it is a great way of getting to know practitioners in your region and become a part of the local Bar.

Young barristers give their experiences of life on circuit, below:

## **Midland Circuit**

I feel very fortunate to be able to say that my circuit has played a huge part in my career at the Bar. It has made me feel supported on both a personal and professional level.

Circuit Ball or 'grand night' as we call it, has been fantastic for a number of reasons. The first one I attended was in summer 2021, owing to it having been cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. It was a joyous signal of the return of some normality to life at the Bar and it gave me a sense of genuinely being part of the profession.



It has also allowed me to develop my relationships with colleagues outside of chambers. In the world of digital working, it provides a fantastic opportunity to meet the majority of your contemporaries at other sets and share a tale of the week's endeavours, a drink or perhaps a slightly questionable dance move!

Circuit is also proactive in putting on training and talks. For example, I am currently looking forward to the RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) training course, an area in which the importance of continuing professional development cannot be understated. A slightly less conventional, but if anything, more important, course that is due to take place is on unconscious bias.

With regard to a more relaxed event, the Midland Circuit Women's Forum put on an evening with Baroness Hale. Baroness Hale kindly gave an address and then took questions on topics, ranging from her infamous ruling on the lawfulness of the then Prime Minister's attempt to prorogue parliament, to the US Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v Wade.

From a wellbeing point of view, circuit benefits from the Leader of Circuit being well known to the majority of its members and judiciary. If an issue arises, perhaps with the judiciary, I know that I could reach out to the Leader of Circuit for assistance. I am also lucky enough to be able to walk to work along one of the many canals (some say more than Venice!) and nip into chambers for a cup of coffee and a catch up before heading over to court.

I joined the Young Barristers' Committee of the Bar Council in 2022 and since then we have been working to create stronger links between the Bar Council and circuit. The Bar Council recognises the great work done within circuits and is committed to facilitating links between circuits and to have open dialogue with each circuit about how it fits in with the Bar Council and what can be done to build relationships.

### **North Eastern Circuit**

Life on Circuit is varied, exciting and collegiate. My pupillage in Leeds covered a mixed practice area, which is almost invariably the case in chambers on circuit. There is emphasis on variety of experience: forensic examination of civil papers, managing extremely vulnerable family clients, and feisty criminal cross-examination all helped me with two things: (1) deciding which area was right for me; and (2) using the skills learned in one area to enhance my advocacy in the others.

Circuit offers a tremendous amount of support, from formal training events with leading silks, judges and academics, to a coffee after a tough morning with a caring colleague you bumped into in the robing room. There are grand black tie dinners, focus groups agitating for social and professional change, quiet pints at the pub, park runs and theatre trips.

One of the benefits of a smaller geographic area on circuit is that it is possible to develop close connections with colleagues (as many are physically in the same chambers or same courts week in week out) and with judges, court staff and solicitors. There is a real sense of community and the chance to form bonds in person with the leading lights on circuit to inspire you and propel your career to the next level.

# Equality and diversity

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Whether in employed or self-employed practice, all barristers are expected to take equality and diversity rules very seriously.

There is detailed information on the equality and diversity standards in the [BSB Handbook](#). The BSB also has guidance and supporting information in the [BSB Handbook equality rules](#).

Rule rC110 places a personal obligation on all self-employed barristers, however they practice, and on the managers of BSB-authorized bodies, as well as on the entity itself, to take reasonable steps to ensure that they have appropriate policies which are enforced. As a minimum, your chambers must have a written statement of policy on equality and diversity, as well as policies dealing with anti-harassment, parental leave, flexible working and reasonable adjustments. It must appoint an equality and diversity officer and diversity data officer to conduct equality monitoring and collect and publish diversity data.

The BSB also prescribes selection and recruitment procedures in the [Fair Recruitment Guide](#).

Barristers employed by public bodies, including the Government Legal Service, are also covered by the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) which places a positive duty on them to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

## Legal obligations – the Equality Act 2010

Section 47 of the Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination in relation to:

- The arrangements chambers use to decide who to offer pupillage or tenancy, the terms offered or not offering a pupillage or tenancy.
- The terms on which someone is a pupil or tenant, in the way the pupil or tenant is afforded access to opportunities for training or gaining experience or for receiving any other benefit or service, by terminating the pupillage or pressuring a person to leave chambers or subjecting that person to any other detriment.

