

The Board Room Brief



Message from the Chair

Welcome to the September edition of our Newsletter... where has this year gone!?

The nights are drawing in and summer feels like it is very much behind us now (other than the odd teasing flicker of sun!).

Our work with the Employed Barristers Committee, the Bar Council, the BSB and the Inns has continued, and we are in the home straight in terms of 2023 events. BACFI always prides itself on supporting students and providing a valuable insight into potential employed bar career paths, so we are hoping to see many aspiring barristers at our annual student evening (in conjunction with City Law School) on 3rd October. Please join if you can - the more we can share our paths, the more enriching it is for the students.

Also, as we look to November we will be hosting our AGM (22nd November) so, again, please join if you can. We will be hearing from now Vice Chair soon to be Chair of the Bar – Sam Townend KC.

Last, but absolutely not least, please get your tickets NOW for our annual Denning Lecture (sponsored by Marque Wealth Management) on 7th December. We are delighted to welcome Lady Vivien Rose to give the lecture this year and in a break from recent tradition, we are moving the lecture at Grays Inn. Not to be missed!

Finally, my usual reminder... please regularly check-in with the BACFI website where you will find a wealth of information pertinent to our practice at the Employed Bar, including career opportunities, links to relevant information from other organisations (eg the Bar Council) and details regarding how to join us and please do not hesitate to contact me or Sandra with any questions, comments, or ideas.

Look forward to seeing you all soon.

Warm regards,

Gaynor Wood

Employed Bar Garden Party: 13th June



The Employed Bar Garden Party took place on the 13th of June in the Rose Garden at Middle Temple. The Master Treasurer of Middle Temple and Supreme Court Justice, The Right Honourable Lord Lloyd-Jones formally launched the Middle Temple Employed Bar Society at the event. Ian Brookes-Howells, BACFI's senior vice chair, is chair of the new society and welcomed everyone to the event. The champagne flowed and we enjoyed excellent canapes and even some wonderful ice creams which were much appreciated on the warm, sunny evening. Thank you to Middle Temple for hosting and to the Employed Barristers' Committee of the Bar Council for promoting the event.

BACFI / MTEBS event: “AI – an opportunity, a threat or both for the law and lawyers?” 25th September



Whilst the news cycle may be filled with doom laden apocalyptic predictions about the impact of generative AI, the BACFI AI event hosted jointly with Middle Temple at Pinsent Masons LLP's London Office most certainly was not!

Datoo Akber founder and managing partner of D2 Legal Technology LLP spoke about a range of use cases for generative AI in legal departments and by lawyers. Luke Scanlon, Head of Fintech at Pinsents spoke about the types of legal issues encountered by his clients, which include some of the largest technology companies in the world, and how to mitigate the risks of generative AI. Finally, BACFI's Charlotte Pope-Williams spoke about the potential and pitfalls of generative AI in a litigation context.

None of the speakers was in any doubt that generative AI will not only change the legal landscape but also the world. However, they also considered that generative AI will not replace lawyers. In fact, that they considered that lawyers will be all the more important to protect the rights of legal persons in relation to generative AI.

Attendees made thought provoking comments and asked interesting questions ranging from ethical considerations about whether it would be appropriate to use AI to draft submissions, noting that Lord Justice Birss recently said that he used ChatGPT to draft part of a judgment (<https://news.sky.com/story/british-judge-admits-using-jolly-useful-chatgpt-to-write-ruling-12961647>) to noting that the EU AI Act (“Act”) may not enter force until 2025 due to political wranglings in the EU Parliament due to certain EU member states potentially wanting to use facial recognition AI before the Act become law.

Lively debate ensued after the event and no doubt this matter will remain topical for some time.

Be part of Pro Bono Week 2023!

Pro Bono Week takes place across the UK this year from 6 to 10 November. Through events and comms it is an opportunity to recognise, showcase and discuss the voluntary contribution of the legal profession in giving free legal help to those in need.

