

The background of the entire page is a long-exposure photograph of a tunnel. The perspective is from the center of the tunnel, looking towards the horizon. The walls and ceiling of the tunnel are dark, but the floor is brightly lit, creating a series of parallel light trails that recede into the distance. The overall color palette is dominated by shades of green and yellow, with the light trails appearing as bright, blurred streaks of white and yellow. The text is overlaid on this background.

BAR  
STANDARDS  
BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

# Annual Report 2023-2024

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The Bar Standards Board regulates barristers and specialised legal services businesses in England and Wales in the public interest.


# Foreword by the Chair of the Bar Standards Board, Kathryn Stone OBE



2023-2024 was the penultimate year of our current strategy. Over this year we continued to focus on improving our performance and achieving operational excellence. We did so both in delivering our core regulatory services as well as in our wider work across the organisation to achieve our strategic aims. We have already markedly improved our productivity in this period, particularly in concluding investigations. Alongside high-quality decision-making and high levels of productivity we are working hard to ensure that we provide a consistently prompt and responsive service across the organisation, and in particular so that both members of the public and barristers can be sure we will take the right decision and do so efficiently and quickly.

To support us in identifying improvements and ensuring that the enforcement system operates effectively and efficiently in the public interest, we commissioned the leading legal firm Fieldfisher LLP to conduct an independent end-to-end review of our enforcement policies and processes. The review has now been completed and published and its recommendations will all be implemented. We have also been looking at how we can improve the Handbook, to ensure that it is easily navigable and easily understood by both barristers and the public alike.

Our work to encourage best practice in the way chambers promote standards, equality and access continued over the last year, and took me to meet barristers in every circuit in England and Wales for the second time since I became Chair of the Board in 2022. The Director General and I had fascinating conversations with barristers, practice managers, clerks and other chambers professionals about the challenges and opportunities encountered by both large and small chambers across all circuits and we will be using this input to decide on our next steps. We shall continue to work closely with chambers and other key stakeholders, such as the Bar Council, to set clear expectations for the crucial role chambers have in upholding standards, equality and access. The more effective chambers are in performing this role, the better the profession will serve the wider public interest and the less need there will be for regulatory intervention.



Over the last year, we have also made better use of the data and intelligence we collect and analyse so that we can deepen our understanding of the capacity the Bar will need to meet the future needs of consumers and the administration of justice. We will continue this work in the coming years. As we enter the final year of our current strategy, we will also consult on a new five-year strategy to ensure that it takes into account the views of all our stakeholders and provides us with a robust framework to achieve our key regulatory objectives.

This year we also published improved CPD guidance and templates to help practising barristers approach CPD in a structured and reflective manner and to promote good practice. Our work on Bar training – entailing supervising training providers and setting and marking centralised examinations - continued throughout the year and we also undertook a thematic review of the quality of vocational Bar training providers, the results of which will be published in 2024.

Over the past year we have made real progress with improving productivity and in achieving our strategic aims. I am proud of the commitment and dedication of our teams and their hard work in making this progress happen.

**Kathryn Stone OBE**

Chair of the Bar Standards Board

# Introduction

In performing its regulatory functions, the Bar Standards Board has Regulatory Objectives which are set out in the Legal Services Act 2007. These are:

- 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;
- encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
- increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties;
- promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles. These are that barristers should act with independence and integrity, maintain proper standards of work, act in the best interests of their clients, comply with their duty to the court to act with independence in the interests of justice, and keep the affairs of their clients confidential; and
- promoting the prevention and detection of economic crime.

The Board of the BSB seeks to ensure that in performing its regulatory functions, all the BSB's activities focus on those key regulatory objectives. Those activities include:

- prescribing the education and training requirements for becoming a barrister and for ensuring that barristers' skills are maintained throughout their careers;
- authorising businesses that focus on advocacy, litigation, and specialist legal advice;
- setting standards of conduct and taking action where it appears that they are not being met;
- monitoring the service provided by barristers and the organisations the BSB authorises to ensure they meet the BSB's requirements;
- assuring the public that everyone the BSB authorises to practise is competent to do so;
- promoting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar; and
- seeking to improve access to justice and supporting public legal education.

The BSB seeks to do this by taking a proportionate, risk-based approach to regulation. We monitor the market for barristers’ services in order to identify the risks that could prevent the Regulatory Objectives from being met. We then focus our attention on those risks that we think pose the biggest threats to the public interest and take action to try to prevent those risks from occurring, or to reduce their impact.

Our [Business Plan for 2023-24](#) was set as part of the BSB’s [2022-25 Strategic Plan](#). That strategy, which was developed after extensive consultation, led the BSB to adopt a vision that

*“we will ensure that the BSB regulates the Bar in the public interest by promoting high standards, equality and access to justice”.*

We also agreed the following five strategic aims:

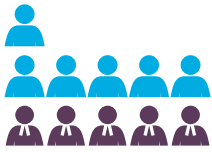
<b>Efficiency</b>	delivering our core regulatory operations quickly, economically and to a high standard
<b>Standards</b>	ensuring that barristers provide a high quality and responsive service throughout their careers
<b>Equality</b>	promoting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar and at the BSB and the profession’s ability to serve diverse consumers
<b>Access</b>	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) and
<b>Independence</b>	strengthening the BSB’s independence, capability, self-confidence and credibility.

Many of our activities contribute to more than one regulatory objective and more than one strategic aim. For example, our work to clarify our expectations of the role which chambers should play in support of our regulatory objectives includes overseeing standards, promoting equality and facilitating access for consumers.

This report sets out how the BSB took forward those strategic aims in 2023/24.

