

The Board Room Brief



Message from the Chair

Welcome to the December edition of our Newsletter.

As the year draws to a close and we hopefully break for time with family and friends it is right to reflect on our achievements.

Once again, our (virtual) annual Student Evening, held in conjunction with the City Law School in October, was a popular event with around 40 attendees. BACFI attaches great importance to giving aspiring barristers an insight into what life can be like at the Employed Bar and the sheer variety of opportunities available beyond the Self Employed Bar. I want to thank to my fellow panellists for sharing their insights and thank Dan Byrne for Chairing. We are always happy to help students in any way we can so please do not hesitate to reach out!

On Saturday 19th October Stephen Potts, Ryan Porter and Sandra very kindly gave up their time to exhibit at the Bar Council's Pupillage Fair 2024. We had a lot of interest which is fantastic. Ian Brookes-Howells attended the Warwick Law Fair the following week. I think Ian particularly enjoyed himself!

In November we hosted Marque Wealth for an insightful deep dive into the ramifications of the budget and they definitely gave us food for thought, especially in the context of pension and inheritance planning. If anyone would like to reach out to Mark and his team for a further discussion, please contact Sandra who can provide the necessary details. Also, in November we hosted our AGM. I would like to welcome the incoming Chair of the Bar, Barbara Mills KC and thank her for joining us at the AGM and thank outgoing Chair, Sam Townend KC, for his support over the past year.

Our annual Denning Lecture and Christmas Reception took place at Inner Temple this year and although I unfortunately could not attend, I am told that a great time was had by all! We are incredibly grateful to Dame Geraldine Andrews DBE for delivering the lecture and thank you to Marque Wealth Management and LexisNexis for their generous sponsorship of the lecture (and thank you to James Kitching for hosting)!

BACFI's close engagement with the Bar Council and the BSB has continued and my thanks also go to Heidi Stonecliffe KC, outgoing Chair of the Bar Council's Employed Bar Committee with whom we have had engagement over the course of the year to ensure alignment and prioritisation. We look forward to continuing that relationship with our very own Sara George and we already have some areas of focus planned for 2025.

A final and personal note of thanks to BACFI's President, Vice Presidents, Senior Vice Chair, Junior Vice Chairs, Treasurer, General Committee members and Sandra for all their support this year. BACFI could not do what it does without you all.

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.

I look forward to seeing you all at our many planned events for next year and, in the meantime, wish everyone a healthy and happy Festive Season and a healthy and prosperous 2025.

Warm regards, Gaynor Wood, Chair

“Owning Your Imposter” – 26th September

On 26 September, BACFI presented a talk on the Imposter Syndrome “Owning Your Imposter” at the new offices of Proskauer Rose LLP at 8 Bishopsgate. The speakers were **Judith Kark**, an accredited counsellor with extensive experience in providing support and guidance to clients making decisions on their careers, and **Ann Collier**, an experienced Business and Career Coach, Trainer and Consultant who previously worked as a solicitor in the Litigation department of a magic circle law firm and now supports many legal professionals to successfully achieve their career aspirations. The discussion was guided by Heidi Stonecliffe KC, Chair of the Employed Barristers’ Committee of the Bar Council.

Our speakers emphasised that there is a skill in speaking and thinking highly about your own expertise and achievements. One obstacle to this is in attributing far greater knowledge, competence and achievements to individual others. While collectively a group may know more than you about a topic, it is highly unlikely that any one of the group knows everything that you want to communicate. A practical tip suggested was to keep a regularly updated list of things that you’ve achieved or which went well. These are easy to dismiss and forget, especially if you have a trait of feeling undeserving and imperfect which often goes along with “imposter syndrome”.

We learnt that imposter syndrome is a type of anxiety, often due to lacking the internal resources to get through a situation, but is not a recognised disorder. It is distinct from: (i) actually being unprepared or unqualified for a task (ii) being disappointed when you know that you have underperformed or (iii) being belittled by another person. Imposter Syndrome can lead to physical sensations, such as “brain freeze” or hyperventilation and here it is particularly important to develop techniques to calm down the body’s stress response and allow the rational brain to reconnect. Mindfulness works.

