



Technology and Innovation at the Bar Research
Report for the Bar Standards Board

Jemma Macfadyen
David Bish
Spinnaker Research & Consulting
www.spinnakerbusiness.co.uk

March 2025

Contents

<u>Executive summary</u>	3
1 <u>Introduction</u>	6
1.1 Background to the research	6
2 <u>Methodology</u>	7
2.1 Research questions	7
2.2 Design of the study	7
2.3 Limitations	8
2.4 Definitions	8
2.5 Literature review	11
2.6 Participants: participants and stakeholders	12
Breakdown of practitioner interviews	12
3 <u>Research findings</u>	14
3.1 Current usage	14
3.2 Implementations of technology	16
3.3 Benefits	18
3.4 Barriers to adoption	23
3.5 Drivers for change/absence of drivers	27
3.6 Risks	30
3.7 Training, advice and facilitation	30
3.8 Early adopters of technology at the Bar	31
3.9 Tech viewed by barristers as not quite fit for purpose	32
3.10 Regulatory environment and the BSB	32
3.11 The future	33
4 <u>Case studies of technology providers</u>	37
4.1 Associo	37
4.2 BarBooks	38
4.3 Barrister Link	39
4.4 Other technology providers mentioned	41
5 <u>Conclusion</u>	42
Recommendations	43
6 Annexes	
Annex A: Literature review	
Annex B: Stakeholder discussion guide	
Annex C: Practitioner discussion guide	

Executive summary

Many of the barristers we heard from as part of this research are curious, committed and innovative when it comes to the exploration and adoption of technology in their individual practices. Self-employed barristers, given their autonomy, are flexible and adaptable in their decision-making and can be agile in the adoption of new technology, although approaches vary to a great extent depending on the individual and their practice area. These individual workflows and personal preferences shape technology use leading to pockets of innovation, particularly within the employed Bar and other better-resourced B2B practice areas (eg commercial, technology, patents).

However, the sense is, from both stakeholders and barristers, that a 'wait and see' approach prevails with barriers such as the profession's structure, lack of innovative providers and lack of both time and funding hindering broader adoption. Using Rogers's innovation adoption curve¹, whilst there is evidence of technology enthusiasts and early adopters, most barristers are pragmatic, preferring proven solutions. Barristers and chambers appreciate the practical benefits of technology and innovation but need to be assured of reliability, compliance, effectiveness, ease of use and low risks of implementation.

Recent technological initiatives at the Bar include investment in cybersecurity, a shift to paperless and digital working, remote working and hearings, and moving from on-premises systems to cloud-based platforms. Micro-tech solutions, such as task-specific apps, are also gaining traction. Common tools include digital bundles and PDFs, with the majority of barristers working digitally (paperlessly) for the majority of their practice. Video conferencing is routine, whether that is for client conferences and/or remote hearings, and the use of own devices including laptops, PCs and iPads is widespread. The employed Bar, from the small sample available, have greater access to infrastructure and resources, enabling a more structured and consistent use of technology, and a more efficient harnessing of the benefits (eg time and efficiency gains) when compared to the individual nature of a self-employed barrister's caseload.

There is limited centralisation in technology deployment, except where chambers employ staff where a more standardised approach can be put in place for those users. While some law firms and areas of the judiciary, such as those focused on commercial law and intellectual property, are leading the charge in embracing these changes, other sectors, particularly family law and the publicly funded or public sector legal services, have been slower to adapt.

Benefits of working with legal technology were commonly observed and these include:

- improving working processes and relationships with clients and law firms and increasing transparency;
- reducing document overload;
- fairer allocation and easier reallocation of work;
- reducing risks and improving data security;
- improving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) outcomes; and
- improving efficiency, reliability and speed of delivery, more responsive to client needs
- reduced environmental impact;
- saving time and increasing billings, increasing profitability.

There is a growing recognition of **opportunities** to streamline various aspects of barristers' workflows. Tasks like time and billing, client onboarding, completing compliance questionnaires from law firms, evidence review, and creating chronologies are areas where

¹ Everett M Rogers: *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th edition).

barristers acknowledged that technology could significantly enhance efficiency. These processes are suited for automation and digital solutions, offering the potential to save time, improve efficiency and reduce risk.

However, according to participants, the adoption of technology driven solutions has been patchy. Participants pointed out that the nature of the barristers' profession (the majority being self-employed) presents unique challenges to technology adoption. Cultural differences within chambers mean that '*everyone has their own way of working*', even for basic tasks like brief management, making it difficult to standardise processes across chambers. Additionally, the absence of centralised IT resources or in-house expertise - often relying on outsourced support - leaves chambers reactive to external factors rather than proactive in adopting technological solutions. Most chambers don't feel competitive pressure to innovate (although there are exceptions) and in comparison to law firms, don't have the funding, time or strategic IT expertise at their fingertips. The IT infrastructure often focuses on basic transactional and desktop support rather than the provision of strategic advice, such as anticipating future technological developments. This is especially true for the smaller chambers or those operating in publicly funded areas of law. This lack of in-house expertise further hampers the ability of the profession to embrace innovation effectively, despite it being a topic of keen interest to practitioners and regularly discussed and considered across chambers.

From the LSB research², barristers' chambers are the most likely out of all legal service providers to have invested in new or improved services in the last three years (35% of chambers compared with 18% of solicitor's firms). In particular, chambers have a higher uptake of certain technologies, including video conferencing and cloud-based storage relative to other organisation types. Barristers are the most likely of any legal service provider to be using video conferencing (97%) compared with 86% of solicitors' firms, as expected given that barristers may be working from home, in court or in chambers. Our qualitative research presents a more picture with regard to innovation, with some chambers arguably being 'behind' large law firms due to lack of expertise, time, funding, structural market characteristics, individual workflow and lack of incentives to adopt, but also some individual barristers are able to adopt innovative technology as they are not bound by the same centralisation and constraints as law firms.