# The BSB's year in numbers

## About us



Our Board has 6 lay members (including the lay Chair) and 5 barrister members



**17,656** registered barristers regulated

At 31 March 2024 we were responsible for regulating 17,656 practising barristers and around a further 59,299 barristers who were not practising (we regulated 17,418 practising and around 58,000 non-practising barristers in 2022-23)



We authorised 145 specialised legal services businesses in 2023-24 (compared with 130 in 2022-23)



**£15,562k** – our income in 2023-24

**£15,525k** – our expenditure in 2023-24

(compared to income of £13,990k and expenditure of £13,599k in 2022-23)

## Bar training



**7,198**

Students sat 7,198 centralised examinations in 2022-23 as part of their Bar training (compared to 7,381 in 2021-22)

**586**



We received 586 applications from solicitors, EU lawyers, overseas lawyer and legal academics wanting to transfer to the Bar (compared to 498 last year)



**2,113**

We processed 2,113 applications for waivers and exemptions from the qualification rules set out in the BSB Handbook (compared to 2,011 in 2022-23)



**305,000**

users visited our website (compared to 667,083 in 2022-23). The decrease in this figure is due to recent changes to how Google analytics measures website visits.



**253,000**

page views of our Barristers Register (compared to 427,246 in 2022-23)

## Regulating barristers



**1,802**



We received 1,802 new reports about the conduct of barristers (compared to 1,911 in 2021-22)

**9**

barristers were suspended

**10**

barristers were disbarred

(compared to 5 and 9 respectively in 2022-23)

## Promoting diversity at the Bar



● The Bar ● KCs ● Pupils ● Barristers

December 2023 (excluding non-responses)

# Our Regulatory Approach

In support of our five strategic priorities, we took forward reforms of our regulatory approach over the year, aiming to ensure that the Bar Standards Board is able to identify and manage risks to the Regulatory Objectives before they have an impact on the public interest. Central to this work was the overhaul of our approach to the gathering, collation and analysis of the intelligence we receive from a wider range of sources. As part of this work, our Data and Intelligence Strategy 2024–2027 was published in May 2024. We believe that effective data and intelligence are essential for the BSB to exercise its regulatory functions, so that we can work effectively and be agile, evidence-led and risk-based. The Data & Intelligence Strategy therefore sets out a vision and objectives for data and intelligence at the BSB, an implementation roadmap, and the outcomes the BSB seeks to achieve.

We understand that there is a need to revise the Handbook, to ensure that it is easily navigable and easily understood by both barristers and the public alike and represents good regulatory practice. We have therefore started making design changes to the layout of the Handbook and Code of Conduct as well as essential amendments flowing from other priority work programmes and this work will continue going forward. We have also reviewed our current risk framework to make sure that intelligence is joined up and that our front-line teams have more discretion to act promptly in response to emerging risks. The review has been completed and we will shortly publish a webpage alongside a blog summarising the review.

The BSB Chair and Director General continued to meet with the profession across each circuit in England and Wales in 2023-2024 to explore how we can support chambers to be more effective and consistent forces for high standards, for equality and inclusion, and for access to justice. At these meetings, we discussed our proposal to consolidate and promote best practice in chambers' oversight of standards, equality and access. In 2024, the Board will consider the feedback received at these roundtables and the responses to our consultation and will then decide on how best to implement the proposals. Our aim is to ensure we work closely with the Bar Council and other key stakeholders to promote best practice without increasing the burden of regulation.



# Strategic Aim 1 – Efficiency

Delivering our core regulatory operations quickly, economically and to a high standard

## What we said we would do

In our Business Plan for 2023-2024 we said that, although the quality of our decision-making remained high, our priority was to improve its timeliness. We intended to ensure that the increase which we have made in investment in this area will enable us to meet key service standards.

We said that we would continue, day-to-day, to:

1. assess reports of potential professional misconduct and risks to our regulatory objectives, taking enforcement or other action where necessary; and
2. deal with requests for authorisation, exemptions and waivers.

We said that we would:

3. conduct an independent end-to-end review of our enforcement policies and processes and overhaul the key IT systems which support these processes to reflect the recommendations of a recent review by Deloitte;
4. conclude the ongoing review into our decision-making processes for authorisations and begin implementing its recommendations; and
5. review the role of the Independent Reviewers in our enforcement and authorisations processes.

## What we did

We continued to assess reports of potential professional misconduct and to deal with requests for authorisations, exemptions and waivers throughout the year. **(1 & 2)**. In March 2024, the Board approved a new set of KPIs and a balanced scorecard to measure the BSB's performance in delivering its core regulatory operations and will regularly review performance against these objectives.

Significant improvements in our productivity were achieved over the year. For example:

- the initial Assessment Team processed 911 reports in the first half of 2023-24 compared to 1582 in the whole of 2022-23.
- the Authorisations Team dealt with 240 applications in the second quarter of 2023/24 – the highest total for a year.
- the Investigations Team reduced its caseload from 178 at the beginning of the third quarter of 2022/23 to 90 at the beginning of the third quarter of 2023/24, concluding 117 investigations in the third and fourth quarters of 2023/24.

Authorisation caseloads continue to rise, as in previous years, due in part to a rise in applications from transferring overseas lawyers and we are putting measures in place to address this increase in volume.

The independent end-to-end review of our enforcement processes was completed by leading law firm Fieldfisher LLP and a report was presented to the Board **(3)**. Fieldfisher reviewed how well the BSB's enforcement system operates from first receipt of concerns about barristers' conduct right through to final decisions being made on sanctions to be imposed by staff, an Independent Decision-making Panel or by a Disciplinary Tribunal. Fieldfisher found that the BSB's enforcement procedure was largely in line with similar models used in professional regulation elsewhere and that fundamentally the approach in place is appropriate. The report details a wide range of recommendations for improvement, spanning eight different areas. The Senior Leadership Team is currently developing proposals to take forward these recommendations.

Our review into our decision-making processes for authorisations **(4)** was opened for public consultation in early 2024 and this work will be delivered in phases over the coming year. Our review of the role of the Independent Reviewers in our enforcement and authorisations processes was completed as planned and new policies were adopted and published following a Board meeting in October 2023 **(5)**.