On the positive side, we learnt that many of the traits of those with imposter syndrome - perfectionism, inability to delegate, self-identification as an expert and comparisons against others - are often shared with high achievers but we also were reminded that optimal performance is not achieved when working under too high or too low pressure. The presentation was informal and the audience offered many of their own examples of facing up to the “imposter syndrome”. Afterwards we continued our conversations over a fine selection of wines, cheeses and other refreshments kindly provided by our hosts at Proskauer Rose.

The evening received very positive feedback. One attendee commented: “I just wanted to reach out and say that this event really and truly was brilliant!! The session really did answer so many unanswered questions in my own mind, the speakers did a sterling job”.

Contact details for the speakers are:

Judith Kark: judith.kark@gmail.com

Ann Collier: ann.collier@sherwoodpsfconsulting.com

BACFI / City Law School student evening – 2nd October

Our annual student event was very well attended by students from universities across the country. Chaired by Dan Byrne (AA Thornton), our panel of speakers – Ian Brookes-Howells (Lloyds Banking Group), Gaynor Wood (CLS Services), Charlotte Pope-Williams (3 Hare Court) and Alexandria Carr (Societe Generale) gave insights into their careers and some hints and tips on how to succeed along with making delegates aware of opportunities available at the Employed Bar. Thanks to Thomson Reuters for their sponsorship of this event and to City Law School for their support. A recording is available on the website [BACFI](#).

The Bar Council's Pupillage Fair

Ian Brookes-Howells and Dan Byrne were pleased to be part of the Bar Council's Pupillage Fair by being on the panel for the online webinar 'Life at the Employed Bar' on 15th October. The panellists, chaired by Ian, explained their careers to date and answered lots of interesting questions from the 195 attendees.

We were also invited to attend the in person Pupillage Fair on 19th October. It was a sell out event with around 900 students attending and well over 100 exhibitors, including other Specialist Bar Associations, the Inns, Circuits, charities such as Bridging the Bar and of course 90 or so chambers who offer pupillage. We were pleased to find some exhibitors who offer employed pupillages such as Reading Council, Express Solicitors and 8 DAC Beachcroft Buildings (8DB) and spoke to current pupils to find out what they had to say about their experiences. We also spoke to students who were interested in a career at the employed Bar along with those who did not know that there is another option to being a self-employed barrister. Thank you to the Bar Council for inviting us along.



Warwick Law Fair – 22nd October

BACFI was represented by our senior vice chair and vice president, Ian Brookes-Howells, at the Law Fair. He was extremely busy answering questions from students and promoting the employed bar as an alternative career choice to chambers. He ran out of leaflets which is always a good sign!



The UK Budget: How Will This Impact Your Financial Planning? - 13th November

We welcomed Simon Martin (Technical Connections) and Mark Quaye (Marque Wealth Management) to speak about the impact of the budget on financial planning. Pensions and inheritance tax were discussed along with possible ways to plan ahead. A recording is available on our website [BACFI](#). Mark has been a long-time supporter of BACFI, providing personal financial audits and planning for members. Please feel free to contact him directly on T: 0207 516 2220 M: 07764 963 701 or E: mark.quaye@sipp.co.uk. Mark says "I look forward to having a quick conversation, via telephone, Teams/Zoom or in-person to see how I can assist; **consultations are free** until we both feel I can add real monetary value".

BACFI AGM - 20th November

Our AGM took place via Teams and we welcomed incoming Chair of the Bar, Barbara Mills KC to address us and outline her priorities for her term as Chair in 2025. Barbara expressed her keenness to work with us on issues affecting our members and very much hopes that she can make a positive difference to those who work in-house, during her tenure.

The formal part of the meeting saw James Kitching be re-elected as Treasurer and Charlotte Pope-Williams, Lorinda Long, Alex Carr, Rebecca Dix, Laurence Fry, Stephen Potts and Dan Byrne be re-elected as committee members. All of our Vice Presidents were happy to stand for re-election for a further term of 2 years.