It also prohibits a barrister from:

- Harassing a pupil or tenant or anyone who has applied for pupillage or tenancy.
- Victimising another person in relation to recruitment to pupillage or tenancy or the terms on which this is offered or in not offering a pupillage or tenancy.

## **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 the Bar Council's [Equality, Diversity and Social Mobility Committee](#).

## **Reasonable adjustments**

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on a barrister to make reasonable adjustments. The legal duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements to make reasonable adjustments:

1. 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.
2. Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.
3. Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison.

Where the provision of information is a requirement under 1 and 3 it must be provided in an accessible format.

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

The Bar Council has a guide for chambers and employers with [more information about reasonable adjustments](#).

Chambers are required by the BSB Handbook rC110(3)(m) to have a reasonable adjustments policy covering all members, pupils, staff, mini-pupils, clients and visitors to chambers. A basic model policy is provided in the [BSB Handbook: Supporting Information](#).

Further information on the types of reasonable adjustment that can be made can be found on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) website](#).

## Access to Work

Access to Work is a Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) programme, delivered by Jobcentre Plus, which covers either advice and/or potential financial support for practical measures to overcome work related barriers based on a disability. Access to Work is available to barristers with a disability who are in paid employment or self-employed.

Access to Work can help with things such as:

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

The Bar Council has more [information about Access to Work](#) on the ethics and practice hub.

## 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 progressing a sustainable and rewarding career at the Bar.

In response to this, the Bar Council's Race Working Group published a groundbreaking report on [Race at the Bar](#), detailing the evidence and setting out 23 specific actions aimed at shifting the dial in improving career outcomes for barristers from under-represented ethnic groups.

There are a growing number of networks across the Bar which support barristers from under-represented groups (see [further information and support](#)), and the Bar Council ethics and practice hub has guidance including a [Framework for taking action on race equality](#), a [Race terminology guide](#) and a toolkit for [Monitoring work distribution by race](#).

## Bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour

The BSB's rules make it clear that harassment, bullying and inappropriate behaviour are unacceptable within the profession and that there must be policies and procedures in place to tackle them if they arise. There are sources of help if you experience any type of bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour at the Bar:

- **Speak to someone.** Your chambers or employer must have a bullying and harassment policy which will include sources of support and routes to reporting. Have a look at the policy and decide what you want to do. You may want to speak to the Equality and Diversity Officer in chambers, or someone in a human resources (HR) role if you are employed.
- **Call the confidential Bar Council helpline** (Telephone number: 0207 611 1426, email: [equality@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:equality@barcouncil.org.uk)). When you call this number or email you will be connected with a member of the Bar Council's Equality and Diversity team. They are responsible for issues including harassment and bullying at the Bar. At no point will you be required to give your name or the name of your chambers or employer. The team will be able to provide advice and support on what you should do next - but you will not be required to do anything, you can simply discuss your options. All contact is always treated with strict confidentiality.
- **Talk to Spot.** This is a secure tool designed to help people working at the Bar to record and report any incident of inappropriate behaviour. You can make a record of what happened, who did it, who saw it, where it happened and when. When you have inputted the information, it will generate a date-stamped record of the incident. No one else will see the record. It belongs only to the person who created it. [Read more about Talk to Spot.](#)
- **Consider reporting the incident to the BSB.** This will prompt a BSB investigation. Harassment constitutes serious misconduct (see rC65/gC96 of the [BSB Handbook](#)) which has [reporting requirements](#). You can read more about the process of [reporting concerns about barristers](#) on the BSB's website.

### **More information and support**

The Bar Council provides information, advice and guidance to barristers and chambers on handling equality and diversity issues and compliance with the BSB's equality and diversity rules. There is an equality and diversity helpline available on 020 7611 1321 from 09:15 – 17:15 Monday to Friday.

