



BAR STANDARDS BOARD
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
2022-2025

Introduction

1. The Bar Standards Board is the independent regulator of the Bar. As the regulator, the BSB works on behalf of consumers and the public interest to ensure that the barrister profession serves the rule of law and its clients, actual and prospective. The BSB can only be fully effective as the regulator if its work is widely known and understood and key stakeholders are able to contribute to its policy-making. So the BSB maintains a small Communications and Public Engagement (CPE) team.
2. The purpose of the BSB's Communications and Public Engagement (CPE) Strategy is to support the Board in the achievement of its statutory objectives:
 - Protecting and promoting the public interest;
 - Supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law;
 - Improving access to justice;
 - Protecting and promoting the interests of consumers;
 - Promoting competition in the provision of services;
 - Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
 - Increasing public understanding of citizens' legal rights and duties; and
 - Promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles.

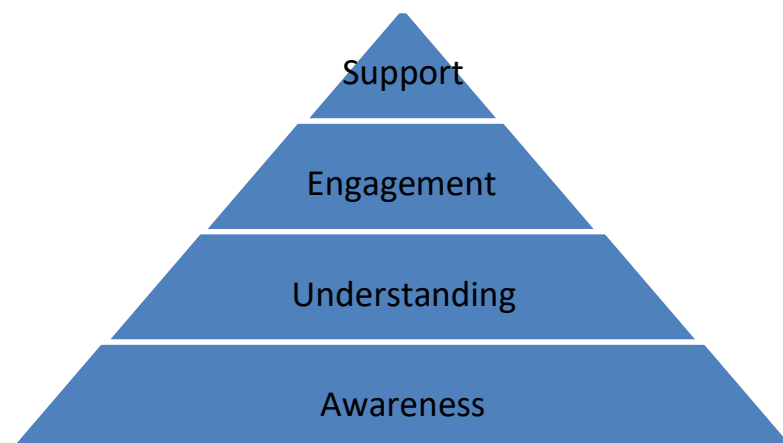
In particular, it also supports the BSB's key strategic aims which are :

- **Efficiency** : delivering our core regulatory operations quickly, economically and to a high standard.
- **Standards** : ensuring that barristers provide a high quality and responsive service throughout their careers.
- **Equality** : promoting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar and at the BSB, and the profession's ability to serve diverse consumers.
- **Access** : promoting consumer understanding of legal services and choice, and good value in using those services (covering both the supply of, and demand for, barristers' services).
- **Independence** : strengthening the BSB's independence, capability, self-confidence and credibility

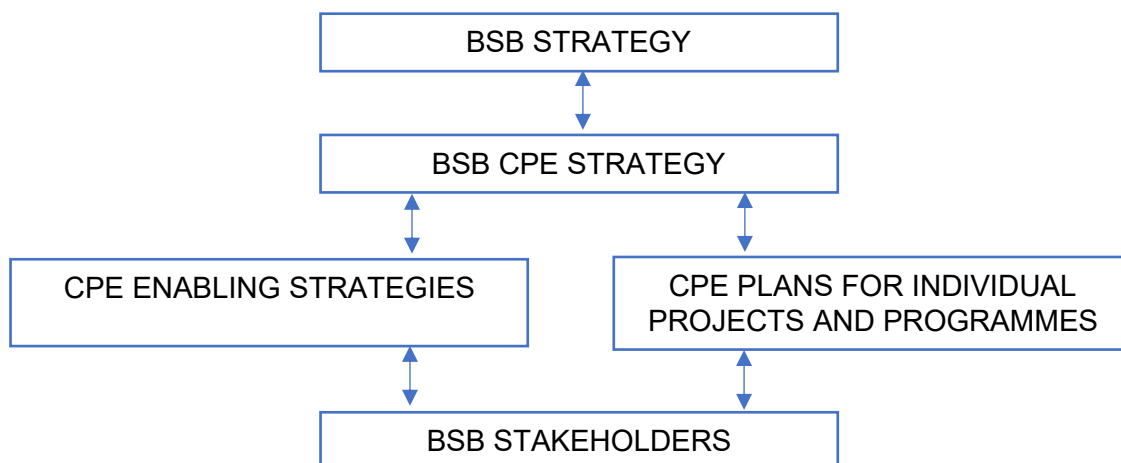
3. This Strategy is designed to accompany the [BSB's Strategic Plan for 2022-25](#) and the BSB's Public Legal Education Strategy which were approved by the Bar Standards Board on 31 March 2022.