For the latest updates follow @ProBonoWeekUK on [X \(Twitter\)](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Arrange an event

Pro Bono Week is a great time to arrange an event to promote or discuss pro bono. Many events are external occasions organised in partnership with others, while others are internal events for colleagues at an organisation. There are three suggested themes this year:

- Changing lives through pro bono
- Maximising the impact of pro bono
- Pro bono within ESG: from climate to sustainable development

For help planning an event visit probonoweb.org.uk/event-plans

Share content on social media

Pro Bono Week is a perfect time to post on social media or your website about your commitment to pro bono, or to thank your volunteers, or to showcase a particular pro bono lawyer or project. *#ProBonoWeek*

For a toolkit & resources such as #IDoProBono posters visit probonoweb.org.uk/media-resources

Attend events in Pro Bono Week

Events you can attend will be added closer to the time at probonoweb.org.uk/events

Sign up to do pro bono

For lawyers or organisations not yet involved in a pro bono scheme, Pro Bono Week is an opportunity to sign up, see probonoweb.org.uk/volunteering

And finally, raise dough!

Get baking with the [Great Legal Bake](#) and raise money for local advice charities.



BACFI member profile: Jack Meek



Jack Meek is a barrister at the Government Legal Department, currently practising within the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Seamus Heaney once wrote that “Anyone born and bred in Northern Ireland can’t be too optimistic!” Yet despite my relatively humble upbringing (without wishing to sound Uriah Heep-ish), my family were never anything less than encouraging that I should persevere in pursuit of my goals if I had the ability and worked hard. Politics enveloped the little corner of the world into which I was born in the late 1980s (ten years of the Troubles were still to play out before the Good Friday

Agreement in 1998), so perhaps preternaturally, I took an active interest in current affairs from an early age. That I succeeded in practising at the Bar with the Government Legal Department therefore fulfilled a career ambition, marrying as it does the relationship between law and politics. However, that makes it all sound so simple.

I have recounted ad nauseum in other outlets the challenges this first-generation graduate faced on the pathway to practice. Post call to the Bar at Lincoln’s Inn in 2013, the wilderness years followed before I finally commenced pupillage in September 2020. Not that the time in between was not well spent. I am grateful for the invaluable experiences in a City firm, the European Court of Human Rights and Thomson Reuters, not to mention the opportunity to qualify at the New York Bar, but the English Bar was always the intended destination. Now that I am here and enjoying practice within the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I do my best to champion social mobility and access to the Bar, not least by working with the Bar Council as an #IAmTheBar advocate and a mentor for aspiring barristers at Lincoln’s Inn.

That famous Nobel Laureate cited above also instructed that, “Even if the last move did not succeed, the inner command says move again.” My resolve never to give up has served me well thus far. If one person takes a singular lesson from me, I hope that is it.

Jack Meek

Pupillages at the Employed Bar – update from the Employed Barristers’ Committee of the Bar Council

When I speak to employed barristers, they often tell me how important it is that employed practice be seen as a viable career path. One of the most powerful means of bringing home this message is employed pupillage. Not too long ago, opportunities for employed pupillage were few and far between, existing almost exclusively within the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Government Legal Department (GLD). This is no longer the case.

It should go without saying that the Employed Bar is not where you go if you couldn’t get into chambers. Work-life balance and wellbeing are so important, and the Employed Bar rates highly on this front -- but if this is the only reason for opting for the employed route, something has gone wrong. Put simply, aspiring barristers should see the Employed Bar as nothing less than a route to a long and successful career at the Bar.

A multitude of organisations including Citibank, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and corporate and high street law firms alike are now offering the opportunity of a pupillage entirely within employed practice, so that aspiring barristers have the chance to start their professional careers in house from the very beginning

and rise through the organisation's ranks. The option of going into chambers remains, but there is no obligation to start there and then 'move over'. The two sides of the profession become fluid.