# Finances and administration

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## Costs of practice

Whether you are self-employed, employed or a dual practitioner you will need to give careful thought to the practical costs of your practice as a barrister.

These are likely to include but are not limited to:

- Chambers fees
- Insurance
- Cost of practicing certificate annual renewal
- Equipment, clothing and software
- High-speed stable internet for home working
- Income tax and national insurance
- Specialist Bar Association fees e.g., the Criminal Bar Association, Commercial Bar Association or membership of your circuit
- Training and professional development e.g., paying for courses on equality and diversity or alternative dispute resolution
- Travel card for public transport or the costs of running a vehicle
- Accountant and/or financial advisor fees

All the above-mentioned costs of practice are applicable for self-employed practitioners.

**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, how much you're owed and a rough idea of when money will come in, and what you owe (to chambers, tax etc). Getting a system in place from the start and devoting time to managing your money, will help you feel more in control.

Use an Excel spreadsheet or other similar software to keep track of your income and outgoings. Some practitioners also find it useful to set reminders 6-8 weeks in advance of certain payments being due e.g., renewal of their practising certificates so that they can organise their finances accordingly.

When you become a tenant or join a new set of chambers, it should be made clear to you how your clerks and fee clerks operate. If in doubt, speak to another member of chambers you feel happy to approach.

When a brief fee has been agreed for a piece of work you or your clerk should keep a written record of the date when that agreement was reached and who agreed that fee. Be clear about the terms on which the work has been agreed (see rC22 of the [BSB Handbook](#)) - you may need to refer to them later.

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 is incumbent on you to tell your clerks (either by email or in-person). It's important to keep your clerks up to date so that they can bill work on your behalf. In any event, you must keep records supporting the fees that you are charging to comply with rC88 of the [BSB Handbook](#).

If solicitors or other clients do not pay you promptly, your clerks are the ones who will chase the payments on your behalf. Chasing payments is usually the role of a specific fees clerk. They will contact the client at certain intervals to chase up payments.

If you have a problem with cash flow and aged debt, your fees clerk will be the person to speak to. You can discuss the current situation with them, and they will usually be happy to let you know what is going on. See also the resources available on outstanding fees on the [ethics and practice hub](#).

Ensure that all your billing information is sent to the clerks in a timely fashion. If it can be helped, do not let billing build up. Billing should ideally be sent after the piece of work or attendance is completed.

Always check and familiarise yourself with the clerk's billing processes. Your clerks should inform you but if you are unsure ask your clerks as this may guide you to the correct billing process.

Keep all bank details and relevant reference numbers (such as Legal Aid Agency, VAT Number) up to date. If chambers do not have up to date information may result in a delay or no payment.

Be aware that if you are VAT registered, if 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 Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will not release the payment without the barrister's individual LAA number.

You should not accept any payments from clients directly. If the clients insist for any reason, you should contact your clerk(s) immediately and explain.



## Financial wellbeing

Sometimes there can be financial stressors, particularly at the start of your career and it can impact on your practice and your wellbeing. When that is the case, it is important to remember that you are not alone. There is a lot more information and how to get support on the [wellbeing at the Bar website](#).

## Ask for help

If you are struggling financially, it can be worthwhile speaking to your practice manager, clerks, or employer. For example, sometimes an interest free bridging loan may be available to you through your Inn, or a grant maybe available from a benevolent association for example the [Barristers' Benevolent Association](#).

## Tax

Once you have secured tenancy, it is important to keep on top of your tax returns and management of your finances.

Make sure you sign yourself up with an accountant in good time for your tax return (and VAT returns if you so choose). They can advise you on the best way to set up your bank accounts for your business.

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



When reviewing your financial affairs, there are various steps you should consider.

### Accounting

An employed barrister's tax computations should not be too demanding since calculations will be done by their employer. However, for a self-employed barrister, matters are a little more complex.

We suggest using an accounting firm that specializes in advising members of the Bar such as Silver Levene, since they will 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.

### Protect your income and capital

It is important to evaluate the financial consequences of your premature death for those left behind as it is also to quantify the likely impact of not being able to work due to long-term disability or illness.