Stakeholders note that the systemic structure of the market/sector as well doesn't lend to dynamic innovation by technology vendors, disruption or investment, with very little technology on offer that is bespoke to the Bar and relevant to the individual and non-linear workflow involved in barristers' work. Participants too, observe that the nature of established working practices is difficult to change, given that 80% barristers are self-employed³.

To an extent, the research found an **absence of drivers** pushing barristers to adopt technology, as courts, solicitors, local authorities and clients are not creating consistently strong demand for change or improvement. Additionally, the diversity and specialisation of practice areas means that the needs and priorities for technology adoption vary significantly across the profession.

Barristers we spoke to, and stakeholders agreed, that one of the potential challenges with the adoption of technology is the **absence of facilitation with and training on technology** for the profession at all stages whether that is at vocational, pupillage or subsequent stages of their career. Much of the technology expertise that barristers have acquired is self-taught or through ad hoc training, provided by legal research providers, technology vendors, colleagues or the Inns of Court and this means that there are gaps in knowledge and

² Legal Services Board, [Technology and Innovation in Legal Services](#) (2023) – barrister specific data supplied by kind permission of the LSB.

³ [BSB: Statistics about the Bar, 2023](#)

expertise. However participants were unclear as to how this facilitation with technology would be delivered, and what would be included, although several indicated a preference for remote and on-demand training.

Culture of the Bar/nature of work – many participants highlighted the individual nature of barristers' work - barristers '*parachute in and out*' and do the job by whatever means works best. The reliance on oral argument and advocacy, and high degree of independent thinking means that some barristers do not see technology as something that can shortcut the specific individual work processes they have developed and refined through experience. Most barristers prefer familiar workflows, and trusted processes. Barristers may also work in specific, niche areas of law that may not seem amenable to automation. Whilst new tools are being adopted in places, especially at the micro-tech level, there is a reluctance to adopt (even if barristers are aware of their existence) if they require a change to working practices, will impact on short-term productivity or there is a perception that it may lead to poorer outcomes for clients. Non-linear/independence of thought is a key skill for barristers and with some exceptions, the work is relatively self-contained rather than collaborative, reducing the potential for efficiency gains on a larger scale.

Barristers often **lack the time** to think strategically about IT and explore potential innovations due to their focus on immediate priorities. While the chambers model and self-employment structure can foster dynamism and responsiveness, enabling cost-effective scaling through tech, this structure can also face challenges such as a lack of centralisation, limited investment, and slow or difficult collective decision-making processes.

Consistently chambers are assuming more of the **search and training costs for technology**, as well as the actual costs (purchasing, implementing, maintaining) and bearing the risk of making that investment choice and **lack of discretionary funding** is a barrier for chambers, especially smaller chambers. Whilst there is a recognition that technology could reduce operating costs in the longer term, the **initial investment in software, hardware, and training is prohibitive**, particularly for smaller chambers who are already operating on flat budgets or legal aid funded with little or no flexibility around cashflow nor headroom for speculative investments. Given the hourly billing nature of their work, the perceived benefits of technology can seem distant or intangible.

Standards and regulations: respondents are keenly aware of the importance of confidentiality, data security, and the handling of client information, including data protection (GDPR), and compliance with professional conduct rules. Respondents did not consider legal regulatory requirements to be significant hurdles to the adoption of technology, both in this research and in the LSB's survey.

There is cautious adoption and usage of **artificial intelligence** (AI) as an assistant in their tasks. Current applications of AI include Chat GPT, Microsoft Co-Pilot and Vincent AI for preparing documents, transcription and note-taking and Lexis+ AI for legal research. AI is being used thoughtfully and the expectation by the participants is that it will probably change what barristers do but not replace them – two barristers pointed out that chambers don't have the huge datasets that law firms do so it is harder to train a large language model (LLM). Many barristers describe the nature of their work as being autonomous and individual so not conducive to data aggregation, commoditised processes and the larger gains and efficiencies that come with that. Barristers anticipate AI to be beneficial to their work, to assist with more mundane and routine tasks, but not to replace the important human elements of skill, experience and judgement that define their profession.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

The use of technology to facilitate legal work (legaltech) and deliver services to clients (lawtech) has the potential to deliver benefits for both legal service providers and their clients. New technologies such as algorithmic decision-making, automated document assembly, AI-based document analysis, chatbots and blockchain could transform how legal services are provided, creating both new opportunities and risks. Technology and innovation can have an important role in delivering better outcomes for consumers, especially through improving access to justice, reducing costs both directly and through system improvements by legal providers, and in helping to deliver transparency for consumers navigating legal services.

The uptake of technology depends both on individual barristers, chambers and employers adapting their practices, as well as an appropriate regulatory environment enabling the profession to innovate and adopt technology safely and effectively. Therefore, as regulator of the Bar, the Bar Standards Board (BSB) needs to collect evidence on the spread of both lawtech and legaltech at the Bar, understand barriers to its use, and determine what role the BSB can play in facilitating an environment that encourages the profession to innovate safely and facilitate access to justice for consumers.

For these reasons, in April 2023, the BSB invited expressions of interest from research providers able to design and deliver research into the usage of technology and innovation at the Bar. Work on the project commenced in July 2023.

The BSB's [Strategic Plan for 2022-2025](#) stated a commitment to 'promote consumer understanding of legal services and choice, and good value in using those services'. This commitment was further elaborated in the [Research and Evaluation Strategy for 2022-25](#), which outlined plans "to examine the role of new technology in promoting access to justice." Through this strategic objective the BSB aims to develop their understanding of the way in which technology and other innovations are changing how legal services are provided, how the administration of justice is delivered, and how that affects barristers and consumers.

One of the key aims of this research is to provide evidence to help the BSB address the regulatory challenges associated with innovative uses of emerging technology and new business models for delivering legal services. This research will also support the delivery of the [BSB's regulatory objectives](#) as set out in the Legal Services Act 2007, in particular protecting and promoting the public interest, improving access to justice, protecting and promoting the interests of consumers, and promoting competition in the provision of services. The LSB is also pushing regulators to be more proactive in creating an environment that encourages practitioners to innovate to help better connect people to legal services. Recent LSB guidance⁴ requires that regulation of the legal sector:

- enables the use of technology and innovation to support improved access to legal services and to address unmet need;
- balances the benefits and risks, and the opportunities and costs, of technology and innovation in the interests of the public and consumers; and
- actively fosters a regulatory environment that is open to technology providers and innovators.