# Strategic Aim 2 – Standards

Ensuring that barristers provide a high quality and responsive service throughout their careers

## What we said we would do:

We said that the core work that we would conduct through the year would focus on:

1. regulating those who provide vocational training and pupillage;
2. setting the curriculum for training as a barrister and managing the centralised assessments in civil and criminal litigation and professional ethics;
3. assuring standards across the Bar by supervising chambers and regulating specialised legal services businesses known as “entities” to ensure that they are meeting our rules, and targeting regulation where we see evidence that standards need to improve – in recent years, for example, we have set out new guidance for those working in the Youth Courts and Coroners Courts;
4. continuing to meet our obligations under the Money Laundering Regulations and under the regulations relating to financial sanctions and liaising with relevant stakeholders, including other regulators, the Office for Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering Supervision (our oversight regulator for money laundering), the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), HM Treasury and law enforcement agencies and
5. maintaining and revising the BSB Handbook, which defines the core duties and rules relating to practice at the Bar.

We said that we would seek to strengthen these arrangements through measures including:

6. continuing our existing programme of work on assuring the competence of barristers throughout their careers, including work to review regulatory requirements during the early years of practice and those that relate to Continuing Professional Development;
7. developing arrangements for the assessment of advocacy and negotiation skills during pupillage as the final part of our reforms to Bar training;
8. undertaking a thematic review of the quality of vocational Bar training providers, how they ensure that standards are maintained once a student is admitted and what systems are in place to ensure that a student develops to their full potential, whatever their starting point; and

9. completing our review of the regulation of standards in non-professional life and of barristers' use of social media in the light of our recent consultation.
10. working with the profession to clarify our regulatory expectations of chambers and to promote best practice in Chambers' oversight of standards.

## What we did:

Our work to maintain standards in Bar training - through our supervision of training providers and our setting and marking of centralised examinations - continued throughout the year **(1,2&3)**. We also undertook a thematic review of the quality of vocational Bar training providers, looking at how they ensure that standards are maintained once a student is admitted and what systems are in place to ensure that a student develops to their full potential, whatever their starting point. A final report and recommendations will be considered by the Board in 2024. **(7.)**

In December we published our **second Annual Report** to the Board on Bar Training covering the period from September 2022 to November 2023 along with a **further report giving detailed statistics** on enrolment, results and student progression by course provider. The Report provides the Board with in-depth insights into how the BSB seeks to ensure that standards are set, met, and assured during both the vocational and pupillage components of Bar training. We also published our **annual report on Bar Training statistics** by course provider **(8.)**. This report offers detailed statistics on results and progression broken down by course provider and aims to provide prospective Bar students with more information about the different courses and course providers which are now available.

Our evaluation of our Coroners' Courts' Competencies was completed in 2023 and we plan to publish a report and action plan in 2024. **(3.)** In January we published improved Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Guidance and Templates to help practising barristers understand and meet our CPD requirements and expectations, approach CPD in a structured and reflective manner, using feedback and self-assessment and demonstrate good practice. **(6.)** The CPD templates will be reviewed again in 2024. We also expect to have new means of assessment for advocacy in place in 2024, and negotiation the following year.

In October we published our Annual Report into Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing **(4.)**. This Report sets out the actions that we have taken to counter money laundering, terrorist financing and economic crime in the period and explains how we collaborate with the Government, other regulators, the legal professions and law enforcement to tackle the threat of money laundering, terrorist funding and economic crime.

We recognise the need to revise the Handbook, to ensure that it is easily navigable and easily understood by both barristers and the public alike and represents good regulatory practice. **(5.)** We have therefore started making design changes to the layout of the Handbook and Code of Conduct as well as essential amendments flowing from other priority work programmes.

In September, following a public consultation, we published new guidance on barristers' conduct in non-professional life and on social media. **(9.)** After carefully considering the responses received to our consultation, we developed these guidance documents seeking to strike a balance between barristers' human rights and their professional obligations under the Handbook. The Guidance on the Regulation of Non-Professional Conduct seeks to clarify where the regulatory boundaries lie in relation to conduct that occurs outside the scope of a barrister's professional practice. The revised Social Media Guidance seeks to help barristers understand their duties under the BSB Handbook as they may apply to their use of social media, both in a professional and in a personal/private capacity. These revised guidance documents seek to provide greater clarity on how we will apply the existing rules rather than indicating a significant change to our approach.

Finally, the Chair and Director General met with the profession across each circuit in England and Wales to explore how we can support chambers to be more effective and consistent forces for high standards, for equality and inclusion, and for access to justice. At these meetings, we discussed our proposal to consolidate and promote best practice in chambers' oversight of standards, equality and access. In 2024, the Board will consider the feedback received at these roundtables and the responses to our consultation and will then decide on how best to implement the proposals. Our aim is to ensure we work closely with the Bar Council and other key stakeholders to promote best practice without increasing the burden of regulation **(10.)**

# Strategic Aim 3 – Equality

Promoting diversity and inclusion at the Bar and the BSB and the profession's ability to serve diverse customers

## What we said we would do:

We said that our work in this area would focus on:

1. clarifying the BSB's expectations of the Bar concerning equality, diversity and inclusion and highlighting opportunities for change;
2. holding the Bar to account for reducing racial and other inequalities across the profession;
3. promoting a culture of inclusion at the Bar and in legal services more generally;
4. building a diverse and inclusive workforce ensuring that the BSB is itself an example of the approach we are promoting; and
5. undertaking research with pupillage providers to investigate the recruitment outcomes of different approaches aimed at increasing diversity.

And as part of our work to clarify our regulatory expectations of chambers and to promote best practice we said that we would also:

6. review the Equality Rules to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and clearly set out minimum standards for chambers' and employers' oversight of diversity, including appropriate governance; and
7. work with the profession to encourage best practice in chambers with regard to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and eliminating bullying, discrimination and harassment.

## What we did:

In early 2024 we published our Diversity at the Bar Report for 2023 **(1,2 & 3)**, which showed that the Bar continues to become more diverse and more representative of the society that it serves but that women and barristers from minoritised ethnic backgrounds remain underrepresented at the most senior levels of the Bar. This year has also seen the continuation of several longer-term trends, including an increase in the proportion of practising barristers who are female; those who are from a minority ethnic background; those who have primary care of a child; and those who are aged 55 or more. This annual report supports us in meeting our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and sets out an evidence base from which relevant and targeted policy can be developed to promote diversity and inclusion within the profession.

