



The Bar Council

Authorisation to Practise 2021 – Prioritising the Bar

The Bar Council is acutely aware that many barristers have been living with a significant drop in income or earnings as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on their practices. The Bar Council is therefore predicting a substantial loss of Practising Certificate Fee (PCF) income this year. In anticipation, for the last year we have been making savings wherever possible, through freezing pay and recruitment, furloughing staff, cutting capital and other budgets and other measures. We are also taking a CBILS loan to spread the impact over time and thus can avoid an otherwise inevitable increase PCF for 2021/22.

The Bar Council will continue to identify where it can make savings in its operations.

To help with cashflow, we are repeating split payments for PCF, specifically for block payments made by chambers and other organisations. Block payers will have the option to pay half of their PCF during the Authorisation to Practise timetable and the remaining balance in late September 2021 to spread the payments. We introduced this process last year for the first time specifically in response to the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the profession.

We had sincerely hoped to offer this facility to individuals who are not part of a block payment scheme and had examined every way of doing so without needing to increase finance staff capacity and cost. The only workable solution was to contract with a finance company which, aside from incurring interest payments, risked impacting on our ability to secure the CBILS loan. It is with much regret that we have therefore had to drop those plans. Not increasing PCF had to be the priority.

We realise that, as last year, only c.60% of the Bar will benefit from split payments. Nevertheless, we should continue to do everything we can to assist as many barristers as possible.

Ends

16 February 2021