⁴ Legal Services Board, [Guidance on promoting technology and innovation to improve access to legal services](#), 24 April 2024

Methodology

2.1 Research questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What do we mean by lawtech and legal tech?
- What are practitioners and technology providers doing now in terms of technology? What are they focused on?
- What do they need to innovate and improve?
- What are the barriers to implementation?
- How can the benefits and impact be realised effectively?
- Is there a lack of confidence in technology across the Bar? What is holding back the adoption of technology at the Bar?
- How does the BSB help and encourage adoption processes and support the profession?
- What are the risks of non-adoption?
- What happens when technology goes wrong?
- How can technology be used to improve ED&I outcomes?

2.2 Design of the study

The first strand of the research was to conduct a literature review which considered primary and secondary research in the legal services market as to the current state of technology and innovation including the SRA's 2021 report into Technology and Innovation, Alison Hook's report in 2019 for the Legal Services Board and the LSB's Technology and Innovation Survey of 2022 (grateful thanks are due to the LSB for providing the research team with the barrister-specific survey data), as well as other sources. The literature review also looks at international comparisons of technology by the Bar or equivalent professions including Singapore, Canada, the USA, Australia and France (see Annex A) and was completed in September 2023.

Qualitative interviews were held with 11 stakeholders to the profession in December 2023, across nine organisations, and then 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with practitioners throughout 2024. The third and final part of the research was to design and deliver case studies from three legal technology companies who are providing or developing services to support the Bar, to explore any challenges they have experienced in market entry and within the regulatory environment, see section 4.

The discussion guides for the semi-structured in-depth interviews were designed and finalised in close consultation with the BSB. See Annexes B and C for discussion guides. Participants were sent the questions in advance of any interview if requested. Participants were also aware that the BSB was conducting the research and that they would remain anonymous and non-attributed. No incentives were offered.

The BSB invited participants to the research via email, directing participants to Spinnaker for a pre-qualification call to establish qualifying criteria and segmentation. A sampling grid was used in order to purposively identify the sample to ensure inclusion of a range of small/large, types of participants (in-house/corporate/employed, self-employed, direct access, operations/IT), and a mix of practice areas. The research primarily used the BSB's database, gaps were also filled by Spinnaker's network in the legal sector where needed.

The case studies of technology providers were chosen from a longlist of those mentioned in the research by practitioners and stakeholders and were selected to represent three different

areas of provision: practice management, online networking and direct access, and collaborative software for case workflow. We are also interested in providers' use of AI and their experiences of entering the legal market and any observations of the regulatory environment. No due diligence was undertaken, no commercial endorsement is given and the case studies were written with the involvement and agreement of the technology providers. It is interesting to note perhaps that out of the three, one has not launched in the UK yet (BarBooks), and the other two are relatively recent launches or developments.

2.3 Limitations

A small sample was contacted and participants self-selected from the BSB email invitation, meaning that participants volunteered to participate in response to the invitation based on their own interest or perceived relevance to them. This may mean that those with stronger opinions or greater personal experience of technology might be more likely to volunteer to take part. In the recruitment process, the researchers actively recruited from specific sectors of the market to ensure a representative mix of participants as much as possible.

The nature of qualitative research means that findings are dependent on the specific contexts of the participants, which may limit the applicability of the findings to a broader context and would also be a limitation if policymakers are seeking statistical evidence for decision-making. However, the use of qualitative methods enabled the research to explore nuanced experiences in detail, uncovering differences in perspectives and perceptions that might be missed in quantitative research. The research has been able to consider the contextual insights of barristers' experiences with technology and enabled us to probe deeply around the mechanisms underlying the adoption (or not) of technology by the profession. As far as possible we have sought to explore the 'why' behind choices and this method also enabled the research to adapt and iterate as the insights emerged, particularly around areas such as definitions (see section 2.3). The study was intended to capture diverse and varied perspectives. Whilst different researchers may interpret the same rich, nuanced qualitative data differently, we found that the stakeholder and the practitioner interviews aligned on similar themes and it is hoped that this research both captures the richness of barristers' experiences with technology and contributes insights for guiding a way forward for stakeholders, practitioners and regulators.

2.4 Definitions

Stakeholders and technology providers have an understanding of lawtech and legaltech and use these sometimes inter-changeably as the use of technology such as software, hardware and telecommunications applications to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of legal services.

Q: What do you understand when I say technology in the context of law and legal services, particularly of advocacy, what do you understand and include in that?

A: 'Everything that is useful to us to do our job, strategy, our clients, their goals and aims, supporting human relationships, negotiating with the judges. This is the heart of our job and technology is everything that is useful to that'

Stakeholder, avocat, Paris Bar Association

Barristers participating in this research had a broad understanding of technology and typically included hardware, software and apps in their definitions, but were more likely than stakeholders to reference generic technology rather than legaltech or lawtech specifically (eg Microsoft, Apple, Google, Dropbox). As part of this research, having conducted a review of the literature, the following working definitions for some terms familiar across the sector (law tech, legal tech) and those perhaps more recent entrants to the discussion (justice tech, micro tech) are suggested.

Lawtech or legaltech?

Whilst legaltech and lawtech as described by Richard Susskind⁵ are useful broad categories when thinking about levers for change and regulatory policy, and are intended as shorthand to comprehension, we acknowledge these definitions are not mutually exclusive and increasingly the distinction is blurred as lawtech providers can and do move into the legaltech space and vice versa and legal services become more unbundled. In the literature review, the two terms and their respective merits are not always clearly distinguished and seem to be used interchangeably according to the context (eg use of legaltech when referencing alongside regtech, fintech) as well as legaltech being used as an umbrella term to include lawtech. The intention is that regardless of the definitions employed (and we find that investors are now speaking more of lawtech than legaltech), the goal is to open up new opportunities in the legal sector by encouraging technological innovation, giving greater access to legal services, and improving access to justice. For regulators and professional bodies the intention is to move beyond the classifications and to consider the risks, benefits and potentially transformative impacts of these technologies.

