



No bar to the Bar

Barristers promoting social mobility







Contents

Foreword	3
The Bar's work on diversity and inclusion	4
A Snapshot of the profession in statistics	5
The Challenges	6
Solutions	7
A Student's story	10
Pupillage stories	11
Junior Bar perspective	13
View from Queen's Counsel and the Judiciary	15
Contact details	

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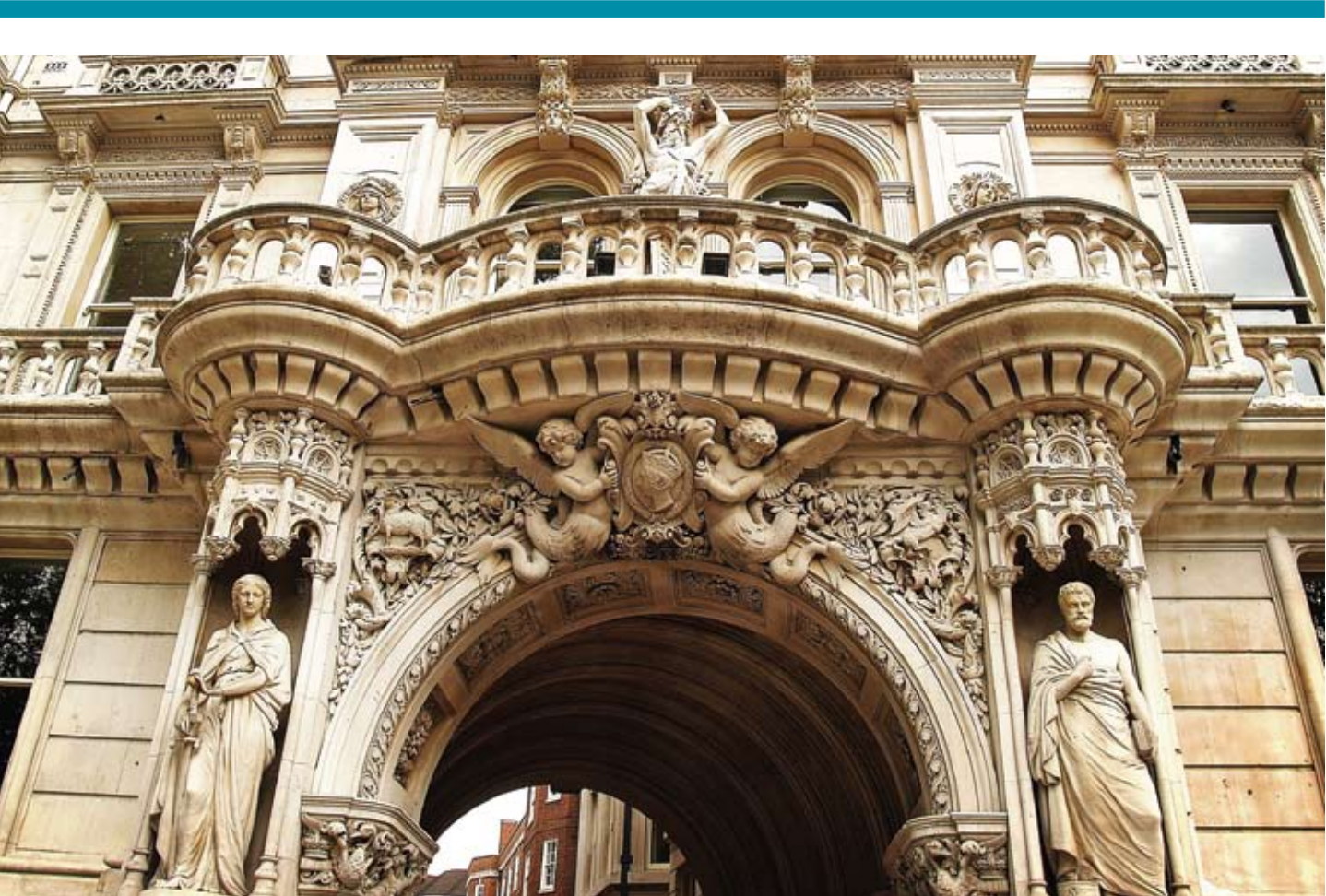
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Mission statement

The General Council of the Bar is the Approved Regulator of the Bar of England and Wales. It discharges its regulatory functions through the independent Bar Standards Board. It represents the Bar by:

- Promoting the specialist advocacy and advisory services of barristers;
- Ensuring access to justice on terms that are fair both to the public and practitioners;
- Promoting the high quality training and professional development of all barristers to ensure the highest standards of practice and ethical behaviour;
- Working for the efficient and cost-effective administration of justice;
- Encouraging access to, and diversity within, the profession so that it is open to all people of ability whatever their background; and
- Strengthening and developing the work and the values of the Bar at home and abroad.

Foreword

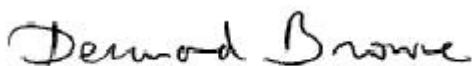
Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of the modern Bar, which is in the interests of justice and in the public interest. Society will have greater confidence in a profession which reflects the communities it serves. The perception of a privileged profession, narrowly drawn and recruiting in its own image, is progressively more outdated. We have seen increasingly strong evidence of progress on the gender balance and ethnic mix of the profession; 23% of pupillages are being taken up by people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, a far higher proportion of inclusion than in the general population.

At all levels, the profession has also shown its commitment to promoting access to the Bar for the talented, regardless of social background. I firmly believe that every able student should feel that a career at the Bar is open to them, regardless of background. Misconceptions that “the Bar is just not for me” can too easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. The stories contained in this booklet should dispel these, showing how individual barristers have achieved personal success through their determination, hard work and legal acumen, all of which characterise the advocate’s craft.