Gaynor presented the report of the General Committee, outlining the events we have held and how we have been involved with the wider Bar, such as through Bar Council and liaison with the BSB and other organisations and through the Pupillage, Fair, Student event and Warwick Law Fair as mentioned above.

Denning Lecture – “Affording Justice” - 3rd December

The Rt Hon Lady Justice Andrews DBE spoke on “Affording Justice – financing dispute resolution in the 21st century” at Inner Temple. Her lecture will shortly be available on our website.

The lecture was followed by our Christmas Reception where we were joined by some of our Vice Presidents, members and their guests to enjoy drinks, canapes and lively conversation!

Our thanks to Dame Geraldine for speaking and to Marque Wealth Management and LexisNexis for sponsoring the lecture.



William Sprigge

It is with great sadness that we report the sudden death of William, a long standing member of BACFI and former Treasurer. He suffered a brain haemorrhage whilst on holiday in Greece in October. Our thoughts are with his widow Jane and the family.

Employed Bar Awards

Many congratulations to the very worthy winners of this year's Bar Council's Employed Bar Awards held at Gray's Inn. The awards are now in their 7th year and always prove to be a special evening for the employed Bar, presenting us with a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the contributions employed barristers make to our profession and showcasing the quality and the breadth of the legal work that employed barristers undertake.

If you would like to find out more about the winners of the awards you [can do so here](#). You can also watch highlights of the [awards ceremony here](#).

Bar Standards Board consultation – Equality and Diversity

In September, the Bar Standards Board issued a consultation paper aimed at promoting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar. Drawing on expertise within our membership, BACFI has issued a response to the consultation setting out the perspective of the employed barristers, which is available here [Consultation on the BSB Equality Rules](#)

BSB's consultation paper proposes reforms to the Equality Rules and to Core Duty 8. The Equality Rules were introduced in 2014, and place prescriptive requirements on those in self-employed practice. BSB proposes to continue to confine the Equality Rules to barristers in self-employed practice and BACFI welcomes this. Barristers in employment have a range of supports for DE&I, often including policies and HR departments. The flipside of this, is that barristers in employment rarely have total power to effect prescriptive changes in their organisation.

Core Duty 8 currently requires that barristers *"must not discriminate unlawfully against any person."* The BSB's consultation paper proposes that this be replaced with the duty to *"act in a way that advances equality, diversity, and inclusion."* While BSB's aims are laudable, this formulation would be problematic for employed barristers for a number of reasons. Employed barristers find they often perform multiple roles, which include taking staffing decisions such as hiring, work allocation and supervision. In doing so, employed barristers are already subject to a number of requirements including internal policies and the Equality Act 2010. It is not clear how an employed barrister would reconcile those requirements with a new duty to positively *"advance"* DE&I. BACFI's response to the consultation concludes that we would rather leave the current duty unchanged. Or, if it must be changed, then it should be in line with the Solicitors Regulatory Authority requirement for solicitors to *"encourage"* DE&I.

The Bar Council has issued its own response. This emphasised the Bar Council's deep commitment to ED&I, but also expressed concerns that the proposals are unworkable, unlawful and may hinder progress. Their response included a section highlighting difficulties for the employed Bar, which chimed with BACFI's position. The Bar Council's response is available here: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/static/6bd9c3b2-7f74-469a-95368aaf612db9c1/Bar-Council-proposed-response-to-BSB-equality-rules-consultation-November-2024.pdf>

General Council of the Bar 2025/26 Practising Certificate Fees and Budget Consultation

The Bar Council are consulting on their planned budget and the proposal to raise the PCF. We encourage you to submit a response [General Council of the Bar 2025/26 practising certificate fees and budget consultation](#) before the closing date Monday 13 January.