Definitions

Client – a person who uses a barrister to seek advice, to provide a legal service for example to represent them in legal proceedings and to appear on his or her behalf in court⁶. This would include those referred by a solicitor as well as those who go to the Bar direct (referred to as direct access clients⁷).

Consumer – individuals ‘who use, have used or are or may be contemplating using’ legal services, or who have rights and interests derived from the use of these services by others⁸.

Legaltech – solutions to simplify and improve the efficiency of legal work for service providers. The key feature of such technologies is the optimisation of internal processes in the work of lawyers. For example, automation of processes, digitisation, improved efficiency and cost reduction. For barristers this includes case management, practice management, document management and also systems used in court proceedings for example advocacy aids.

Lawtech – aimed at improving the interaction of the legal industry with consumers of legal services, primarily serving consumers and small businesses. For example: chatbots, online portal for clients, automated document generation for wills, legal education resources. We would include providers such as Legal Zoom, Farewill and Rocket Lawyer in this space. For the Bar, this will be relevant for those who take direct access clients in consumer-facing practice areas.

Generic tech – not specific to the law or legal services but may be used by lawyers as part of their professional practice such as PDF editors, operating systems and software such as Microsoft packages, document file sharing (ShareFile, OneDrive) and cyber-security.

Justice tech – designed to improve access to justice and the delivery of justice, for example addressing systemic inequities, streamlining judicial processes and empowering people to resolve disputes fairly. It overlaps with law tech and legal tech but is aimed at access to and delivery of justice, and might include court modernisation tools, systems that allow better navigation of the justice system, tools that avoid engaging legal services altogether (online

⁵ Richard Susskind: The end of lawyers? Rethinking the nature of legal services, OUP 2008 and The future of the professions: how technology will transform the work of human experts, OUP 2022

⁶ <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/choosing/legal-jargon-explained/>

⁷ For more detail on public and licenced access schemes, see [BSB guidance](#).

⁸ Legal Services Act 2007, s 207.

dispute resolution) and/or platforms that match those who need legal aid with pro bono providers for example.

Microtech – small-scale, innovative technologies designed to enhance efficiency, accessibility, productivity and sometimes compliance, often focusing on niche applications.

From the research, we include a list of technologies used or mentioned by participants in the research in the broader categories of business to business (ie provided by technology vendors and used by barristers) and business to consumer (solutions intended for use by consumers and/or clients). **Note that these companies are only those mentioned by participants in discussion during the research interviews. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of technology products nor a commercial endorsement.**

Business to business: solutions used by barristers that are specific to legal services provision (although not always paid for by chambers as case management solutions and/or document sharing portals may be funded by law firms)

- Case management for chambers and electronic diaries – eg LEX, MLC from One Advanced including work allocation across chambers
- Court digitisation processes eg criminal/CPS and commercial courts
- Third party case management eg Opus 2, CaseLines, TrialView
- Knowledge management databases and precedents – internal and external
- Legal specific bundling and workflow tools eg Hyperlaw, Associo, Casedo
- Online legal research information and books on screen for access to primary law (Thomson Reuters/Westlaw/PLC and LexisNexis etc)
- Document management purpose-built for legal service providers
- Document sharing (collaboration with law firms, local authorities and clients)

Business to consumer: solutions used by consumers or clients

- Online platforms that connect clients with barristers: Barrister Link
- [Valla](#) - legal platform for consumers to raise employment law issues
- [Access Social Care](#) – a bot in the third sector, advising consumers on benefits

Generic technology used by barristers in the provision of legal services

- AI: Microsoft CoPilot, Chat GPT, Vincent AI
- Bundling software eg Adobe Pro, LiquidText, Foxit
- CRM
- Cyber security measures
- Digital signatures
- Microsoft/PC, Outlook, Apple for day-to-day work
- Video conferencing
- Cloud-based data storage
- ID checking
- Time recording tools

The benefits of the use of generic technology in the provision of legal services came through strongly from the research which is why the focus of the research has been wide-ranging rather than focusing just on the adoption of legaltech at the Bar. Value judgements have not been made as to how the technology is developed on the supply side, whether purpose-built for the legal sector or intended for general use, as on adoption these both constitute barrister innovation. For example the adoption of video conferencing has driven significant

improvements for barristers and clients, and usage of PDF has significantly reduced the consumption, storage and transport costs of boxes of paper files.

2.5 Literature review

See Annex A for the full literature review which was intended to:

- review and consider existing evidence and primary research on the use of technology at the Bar in England & Wales;
- propose definitions and identify any exclusions;
- identify and analyse relevant international comparators;
- shortlist stakeholders and technology companies to take part; and
- inform and define subsequent elements of the research including shaping the research questions.

2.6 Participants: practitioners and stakeholders

Practitioner interviews Thirty semi-structured practitioner interviews with individuals from chambers or other barrister organisations. For questions see Annex C.

Job role or function of participants

Self-employed barrister/KC	15
IT/Operations (non-legal)	7
Chambers Director (legally qualified barrister or solicitor)	5
Employed barrister	2
Senior Clerk	1
	30

Chambers size

Size of chambers (by #barristers not revenue)	
Large (70 +)	15
Medium (21-70)	6
Small <20 barristers	7
Corporate/employed	2
	30

Practice areas (individual barristers only)

Chancery	1
Construction	1
Corporate crime	1
Commercial	6
Crime	2
Employment	3
Family	2
Property	1
PI/Clin neg	4
Tax	1
	22

Direct access (barristers only - when stated)

Yes	3
No	7
Some	3
Not applicable (employed)	2
	15

Barristers by experience

Kings' Counsel	3
Senior barrister > 20 years' call	10
Junior barrister 10-20 years' call	5
Junior barrister less than 10 years' call	2
	20

Location (all participants)

London/SE	20
Midlands	3
National	3
North East	1
South West	1
Virtual	1
Wales	1
	30

Stakeholder interviews

Eleven semi-structured stakeholder interviews with individuals from nine organisations were conducted, for questions see Annex B.