### Income Protection

The chances of being unable to work due to long-term illness or disability are extremely unlikely. However, if you are unlucky and have no protection in place, the chances are life thereafter will be very difficult. Income protection is designed to address this.

There are restrictions on how much cover an individual can have but the best advice is to cover the likely ongoing expenses, and also a further sum to be invested to help meet expenses in retirement when the income protection plan expires.

A note of caution: be aware that some income protection providers have clauses within their contracts that nullify cover for those that work long hours. Equally note that some barristers' chambers also 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 are looking to pay off a mortgage or other debts, opt for 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 -- go for an income assurance. That way, the life company retains the majority of the capital in the early stages and can benefit from the remaining capital, meaning the premiums are considerably cheaper.

Finally, it is important to consider trusts so that any benefit payable falls outside the estate and is not therefore subject to Inheritance Tax.

## **Investing**

### **Pensions**

Along life's journey there will be disruptions. Some will be welcome such as marriage, children and perhaps an extended break; some will not be welcome such as illness and disability. Retirement will arrive for most and, with it, a cessation of earned income. Saving for future capital or income requirements is so much easier when started early because the money you invest has longer to grow and the growth on the money you invest grows alongside it.

Investment into pensions attracts tax relief up to one's highest marginal rate, the fund grows tax free and at retirement one can access up to 25% of the pension fund tax free. For most, upon death, the fund can be passed down to spouses and partners and their children without IHT.

### **Individual Savings Accounts**

ISAs can invest in a wide range of assets including cash and all growth and income is tax free. You can invest a maximum of £20,000 each year.

It is not recommended that Cash ISAs are held long term since the returns are unlikely to outpace inflation and the resultant capital will in effect be eroded.

### **General Investment Accounts**

Each UK resident has an annual Capital Gains Tax Allowance (CGTA) that allows them to offset a level of capital gains and thereby pay no tax on them. In addition, currently there exists a Savings Allowance and Dividend Allowance to mitigate tax further.

For those with higher earnings or who come to the Bar with a certain amount of capital already, General Investment Accounts (GIAs) offer a further tax-advantageous investment wrapper.

### **Other investments**

There are a number of other investments that carry with them tax reliefs or benefits and are more specialist in nature. These include:

- offshore bonds
- Venture Capital Trusts (VCT)
- Enterprise Investment Schemes (EIS)
- other private equity structures and Business Relief (BR) schemes

These structures can be attractive. However, for every success there are many, many failures.

### **Property as an investment**

Investing in property over the last 40 years has been very lucrative. However, increasing pressure upon property and the commercial viability of property as an investment is now more questionable.

Not only are these assets high risk (one asset, one city, one country, one currency) but a number of structural changes have resulted in falling prices:

- The Buy to Let tax reduces the net rental receivable
- Interest rate increases are making mortgage payments far more expensive
- The widescale adoption of part-working from home reduces demand for commercial property at the same time as more and more shops go online. It is possible that the resultant surplus of commercial and retail space will lead to a widescale change of use to residential, thereby resulting in a surplus of residential properties and, with it, falling prices

### **Risk**

When deciding what to invest in, you have to be mindful of your attitude to risk (which helps to manage concerns during market volatility) and capacity for loss (which helps to ensure one has sufficient resource with which to weather volatility).

Spreading monies amongst various different types of plans allows you to use the widest range of tax allowances and reliefs and can help mitigate the impact of tax in retirement by turning on and off income streams depending upon their plans tax treatment at the time.

### **Conclusion**

The world of financial services is complex and very dynamic. Competent financial advisers offer subjectivity, can help set goals and monitor them, can assess the risk you take, the likelihood of being able to carry on your current lifestyle in retirement, and they can mitigate tax and drive down costs.

Financial advisers have the tools to source and keep under review funds from within the full investment spectrum.

If in doubt, seek advice from a barrister specialist financial adviser.

# Building your practice

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Day one of being a barrister will not be your first experience in chambers, at work or in court. You'll have done extensive on-the-job training during your pupillage, and you may have done one or more mini-pupillages and have other work experience. But now you're out on your own, we asked some barristers a bit further down the road for some tips on how to build your practice from the get-go.