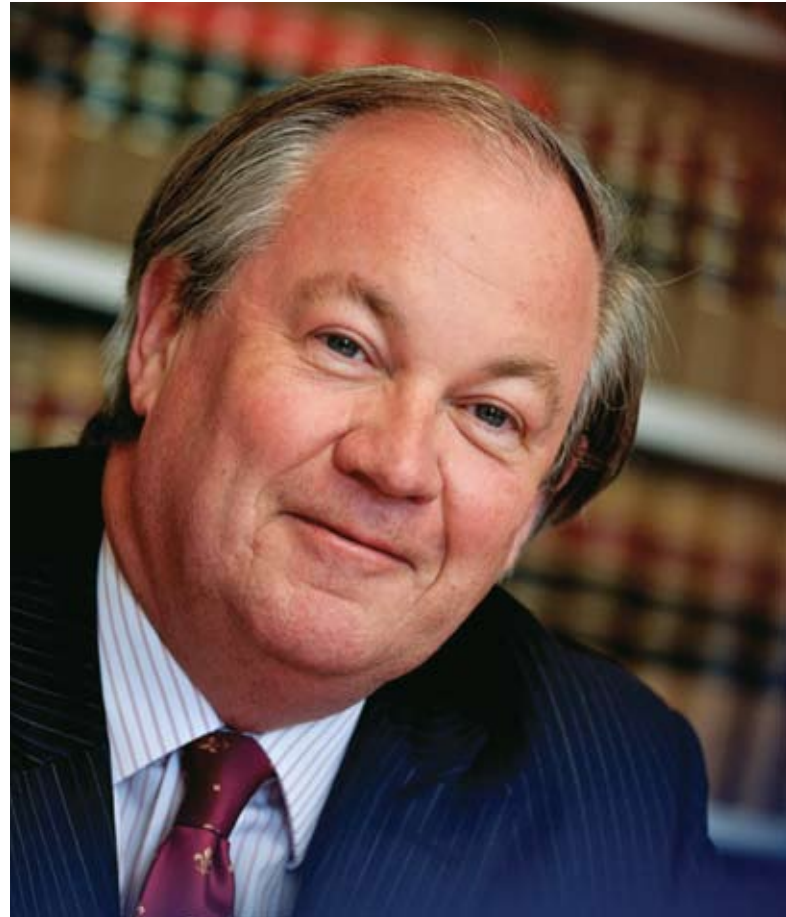
The Bar Council played an active part in of the work of the Government’s Panel on Fair Access to the Professions. The Panel’s membership included a former Chairman of the Bar, Geoffrey Vos QC and Lord Neuberger, who led the Bar’s work resulting in the 2007 report on Entry to the Bar, which comprehensively reviewed the measures necessary to improve access to the Bar. Our work with the Inns of Court, the Specialist Bar Associations, and the Circuits has played an important part in a variety of measures which have contributed to a steady increase in diversity at the Bar. These include:

- An innovative placement scheme;
- Schools presentations and visits;
- Careers’ conferences for state school students;
- Valuable bursaries that support students;
- Mentoring; and
- A range of accessible publications.

But we are not complacent. We remain acutely aware of countervailing pressures – including the cost of qualification and cuts in legal aid – which risk undermining our efforts. It is vital that such pressures should be resisted. We should all work together to ensure that the benefits of increased social mobility continue to be felt by future generations.



Desmond Browne QC
Chairman of the Bar



‘23% of pupillages are being taken up by people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, a far higher proportion of inclusion than in the general population.’

The Bar's work on diversity and inclusion

The Bar Council is committed to ensuring that it reflects the latest thinking on diversity, equality of opportunity, and enabling access to the profession. A significant part of the work of the Bar Council and the Bar Standards Board (BSB) is dedicated to removing barriers to qualification, including any that ensure that social background remains a significant deterrent to entry to the profession.



The Bar Council was the first professional body to publish an Equality and Diversity Code in 1995, which sets out a framework for chambers to achieve diversity, including the fair recruitment of pupils and new members of chambers, as well as practice development, the fair allocation of work, maternity, career breaks and flexible working. Implementation of the Code is supported by chambers' Equal Opportunity Officers, who undertake a programme of organised training, drawing on a diversity training toolkit, which cascades diversity awareness to all barristers in chambers. Compliance with the Code will be monitored by the BSB from 2010.

A firm evidence base is critical to guiding the Bar Council's equality and diversity policy. Each year the Bar Council publishes diversity data on pupils, as well as on employed and self-employed barristers, and has commissioned research charting the progress of potential barristers through school, university, the BVC and pupillage. It is also developing further data resources, covering the background and progress of entrants to the profession. The Bar Council also conducts an annual exit survey, identifying the numbers and reasons for barristers leaving, or changing their practising status. Similar work is being undertaken by the Inns, allowing them to assess the effectiveness of projects, and benchmarking progress.

The Bar Council has strongly supported the CPS and the Attorney General in developing Equality and Diversity Expectation Statements for chambers based on the Code. The Statements aim to raise standards and increase the diversity of those who prosecute. The Bar Council has suggested improvements to these, and performance against the Statements is monitored regularly. The Bar Council also devotes its own resources to assisting members, for example in returning from maternity leave. In addition, it provides a disability panel of advisers, who are practitioners with special knowledge of particular disabilities, to advise disabled students interested in a career at the Bar.

The circuits are also active in promoting inclusion. In 2008 all circuits appointed at least one senior member to act as a mentor to barristers seeking career development advice. Their role is proactively to offer encouragement to those without ready access to this kind of advice in chambers. Robin Tolson QC, the Leader of the Western Circuit, says, 'As a former state comprehensive school boy from Hull, I can assure you that the Western Circuit takes social mobility seriously', because 'all that matters is commitment to advocacy as a profession.'

