

Report of the General Committee for the AGM 2020

2020 will be a year that we will all remember for the wrong reasons but despite this BACFI has continued working throughout the year with its role of providing representation, education and support to employed barristers including unregistered barristers. By moving all our events to video calls on Teams and Zoom, we have managed to not only continue our full programme of events but it we have been able to attract more members from around the country.

This year we celebrated 55 years of the association, and although we had to postpone our House of Lords Dinner, we had a very successful virtual drinks and it was wonderful to have Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, as our special guest together with many members from the early years.

As part of our 55th anniversary celebrations we created a new special award for outstanding achievement to the employed bar, the BACFI Fellowship, which was awarded to Helen Fletcher Rogers.

At the beginning of the year we refreshed our business plan by adding to our core values:

- ❖ Our values are independence, integrity and inclusion:
 - ❖ We believe in one independent bar in which employed barristers have the same rights and opportunities as self-employed barristers
 - ❖ We believe that barristers should conduct themselves with integrity and observe the highest professional and ethical standards
 - ❖ We believe that training and supervision for barristers should be inclusive and designed to accommodate the needs of those working, or who wish to work, in-house
 - ❖ We care for the health and well-being of our members and will support initiatives which help members in this regard such as participating in such initiatives as “Well Being at the Bar” committee to ensure representation of the employed Bar and resources are shared to support mindfulness at work
 - ❖ As a national professional association for employed barristers we strive to build a legal profession where people unite and take action to create lasting change. We value diversity, equality and inclusion, celebrating the contributions of people of all backgrounds, regardless of their age, ethnicity, race, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.
 - ❖ We wish to grow and diversify our membership to make sure we reflect the communities our clients serve. As part of this objective BACFI wishes to help create opportunities for barristers of all backgrounds to develop their careers to their full potential.
 - ❖ We wish to create a legal profession that is more open and inclusive, fair to all, builds goodwill, and benefits our members and the clients they work for. We want barristers with differing perspectives and ideas who will help BACFI take action to create lasting career opportunities for members of the employed bar.

As a General Committee we set ourselves 7 key objectives which we have been working on throughout the year.

1. Overall theme is “Opportunities for all – lets be a beacon for equality, diversity and inclusivity in the Bar”. We will work with the Bar Council, BSB and Inns of Court (“Bar Institutions”) to raise awareness of equality and inclusion at the Employed Bar, unregistered barristers and those barristers working in business in different capacities.

We have continued the work of BACFI on diversity, equality and inclusion by recruiting new General Committee members from different backgrounds. We have worked with the Bar Council and Bar Standards Board in supporting their objectives to improve great access for all who wish to enter the profession and to ensure we continue to retain the best talent. BACFI has supported changes to the Bar Council Constitution to enable it to be more flexible, accessible and attractive to people of all backgrounds to participate in the Bar Council and its committees. We are organising events in the New Year with the Bar Council looking at sharing best practise in equality, diversity and inclusion. We still have much to do in this area but BACFI is fully committed to being a beacon for equality, diversity and inclusivity at the Bar

2. Represent the interests of our members and the employed bar; Lead on key issues:

I and other BACFI members as members of the Bar Council have fully participated in Bar Council meetings and its various committees, ensuring that the voice of BACFI for the employed bar is heard. We have developed an excellent relationship with Amanda Pinto QC, chair of the Bar and the Bar Standards Board. We have participated in various consultations including a response to the QC Appointments’ consultation along with having input to the Bar Council’s response to the Government’s consultation on the Independent Review of Administrative Law. We have been involved with the Legal Outreach Programme Group who organise University Law Fairs Bar Council Pupillage Fair and the held a student webinar with City, University of London.

3. Inform, through provision of resources and training;

Our seminars this year have included: Data Protection, IR35, Challenges to contracts on the basis of “fairness”, Brexit and IP, Judicial Appointments and our first wellbeing seminar which looked at returning to work post lockdown. We have a full programme planned again for next year.

4. Develop and maintain effective relations and networks with the wider legal community;

We have held joint events with SEAL, Judicial Appointment Commission, the Inns and have events organised with the Bar Council and the Temple Employed Bar Forum. As stated above, the Chair and members have been active sitting on the Bar Council and its committees. Members of the General Committee have been involved with their own Inns’ working groups trying to get more members engaged with their Inns.

5. Increase our impact, through more members and greater reach:

We held a very popular student event again in October and have gained members from a wide range of law schools. All of our events have been advertised widely around the Inns, law schools, in Counsel Magazine, by the Bar Council and other organisations such as the Female Fraud Forum and SEAL. Our online webinars have proved popular and we will continue to provide webinars as they are easily accessible to those not based in London. By having webinars on Teams and Zoom our events have been more accessible and involved more members who would not otherwise travel to London for events.

6. Provide value for money

For a Specialist Bar Association providing so much to our members with free webinars etc., I believe that we are very good value for money at only £70.00 per year.

If you have any colleagues or friends who you think would benefit from being a member of BACFI, please do invite them to join. The more members we have the better BACFI can do for the employed bar.

I would like to thank all those who have organised and hosted events, Fried Frank, DLA Piper, City Law School, Gough Square Chambers, SEAL and the Judicial Appointments Commission.

I would especially like to thank Sandra, for all her support and hard work in a particularly difficult year.

Thanks to the committee for all their hard work and help over the past year. I would also like to thank our Vice Presidents for their support and also our President Lady Hale.

I look forward to seeing you all at our first ever virtual Denning Lecture on Wednesday.

Ian Brookes-Howells

Chair, BACFI