## Working with solicitors

- Always 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 as soon as you've had time to read them. It ensures the solicitor is abreast 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 this at the outset as there may be difficulty in arranging a convenient time for the client and/or the expert.
- If asked for your opinion, give your opinion. Try not to defer giving that opinion while further information is obtained (unless it is crucial). Remember that your instructing solicitor is having to assess the strength of any claim on an ongoing basis usually with only partial information.
- After attending a hearing, drop the solicitor a quick message to give them the highlights. Once back at your desk give the solicitor a clear and concise report and attendance note which can be passed onto the client with minimal adaptation. 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 esoteric 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, and this is usually what the client wants too.

## **Making your own opportunities**

The Specialist Bar Association (SBA) for your area of practice will run events which you can attend and make contacts at. Your Inn of Court, circuit and other groups and forums around the Bar will also have an events programme. Once you have made contacts, you can start to put yourself forward as a speaker or propose event ideas.

Writing articles for your chambers website or contributing to blogs and newsletters either online or in print is also a great way to get known.

## **International practice**

There are many opportunities to build a more international practice, and chambers can help you if they do this kind of work. Here are some resources that may help:

- The Bar Council's [support pages for international practice](#)
- Advice from the former and current Chair of the Young Barristers' Committee on how to get started in his Counsel article '[Young Bar: home and away](#)'.
- [The International professional and legal development grants programme](#).

## **Social media**

Finding your space and voice on social media can be very effective. Whatever your practice area, commenting on legal developments, and making the law understandable and accessible to non-lawyers is a great way to get noticed.

Following other lawyers in your field, joining in conversations or debates may make your name more familiar to potential clients, could build your reputation with seniors who may be looking for juniors in the future.

As a new barrister you really need to think about the impact any strong or controversial opinions could have on your emerging practice. There's a balance to strike, and one of the hallmarks of being a good barrister is knowing when to speak out and when to remain silent.

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) has provided [interim guidance on social media](#), which notes the Core Duties and duty of client confidentiality.

The Bar Council also offers guidance on [advertising and website profiles](#) on its ethics and practice hub.

## **Mentoring schemes across the Bar**

There are a number of mentoring schemes across the Bar, some of which are focused on career stage, others are circuit based and some for specific groups. Many

chambers run mentoring schemes, and most barristers are open to being a mentor if you ask them.

The [Bar Council Mentoring Service](#) specifically assists students seeking to join the Bar, parents who wish to stay in practice, and barristers considering silk or judicial appointment.

This is a list of some of the other mentoring schemes across the Bar:

- [Middle Temple Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Gray's Inn Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Western Circuit Women's Forum Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Midland Circuit Women's Forum Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Chancery Bar Association Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Women in Family Law Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Black Barristers' Network](#)
- [Women in Criminal Law Mentoring Scheme](#)

### **Pro bono and volunteering**

Pro bono work is one of the greatest traditions of the Bar. Pro bono work and volunteering can provide support to all those who are not able to access legal aid, as well as career benefits for a young barristers, for example, the opportunity to gain advocacy experience in the courtroom. If you are 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.

Young barristers are often asked to volunteer by working for Advocate, at a Legal Advice or Law Centre, or by providing services free to charities or even friends and family. There is no reason why you shouldn't do this, and it can provide valuable experience.

[Advocate](#) is a national charity that offers opportunities for barristers to contribute to the community. It matches members of the public with deserving cases, but can't get fund representation or access legal aid, with barristers who are willing to donate their time and expertise for free. It also operates a trustee-finding service for charities looking for legally qualified trustees.

[The Free Representation Unit](#) provides representation at tribunals in social security and employment cases. There has been a significant reduction in the number of cases being brought before the Employment Tribunals and a corresponding drop in the number of volunteers required, but applications are still welcome from junior barristers and would-be barristers at all stages of their legal training and early careers.