The same welcome is true for London; as Tim Kevan, a practising barrister for ten years, and author of *'Baby Barista and the Art of War'*, a novel based on his popular fictional *Times* legal blog, agrees: 'As the son of a social worker and a teacher, I didn't know a great deal about becoming a barrister, before I embarked upon that long road. However, at every stage of the journey, I was given advice and encouragement; whether from established members of the profession, or from gaining financial assistance through generous Middle Temple scholarships.'

A Snapshot of the profession in statistics

As Lord Neuberger said at the launch of his Interim Report on Entry to the Bar, ‘the fact that the Bar is a very competitive profession does not mean that it should only recruit from the social or economic elite.... the Bar should be open to all, and the Bar has to play its part in ensuring that it is.’

As Lord Neuberger himself has commented, ‘in terms of race and gender profile, the Bar does quite well in promoting a diverse profession.’ In 2008, there were 12,136 self-employed barristers and 3,046 members of the employed Bar. Out of 15,182 barristers who provided details, 1,429 were from BME backgrounds (9.41%), with women comprising 34% of the membership. Figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08 showed that 54% and 62% of pupils respectively were from the top two socio-economic classes. Progress is being made in widening the participation of graduate entrants in law from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In 2002, 29% of law undergraduates were from such backgrounds. Five years later, this increased to 35% – as against 32% for all degree subjects.

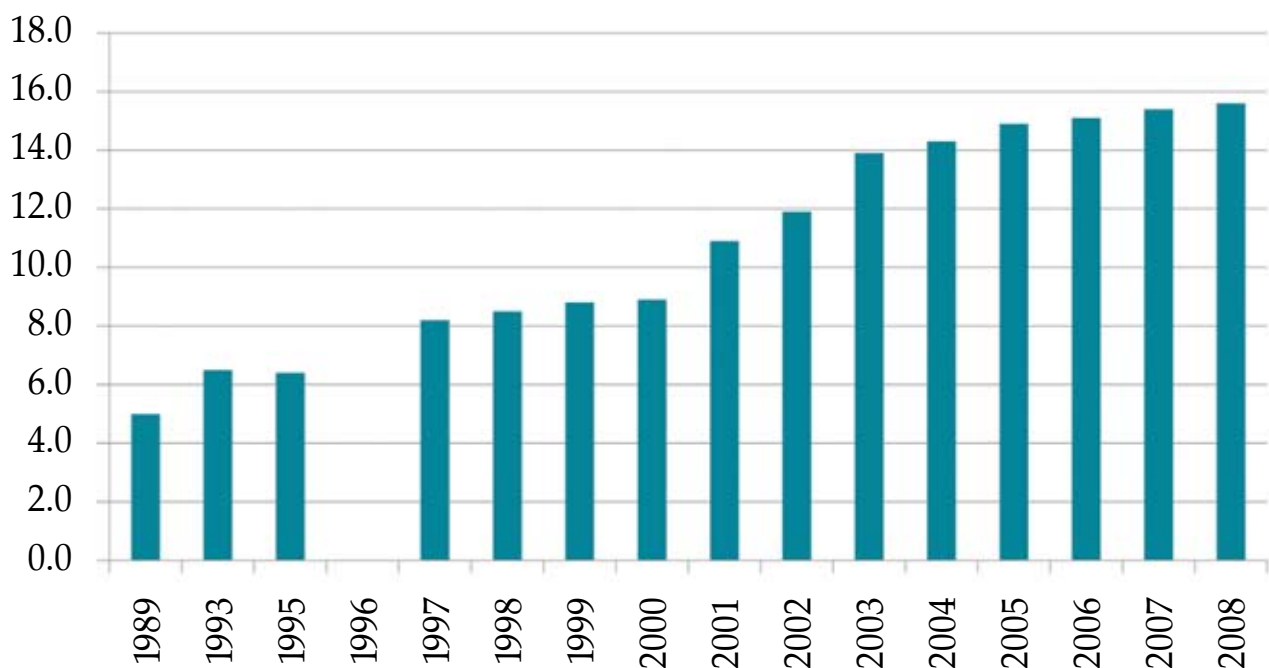
In 1995 the percentage of BME barristers at the self-employed Bar was 6.4%, with 376 barristers; by 2005, the figure had risen to nearly 15%, with 1382 barristers. In 2008, 15.6% of all self-employed barristers were from a BME background, with steady increases having been recorded over the previous ten years. The numbers of BME employed barristers have also grown from 397 in 2003, to 499 in 2008, approximately 15%. 27% of BME applicants who applied for silk in the 2009 round were successful. Such improvement also has strong foundations in the work of the Inns of Court. At Inner Temple in recent years, 21% of

the Inn’s UK-national students and 17% of the Inn’s pupils were from BME backgrounds. Overall, 21% of pupils are from BME backgrounds, up from 16% in 2004., whereas 8% of the UK population are from BME groups.

Ethnic and socio-economic diversity are not the only criteria against which the Bar has made improvements. In 2005, nearly half of all newly qualified and trainee barristers were women, who are making consistent strides in the highest levels of the profession. In 2006 there were 33 women appointed Queen’s Counsel, up from 12 appointments in 2002. In 2009 there were 16 such appointments and, for the third year running, the success rate for women applicants for silk was significantly better than for men. From 30 women silks in 1989, to 127, or 10%, of Queen’s Counsel in 2009, the scale of change is impressive. The Bar is also benefiting from a more mature class of applicants. Eleven percent of students at Inner Temple, for example, are undertaking their BVC more than ten years after their first undergraduate degree, with 62% of new pupils at Inner Temple being mature candidates (25+), 12% of whom are over the age of 35.

Bar Council Chairman, Desmond Browne QC has said: ‘Like all my predecessors as Chairman, I am determined to promote the Bar as a profession which is diverse and inclusive. Any profession which places obstacles in the way of talented aspirants joining its ranks would be undermining its own best interests.’