As in previous years, in 2023 we also published our annual report on the diversity of our workforce and Board members, demonstrating our commitment to reporting transparently on diversity data within the organisation. To ensure that the BSB is a diverse and inclusive workplace, we also began to develop an internal Anti-Racist Strategy in 2023 which we published in May 2024. **(4.)** In developing this Strategy, the BSB's workforce was surveyed and focus groups were held. Based on the evidence obtained through this work, an internal Anti-Racist Working Group (ARWG) was then formed to recommend a strategy to the Senior Leadership Team and the BSB Board. We hope this Strategy will demonstrate that the BSB leads by example, embodying the values of diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

As part of our commitment to ensuring that reporting of misconduct by barristers, including bullying and harassment within the Bar, is taken seriously, we began a series of outreach presentations in early 2024, with an initial well-attended session held in London for the South Eastern Circuit, and we plan to deliver a presentation in each circuit in England and Wales throughout the year. Our aim is to ensure that anyone who wishes to report a concern to us feels comfortable about doing so, understands what will happen after they have made a report and can be confident that appropriately trained BSB staff will handle such reports sensitively and efficiently. These sessions entail a presentation delivered by our staff who deal with reports of concerns about barristers and an opportunity to ask us questions. **(7.)**

Our review of the Equality Rules is being taken forward as an integral part of our initiative to clarify our expectations of chambers **(6.)**. We will begin a public consultation about our proposed revised rules in September 2024. In 2023, the BSB undertook research to strengthen our evidence base around pupillage recruitment to inform the development of the BSB's policies. As a result of this research, two reports on pupillage recruitment were published in May 2024. **(5.)** Over the coming year, the Board will also consider the feedback received at our most recent series of roundtables with chambers and the responses to our consultation and will then decide on how best to implement the proposals to support chambers in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and eliminating bullying, discrimination and harassment. **(7.)**

# Strategic Aim 4 – Access

Promoting consumer understanding of legal services and choice and good value for those who use those services

## What we said we would do:

We said that our core work would focus on improving consumer choice and increasing their understanding of the legal services market by:

1. promoting public legal education in collaboration with our fellow regulators and with other frontline providers of help to those in legal need;
2. continuing to ensure that our transparency rules are being complied with and are being effective;
3. continuing our examination of the role of new technology in the legal services market, in collaboration with others and taking part in joint activities with other regulators, tech companies and other stakeholders as appropriate. Looking at whether consumers' interests can be well served by online comparison or by other intermediaries offering to broker access to barristers;
4. looking at our "association rules" which regulate how barristers interact with intermediaries which provide information about their services



## What we did:

Our work in public legal education continued to focus on working with our fellow regulators and with a range of frontline legal help providers to agree common approaches to meeting legal needs. We also work with the other regulators through Legal Choices, which we rejoined in 2023, and are confident that our participation will serve consumers' interests and enable the platform to provide more complete coverage of regulated legal services issues. **(1.)**

We continued our work to evaluate the role of new technology in the legal services market and our participation in the work of LawtechUK and recruited dedicated policy staff to take this work forward including looking at whether consumers' interests can be well served by online comparison or by other intermediaries offering to broker access to barristers. **(3.)** Our digital comparison tool (DCT) market study continued during 2023, looking at how DCTs enable consumers to locate and select legal service providers, using a range of criteria such as location, ratings and reviews to help with this process. Our current study of DCTs looks at whether and how the DCT market could further our regulatory objectives to protect and promote the public interest, improve access to justice, promote competition in the provision of services, and protect and promote the interests of consumers. Following the conclusion of the study, we will review the findings and publish a report.

We carry out regular compliance checks of our transparency rules and we plan to consider appropriate next steps on transparency in the light of our DCT market study and other evaluation work undertaken to date. **(2.)** Our work to look at our "association rules" which regulate how barristers interact with intermediaries which provide information about their services, is also ongoing and we expect to complete this in 2024. **(4.)**

# Strategic Aim 5 – Independence

Strengthening the BSB’s independence, capability, self-confidence and credibility

## What we said we would do:

We said that our aim here was to ensure that the BSB has the culture, values and associated policies appropriate for an independent regulator and that our core work would focus on:

1. our periodic review of our implementation of the Internal Governance Rules, which govern the relationship between regulators and professional bodies, with the aim of enhancing regulatory independence within the current legislative framework. We want to ensure that our arrangements can continue to guarantee our independence and that we do not duplicate the work of the Bar Council.
2. continuing to pursue the governance reforms in our Well Led Action Plan and in our action plan in response to the LSB’s Regulatory Performance Review; and
3. promoting engagement and collaboration with consumer organisations, the profession and other regulators.

We said that our project work would focus on continuing to:

4. implement the reward system reforms for our people;
5. examine and implement measures to promote wellbeing;
6. promote diversity and inclusion at the BSB; and
7. ensure that the BSB’s values (of fairness and respect, independence and integrity, excellence and efficiency) guide all our activities.

## What we did:

We completed our review of how the current Internal Governance rules are working **(1.)** and we continued to pursue the governance reforms in our Well Led Action Plan and in our action plan in response to the Legal Services Board's (LSB) Regulatory Performance Review. **(2.)** We made good progress in implementing the reforms set out in the Action Plan and our Business Plan for 2024-25 includes further reforms which we intend to make in order to promote continuous improvement in both our performance and our governance. We continued to engage with all our stakeholders in our work regularly consulting consumer groups, our fellow regulators and the profession **(3.)**. We hired a new Stakeholder Engagement Officer to take forward this work in 2024.