Organisation	Key function
<u>Advocate</u>	Free legal help from barristers for people who cannot get public funding (legal aid) and cannot afford to pay. Registered charity.
Association of Consumer Support Organisations (<u>ACSO</u>)	Non-profit membership body to represent the interests of consumers in the UK civil justice system
<u>Avocats Barreau Paris</u> (Paris Bar Association)	Professional body for <i>avocats</i> in France – organise the profession, strengthen training etc
Home Office	
<u>Institute of Barristers' Clerks</u>	Professional body for barristers' clerks
Legal Practice Management Association	Professional development for legal practice managers
<u>Legal Services Consumer Panel</u>	Independent body in the UK that provides advice and guidance to the Legal Services Board (LSB)
Ministry of Justice	
<u>The Bar Council</u>	Professional association for barristers in England and Wales

3 Research findings

3.1 Current usage

- Current usage of technology in chambers includes:
 - Video conferencing for remote working and online hearings
 - Online legal research tools from third-party information providers
 - Cloud based document storage
 - Case management and document automation
 - AI
 - Bundling software for PDFs
 - Fees, invoicing and receipt management
 - Time recording
- Other types of technology that were rarely mentioned included:
 - Electronic billing and timekeeping
 - Online marketing, communication and client engagement (websites, barrister reviews),
 - Data analytics including case outcomes, client demographics and practice profitability to assist in strategic planning.
- In chambers, especially the larger ones, we found differences between systems that are centralised across chambers and those that are adopted by individual barristers. Centralised technology include Microsoft 365, Microsoft Teams, email/outlook, diary management, document sharing tools such as Dropbox/SharePoint/OneDrive, cyber security eg Modern Desktop, Microsoft Defender, case management including LEX and MLC. Typically this is driven by operational efficiencies and infrastructure requirements. Individual systems, those purchased and adopted at the discretion of individual barristers, include PDF editing tools (Adobe, Foxit, LiquidText, PDF Editor) for managing, sharing and reviewing documents. The choice of PDF software is driven by personal preferences as to usability, ease of annotation, cost and the type of device being used eg iPad or Windows. All barristers who took part in the research have their own devices and the purchasing of software solutions and apps over and above the central systems provided by chambers tends to be at their own discretion.

From a central services point of view we use corporate devices, from a chambers employed perspective. For the barristers it's completely different, they are responsible for their own IT equipment and they use a mixture of weird and wonderful devices, predominantly Mac based

Chambers Director, non-legal, large civil law chambers

We are fairly open in allowing people to use their own devices and their own software. We do set limitations on what they can use if they can access our systems, but what we don't have is a kind of corporate environment that you would have in a solicitors' firm where they give you the laptop, you can't load anything on it, you've got to use their document managed system, management system and all that. I think that will be horrible if you would lose the character of the Bar, we are all independent and that's the way it is.
KC, commercial, medium chambers

- Stakeholders see the current state of play regarding the adoption of technology at the Bar as variable. Whilst there is appetite and some drive from sections of the Bar and pockets of progress and improvement observed by stakeholders (eg digitisation of paper-processes, remote working) the sense is that the majority of barristers are taking a 'wait and see' approach and there are still areas of inefficiency (court delays, funding issues). This assessment was also supported by views expressed in the practitioner interviews.

- Unsurprisingly, participants see the majority of investment in technology in legal services being undertaken by commercial law firms, as barristers' chambers face some challenges in terms of the economics. The bigger chambers with more funds have been able to invest more in technology, while publicly funded chambers have found it more difficult. Overall, stakeholders and participants agree that the use of technology at the Bar is less advanced when compared with large law firms.
- However, there is recognition that technology can be used to accelerate the resolution of legal problems, as long as necessary safeguards are in place. Some participants were able to point to areas of potential opportunity for technology in the broader legal market, for example:
 - Improving public legal education eg chatbots, video guidance for consumers
 - Reducing court delays especially in civil justice
 - Addressing information asymmetry
 - Online portals for general client handling as well as for clients to view progress with their legal matter. Customer relationship management systems (CRM) to share workflow progress with clients – reducing the overhead in clients contacting barristers
 - Continue to promote and drive alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and online dispute resolution (ODR).
- There is recognition from stakeholders and barristers that consumers in many areas of legal services still need a blended environment including the option of face-to-face interaction, and informal support, eg via WhatsApp and that whilst vulnerable and digitally excluded consumers must be considered, this should not necessarily be a brake or an impediment to innovation.
- The research indicated a gap in the technical knowledge of participants. IT support in chambers is typically transactional and not strategic, as it is often outsourced to an external IT consultancy, rather than having in-house roles or functions such as Head of Innovation as you may find in a law firm. IT functions in chambers are committee-based with limited deep technical expertise and knowledge, and barristers have not been trained in legal technology at any stage so are unclear on the potential applications and benefits of technology and find it difficult to prioritise as part of the day job.

We still run ourselves like a golf club frankly like an unincorporated association with a committee, with people on the committee taking on little projects. Personally I don't think it's a satisfactory way to run an organisation. What it means is that these sorts of big strategic questions that we need to answer [relating to technology] tend to get put on the back burner because everyone's busy and everyone's got their day job to do.

Barrister, personal injury, medium chambers

The people who have to make the decisions lack the knowledge and insight to be able to make those decisions, because they're barristers.

Barrister, personal injury, medium chambers

- Several participants highlighted challenges associated with supporting **direct access clients** that could potentially be solved by better deployment of existing technology such as case management, client portals, and evidence submission. However, some participants were not keen to take direct access work due to the additional challenges it represented. Experiences have been that direct access can create additional logistical and emotional overheads and there is a preference for some for the intermediating presence of a solicitor. Direct access requires a greater volume of forms and paperwork at the on-boarding stage, which is felt to be too time-consuming. Because direct access

is undertaken in an ad-hoc fashion by participating barristers, and did not appear to be undertaken by any of the chambers taking part in the research to a significant extent, it was observed that technology systems have not yet been deployed by the Bar to solve these particular challenges.