However, employed pupillage remains a relative niche. Just under one in every five barristers works in employed practice; but most of them completed pupillage in chambers. This is no surprise when, of the 486 pupillages up for grabs via the Bar Council's Pupillage Gateway in 2022/23, there were just 56 employed pupillages available that year.

The Chair of the Employed Barristers' Committee, Stuart Alford KC, recently offered his endorsement of employed pupillage and talked about an upcoming [informational campaign from the Bar Council to promote it as a route to a career at the Bar](#).

I would also like to encourage any employer thinking about applying for authorisation to take the leap – there has never been a better time to become an Authorised Education and Training Organisation (AETO). The EBC is here to help and answer any questions, and the Bar Standards Board can assist when it comes to the regulatory elements and specific requirements for approval.

Information on how to apply to become an AETO is available here: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/our-information-for-pupillage-providers-aetos.html>

Beyond pupillage, there is plenty more to be getting on with. Autumn is always a busy time at the Bar, and it is no different for the EBC.

On the 9 October, the South Eastern Circuit will be holding an event for employed barristers about how membership can benefit them, and the Circuit Leader will be speaking with the EBC's Vice Chair Heidi Stonecliffe KC about her own journey at the CPS.

On the 19 October, the annual Employed Bar Dinner will once again be taking place at Gray's Inn. The Bar Council will be hosting a drinks reception as part of its ongoing partnership, which champions the Inns of Court and the work they do for the Bar. [Tickets can be purchased here](#).

The Bar Council is working hard to meet the nine recommendations set out in the [Life at the Employed Bar](#) report, which was published earlier this year. Efforts to promote careers at the Employed Bar, build networks with the Circuits and the Inns and their Employed Bar groups, and targeted projects for increasing judicial and silk appointments at the Employed Bar, are all things we are working on.

As ever, BACFI is a key partner in the work the Bar Council does on behalf of the Employed Bar, and we are grateful for its support.

I hope to see you at one of our events or yours soon. In the meantime, I wish you all the best for the new legal year.

Yours,

Stuart McMillan
Policy & Programmes Manager, Bar Council

Wellbeing at the Bar – Leaders’ video

As former Chair, of the Well Being at the Bar Committee, representing BACFI, Rebecca Dix committed to making this video a priority objective for WBATB. The content was updated and speakers refreshed for inclusivity across the Bar. Our Chair, Gaynor Wood, represented the Employed Bar in this video highlighting how life at the Employed Bar also comes with its challenges of managing a multi-disciplinary team and being primed and ready to present in front of Executives and Boards at short notice. Shahmeen Purdasy, has now been handed the baton to continue to represent BACFI at the WBATB committee. We look forward to following the Action Plan of the next Chair of the WBATB, Nicola Shannon KC.

The video can be found on the Wellbeing at the Bar page of the Bar Council’s website: [Wellbeing at the Bar \(barcouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.barcouncil.org.uk)

BACFI’s new LinkedIn page

We have a new company page set up rather than the group page which has previously been used. Please follow the page and repost to your connections to help us build the number of followers and spread the details of our events and news far and wide!

https://www.linkedin.com/company/bar-association-for-commerce-finance-and-industry/?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad_flagship3_groups_entity%3BhfzadLzZR%2BmFrYb54lyXqQ%3D%3D



“Such silence has an actual sound, the sound of disappearance.” – S. Finnamore

Figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that the number of divorces amongst opposite-sex couples in 2018 was 90,871 compared to 107,599 in 2019 – **so an 18.4% increase**. This has been the highest increase since 2014 when 111,169 divorces were granted.

In fact, the number of **divorces in England and Wales has seen its largest percentage increase in nearly 50 years**. This creates real financial planning issues especially for women.

At a glance.