Race at the Bar: time to double down on race equality work, says Bar Council

The Bar Council is calling on individuals, chambers, and organisations at the Bar to step up work on race equality and keep the momentum going, as it publishes the follow up report to the landmark Race at the Bar report 2021.

The new report 'Race at the Bar: Three years on' reveals there has been some progress on access, retention, progression and culture. In particular, the overall diversity of the Bar is improving year by year. But there is much more work to do, particularly in relation to the experience of Black barristers and Black aspiring barristers, students and pupils.

The Bar Council has made a series of recommendations and produced a toolkit [Race Equality Toolkit – Bar Council - Practice & Ethics](#). The full report can be found here: [Race-at-the-Bar-three-years-on.pdf](#).

“Two-thirds of barristers embrace generative AI” says new report from LexisNexis

Read an executive summary of the report below

The legal sector is undergoing a significant transformation as barristers increasingly turn to generative AI to enhance efficiency, streamline operations, and improve service delivery. This report delves into the growing trend of AI adoption among barristers, examining the benefits and challenges it presents, as well as its potential impact on pricing models and legal practice. As the legal profession embraces this technological shift, it is crucial to understand the implications for both barristers and their clients.

AI adoption rises among barristers

The adoption of generative AI among barristers has seen a remarkable increase, with two-thirds of barristers now using or planning to use this technology. This marks a substantial rise from previous years, driven by the technology's ability to expedite legal work and improve efficiency. The survey conducted in September 2024 highlights that the number of barristers using AI for work purposes has quadrupled in just over a year. This rapid adoption is indicative of the legal sector's recognition of AI's potential to revolutionise traditional practices.

Driving efficiency and innovation

Generative AI is playing a pivotal role in revolutionising routine legal tasks such as research, document review, and contract analysis. By automating these labour-intensive processes, barristers can focus on more complex and strategic work, ultimately enhancing their service offerings. Major law firms are investing heavily in AI to support their barristers, with firms like Clifford Chance and Linklaters leading the charge. The integration of AI into legal practice is not only streamlining operations but also fostering innovation and creativity within the profession.

Challenges and risks

Despite the numerous benefits, the adoption of generative AI is not without its challenges. Concerns about AI-generated inaccuracies, data confidentiality, and ethical implications persist among barristers. The risk of relying on incorrect information, known as hallucinations, poses a significant threat to the integrity of legal work. Barristers emphasise the importance of human oversight and the need for AI tools grounded in reliable legal sources to mitigate these risks. Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content is paramount to maintaining trust and confidence in legal services.

Impact on pricing models

The efficiency gains brought about by AI are prompting barristers to reconsider traditional billing practices. The shift towards AI-driven efficiency is expected to bring changes to pricing structures, with a potential move away from the billable hour model towards value-based billing. While some barristers anticipate this shift, uncertainty remains about the extent of its impact. The survey reveals that a significant number of barristers are contemplating adjustments to their billing practices due to AI, reflecting the ongoing evolution of pricing models in the legal sector.

Mitigating risks and ensuring transparency

To address the potential risks associated with AI adoption, barristers are implementing comprehensive training programs and policies. Educating staff on the effective use of AI and the importance of writing clear prompts is crucial to minimising risk. Transparency with clients about AI usage is also essential to maintaining trust and confidence in legal services. Barristers are increasingly recognising the need to inform clients when AI is used in their work, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld and client expectations are met.

The adoption of generative AI is reshaping the legal landscape, offering significant opportunities for increased efficiency, improved client service, and a competitive advantage. However, barristers must navigate the challenges of

maintaining accuracy, confidentiality, and ethical standards. Those who successfully integrate AI into their practice while upholding professional integrity are likely to gain a competitive edge in the evolving legal landscape. As the legal profession continues to embrace this technological shift, it is imperative to remain vigilant in addressing the associated risks and ensuring that AI is used responsibly and ethically.

For a comprehensive understanding of the transformative impact of generative AI on the legal sector, we invite you to read the full report at this link: [Barristers are taking to generative AI](#). This detailed report provides valuable insights into the current state of AI adoption among barristers, the benefits and challenges it presents, and the future implications for the legal profession.