In 2023, we launch a revised recognition scheme, aiming to acknowledge those who exemplify our values or deliver marked improvements in our work, and are also working on a revised performance management system, to support us in ensuring that we are all guided by the BSB's values in our work. **(4&7.)** We continued to implement the reforms we made to our reward system in response to the difficulties we experienced in recruiting new people for legal and policy roles. **(4.)** Within the people team, we hired a Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager to ensure we explore ways to promote staff wellbeing as well as diversity and inclusion. **(5&6.)** As part of the programme, which is aimed at embedding our values and behaviours to deliver a culture of continuous improvement, our 2023/24 organisational learning plan was implemented. We have also consulted with staff to develop a vision statement, encapsulating our values and defining our culture and we are in the process of finalising the statement. **(8.)** To ensure that the Board itself exemplifies and demonstrates the values of the BSB, its members receive regular equality and diversity training and annual reviews of its governance are carried out, including an independent external review in 2024. **(8.)**

# Our teams and their work

## Our Board

(See “Our governance” section on page 25)

## BSB Director General

Mark Neale

### Regulatory Operations

**Interim Director: Saima Hirji, 36 people** | Receipt and assessment of all incoming information | Authorisations

### Standards

**Director: Rupika Madhura, 19 people** | Supervision and Qualifications, management of the centralised examinations function.

### Strategy and Policy

**Director: Ewen MacLeod, 16 people** | Policy development | Regulatory risk | Equality and access to justice | Research

### Legal and Enforcement

**Director: Sara Jagger, 23 people** | Investigations of potential breaches of the BSB Handbook/ Enforcement and disciplinary action/ legal advice and support including litigation support

### Communications and Public Engagement

**Director: Wilf White, 4 people** | External and internal communications | Public and stakeholder engagement

### BSB People

**Director: Teresa Haskins, 4 people** | People strategy and support | Culture and Values | Learning and Development

Two further teams report directly to the Director General:

- **Governance and Corporate Services** led by *Rebecca Forbes with 5 people*
- **Programme Management** led by *Michael Farmer with 3 people*

We also share the following support services with the Bar Council: Facilities, Finance, Information Services, Records, the Project Management Office, and those centralised Human Resources services not provided by the dedicated BSB function.

## What our teams do

### Regulatory Operations

The Regulatory Operations Department is responsible for the receipt and assessment of all incoming information into the BSB, dealing with enquiries about the BSB and its activities, all authorisation activity, including the authorisation of new AETOs and new business entities and the consideration of applications for waivers from the practising requirements for barristers.

### Standards

The Department oversees the training that must be completed in order to qualify as a barrister and sets and marks centralised examinations for prospective barristers. It also decides on individual applications from people wishing to qualify and/ or practise as barristers but who would like to be exempted from some or all of the normal training requirements.

Its aim is to assure, maintain and enhance standards across the profession through the development of measures for assessing the adherence to the standards set out in the BSB Handbook of both the individuals we regulate and the chambers or entities in which they practise. This includes a risk-based approach to supervision, and the regulation of Continuing Professional Development.

### Strategy and Policy

Our Strategy and Policy Department is responsible for collecting evidence about the effectiveness of our rules and policies, assessing regulatory risk, and, where necessary, changing existing rules or introducing new ones.

The Department gathers evidence about what is happening in the market and the impact that our actions are having by conducting research (either by itself or with others) and by collaborating with stakeholders who have an interest in our work. Where necessary, it uses this knowledge to set or revise standards and introduce rules and guidance for barristers and entities. These rules are contained in the BSB Handbook. It develops policy on the educational pathways into the profession, and on the conduct of practice in areas

such as chambers' complaints handling and direct public access to barristers. Another important area is equality and diversity, where the Department is responsible for setting and seeking to achieve the objectives within our Equality Strategy.

## **Legal and Enforcement**

Our Legal and Enforcement Department is responsible for ensuring that the professional obligations set out in the BSB Handbook are complied with and, if necessary, taking enforcement action where those obligations have not been met. The Legal Support Team is responsible for providing or sourcing legal advice to assist those in regulatory decision-making roles, overseeing claims arising from regulatory decision-making, developing the annual legal training programme as well as for legal knowledge management.

The Department carries out investigations of potential breaches of the Handbook. Where an investigation reveals sufficient evidence, and the conduct poses a risk to the Regulatory Objectives, enforcement action will be taken in accordance with the processes described on our [website](#).

Decisions on what action, if any, to take can be made by staff and the BSB's Independent Decision-Making Body. Staff decision-making is limited to dismissing allegations or imposing non-disciplinary administration warnings or fines (up to £1,000 for individual barristers).

Our Independent Decision-making Body, sitting as five person lay majority panels, has wider powers: they can also refer cases of professional misconduct to a Disciplinary Tribunal and have the power to decide less serious charges of professional misconduct, with the barrister's consent, under the Determination by Consent procedure.

The Department is responsible for preparing and presenting charges of professional misconduct to independent tribunals, convened and administered by an independent organisation called the Bar Tribunals and Adjudication Service (BTAS). In doing so, the BSB is assisted by our [Tribunal Representation Panel](#) which provides representation at tribunals and other hearings. It is for the independent tribunal to decide whether the charges brought by the BSB are proven and to determine any sanction.

The Legal and Enforcement Department also deals with concerns about barristers' fitness to practise for health reasons, and with interim suspensions from practice pending conclusion of disciplinary proceedings.

## **Communications and Public Engagement**

Our Communications and Public Engagement Department is responsible for all our internal and external communications including our publications, website, social media activity and media relations. It helps our other teams to engage with the profession and other stakeholders to make sure that we discuss our policy development plans in an open and consultative way. The Department helps make sure we fulfil our transparency and accountability functions, and our obligations to promote public legal education.

## **Governance and Corporate Services**

The Governance and Corporate Services team supports strategic and business planning and budgeting. It coordinates performance reporting and monitoring of our corporate risks. The team ensures that we act in accordance with good governance practice, and also provides administrative support for the Chair, Vice Chair and Director General.

## **Programme Management**

The Programme Management team provides guidance and ensures that best practice is followed in the setup, running and closure of all our major programmes and projects so that the maximum benefits can be realised. It provides project management training to officers in other teams.