■ Percentage BME



The Challenges



The Bar Council has made widening entry to the Bar for people from lower socio-economic groups a key strategic objective. In 2007 it published a report of the Entry to the Bar Working Party, chaired by Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, which was followed by the Neuberger Monitoring and Implementation Group (NMIG) to oversee implementation of the Working Party's recommendations. They found the following factors played a significant part in access to the profession:

Schools – many school children have not encountered the Bar in any social or educational context whatsoever, and by the time they have completed their GCSEs and A level choices, they are at a disadvantage as a result in considering the Bar as a career.

Universities – Lack of knowledge about the Bar is just as poor for many undergraduates, particularly at non-Russell Group universities, as it is for many school children. Many of these universities do not have connections with the Inns, the Bar Council, or individual chambers, making it harder for students to obtain practical advice on a career at the Bar.

Cost of Bar Vocational Course – Currently it can cost upwards of £13,000 to complete a 30-week course. The Bar Council estimates that many students leave university with debts in the region of £20,000, and once the cost of the BVC together with living expenses are added, the total debt can be in excess of £30,000.

Pupillage – Currently there are fewer than 400 pupillages. The Bar Council's figures show that in 2007 there were around 3,800 applicants for pupillage. Such statistics can be very discouraging and are likely to be more so for those from more modest backgrounds.

Against this background the Bar Council has taken action, through the NMIG to progress the 57 recommendations made for change identified in the Neuberger Report:

Schools – Lord Neuberger's Report identified that it was essential that more information was provided to school students, through better websites, information sheets, visits to schools, and placement programmes to allow less privileged children to see the Bar at first hand. These recommendations are being taken forward.

Universities – Again, the Neuberger Report identified changes that needed to take place, recommending that the Bar should try to cast its net more widely when it comes to recruitment, with more discussions with law lecturers about how they advise on careers at the Bar. Lincoln's Inn, for example, is dedicated to doing so: as one spokeswoman put it: 'For many students, no matter what their background, the Bar is surrounded by mystery and we try as far as we can to help students see through this.'

Cost of Bar Vocational Course – The Neuberger Working Group's response to this was to advocate a step-by-step approach on assistance to be provided at the stages of entering the profession. The group commended the Inns of Court for their provision of scholarships and prizes worth £4m in support of qualifying students, although the group argued that the Inns could not 'provide an all-embracing solution to this situation'. Schemes offering loans on preferential terms have been set up alongside existing programmes, to mitigate issues on financial pressures.

Pupillage – A decrease in the number of pupillages has occurred, in part, because practice areas like family law and criminal law, in which a large proportion of practitioners work, are publicly-funded. These have been particularly hard hit by repeated cuts in legal aid rates, making the publicly-funded Bar less attractive as a career option than it used to be. The problem is further compounded by student debt.

As Desmond Browne QC puts it: 'The process of ensuring diversity at the Bar needs to start at school and continue all the way to appointment to the Bench. It also needs to ensure that young barristers have a proper supply of publicly-funded work on which to cut their teeth.'

'The Bar Council has taken action to progress the 57 recommendations in the Neuberger Report.'

Solutions

The Bar has led the way in reaching out to those from disadvantaged backgrounds with a range of initiatives across England and Wales, particularly for those who would not normally consider the Bar as a career option. These range from arranging barrister speakers for schools in England and Wales, a chambers placement programme, and careers conferences arranged in conjunction with organisations like the Social Mobility Foundation and Aim Higher co-ordinators for state schools, as well as the Bar Mock Trial Competition for state school students.

School Speakers

Each year, the Bar Council writes to around 7000 schools in England and Wales offering barrister speakers. As a result, about 1200 talks are arranged each year. The talks are informal, and introductory in nature, and deal with a lack of familiarity with the legal profession. As Jane Miller QC explains from a Western Circuit perspective: 'many members of the Bar give talks at local schools and 6th Form Colleges to encourage students to consider a career at the Bar, both as a result of the Bar Council's "Speak Up" for schools" initiative, and through local links.' Links have also been forged with local universities in improving access to the Bar and promoting social mobility.

At the other end of the Western Circuit, the Bar works with the local judiciary in Bristol and the University of the West of England (UWE), a local provider of the Bar Vocational Course (BVC). Christopher Quinlan, of Guildhall Chambers, explains that UWE runs a schools programme, targeting disadvantaged 14 year old students, in Bristol. Quinlan says: 'BVC students choose students from selected schools who have demonstrated a genuine interest in the law. They are subsequently invited to attend the BVC Campus for a 'trials day'. Here, a local Circuit Judge presides over a mock trial, and the BVC students assist the school pupils prepare the case. The trials are conducted in the mock court rooms on the BVC Campus, and are recorded.'

Andrew Powell, a pupil barrister at 4 Paper Buildings, says: 'I have given talks at schools in deprived areas in Birmingham, where we've realised that people don't have the confidence to even think about it, until they hear that they can do it.' Kate Grange, a barrister at 39 Essex Street, agrees: 'I like to give something back, too; I've been to my former school and talked to them about the Bar and what's involved. I strongly support barristers acting as role models to school students; encouraging by dialogue, example, action. That can give someone the confidence to believe they can do it, too. It's important that students don't set their sights too low; Students at my Nottingham school might believe they were only good for being secretaries. But they can be barristers, too.'

Teachers also appreciate the visits. Miss Jordan Cooper, a teacher at Rosebery School, in Epsom, Surrey said: 'I found that our barrister speaker interacted really well with the students. The speaker took the time to discuss the law with them, before holding a question and answer session. Students were engaged and interested in what the barrister had to say; those hoping to pursue the Bar as a future career path also found the talk very useful.'



'Our barrister speaker interacted really well with the students.'