The Strategy

- To achieve the aims set out in its Strategic Plan the BSB must communicate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including:
 - the public and consumer groups, including bodies promoting access to justice and equality and diversity;
 - barristers and their representative bodies, including the Bar Council, the Inns, the Circuits and Specialist Bar Associations;
 - those training for the Bar, Law students and those offering that training;
 - other professions which support the Bar including clerks and practice managers;
 - other legal professionals and their representative bodies;
 - other regulatory bodies;
 - Government, Parliament and Whitehall;
 - BSB colleagues; and
 - the media.
- 4. With which stakeholders we need to engage and to what extent will vary according to the issue. Our priority is to ensure in each case that those most affected by our decisions have their voices heard in the decision-making process. Individual stakeholder enabling strategies are drawn up to set out how we seek to engage each group of stakeholders.
- Our CPE strategy seeks:
 - to maximise **awareness** of our work and
 - increase **understanding** of what we do with the aim of increasing trust and confidence
 - in the hope that that will encourage the **engagement** which is vital for our policy making, and
 - increase **support** for our work (by which we mean ongoing engagement with our work which certainly need not be uncritical).
- The purpose of our engagement can be illustrated with the following “communications pyramid”:



- The pyramid seeks to illustrate that while we want the widest possible awareness of our work, which we hope will lead to greater understanding, engagement and support, we recognise that those who choose to engage with and support us in our work will always only be a proportion of those who are aware of our work. We know from some of our stakeholders that they feel that a degree of awareness and understanding is sufficient. But we do want as many as possible of the public to be aware of the following key messages:
 - the Bar is a well-regulated profession which is vital for the rule of law upon which a civilised society depends. So the regulation of the Bar matters to everyone even if they may never themselves use a barrister;
 - the BSB is an independent body operating in the public interest which seeks to ensure that barristers are well trained, competent and trustworthy and dedicated to giving their clients the best service they can and, if you do want to report a concern about a barrister, it is easy to do and you can be assured that it will be thoroughly and impartially investigated; and
 - the Bar is an increasingly diverse profession, where we seek to ensure that entry and career progression is based on merit.
- As part of our overall CPE strategy, our regulatory objective to increase public understanding of citizens' legal rights and duties is also met through our Public Legal Education strategy in partnership with other legal regulators and frontline providers of help to those in legal need.
- Communications and public engagement is not only the responsibility of the CPE team. We seek to encourage all staff to act as ambassadors for the BSB in their dealings with members of the public and key stakeholders and every key project and programme has a CPE strategy. The responsibility for designing and implementing those strategies is shared between the Programme and Project Managers and the CPE team.
- The diagram below illustrates how the BSB's CPE Strategy operates. There are enabling strategies for each group of stakeholders and CPE plans for individual programmes and projects. There is direct messaging between the BSB CPE team and staff, stakeholders and the public. There is also messaging that is delivered by other BSB staff as part of individual programme plans. It is essential that this messaging goes in both directions – we gather vitally important feedback and input into our policy-making from stakeholders while we also communicate with them:



- The CPE team's key overall objectives over the next three years continue to be:
 - to increase awareness of our work by all stakeholders;
 - to increase understanding of our work especially by those training for the Bar;
 - to encourage greater engagement with our work with a more diverse range of stakeholders, including more engagement with consumers and their representative bodies;
 - to increase support for our work in the form of ongoing engagement.