“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” – Jon Kabat Zinn

Jon Kabat Zinn is the creator of *a Stress Reduction Clinic* at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and coined the above phrase, which I guess is a variation on the expression about *life, lemons and lemonade*.

The serious point however is the essence of its meaning, in a world that is increasingly uncertain, the provision or consideration of ourselves and that of *our employees’ mental health through employee benefits* is becoming increasingly important and valued.

How staff wellbeing can help you gain a competitive edge

Increased investment in wellbeing has been linked to *greater productivity* and *staff retention*.

Sickness absence rate jumps to the highest in a decade - businesses should develop wellbeing strategies to mitigate this.¹

Business should realise the value for their business and that wellbeing goes hand-in-hand with *financial and commercial success*.

The latest labour market outlook from the CIPD shows that organisations are being affected by a new trend – ‘*The Big Stay*’ – with employees opting to stay put at work. On the surface, you might see this as a positive thing. Employees may not be staying for the positive reasons you think.

A *study by AXA and CEBR* indicate that staff are feeling increasingly disengaged in the workplace, fuelled by *elevated levels of burnout, stress and struggles with mental health*, not helped by a high level of global volatility and uncertainty. This amounts to *23.3 million sick days a year* - organisations can’t afford to neglect this issue.

This puts the focus on organisations *implementing wellbeing initiatives* and providing an environment where staff feel secure and supported.²

What is employee wellbeing and why does it matter?

This refers to the financial, physical and mental health of staff in the workplace. By supporting the wellbeing of employees, this can result in:

- employees feeling *satisfied and motivated*
- help retain the best talent and *attract new talent*
- *enhance workplace culture* and build a supportive environment
- motivate staff and *boost productivity*
- reduce overall staff turnover.

SME (Small, Medium, Large) owners may feel they don’t have time or money for wellbeing initiatives, but there are many that realise the value for their business, and that *wellbeing goes hand-in-hand* with financial and commercial success.

A small business may only have a handful of employees with a particular skill set and if only one is off sick for any length of time the business will take a productivity and financial hit. According to the CIPD, the average rate of *employee absence now stands at 7.8 days per employee per year*. Businesses need to think seriously whether they can survive this.¹

How to implement a wellbeing strategy

According to the CIPD, wellbeing initiatives often fall short of their potential because they are siloed – implemented separately from the everyday business.

Instead of **viewing it as a tick-box exercise**, wellbeing should be embedded as part of a culture of inclusivity, respect and support.

How to support employee wellbeing

Employee wellbeing can be approached in different ways, depending on your organisation's budget and set up. Here are a few quick wins:

Find out what your employees really want

Which wellbeing initiatives you choose for your business will depend on the needs of your employees. It could be anything from help with **rising living costs** to more **flexible working, mental health support** or access to **a financial adviser**. So, ask people **what matters to them**. That will help you decide what initiatives to prioritise first.

Empower your managers

These days it is getting harder for individuals to leave their personal lives behind when they come to work, so managers should try to understand their issues and be accommodating. Be open so that your people feel comfortable sharing their concerns with you and discuss ways of supporting them. **It doesn't have to be monetary support** it could just be a more flexible approach to their working hours to accommodate family duties such as caring for an elderly relative.

How financial advice can help

Financial wellbeing is often part of the overall package. With the cost-of-living crisis impacting households, support for **financial wellbeing has moved centre stage in many firms**.

Providing access to a financial adviser is a great service employers can provide **tips and solutions on managing debt**, investing, **pensions and other financial decisions are great gifts**. However, never pressure employees to take this up, as they may wish to deal with their issues privately.

To discuss how financial advice can benefit you and your staff, **get in touch with us**. We can advise businesses and support you at every stage. If you'd like a financial adviser by your side to help support, you and your teams of employees with **regular or ad hoc financial education and wellbeing clinics and presentations**, do get in touch with **Marque Wealth Management** and we can help you **surf the looming economic waves** for 2025 and onward. A New Year a new approach!