Solutions



Chambers Placement Schemes

A key development undertaken by the Bar Council in recent years has been the creation of a placement programme to enable gifted children from state schools to learn about the Bar, the Courts and about barristers at first hand, delivered in co-operation with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF). The former Chief Executive of the SMF, Linkson Jack, has acknowledged the Bar's foresight in so doing, saying: 'In the past, the Bar may have had a reputation as being inaccessible to talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Initiatives such as this prove that is no longer the case at the Bar.'

The placements enable school students to take an early and informed decision as to whether they wish to read law at university, so as to be in the best position to enter the profession. The scheme involves students shadowing a barrister for a week, observing trials and learning to do some of the work that a barrister would do such as drafting pleadings or opinions, as well as discussing issues that arise in a case. Students also get an opportunity to work with barristers on a mock trial scenario to learn about how to conduct a trial.

Kawsar Zaman, who took part in the Bar Council's 2007 placement scheme, said: 'The placement has done everything for me. It's made me really consider a career at the Bar, given me great contacts, and has said to me, "I can do it". I would unreservedly recommend it to others. It is unique. I don't think there is anything out there that compares with this and the best thing about the placement is that it is not simply a one week placement and then it ends there. The people you meet and come across are people who will help you in the future and in my case, became real friends.'

The scheme has been a success, with the numbers steadily increasing, with 27 applicants in 2007, and 36 in 2008. In 2009, all those students who expressed an interest in undertaking an internship with a barrister were placed in chambers. Duncan Matthews QC, Chairman of the NMIG says, 'this year, 46 students from across England participated ... the scheme has capacity for more students; we are already working on measures to extend its operation.'

Feedback from students is uniformly high: 95% of 2008 interns said the week was either "Excellent" or "Very Good". One barrister from Blackstone Chambers commented in her feedback on one student that: 'she hugely exceeded my expectations...fantastic social and communication skills, very quick, extremely clever... by the end of the week she was writing an opinion for me on discrimination law... she would make a brilliant career at the Bar.'

'By the end of the week she was writing an opinion for me... she would make a brilliant career at the Bar.'

Solutions



The Bar Mock Trial Scheme

The Bar National Mock Trial Competition has been running since 1991. It is open to all non-fee paying secondary schools and Further Education colleges in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each year the competition involves over 200 schools and nearly 3,000 students from across the UK.

Teams of up to 15 students, aged between 15 and 18, prepare the prosecution and defence of two specially written criminal cases and take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court staff and jurors in a mock trial. Their performances are judged by Circuit Judges, Recorders, and senior barristers. Each team takes part in regional heats, held in November each year, and the winners of the heats go on to a National Final, held in Spring the following year.

The primary purpose of the competition is to promote citizenship and demystify the legal process. By taking part in a mock trial, young people gain an understanding of criminal law and the criminal justice system, and explore how legal rights and responsibilities operate in practice. They also learn about the vital role in the criminal justice system that ordinary people have to play as jurors. The competition is organised by the Citizenship Foundation and funded by the Bar Council, the Inns of Court and the Circuits, and other UK advocacy professions.

Commenting on the final of the 2008/09 competition, the Chairman of the Bar, Desmond Browne QC, said: 'The competition is an integral part of the Bar's work to develop a more diverse profession. I wanted to be a barrister from my schooldays, and hopefully this competition will make today's students feel the same.'

'Involves over 200 schools...'

Other Initiatives undertaken by the Bar

The Bar Council and the Inns of Court also undertake other initiatives to support increased diversity and inclusion in the profession. Inner Temple, for example, is carrying out pioneering work in collaboration with the National Education Trust, by committing itself to a Schools Project aimed at Years 12/13 which seeks to raise the aspirations of state school pupils in Greater London. This has taken the form of a series of workshops under the title "Becoming a Barrister- Your Call?" designed to improve oratory skills, and culminating in a debating competition in September 2009.

The Bar Council also holds regular careers conferences for schools students. Twenty two sixth form students, from seven different Hounslow state schools attended such a conference in April 2009, provided by the Bar Council, the Social Mobility Foundation and Aim Higher. The students, who all have a genuine interest in pursuing a career in law, were enthused by an inspirational talk from Helena Kennedy QC, with one saying 'she spoke directly to my own beliefs and motives...I was in awe'; another said: 'this talk really inspired me to go for the dream'.

This was followed up by a series of interactive workshops where students gleaned more information about developments in law, the working life of a barrister and interesting legal cases. Valerie Naylor, of Hounslow School Improvement Service said: 'The students reported back enthusiastically to their schools and said they really benefited from the day and will be able to make good use in the future of the insights provided by those already in the legal profession.' Similar careers events have been arranged by Inner Temple, and the other Inns of Court, with between 60-70 students due to attend two such presentations at Inner Temple, for example, in June and November 2010.

A Student's story



Kawsar Zaman is an undergraduate studying law, who previously attended the 2007 Social Mobility Foundation Placement Scheme. Such educational experiences have been noted by the Milburn Review on Fair Access to the Professions as being of great benefit to students seeking a career in the law, as a form of outreach, in showing people who take part that a professional career is a goal they can attain. In 2009, all 46 students who expressed an interest in doing an internship with a barrister were placed in chambers.

Kawsar Zaman is refreshingly open about how little he knew about the Bar beforehand: 'To be honest, before I did the placement, I heard a lot about how, to be frank, barristers were 'snobbish', and so I was a bit put off. Before this, I had never met a barrister, nor even been in a court room. I live in Tower Hamlets where educational attainment is very low; in my family, no-one has ever gone on to A levels, let alone University! It was all new for me. At the beginning of the placement scheme we dined at Middle Temple, and I thought to myself "wow". It was brilliant to be exposed to it all.'