### **Pro bono - the rules**

Barristers may supply legal services (as defined in the [BSB Handbook](#)) at a Legal Advice Centre on a voluntary or part-time basis so long as they observe the requirements of rS41-42 and gS9-11 of the Handbook. The BSB's definition of "legal services" specifically excludes "giving advice on legal matters free to a friend or relative or acting as unpaid or honorary legal adviser to any charity benevolent or philanthropic institution", so if you are acting in any of these capacities you need not hold a current practising certificate.

The situation is different if you are an employed barrister; the Bar Council's guidance for [employed barristers working pro bono](#) provides further details.



# Wellbeing

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Although rewarding and exhilarating, the life and work of a barrister is demanding and often pressured. When pressure becomes too much you may experience stress and your wellbeing could be at risk.

The Bar Council has worked with doctors, experts and barristers to bring together a website dedicated to [wellbeing at the bar](#), which provides information for barristers, clerks and chambers on staying well and tackling stress.

## Looking after yourself as well as your practice

If you do not have time to do a piece of work properly or you have too much work, tell the clerks or your manager. It may have gone unnoticed, but if you are struggling it is best to ask for help quickly.

If you encounter stresses, health problems or difficulties, it is best to involve your clerks or manager. Do not suffer in silence. There are some tips on how to go about this on the [wellbeing at the Bar website](#).

Keeping your clerks or manager well informed will allow them to manage your workload appropriately.

## Managing your time

Setting aside time to look after yourself is essential, not an optional extra.

There are thousands of tips, articles and guides to time management online, and even more companies trying to sell you the technology which will organise your life and help you to manage your time effectively.

### Time management: Tips from young barristers

- **Actively manage your diary.** Keep regularly up to date with your chambers or work diary and make sure your workload for the coming month is manageable. Stay aware of which days will be intense and which days might be easier to handle. That way you can plan your social life around when work might be easing off and give yourself extra spare time when the job might need a little more from you.
- **Make 'to do' lists.** Keep a note of tasks that need completing and allocated timeframe for completing them. Everything from prepping for a trial and drafting paperwork to telephoning a solicitor or arranging a meeting with your clerk should be on your list. Working this way has the added satisfaction of ticking off or clearing the list and feeling incredibly productive.

- **Use spare time wisely.** Being a barrister is hard work and can be intense, but there also tends to be a lot of segments of wasted time within a day. Draft your attendance notes on your train journeys to and from court, or answer e-mails or scan papers when you are sitting around waiting at court (only if you are done with client conferences, of course). Using those small pockets of time for work can create space elsewhere in the day or evening.
- **Be aware of how you work best (and worst).** The Bar is unique as a profession in that your time is, mostly, your own and no one will have oversight over how much a little time you spend on a task. For some people this can be really daunting and for others it is a perfect way of working. If you're someone who struggles to get started or procrastinates, set yourself a timetable like you might have done at university or for Bar school revision. If your problem is knowing how long to spend on a task, ask a more senior member of chambers as to how long they think this type of work should take and try to stay reasonably close to that estimate. If you work better after a break in the evening, do that. If you're an early bird, then try and keep your evenings a little freer.
- **Give yourself a break.** Try to get ahead of work when you can, but also make sure you give yourself time away from it too. You will be much more effective and efficient if you do. It might seem counter-intuitive but planning for fun and non-work time and sticking to it regardless of your load will lead to a more productive work session afterwards. A lot of junior barristers will give themselves Friday evenings and Saturdays completely off from work (unless in the most exceptional cases), but part of Sunday will be a prep day for the week. Work out a system or regime that works best for you and make good use of out-of-office notifications so colleagues and clients know when they can expect to hear from you.

### Handling criticism

The Bar can be a critical place - barristers are a competitive bunch. It is not unusual for barristers, especially those who are inexperienced, to be subjected to unwarranted criticism. Most cases result in one side winning and the other side losing – that doesn't mean the barrister on the losing side did anything wrong... it's just how it is.

#### A barrister says:

"Don't fall for robing room games. Some barristers positively enjoy trying to put off their opponents by ostracising or intimidating them. It isn't you. They're just playing games. Ignore them."