- These objectives support the BSB's strategic objectives in the following ways:
 - **Efficiency** delivering our core regulatory operations quickly, economically and to a high standard.
 - the Bar and other stakeholders must be aware of our regulatory rules for those rules to be effective; greater engagement by stakeholders with our work also helps us to understand better the risks to our achieving our statutory objectives and to maximise the appropriateness and effectiveness of our regulation both in its design and its impact
 - we also need to engage with barristers and other key stakeholders so that we can better understand the threats and opportunities facing the Bar

 - **Standards** ensuring that barristers provide a high quality and responsive service throughout their careers.
 - we want to encourage barristers to solicit feedback from clients, the judiciary and colleagues
 - we want to promote competition by raising awareness of, and compliance with, the transparency rules
 - we want to raise awareness of best practice in chambers to promote standards, equality and access

 - **Equality** promoting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar and at the BSB, and the profession's ability to serve diverse consumers.
 - we need to raise awareness of the progress that is being made to promote equality and diversity at the Bar and to promote the need for further progress

 - **Access** promoting consumer understanding of legal services and choice, and good value in using those services (covering both the supply of, and demand for, barristers' services).
 - we need to promote public awareness of how they can get legal help, which we seek to do through our own communications and in partnership with others
 - we also need to improve our understanding of the barriers and threats to access to justice so that we can properly target our activities and complement the work of others who share this objective

 - **Independence** strengthening the BSB's independence, capability, self-confidence and credibility
 - We need to increase awareness among all our stakeholders of the separate and distinct roles of the Bar Council and the BSB and to ensure that they understand that we are independent bodies

- Our usual activities include:

- issuing Press Releases and handling Press inquiries
- maintaining our website and our intranet site
- publishing corporate documents
- issuing a monthly email to all barristers
- issuing a quarterly email to legal consumers
- using social media especially Twitter and
- holding and attending face to face meetings and events

and we also seek to achieve our objectives by:

- increasing the coverage of our work in the national and specialist Press as well as in the legal Press;
- engaging actively with third sector organisations to which consumers, particularly consumers in vulnerable circumstances, turn when they have a legal problem;
- maintaining the “read” rate for Regulatory Update, our monthly email regulatory bulletin for the Bar;
- continuing to refresh our website and our intranet site, Verity, to make them easier and more attractive to use, including on mobile devices;
- working with the other legal regulators, to improve the public’s understanding as to how they can obtain legal advice and how the Bar is regulated;
- seeking other forms of collaboration with stakeholders where possible;
- attending more events hosted by third parties rather than expecting them to attend our own events;
- seeking new ways to encourage engagement with us and with our policy consultations, especially by the public and consumer groups;
- ensuring that our Board and staff feel well informed about our work and are well equipped to act as ambassadors for the BSB;
- establishing new measures for judging the effectiveness of our work;
- while always seeking to maximise our value for money.

Outcomes

13. The outcomes we will seek to achieve will be:

- wider coverage of our work in the national and specialist Press and on social media;
- an increase in usage and in user satisfaction for both our website and intranet site;
- working with other legal regulators and frontline providers of help for those in legal need, an increase in public understanding as to how they can obtain legal advice;
- more collaborative events and initiatives with interested stakeholders;
- an increase in interaction with our work through greater attendance at third party events;
- wider understanding of our work among all stakeholders;
- an increase in engagement with our consultations, especially bodies representing consumers and the public;
- Board members and staff feeling well informed and well able to act as ambassadors for the BSB;
- having in place better measures to evaluate our effectiveness;
- demonstrating that we have managed our costs while maintaining our effectiveness.

Measuring success

14. We will carefully monitor and evaluate:

- a. visitors to, and the use of, our website
- b. the satisfaction of website users
- c. (to the extent that we can) the reach and impact of our other communications
- d. levels of engagement with our policy making

15. Specific targets for reach will be set or agreed where appropriate.

16. Performance reports will be made quarterly to the Senior Management Team and to the SPR Committee and annually to the Board.