He says: 'During the placement week, I was shadowing criminal barristers at 2 Hare Court, which is a leading criminal set. I shadowed two Treasury Counsel – barristers who only prosecute on behalf of the Crown – at the Old Bailey in London.' Zaman followed Jonathan Laidlaw QC, and Parmjit-Kaur ('Bobbie') Cheema (one of the first ever Asian women in the Treasury Counsel's room). Of his two barristers he shadowed, he said 'They were brilliant and still are a great source of inspiration for me. During the week, I was at the Old Bailey in two cases – both murders! The whole week was just a truly eye-opening experience.' Kawsar was impressed by how seriously 2 Hare Court took the scheme, saying: 'Everyone must have known that I was coming in, because every time I was in chambers, a barrister would come up to me and say "you must be the mini-pupil we've been told about!"'

His impressions of the Bar were realistic ones, he notes, particularly of the criminal Bar, itself subject to funding and other pressures: 'They work long hours! Work of barristers is so varied. It's not always glamour. It was important to see this side. I also learnt a lot about advocacy skills, and how the court system and the criminal justice system operate.' However, he says that 'before the placement I wasn't sure whether the Bar was for me, but knew I had an interest in the law. The scheme has now really focused me to seriously consider a career at the Bar.'

In common with many interns, he found it an enlightening experience, with many things learnt, including emphasising the decision whether or not to apply for law at University. He is both realistic and enthusiastic, about his aspirations: 'They told me that the Bar is competitive, but if you put your mind to it you can do it.' He is now determined to go on and pursue a career at the Bar, and is being assisted by 2 Hare Court to do so.

'The placement has done everything for me. It's made me really consider a career at the Bar, given me great contacts, and has said to me, "I can do it".'

Pupillage stories

Andrew Powell explains his background: 'I'm originally from Birmingham, from Handsworth Wood, which is an inner-city area of the city. I attended a state school – Great Barr Comprehensive, one of the largest in the country, with a roll of 2500, which I left with good A level results, having also been made Head Boy.'

Andrew's first experience of the Bar was through a mini-pupillage. Chambers offer work experience in the form of mini-pupillages, mostly for undergraduates. The Bar Council is encouraging chambers to offer more mini-pupillages, shorter than a week in length in an effort to give more students a taste of what being a barrister is like. He found the experience worthwhile: 'I wrote to them and arranged a mini-pupillage at what is now 25 Bedford Row. It was the only connection with law that I had; my family weren't lawyers – in fact, my mum works as a nurse and my dad is an electrical engineer. I got the mini-pupillage and spent time in shadowing a number of barristers doing defence work in the Crown Courts.'

Having graduated from Manchester University with First Class Honours, Andrew went onto study a two-year combined CPE/LLM at Leeds University. Whilst working at his studies, he also arranged further work experience: 'I knew I had to give myself as broad an overview of the likely sets I would apply for, so I was busy setting up mini-pupillages from 2005-2006. I went to seven different sets between my first two years at Leeds. This gave me a variety of legal experiences, but also, crucially, an understanding of the mix of sets both in, and out, of London that I might apply to.'

He says: 'Mini-pupillages are important because the experience helps you assess the sets, and vice versa. Some are more traditional than others. Those which had a more contemporary ethos were the ones I tailored my applications towards; I knew I wanted to work with them, and could see how they'd assist the solicitors and clients they were working with. In each instance, I felt I was given a fair shout, in terms of my application to them, and how we felt about each other. Although the mini-pupillages are over-subscribed, I felt I was being selected totally on merit, notwithstanding a non-traditional route into law.'

Andrew is a pupil barrister in family law, one of the two largest practice areas for barristers, in which a large proportion of practitioners are publicly-funded. They have been particularly hard hit by repeated cuts in legal aid rates, leading the Bar Council to argue that 'the justice system simply won't work without properly trained advocates to prosecute and defend cases.'

Andrew wholeheartedly agrees: 'Funding by the Legal Services Commission (LSC) has a real impact. Make no mistake, it can be rough at the first three to four years at the Bar. I'm proud of the work I do as a family pupil, and whilst others might say that it's worthy work, that work also needs to be funded properly so I can continue to do it! If the LSC are serious about attracting individuals from all sections of society into the legal professions, then they should look again at how they encourage this.'



'In each instance, I felt I was given a fair shout, in terms of my application to them, and how we felt about each other... I felt I was being selected totally on merit, notwithstanding a non-traditional route into law.'



Andrew Powell is a pupil at 4 Paper Buildings, a leading family set in the Inner Temple, in London.

Pupillage stories



Saima Younis is a pupil at Byrom Street Chambers, moving to Queen Elizabeth Building, London, in September 2009, to work mainly in family law.

'I will always be eternally grateful for Inner Temple's investment and confidence in me.'

Saima Younis also had a non-traditional route to her career, as she explains: 'I didn't have any background in the law; my Dad is a taxi driver, and my Mum spent a lot of her life looking after 8 kids, family life has always been very busy! My parents weren't professionals and didn't go to University but were always extremely keen for us to go down this route.'

The role of schools and colleges is something that she stresses: 'At Sixth Form College, I got a great deal of encouragement from my teachers and a lot of useful advice on pursuing a career in law. I was torn between deciding between a Law degree and a History degree. One of my teachers suggested that History, which was the subject I most enjoyed and excelled at, would be a good choice, as if I enjoyed it, I was likely to get good results and be able to convert to Law later. This allowed me the flexibility to make up my mind at a later stage.' Saima believes this was one of the best pieces of advice that she has received.

Having graduated from the University of Bristol with First Class Honours, she says: 'A good quality degree is crucial and, in my experience, can give you a bit of an edge over other applicants.' She has advice for future students: 'Research, research, and research. There are lots of sources of information available now on the internet, from books, which I found invaluable, the Bar Standards Board (BSB) and the Bar Council. Start early – if you're interested in this at 16, then you've got chance to work on your A levels, and choose the best degree for you.'