## **BSB People**

Our dedicated People team is responsible for setting and delivering our people strategy and for guiding the leadership team in defining and developing the BSB's culture as an independent regulator. It also provides a wide range of operational services to BSB managers and staff, assisted by administrative and transactional support from the Bar Council shared service.

# Our governance

We are governed by a Board made up of a combination of lay people and barristers. It has five lay and five barrister members and a lay chair which gives the board a lay majority.

The Board met 7 times during 2023-24: there were 6 ordinary meetings and 1 Away Day. Selected members also attended 1 Board to Board meeting during the year with the Legal Services Board and 5 seminars which allowed Board members to explore aspects of the BSB's work in greater depth. Members of the Board also attended an Equality and Diversity training session in March 2024. Ordinary Board meetings are partly held in public and we invite members of the legal Press to attend all public sessions. Board meetings during 2023-24 continued to be hybrid meetings where some members joined online.

During 2023-24 our Board members were:

**Chair:** Kathryn Stone OBE

**Vice-Chair:** Mr Andrew Mitchell KC

**Barrister members:** Mr Jeff Chapman KC  
Mr Simon Lewis  
Ms Irena Sabic KC  
Professor Leslie Thomas KC

**Lay members:** Ms Gisela Abbam FRSA  
Ms Alison Alden OBE  
Mr Emir Feisal JP  
Mr Steven Haines  
Mr Stephen Thornton CBE



## Accountability and how we manage risk

Under the Legal Services Act 2007, the Legal Services Board is responsible for overseeing the approved regulators for legal services in England and Wales. The approved regulator for barristers is the General Council of the Bar (GCB), which is also the representative body for the Bar.

The Act requires the separation of regulatory and representative activities, so the GCB has established the Bar Standards Board to exercise its regulatory functions independently. We have a protocol in place with the GCB to ensure that the exercise of the regulatory functions is not prejudiced by the Bar Council's representative functions.

Our Board manages its work with the help of four sub-committees:

- The **Governance, Risk and Audit Committee** (GRA) is responsible for ensuring that our corporate governance standards and internal controls are maintained. The Committee keeps all our risk management framework and internal audit arrangements under review and advises the Board accordingly. The corporate risk register is reviewed at least quarterly by our Senior Management Team and the GRA Committee. In addition, the GRA Committee conducts regular in-depth risk reviews throughout the year, and considers Internal Audit reports.
- The **Performance and Strategic Planning Committee** (PSP) oversees the development of our strategic direction and plans and advises the Board on developments to our planning and resource setting. It oversees performance against relevant service levels and considers whether financial and operational resources are properly and effectively allocated and efficiently managed across the organisation.
- The **Nomination Committee** seeks to ensure that recruitment to the Board and senior executive roles is fair, inclusive and transparent
- The **Remuneration Committee** makes recommendations to the Board on the remuneration and terms of engagement of BSB staff, its non-executive members and advisers. It also considers appeals by the Director General and his direct reports against decisions relating to dismissal, disciplinary sanction, grievance, promotion or demotion.

# Our income and expenditure and Cost Transparency Metrics

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) is firmly committed to the principle of transparency and publishes financial and other transparency metrics as part of the Annual Report and Business Plan in accordance with the recommendations of the Legal Services Board's (LSB) Cost of Regulation Project. We combine our Cost Transparency Metrics, with the figures here in our annual report so that all our financial reporting can be found in one place.

We pay close attention to how we spend our money:

- Our budgets are set annually and our budget envelopes are informed by our business plans;
- The budget is divided up into departmental budgets which our Directors manage;
- Each month we receive detailed management accounts which enable us to keep a close eye on our business;
- Each quarter we think about what we might need to spend in the future and produce forecasts;
- We tightly monitor our largest area of spend which is our staffing costs;
- We make sure that our resources are directed at our key priorities; and
- Our financial performance is scrutinised by the Board and its Performance and Strategic Planning Committee (PSP).

## Income

### Practising Certificate Fees (PCF)

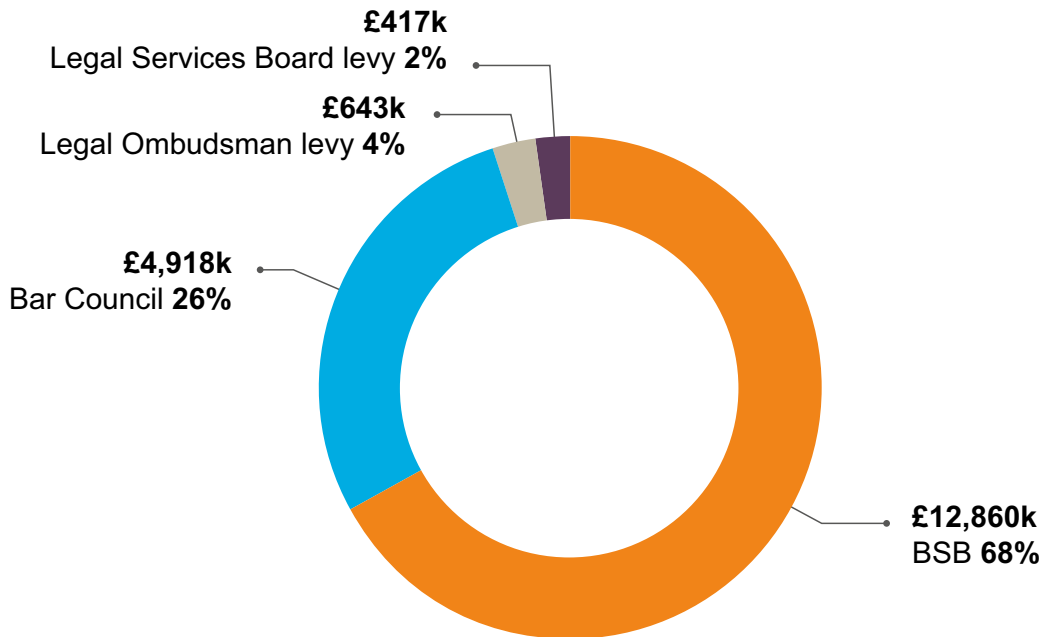
Barristers are only legally entitled to undertake reserved legal activities if they are authorised to do so by the BSB. To be authorised they must hold a current Practising Certificate renewed annually via a process known as Authorisation to Practise, which includes payment of a Practising Certificate Fee (PCF). The PCF funds the expenditure that falls within the 'permitted purposes' as defined by the Legal Services Board (LSB). The PCF is shared between the Bar Standards Board who deliver the regulatory functions, the Bar Council who deliver non-regulatory permitted activities, and levies for the Legal Services Board and the Legal Ombudsman (LeO).