The direct access clients, we have to explain to them in a lot of cases how to provide instructions with the degree of specificity and preparation that we would expect A lot of people coming through direct access think it's going to be terribly informal, they need to learn that it isn't

Family law barrister, large chambers

Direct access work is worse. People send us in these paper bundles and things, and dodgy email accounts and all that. We're not big fans. I try to discourage members from doing it. It tends to be low value work. It tends to be the most problematic to deal with. It's unrealistic expectations for the members. Its problematic in terms of managing clients directly rather than having solicitors. They all think we are like a mobile phone operator you can call 24/7

Operations Director (non-legal), large chambers

3.2 Implementations of technology

- When asked about recent implementations of technology, all chambers and the employed Bar have spent considerable time and effort to ensure **cybersecurity**, driven by the importance of client confidentiality, the potential impact of a breach and the impact of cyber-attacks on chambers in the last few years. The questionnaire produced by the Law Society and the Bar Council was mentioned by several as a useful tool⁹.
- A third of participants pointed to a commitment to **paperless working**, saving money on printing, storage, transportation and secure disposal of paper files, accelerated by the change in working practices during covid. The benefits of **digital working** include being able to walk to court without heavy bundles in wheely bags and being able to receive large volumes of papers electronically in any location. Another benefit mentioned was being able to search across data and mark up a PDF digitally rather than rely on post-it notes and highlighters. Digital bundles also mean reduced risk of leaving files on a train or in court.

When we do our accounting, we have one of our categories of accounting now is non-paperless working. So we actually account for paper, copying, printers then we've got all the courier services that go with it, and then we've got the secure shredding because it all comes back to get shredded. So we have a whole life cycle to identify how much money we're wasting by using paper as opposed to doing it electronically.

Operations Director (non-legal), large chambers

- **File sharing and cloud storage** has been adopted by many chambers including WeTransfer, OneDrive, SharePoint and Dropbox, reducing paper storage and enabling an easy transfer of cases across practitioners when needed. This is often driven by law firms using a particular vendor. Similarly most have recently moved from on-premises servers to the cloud for storage, for security and efficiency gains. Although a challenge here is maintaining separation of documents at a chambers level, as barristers from the same chambers can be acting for parties on opposing sides of the same case.
- Several chambers also have set up **shared email addresses** for clerks which is saving time and improving efficiency.

⁹ [Cybersecurity questionnaire by the Law Society and Bar Council](#), updated July 2024.

Case study – microtech– meeting summaries

Uses **Read AI** as an AI copilot, a plug-in to record conferences and send to both professional clients (solicitors and in-house lawyers) as well as to direct access and lay clients in order that all parties have a record of the call. Whilst parties are warned that it is AI generated, it has proved to be useful and timesaving. As well as transcription and meeting summaries, the tool is also used for dictating opinions and advice.

I file those transcripts, and they can be very useful if I've got an ongoing matter where I actually come after months or sometimes years later, and I can back and see what I've said.

Tax barrister, small chambers

- **Video conferencing** – is in use by all barristers we spoke to and is largely felt to be a benefit to the profession and to clients, through enabling remote hearings.

Covid put jet packs on remote working.

KC, clinical negligence and personal injury, large chambers

- The benefits of **remote hearings** were cited as supporting better client relationships, making international work easier and cheaper, saving travel time and accommodation costs. For most it is efficient and enables barristers to work more effectively with other professionals (non-UK lawyers, expert witnesses) and intermediaries. Provided that practitioners have the right set up in place either at home or in chambers, most of which has been enabled by remote working. Several barristers observed that the usage of video conferences by courts is still inconsistent and frustrating and despite the proprietary HMCTS remote video system, many are using workarounds eg Teams. Remote hearings were seen as particularly useful for clients, such as personal injury clients or minors, who cannot travel. However, some barristers felt it can occasionally distance/disassociate clients from the justice process.

I think clients can be less engaged with the process. It feels like you're on the telly, it doesn't feel like it's your life and so you do see quite a lot of them not seeming to understand the issues. There are clients for whom it is a completely disengaging process. It takes a little more thought to make sure that the convenience isn't overriding their capacity to cope with it.

Head of Chambers, barrister, family, small chambers

The experience of justice, I don't think some clients take it as seriously, when they're sat on their sofa, talking into a phone or talking into a laptop, then they do, then when they have to go to a separate building... there is a solemnity there.

Barrister, employment, small chambers

In some situations, and for some clients, a face-to-face meeting was considered essential.

If someone has a brain injury, or paraplegic, I would always go and see them. I would never do it online, I want to make sure clients have understood, I want to meet the family, see where they live. It's an essential part of preparing the claim. Barrister, personal injury, small chambers

As another example, in domestic abuse cases, remote hearings can mean the survivor of abuse is safeguarded from appearing in person – however, it was felt by some that power imbalances are more easily understood by a judge/jury in person. Most barristers support

the use of remote hearings when it makes sense to do so (eg pre-trial hearings, client conferences, working with intermediaries including expert witnesses) but less so in examination of witnesses as part of a trial or when truth needs to be established through questioning/cross-examination.

- Technology used by barristers is almost always '**off the peg**', rather than bespoke. The advantage of this approach means reduced barriers to adoption and has benefits compared with bespoke solutions including more cost effective, immediate availability, proven reliability, ongoing support and updates, scalability and provision of support and training.
- Other examples of recent implementations of technology include case/practice management systems, replacing the hard copy library with online information services, and telephony systems to improve call routing and remove the requirement for phone operators/receptionists in chambers.