Financial support is also crucial to prospective barristers. The Bar Council and the Inns have worked hard together to put in place a professional studies loan scheme at favourable interest rates with HSBC, for those interested in a career at the Bar. All of the Inns of Court award scholarships and the total amount awarded each year is in the region of £4 million, a significant amount for a small profession which compares very favourably with other professions, allocated by the Inns, Lincoln's, Inner Temple, Middle Temple and Gray's. Saima was supported by Inner Temple, who awarded her two Major Scholarships: the Princess Royal Scholarship of £7,500 for the CPE, and then a Sir Peter Taylor Scholarship for the BVC of £20,000, covering fees and living expenses. She was also awarded the Duke of Edinburgh Entrance Award which covered her Call fees, and the Leonard Woodley Scholarship as a pupillage award. She pays tribute to Inner Temple: 'The Inn has been an invaluable support throughout. The scholarship interviews were testing but warm, welcoming and interested.'

That support was clearly inspirational: 'The Inn's faith and confidence in me gave me a real boost and encouraged me to go further. Thanks to that support, I obtained a Commendation for my CPE and a Very Competent for my BVC. I will always be eternally grateful for Inner Temple's investment and confidence in me', noting that without this financial support, she would have found it extremely difficult to pursue a career at the Bar.

Junior Bar perspective

Philip Henry: 'Originally, I worked as a part-qualified accountant, but I couldn't see a long-term future in it, so I decided to study Law, which I read at Kingston Polytechnic, (now Kingston University). Kingston had a strong practical bias in teaching law, specifically geared towards a career at the Bar, and I wanted the best possible preparation for the role'. He remembers that none of his immediate family had a connection with the law, other than 'an uncle who practised at the Bar in Antigua, who was an inspiration to me when considering my future.'

Having passed his Bar exams, 'thanks to Kingston, which equipped me for exercises in drafting pleadings much better than some of my counterparts', he then completed his pupillage, worked as a Crown Counsel in Antigua in criminal law for four years, before returning to a tenancy at 4 King's Bench Walk. He remembers: 'Even in those four years, I had noticed a more positive difference in the way in which chambers reacted to black people seeking a career at the Bar. My impression was that merit had become genuinely more important as a guiding criterion rather than other factors, like race.'

He then took the opportunity to join the CPS, and specialised further by joining the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) for twelve years, finishing as an Assistant Director. He is positive about his experiences as an employed barrister: 'In the same way that the Bar has accommodated greater diversity, both the SFO and the CPS are also good examples. The Civil Service is, in my view, a genuine meritocracy. CPS and SFO lawyers recognise that they'll be judged on how they deal with opportunities, and if they meet these challenges, then skill will out. If you have shown yourself to be good, and you can do the job, then you will get on. If, on the other hand, you assume you will get on because of who you know, then life can be difficult!'

He then joined 9 Gough Square, which was 'completely professional in every way. There was no place for negative attitudes.' He says 'because of that, the old ways of inviting people to interview because you'd known their father at Oxford had gone'. He goes on to say: 'pupillage, for example, was much better run; there were pupillage committees, where proper analysis and discussion took place, often with many hours being devoted to sifting CVs, or interviewing candidates. Equality and diversity were taken seriously as a result, and we took pains to ensure that people's credentials were looked at properly.'

To him, as a criminal lawyer, the legal aid question is a vital one. He says: 'The CPS's reliance on in-house advocacy does the junior Bar a massive disservice. One needs a training ground and should anything take away the opportunity to create that, then what one has is a situation, where the little cases which junior barristers rely upon to develop their practices aren't there, and so they suffer.'



Philip Henry is a "senior junior" barrister at 9 Gough Square, specialising in criminal law, where his practice spans complex criminal fraud and serious crime.

'If you have shown yourself to be good, and you can do the job, then you will get on.'

Junior Bar perspective



Kate Grange is a senior junior practising in commercial, construction, public and administrative law at 39 Essex Street, in London.

Kate says that: 'I come from a modest family background; I attended an inner-city comprehensive in a fairly rough area of Nottingham, where my mother was a teacher, and my father was a printer. None of my relatives were lawyers.' She attended a Sixth Form College and then Queen's College Cambridge, where she read Law, having been drawn to do so by a love of public speaking, her English studies, and supportive teachers at Sixth Form College – not to mention programmes like *LA Law* and *Rumpole of the Bailey*.

She stresses the importance of getting work experience to establish what it is you want to do as a barrister: 'I recognised that I wanted a balance between paperwork and advocacy, and that I wanted a variety of cases, particularly around public law, because that had interested me at University. So, I chose carefully, worked hard, and looked for a modern, unstuffy, progressive set, which is how I found 39 Essex Street to be; they did a full range of the kinds of work that I liked.'

She is clear as to why the modern Bar is now so open and diverse, saying: 'Perhaps it's because there are a quite a few of us now who have been to state school, university, and then qualified. I've sat on the pupil interview panel and I can assure you everything we do is done on merit. We work really hard, both clerks and members, to avoid discrimination, indirect or otherwise. We look at all backgrounds of applicants, and the fact that those who can't afford to, or aren't able to do a mini-pupillage are taken into consideration alongside those who have been lucky enough to do one, because it's their talent for the Bar that counts, not whether they've been able to experience it at that age; not everyone can – it's expensive.'

As a wife and mother herself, she has also noticed that working mothers are much more prevalent at the Bar now, too. 'In my set, there are a lot of women under ten years Call, who have had career breaks and come back to practise. In my early years, these women either came straight back to practise after a baby, or had their babies much later in life; now, chamber gives them the confidence that they can have the support they need, at whatever stage in their career, which means we keep and retain people for longer.'

To her, 'Confidence is everything. Experience and knowledge count, but confidence counts for more. If you want to be a barrister, you should believe in yourself from an early age. Don't talk yourself down – it's unattractive. The inner belief that might start from a student seeing someone like me, do well at a place like the Bar, can be the force that propels you to take that mini-pupillage, and build that knowledge and experience from the start. But it all starts with confidence.'