Band	Thousands	Thousands
Metric	2022-23	2023-24
Total PCF Reported	£17,196	£18,838

In 2023-24 Practising Certificate Fees were set as follows:

Band	Income Band	2023-24 Fees
1	£0 - £30,000	£100
2	£30,001 - £60,000	£266
3	£60,001 - £90,000	£534
4	£90,001 - £150,000	£972
5	£150,001 - £240,000	£1,476
6	£240,001 - £500,000	£2,001
7	£350,001 - £500,000	£2,138
8	£500,001 - £750,000	£2,704
9	£750,001 - £1,000,000	£2,861
10	£1,000,001 - £1,500,000	£3,245
11	£1,500,001 and above	£3,434

## Allocation of PCF between Bar Council, the BSB, LSB and LeO



	2022-23	2023-24
Portion of PCF funding 'non- regulatory permitted purposes'	33%	39%
Total Permitted Purposes reserves	£3,282k	£4,824k

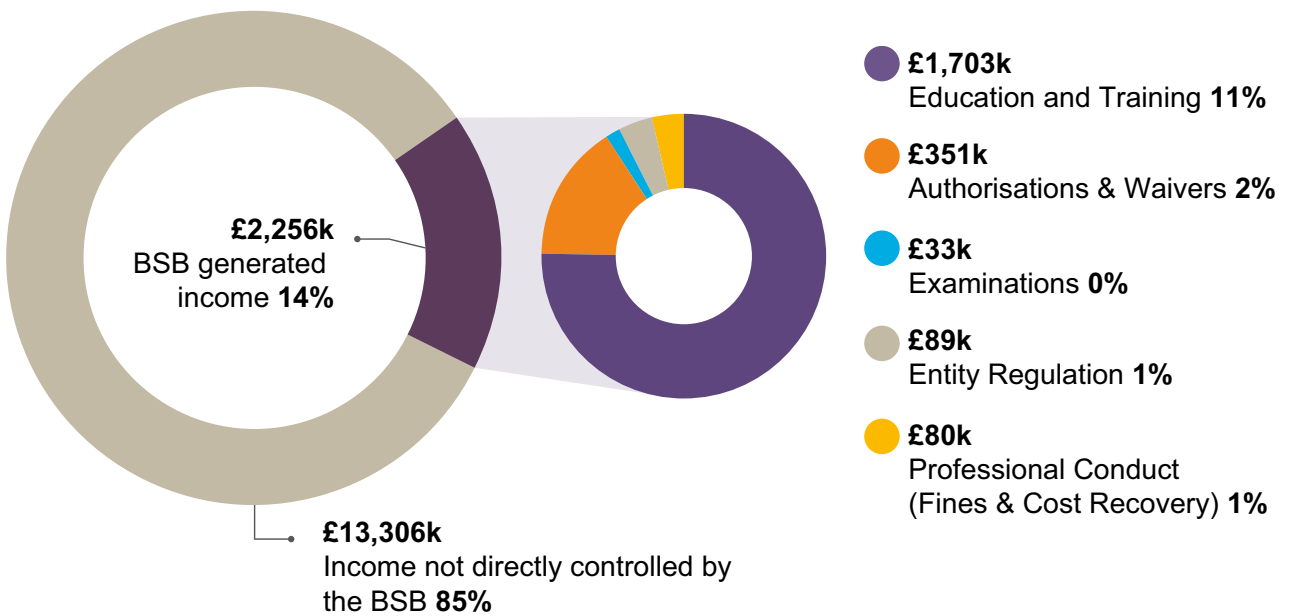
Apart from the PCF, some of our income comes from charges we make for specific services we provide to individuals and organisations. These income streams include the fees from Bar training providers, and the Bar Transfer Test.

Income Area	£ thousands 2022-23	£ thousands 2023-24
Education and Training	£1,655	£1,703
Authorisations and Waivers	£342	£351
Examinations	£175	£33
Entity Regulation	£69	£89
Professional Conduct (Fines & Cost Recovery)	£99	£80
<b>Total BSB Generated Income</b>	<b>£2,340</b>	<b>£2,256</b>

As with previous years, income from fees for Bar training remained the most significant proportion of the BSB controlled income during 2023-24. The forecast income for Bar training was set at £1,350,000 based upon expectations modelled on the 2020-21 (this has been updated for 24/25 to reflect the increase numbers) uptake. However, we generated an additional £353k of income as student numbers increased. Overall, the BSB exceeded its (non-PCF) income target by £457k (25%).