The best way to protect yourself from this is by doing as careful and competent a job as you possibly can. It might be helpful to keep a detailed record of all the work you do on a case: the people you consult; the instructions you take; the conversations you have; the drafting you do; the advice you give – so that in the event the case has to be returned there is a clear record of the professionalism with which you've approached your handling of it.

If you are experiencing criticism which feels more like bullying, help is available. You could report your experiences to [Talk to Spot](#), get support from the [wellbeing at the Bar](#) website or call the Bar Council's Equality and Diversity line on 020 7611 1426.

# Parenting at the Bar

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There are a lot of parents practising at the Bar. They are in every practice area and many have thriving practices. But it has to be said that the Bar lags behind in offering really effective flexible working models. It has been left to individuals to work it out for themselves, often juggling parenting leave and part-time working and having to negotiate with chambers on rent breaks and payment holidays.

Now chambers have more sophisticated parental leave and flexible working policies, and there are rules which ensure new parents can take proper leave (up to 1 year), have rent holidays (at a minimum; some chambers go a lot further), and ways to help you 'keep your hand in' while on leave.

All of the information about the rules covering [family career breaks](#) are on the Bar Council ethics and practice hub.

The Bar Council also provides further information on parental support as part of its [wellbeing and career support](#) pages.

The [Bar Council's parent mentoring scheme](#) is for any barrister thinking about starting a family, on maternity leave or trying to balance working with bringing up a family. The scheme will put you in touch with a mentor who has made it work and is happy to share their insights, while supporting you with your new challenges. Where possible they will try to match barristers from the same practice areas or circuits.

The Bar Council has special arrangements for barristers with the [Smithfield Nursery](#) in London and [Tiny Tree Day Nursery](#) in Leeds. Both offer barristers special rates and more flexible opening hours to accommodate barrister parents' schedules.

## **Preparations for starting a family: tips from a young barrister**

- Ask about your chamber's parental leave policy and the support provided to tenants who have been on parental leave both during their leave and on return to work. If you begin your career before you have children and perhaps consider that having children is in the future, consider the parental leave policy. This is your opportunity to shape your chambers provision before being faced with parental leave without the support you need.
- Be honest with yourself about the impact that having children will have on your ability to work as a barrister – particularly if your work is heavily 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 real risk that you will feel overwhelmed, and your work and wellbeing will 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. Choose your mentor wisely. Try to find someone whose personal circumstances mirror your own.
- Don't ignore the benefits of the Bar when it comes to having a fulfilled family life. If your chambers policy is up to scratch, you have the support of your clerks and you can manage your caseload then you can maintain control and be there for your children in a way that other professions can't necessarily accommodate.

# Handling complaints and reporting obligations

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Complaints may take many forms. A minor issue may be sorted out by you, the client or solicitor, and your clerks and should not need to commence 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 immediately so the complaints procedure can be complied with.

## **Rule C99 of the BSB Handbook**

You must notify clients in writing when you are instructed, or, if that is if not practicable, at the next appropriate opportunity:

1. of their right to make a complaint, including their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman (if they have such a right), how, and to whom, they can complain, and of any time limits for making a complaint;
2. if you are doing referral work, that the lay client may complain directly to chambers or the BSB entity without going through solicitors.

Don't sit on a complaint and hope it will go away. Engage and respond, even if it is painful or infuriating. Speak to someone in chambers – another barrister and/or your clerk as soon as possible.

You will need to speak to your Head of Chambers if the matter is serious (and you may want to even if it is not).

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.

Always respond to letters and emails from the BSB, as failure to do so could constitute a separate offence.

There is helpful [guidance for the operation of the complaints procedure](#) on the BSB website. It is also worth looking at the regulatory and ethical guidance on the Bar Council's [ethics and practice hub](#).

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 of barrister. You will be guilty of serious misconduct yourself if you fail to report a barrister who has committed serious misconduct to the BSB (see [BSB Handbook](#), rC66-69, where there is guidance as to what constitutes "serious misconduct"). If you need to make a report or wish to talk to the BSB about a possible reporting situation, contact the BSB professional conduct department on **020 7611 1445**.