3.3 Benefits

Working with clients and others, managing relationships

- Barristers are using technology to make the running of their practices easier. They are using technology to manage and present legal documents, such as creating paginated court bundles using a variety of generic PDF software and web-based applications. They are also encouraging clients to seek more efficient ways of managing their cases, including emailing bundles and using document sharing platforms with law firms. Intermediaries such as courts and the public sector are also driving the adoption of technology such as the HMCTS portal, the family law portal in some instances.
- **Transparency for the client** – technology can enable the client to have better awareness of progress eg through the use of conveyancing portals. Clients can also be provided with more accessible and better management information. At the employed Bar there are systems set up for easier access to KPIs across the legal portfolio including risk ratings of specific matters for faster visibility. These types of portal enable barristers to respond quicker to clients and have more visibility on a wider range of active cases. Stakeholders have seen evidence of client/consumer demands for technology to meet their desire for progress updates and frequency of support via mixed methods including email/phone/online/chat.

Consumers would be surprised at how slowly the wheels of the law turn. They don't know that and are stunned that a minor issue can take years to resolved. How to inform about progress? That's the biggest issue. Clients feel ignored, frustrated...a lot of the time there is no news. Law firms working in low margin areas can't check in by phone every month. Tech could improve that experience. So often it's about information, contact levels, simplicity of explanations. Tech can improve those reassurance levels. Stakeholder, barrister, large chambers CEO

Case study – client portal

We have effectively an online portal where we can set up an online data room specific for that client, add the lawyers that are working on the case, add the client contacts that need to upload documents, and they can upload the documents that we can then download on the other side. And as we push through in the development of that, we're starting to embed more and more management information and almost build it into a more of an online database.

Employed barrister, personal injury, large firm

- **Video conferencing** has had a beneficial impact on delivery of legal services and improved the ease of working with other professionals and intermediaries, although a functional ecosystem/end-to-end solution including all the necessary equipment in court even for in-person hearings is still felt to be some way off by participants.

I've had trials derailed because we can't connect to the screen. That many barristers have to stop working to sort it out. I've had to say to a client, which is ridiculous, we're not going to go ahead the rest of the day because screens are not working.
Criminal barrister, small chambers

You cannot use the digital witness bundle because most of the screens in the witness box simply do not work.
Chambers Director, legal, small chambers

Case study – microtech – managing relationships

Having worked in a law firm, I'm aware that solicitors comment on how barrister engagement drops off after the hearing, having been keen and engaged in the lead up to the case. From the barristers' point of view, they have moved on to the next case and the next solicitor. I use Omnifocus to automatically diarise two weeks after the hearing that I send an email to the solicitor to touch base on the case. It's using a generally available product for a legal task, that helps me manage my to-do-list and maintain those solicitor relationships.

Barrister, employment, large chambers

Case study – working with consumers – chatbots

We have a certain level of out-of-hours contact. We try and manage that demand. But the more that we can direct people to talk to a chatbot at two in the morning to get the answer to their question the better, because then we can free up that capacity to serve the atypical and more difficult questions. But if we're answering lots of very simple questions, we don't get round to the difficult question as early.

Employed barrister

Reduce document overload

- For many, technology has created more of an overhead in terms of preparing cases. For example, smaller law firms are relying on the Bar to implement and execute:

'Here is your brief – it's 57 emails, with copies of emails embedded, can you create a brief for yourself..? Historically that would be in a nice pink ribbon. When it's received, there must be solutions that exist to help these things make sense?'
Barrister, CEO of large chambers, stakeholder

- One stakeholder organisation working directly with consumers doubled the number of case workers as the volume of inputs has increased so significantly as technology means clients can submit a greater volume of less relevant information.

Technology has given us more work, it's more content to sift through, more prescriptive requirements to manage'
Stakeholder, consumer access to barristers

- Many barristers mentioned that the volume of material they receive has increased significantly now that digitisation makes it possible to send greater volumes, which would seem to present an opportunity for technology solutions to support document management and data analysis.

Fairer allocation and easier reallocation of work

- Some participants pointed to the adoption of case management systems leading to a fairer allocation of work, and reduced bias. Using a central document storage/organisation in chambers means that when the barrister on a case changes quickly, the infrastructure supports a quick reallocation of digital papers, saving time in the handover.

Case study – work allocation and re-allocation

One of the things we do is crime. From my experience of talking to the practitioners and the clerks, is that cases change person very quickly, so the ability to quickly share that and to take someone off and put someone on, which you can do quickly on Dropbox which has an integration with the MLC platform as well. People can access their files through that one and just go into the Dropbox software itself so that's great. The clerks can very quickly transfer papers to someone, which is fantastic.

Finance & operations, large chambers

Reduce risks and improve data security

- Holding documents digitally means there is less re-keying of data, less document versioning, and therefore reduced scope for error. When data is properly encrypted compared with being in print, it is backed up, safer and more secure. A useful by-product of digital working means barristers are no longer dealing with lever arch files, bankers' boxes, and having to take taxis and trains with the physical burden of heavy papers. The cost of paper is also saved.

I'm always looking for ways to bring technology in. IT generally will reduce the scope for error. It improves control, it improves job satisfaction. It gives a more professional approach to things. And it controls costs as well, normally.

Director of Operations, non-legal, large chambers

Risk reduction really is a big, big motivator. So certainly on those individual big cases or those big contracts where there's lots of moving pieces, but the management information, it's enabling multiple different lawyers to feed into the same document as opposed to that document being reproduced of an individual level and needing to be reproduced at management level for transmission on to the client. So you're inputting the information only once as opposed to it being repeated and regurgitated. And obviously the consequential time saving in respect of that.