- Many women rely on the State Pension when it comes to retirement income, but you may have a **smaller workplace pension than your colleagues** if you took time out to raise a family.
- It’s important to be sure that you’re getting the **full State Pension amount** that you’re entitled to.
- If you reached your State Pension age before April 2016, and divorced later in life, you could be missing out on **unclaimed State Pension**.

The State Pension is the foundation of many people's retirement income. Many women will rely on the State Pension even more than men, if they've been on a lower income, or have a **smaller pension pot due to taking career breaks**. And if you're divorced, it's even more important to check that you're getting the correct State Pension.

What is the State Pension?

It's a benefit paid to individuals who have reached their State Pension age and have made National Insurance contributions during their working life. This pension is usually paid based on the individual's own National Insurance contributions. How much you get depends on the **number of years you have on your National Insurance record**.

From April 2023, the maximum amount of State Pension you can receive went up to **£10,600 over the year**, or almost **£203.85 a week**². The full basic State Pension under the old system (before 2016) was £156.20 per week in 2023-24 for people who have all the qualifying years of NI contributions for their date of birth.³

Why it's important to make sure you get your full UK State Pension.

When you want to retire, a full State Pension could be a key part of your retirement income. It can:

- Provide you with a regular source of income in retirement so you don't have to rely solely on your savings or investments.
- Help you meet your **basic day-to-day expenses in retirement**, such as food, housing, and energy costs.
- Help make sure your money lasts as long as you need it to – especially since many of us are living longer.
- Mean you enjoy your retirement without worrying about money, giving you peace of mind.

Am I missing out on unclaimed State Pension?

If you reached your **State Pension age before April 2016, and divorced later in life**, you could be missing out on unclaimed State Pension. When you think about how long you might be retired for, it could add up to a significant sum over the longer term.

The problem relates to the 'old' state pension system. The old system assumed that wives were financially dependent on their husbands, so it allowed **women to pay a reduced rate of NI contributions**. This means they may have generated little or no State Pension in their own right. **Under the 'old rules', you could register your ex-husbands' NI contribution as your own, up to the date of divorce.** This often provided a welcome uplift to State Pension income especially since many women had gaps in their own NI contributions, due to raising a family or providing care for others.

In April 2016, the 'new State Pension' was introduced, to provide a simpler and fairer State-backed pension in old age.

How can I check?

Checking how much State Pension you're likely to receive is an important part of your forward financial planning – and you can <https://www.gov.uk/check-state-pension> in a matter of minutes. For most people it will be a straightforward check of your NI contributions record. But if you have **divorced, you have a little more work to do**.

To investigate if you meet the pre-2016 criteria and are entitled to an uplift, you **need to make a claim to the Department for Work and Pensions**.

When making your enquiries, there are some additional things to bear in mind. If you reach your State Pension age after April 2016, when the new rules were introduced, and you **agreed a Pension Sharing Order** as part of the divorce settlement – the order may take priority. It's best to speak to us if you're not sure about anything.

Also, if you have **subsequently remarried**, or entered into a civil partnership, before you reached your State Pension age, then you **can't claim on your ex-husband or partner's previous NI record**. If you have divorced more than once, the claim rules apply only to the most recent circumstances.

Get in touch.

We can play a key role during a divorce, providing advice and support. People often turn to an adviser once their divorce settlement is agreed but ***involving us early on means you can take control of your financial wellbeing.***

If you need help checking your pension entitlement, get in touch with ***Marque Wealth Management*** and we can help you enjoy the retirement you deserve.

• **Contact Mark Quaye (APFS) - Chartered Financial Planner: 020 7516 2225 / 07764 963 701 www.marquewealth.co.uk**

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and the value may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

The levels and bases of taxation, and reliefs from taxation, can change at any time and are generally dependent on individual circumstances.

Sources

¹Money Saving Expert, Married women missing state pension boost, April 2023

²Government website, gov.uk New State Pension - what you'll get

³Age UK, Basic State Pension before 2016, April 2023

Marque Wealth Management welcomes the opportunity to extend our services to all members of BACFI no matter their current wealth status for a no obligation personal financial review and this extends to access to our Business advisory specialists and Entrepreneur service.