### **Reporting obligation**

Barristers can be found guilty of serious misconduct if they fail to report a barrister who has committed serious misconduct to the BSB (see [BSB Handbook](#), rC66-69, where there is guidance as to what constitutes "serious misconduct").

If you need to make a report or wish to talk to the BSB about a possible reporting situation, contact the BSB professional conduct department on 020 7611 1445.

### **The rules explained**

The Bar Council's [ethics and practice hub](#) is an online library of ethics documentation. Visit the hub to search and view material that can help you find answers to your professional ethics questions.

The Bar Council provides a confidential [ethical enquiries service](#) to assist barristers to identify, interpret and comply with their professional obligations under the BSB Handbook.

Call the ethical enquiries line on 020 7611 1307. Lines are open 09:15-17:15 Monday-Friday, or email: [Ethics@BarCouncil.org.uk](mailto:Ethics@BarCouncil.org.uk).

**Please note: this service does not give legal advice.**

# Training and professional development

You are 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.

The [New Practitioner Programme](#) (NPP) requires all 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 nine hours on advocacy and three hours on ethics.

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

[The Bar Council](#) offers a range of conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses to help barristers fulfil their professional development requirements and build their practice.

The Inns of Court all offer a huge range of education, training and professional development:

- [Gray's Inn](#)
- [Lincoln's Inn](#)
- [Middle Temple](#)
- [Inner Temple](#)



# Further information and support

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## Equality and diversity

The Bar Council offers a [confidential equality and diversity helpline](#) to all pupils and members of the Bar.

Email: [equality@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:equality@barcouncil.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7611 1426

## Ethics

The Bar Council provides a [confidential ethical enquiries service](#) to assist barristers to identify, interpret and comply with their professional obligations under the BSB Handbook. The [ethics and practice hub](#) contains guides to assist barristers on matters of conduct and ethics in particular types of situations.

Email: [ethics@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:ethics@barcouncil.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7611 1307

## Reporting bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour

Talk to Spot is [an online tool](#) for the Bar to confidentially report inappropriate behaviour.

## Wellbeing

[Wellbeing at the Bar](#) provides mental health and wellbeing support and resources for barristers, clerks and staff. The assistance programme provides confidential telephone support, counselling services and online resources.

Telephone: 0800 169 2040

## Pupils

The pupils' helpline gives confidential advice and support to pupils by putting them in touch with an experienced and independent barrister who can help with problems encountered during pupillage.

Email: [pupilhelpline@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:pupilhelpline@barcouncil.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7611 1415

## Barristers Benevolent Association (BBA)

The [BBA supports and helps members of the Bar in England and Wales](#) and their dependents who are in need, in distress or in difficulties.

Telephone: 020 7242 4761

## Young Barristers' Committee

The [Young Barristers' Committee](#) is the voice of and representative committee for all barristers of up to seven years' post-pupillage.

Email: [YBC@BarCouncil.org.uk](mailto:YBC@BarCouncil.org.uk)

## Bar Standards Board (BSB)

If you need to make a report or wish to talk to the BSB about a possible reporting situation, you can find out [more information on the BSB website](#).

Telephone: 020 7611 1445

## Inns of Court

The Inns of Court provide support for barristers through a range of educational activities, dining facilities, access to common rooms and gardens and the provision of various grants and scholarships:

- [Gray's Inn](#)
- [Inner Temple](#)
- [Lincoln's Inn](#)
- [Middle Temple](#)

## Circuits

The circuits provide important sources of support, advice and representation for barristers practicing in those areas:

- [Midland](#)
- [Northern](#)
- [North Eastern](#)
- [Western](#)
- [South Eastern](#)
- [Wales and Chester](#)
- [European](#)

## Specialist interest networks

These networks can 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.
- [Themis](#) – The Intersectional Women Barristers' Alliance - a community for all women at the Bar.
- [FreeBar](#) – a network aiming to foster inclusion and support for LGBT+ people working at and for the Bar.

# Acknowledgements

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This guide will be updated regularly. Please get in touch with any comments or amendments by emailing [ycb@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:ycb@barcouncil.org.uk)

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