'I've sat on the pupil interview panel and I can assure you everything we do is done on merit. We work really hard to avoid discrimination, indirect or otherwise.'

View from the Queen's Counsel and the Judiciary

Having attended two Welsh comprehensive schools, Stephen Davies QC read Law at the LSE and Cambridge. He was called to the Bar as the Atkin Scholar of that year. He moved to Bristol in 1985 to Guildhall Chambers, and took silk in 2000. He is a Bencher of Gray's Inn.

Stephen Davies didn't have a family background in law, and the careers assistance provided by the two comprehensive schools in South Wales was 'rudimentary at best.' 'In 1976-78 there was very little careers advice, properly so-called. I had never met a barrister, or a son, or daughter, of a barrister. I had not seen anything relevant on the television (not even *Rumpole*) and the first time I set foot in any chambers was for pupillage interviews!'

His real experience of law came in his undergraduate and graduate studies in Law at the London School of Economics and Cambridge: 'I learned quite a bit of black letter law and to that extent they prepared me. I met many students from public schools, and rapidly realised that they were as mixed a bunch as any other class of persons. I don't think I had any particular problems adjusting by reference to my background.'

Why did he decide to become a barrister? He harkens back to a familiar theme to many lawyers: 'I liked the sound of it – standing up and defending the rights of others – but had no real idea what it entailed. There were no websites, brochures or other literature'. He is full of praise, however, for the Inns of Court: 'Gray's Inn was my saviour. I could not praise the Inn more. They were welcoming and supportive and I won awards, which set me on the right track'.

The situation now is very different, as chambers in Bristol provide advocacy experience for BVC students; the Guildhall Shield, the Albion Shield and the St. John's mooted prize are annual competitions, run with the purpose of promoting links between the local Bar and students. Stephen's own set, Guildhall Chambers, recently invited a number of A-level pupils from local Bristol comprehensive schools to Chambers. They spent the day being introduced to, and speaking with, members and having talks from practitioners of all levels of call.

Stephen feels that the Bar has changed for the better: 'The broader the social mix in chambers, the more likely that chambers is likely to be modern and forward-thinking in its approach to development with the times and practices. Recruitment is much more transparent – with applicable policies and protocols which are observed. There is now mentoring (where previously there had been none) and more awareness of pupils' needs. Financing of pupils has seen big improvements.' He adds: 'Over time, the Bar should cease to have the appearance of being the exclusive province of the well-healed and privately-educated.'



'I had never met a barrister, or a son, or daughter, of a barrister. I had not seen anything relevant on the television (not even Rumpole) and the first time, I set foot in any chambers was for pupillage interviews!'

View from the Queen's Counsel and the Judiciary



'My own Inn, Inner Temple, distributes more than £1 million in scholarships each year and I know the other Inns have similar schemes. We work hard to ensure that good candidates are not put off by the cost.'

Dame Heather Hallett is a Justice of the Court of Appeal. She was the first woman to be elected leader of the South Eastern Circuit, in 1995, and then the first woman to chair the Bar Council of England and Wales, in 1998. She is a judicial member of the Judicial Appointments Commission, responsible for selecting new judges.

She says: 'I was one of the fortunate generation who had the benefit of an excellent education from grammar school to University to Bar Finals (as they then were) for free. The cost of my tuition was paid by the state throughout, and my local authority provided a grant towards my living costs at university. My parents had no spare income or savings and without the financial assistance of the local authority, I doubt very much that I would have become a lawyer.' She argues that although there is considerably more support for aspiring barristers these days, 'given the huge cost of qualifying, there needs to be', saying 'my own Inn, Inner Temple, distributes more than £1 million in scholarships each year and I know the other Inns have similar schemes. We work hard to ensure that good candidates are not put off by the cost.'

Dame Heather says she has become increasingly concerned about the rising cost of qualifying as a barrister, pointing out that: 'An aspiring barrister must saddle themselves with a huge amount of debt before they have any real idea of whether they will be successful at the Bar. My fear is that, as a result, people from backgrounds like mine will be deterred from applying to become barristers. We must be vigilant to ensure the Bar does not revert to being the preserve of the privileged.'

Equally, she says, changes in the public funding of lawyers can have an impact: 'When I was a young barrister public funds were available for crime, family and civil. I was fortunate to be instructed in most kinds of work and did not specialise until many years after call. I believe this all round grounding made me a better advocate and a better lawyer.'

She welcomes the improvement in the diversity figures, saying 'much of this is the result of the efforts made by the Bar Council and the Inns to recruit the most able students to the Bar, regardless of their background. They target school and university students who may not receive adequate advice or encouragement to try for the Bar.'

She adds: 'Inner Temple, for example, is undertaking a number of initiatives to raise the aspirations of young people and provide information through links with local schools and colleges. This includes the pioneering schools project with the National Education Trust (NET), 'Becoming a Barrister... Your Call?' In addition, Inner runs an annual conference for students in years 12 and 13 from state schools and a biennial conference for school careers advisers.'

Contact details

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Training & Education

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THE INNS OF COURT

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Inner Temple

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Gray's Inn

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Email: info@socialmobility.org.uk
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Bar Mock Trials

Citizenship Foundation
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Bar Loan Scheme

Commercial Manager
HSBC Bank plc
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165 Fleet Street , London
EC4A 2DY
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National Education Trust

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The Sutton Trust

111 Upper Richmond Road
Putney
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SW15 2TJ
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Useful websites

General Advice: www.barcouncil.org.uk/trainingandeducation/CareersHome/

Law Fairs & Events attended by the Bar Council & Inns of Court:
www.barcouncil.org.uk/trainingandeducation/CareersHome/EventsListing/Inns



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BISHOP'S COURT