Total Income for the BSB	£ thousands 2022-23	£ thousands 2023-24
PCF Contributions	£11,478	£12,860
Income from GCB Resources Group	£172	£446
Planned Contributions from Reserves	0	0
<b>Total income not directly controlled by the BSB</b>	<b>£11,650</b>	<b>£13,306</b>
<b>Total BSB Generated Income</b>	<b>£2,340</b>	<b>£2,256</b>
<b>Total regulatory income</b>	<b>£13,990</b>	<b>£15,562</b>

### BSB Income



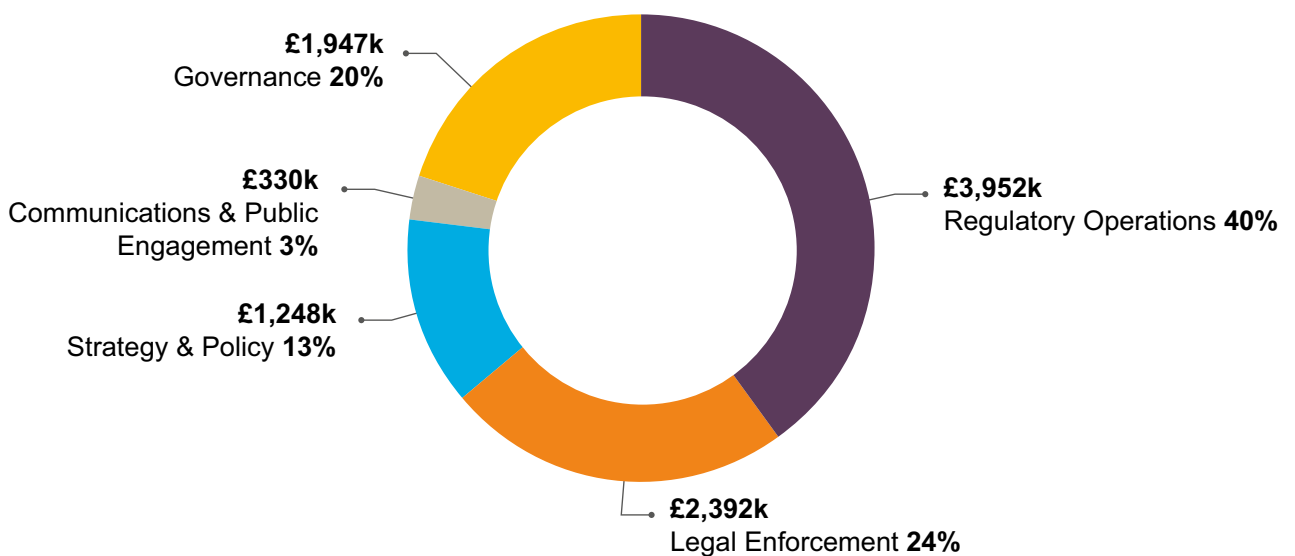
## Expenditure

BSB directly controlled expenditure was £9,869k against a budget of £9,337k, a £532k (6% overspend). The reasons for this overspend were the Enforcement review, additional consultancy cost and the final phase of the recovery plan.

The full cost of regulation includes an allocation of shared costs (IT, Finance, HR and Premises costs) from the Bar Council Resources Group. The Resources Group expenditure budget is managed separately, outside the direct control of the BSB, and is apportioned to the organisation.

Department	£ thousands 2022-23	£ thousands 2023-24
Regulatory Operations	£3,381	£3,952
Legal Enforcement	£1,964	£2,392
Strategy and Policy	£916	£1,248
Communications and Public Engagement	£272	£330
Governance (including Corporate Services, Chair, HR and Programmes costs)	£1,993	£1,947
<b>Total Direct BSB Expenditure</b>	<b>£8,526</b>	<b>£9,869</b>
Resources Group allocation & adjustments	£5,073	£5,656
<b>Total cost of regulation</b>	<b>£13,599</b>	<b>£15,525</b>
<b>Average cost of regulator for each authorised individual<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>£659</b>	<b>£726</b>

### Direct BSB Expenditure in 2023-24



<sup>1</sup> The average cost of the regulator for each authorised individual is calculated by dividing total BSB PCF income (£12,860k in 2023-24) by the number of practising barristers at 31 March 2024 (17,656).

## Staff resources

	2022-23	2023-24
Headcount	104 (98.6 FTE)	114 (110.2 FTE)

## Remuneration of the Board and Executive

Chair of Board total remuneration	£105,684	£116,616
Vice Chair total remuneration	£38,690	£38,796
Director General total remuneration	£157,942	£169,957

The median staff salary at the BSB in 2023-24 was £56,375, the ratio between this and the Director General (salary: £170k) was 1: 3.01. As well as the Director General, the Bar Standards Board has six Senior Managers paid in a salary band which in 2023-24 was between £84k and £115k.

Staff costs	£5,693,210	£6,594,308
Board costs	£221,107	£269,528

Overall staff related costs were £7,312k (3% overspent). We ended the year with staff turnover of 14%. Any salary savings achieved from vacancies were offset by recruitment related expenses and temporary cover for business critical roles.

## Board Remuneration and Expenses in 2023-24

Name	Salary / Fees	Pension	Allowance	Total	Expenses incurred in relation to BSB business
Kathryn Stone OBE	£116,616	£0	£0	£116,616	£2,279
Mr Andrew Mitchell KC	£38,796	£0	£0	£38,796	£0
Ms Gisela Abbam	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£0
Ms Alison Alden OBE	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£512
Mr Jeff Chapman KC	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£0
Mr Steven Haines	£13,860	£0	£0	£13,860	£0
Mr Simon Lewis	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£534
Ms Irena Sabic KC	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£0
Mr Emir Feisal JP	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£0
Professor Leslie Thomas KC	£9,240	£0	£0	£9,240	£0
Mr Stephen Thornton CBE	£13,475	£0	£0	£13,475	£1,013

### Non-staff costs

Total non-staff expenditure was £2,557k (a £333k overspend).



# Further reading

To obtain a fuller picture of who we are, what we do, and the context in which this Annual Report was produced, please visit the following pages on our website:

- This Annual Report is designed to be read in conjunction with our [Business Plan for 2023-24](#) and our [2022-25 Strategic Plan](#).
- More information about our work around [equality and diversity](#) can be found there.
- Our [organisational values](#) describe the way in which we conduct all our work including the activities described in this Plan.

## Contacting us

We are committed to providing a high standard of service and dealing with everyone in a way that is fair, transparent, and proportionate. We welcome your feedback on our services, particularly where the level of service has exceeded or fallen below your expectations.

Your comments and suggestions are important to us as they will help us to meet our obligations to you and to improve our performance.

### Contact us:

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WC1V 7HZ

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LinkedIn: [/thebarstandardsboard](https://www.linkedin.com/company/thebarstandardsboard)