The Partner Practice is an Appointed Representative of and represents only St. James's Place Wealth Management plc (which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority) for the purpose of advising solely on the Group's wealth management products and services, more details of which are set out on the Group's website www.sjp.co.uk/products. The title 'Partner Practice' is the marketing term used to describe St. James's Place representatives.

Dates for your diary

3rd October: Annual Student evening in conjunction with City Law School via MS Teams at 6pm. Join us to hear what it takes to succeed at the Employed Bar from our expert panel. Free for all to attend.

25th October: "Managing the challenges of commerciality along with your legal duty to your employer". Considering the complex tensions of commerciality versus your duty to being a full legal service provider to your employer. In person at Business Enterprise Finance Ltd in Bradford or via MS Teams at 6pm. Speaker: Stephen Waud, CEO of BEF Ltd.

22nd November: AGM via MS Teams at 6pm. Speaker – Sam Townend KC, Vice Chair of the Bar.

7th December: Denning Lecture and Christmas Reception, 6pm at Gray's Inn - Speaker: Lady Vivien Rose of Colmworth DBE, BACFI Vice President. Tickets for lecture and reception are available at a cost of £45 for BACFI members and their guests and £55 for others. Lecture only tickets which are free will be available from 1st October. The Lecture is kindly sponsored by Marque Wealth Management www.marquewealth.co.uk

23rd January 2024: The PO Horizon IT Scandal – lessons for in-house lawyers and boards. This webinar will discuss the ethical aspects of the scandal and the subsequent consequences for those employed in-house. Speakers - Professor Richard Moorhead (University of Exeter) Professor of Law and Professional Ethics, Dr Alan Brener (UCL) Associate Professor (Teaching) and Deputy Director for the UCL Centre for Ethics and Law, Flora Page (23ES Chambers), barrister currently representing wronged subpostmasters in the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. Chaired by James Kitching (Fried Frank). Via MS Teams at 6pm. Free for BACFI members.

21st February 2024: Gin distillery tour and tasting at the City of London Distillery, home of Whitley Neill Gin. £45 for BACFI members and their guests, £55 others. Numbers are strictly limited so book early to avoid disappointment.

18th April 2024: BACFI’s annual wine tasting evening at Bedales, Leadenhall Market.

BACFI members on Bar Council and BSB Committees 2023

Bar Council

Gaynor Wood, Lucinda Orr (elected), Lorinda Long (Treasurer), David Bunting, Charlotte Pope-Williams (elected), James Kitching (elected), Mike Jones KC (elected), Hannah Smith (elected)

General Management Committee

Lorinda Long, Gaynor Wood,
Lucinda Orr, Mike Jones KC

Employed Bar Committee

Mike Jones KC, Lucinda Orr, James Kitching,
Sara George, Patrick Rappo, Charlotte
Pope-Williams, Hannah Smith

Finance Committee

Lorinda Long

Regulatory Review Working Group

David Bunting

European Committee Law Committee and Retained Law Working Group

Alex Carr

Bar Representation Committee

Lucinda Orr, James Kitching,

Race Working Group

Sharon Blackman

Money Laundering Working Group

Shahmeem Purdasy

Education and Training Committee

James Hampson

Ethics Committee

Brian Cahill

Wellbeing at the Bar Group

Shahmeen Purdasy

BACFI Committee 2023

Chair:	Gaynor Wood
Senior Vice-Chair:	Ian Brookes-Howells
Junior Vice-Chairs:	Sharon Blackman Rebecca Dix
Hon. Treasurer:	James Kitching
General Committee:	Ryan Porter Stephen Potts Lorinda Long Alex Carr Daniel Byrne Charlotte Pope-Williams Sara George Sonia Hayes Shahmeem Purdasy David Bunting Patrick Rappo Laurence Fry

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