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

Thanks to all that attended the **Budget 2024 webinar on Wednesday 13th November 2024**, many expressed their appreciation for the session and felt that it helped them assimilate the **groundbreaking changes** that are impacting personal and business planning for the future. For those that couldn't attend please see the links below.

- http://www.bacfi.org/past_events24.htm
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNZZPZa6QOE>

We hope you find it useful, please feel free to make contact if you have any questions and queries.

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

Sources

1 - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 12 October 2023 (survey in over 900 organisations covering 6.5 million employees).

2 - AXA UK & Centre of Economic and Business Research, accessed 29 March 2023.

Dates for your diary 2025

23rd January: Workshop - Experiences of Disabled Practitioners. Lincoln's Inn invites those who have a disability, or experience of disability as a carer or colleague, to an evidence gathering workshop from 6pm – 8pm followed by drinks and refreshments. Book here: [Workshop: Experiences of Disabled Practitioners - Lincoln's Inn](#). Members of all Inns are welcome to attend.

27th February: Webinar in conjunction with Gough Square Chambers, 6pm. Kate Urdell will look at the current car finance scandal. Free for BACFI members. £20 others.

19th March: To mark International Women's Day - Lady Rose will speak on "Women in the Law: the story so far... now read on". She will give us an overview of women in the legal profession, including a little historical survey, look at the current position and also explore some current initiatives to improve the representation of women. Proskauer Rose (UK) LLP, 6pm. In person only and free for BACFI and SEAL members, £20 others. Followed by refreshments and networking. **You are advised to book now as spaces are filling up fast.**

30th April: Having an Agile Career at the Bar – Opportunities for Career Returners and Movers at the Employed Bar in conjunction with the Middle Temple Employed Bar Society and hosted by Middle Temple, 5.30pm followed by a drinks reception and also available online. Speakers: Ian Brookes-Howells, Charlotte Pope-Williams, Dan Byrne and Emma Torr. Cost to attend is £10.00 and bookings can be made <https://www.middletemple.org.uk/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=41822>.

14th May: Trump's first 100 days - looking at the legal implications of Trump's first 100 days back in power hosted by Sidley Austin LLP, 6pm and in conjunction with the Employed Barristers' Committee and SEAL. Free for all to attend. Followed by refreshments and networking.

60th anniversary dinner: 10th October 2025 at The House of Lords hosted by Lady Hale. Please contact Sandra if you wish to register your interest. Guests are very welcome. The cost will be approximately £170 per head but will be confirmed as soon as possible.

22nd October: Annual Student evening in conjunction with City Law School. Free for all to attend.

BACFI members on Bar Council and BSB Committees 2025

Bar Council

Gaynor Wood, Lucinda Orr (elected Treasurer), Lorinda Long (Elected), David Bunting (BACFI representative), Mike Jones KC (elected), Rebecca Dix (elected).

General Management Committee

Lorinda Long, Gaynor Wood, Lucinda Orr

Employed Bar Committee

Mike Jones KC, Lucinda Orr, James Kitching, Sara George (chair), Patrick Rappo, Charlotte Pope-Williams

Finance Committee

Lucinda Orr

Regulatory Review Working Group

David Bunting

European Committee Law Committee and Retained Law Working Group

Alex Carr

Bar Representation Committee

James Kitching,

Race Working Group

Sharon Blackman, Rebecca Dix

Money Laundering Working Group

Shahmeem Purdasy

Education and Training Committee

James Hampson

Bar International Co-ordination Group

Charlotte Pope-Williams

Ethics Committee

Brian Cahill, Hannah Smith

Wellbeing at the Bar Group

Shahmeem Purdasy

BACFI Committee 2025

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

Contact BACFI:

PO Box 4352, Edlesborough, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 9EF

Tel: 07507237218

secretary@bacfi.org

www.bacfi.org

**REPRESENTATION, EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYED
BARRISTERS FOR NEARLY 60 YEARS**