Employed barrister, clinical negligence, large law firm

Case study - risk reduction through the provision of management information

Team of barristers prosecuting many cases for a regulatory agency

We're required to provide an awful lot of information about case progress within the various KPIs that we're required to meet. And to do that...we're reliant on quite a clever Excel spreadsheet. One that's live can be viewed from both sides and tracks the process of cases as well as giving us the information for example when we're

approaching a fixed fee on the budget, when we're approaching deadlines. It is RAG rated automatically and giving both us and the client the visibility on the same bits of information. Employed barrister, clinical negligence, large law firm

Improve equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

- Technology can be used to advance EDI in the legal sector and the research highlighted some examples. Video conferencing, document sharing and collaborative tools have enabled barristers to work from anywhere, creating flexibility for those who may face challenges with attending chambers or court in person such as those with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities as well as (in theory) supporting better work-life balance with less time spent away from home or travelling. Collaborative tools in particular can allocate smaller and identifiable parts of a case across several practitioners in more accessible ways:

The profession tends to be inaccessible for people coming back with responsibilities - the amount of information we have to hold in our heads is so enormous, you have to work long days to keep it at your fingertips. If the information is shared, you can allocate pieces of it, you can see what others are doing... you have the ability for people to work part-time. Carers and parents are back into the workforce.

KC, commercial, large chambers

- Conducting hearings online rather than in-person has provided better access to translation and interpretation tools. One barrister pointed out it has been easier and more-cost effective to arrange an interpreter for a short timetabled online hearing rather than a day's court appearance. This ensures that clients from different linguistic backgrounds can participate more fully in the legal process, promoting inclusivity.

It is getting more and more difficult to get interpreters in person. Now we are able to get them online, that allows people to engage with proceedings.

Barrister, family, small chambers

- Three chambers are using data collection within their case management systems to monitor the allocation of work across chambers in order to ensure fairness by E&D characteristics.
- Similarly, several are using technology such as Microsoft Forms to run in-house surveys on diversity ensuring responses are confidential and that activities across chambers are supportive of diversity.
- A few chambers observed that whilst they don't currently have any members who require accessibility support such as screen readers, they do have technology in place to support this if needed.

Improve efficiency, saving time and increasing billings

- One or two clerks and chief executives of chambers also point to improvements made in processes specifically payments, receipts and billing systems which can be tangible.

The biggest win for me was actually time recording. You know, we saw an increase in 20% of turnover as a result of that. Because, as a sector, particularly at the Bar, we tend to undervalue the time we put into cases.

Chief Executive, barrister, commercial, large chambers

- The cautious use of AI is another example of barristers being able to reduce the time spent on more routine tasks.

The use of Co-pilot for me is very much about time saving. One of the conversations we've been having internally is how do you make money when you're asleep? Professional services are not necessarily in that sphere. So, it's about finding ways of giving back more time while still being able to charge for it. So, for me, it's all time driven.

Chief Executive, barrister, commercial, large chambers

Case study – receipts management – microtech – improving efficiency

I've got Hazel, a Mac app that deals with document management. I set up a rule in Hazel, then it will look at a particular folder, and it says if there is a PDF, and you set up the variable, so if there's a PDF file with the name of 'X' in this folder, then move it somewhere else.

Another example would be when I get a receipt, the money gets paid from the solicitor to chambers bank account. Chambers then send me notification they receive the money and the receipt. What I used to do is manually save the receipt. Sign it, email that to the solicitor, then go back to my Excel spreadsheet, mark it off, then move the money about either to a business account or a personal account and so do all that. Now all I do is I just drag it from the PDF receipt from the email onto one of the folders that Hazel is looking at and Hazel knows if there's a PDF in here with my VAT number on it and contains the word receipt to trigger an automated process whereby it gets electronically signed, attach to an email, that email sent to the solicitor, and then the various Excel spread sheets are opened so I can pay it off. And then the last stage is automatically my banking app opens so I can move the money about.

Barrister, employment, large chambers

Case study – improving efficiency and saving time

A large barristers' chambers was experiencing frustrations with barristers requiring meeting rooms for conferences and the rooms being double booked. With the implementation of [Get Joan](#), a workplace platform that plugs into Lex, when an online conference is booked, the physical room is also booked. There is a small display on the room door that lets barristers know if a room is available, occupied, or booked for later. This avoids last-minute scrambles for a room and automatic room release ensures that only actively used meeting spaces stay occupied. Users can also book a meeting room directly on the app.

Because what happens, when you've got ten meeting rooms, members will just go and see one's unoccupied and they'll just go in and use it, not realising it's actually being used, or about to be used for people to join from the outside. Now it's integrated with our Lex and Outlook.

Operational Director, non-legal, large chambers

Case study – microtech – productivity – improving efficiency

OmniFocus - the way it's set up, it gives me the jobs I need to do on any given day. So there's no choice. There's no paralysis of decision. When I've finished my case prep, I'll turn it on the focus and put it here in front of me. There are eight little jobs I need to do today. And then I'll do those, kick them, they'll disappear off into the archive of jobs done. And tomorrow when I start up on the focus, it will have the particular jobs I need to do tomorrow. So that's really helped efficiency, that's really helped my productivity of getting things done.

Barrister, employment, medium chambers

Case study – improving efficiency – workflow support

The other bit of software I occasionally use is mind mapping software, something like MindNote, because if you've got lots of moving parts and there's no easy immediate story to tell, it allows you to deal with each of the elements of the case in their own right and then you can drag and drop and move them to work out how they all fit together into a coherent narrative or which points can be subsumed.

Barrister, employment, medium chambers

3.4 Barriers to adoption

For many participants, the **independent and practice-area-specific nature of the profession**, with self-employed barristers working on their own devices in their own individual ways, according to their own autonomous workflow, limits the drive for change. Participants pointed out that barristers work on their own devices, on individual cases and then move on to the next case. The perception is that there is limited potential for efficiency gains. Many barristers mentioned the importance of independence of thought, mind and practice in the profession and several point out that some parts of their workflow are not that suited to technology gains.

I think it's a good thing that we are able to be independent in all aspects of our practice because it fosters the type of mindset that you need to do our job effectively and to serve justice, which is what we're here for.

KC, commercial, large chambers

Traditionally being self-employed, it's 14,000 members of the Bar on their feet in court doing advocacy. Developing technology to bring into that arena isn't that obvious. It's still actual bits of paper or PDF to develop their line of argument. There isn't much that can help there.

Stakeholder, representative body

You want actually stuff [technology] that's more geared towards the creative arts almost, because you need to be able to do that. Employment barrister, medium chambers

It's actually about me organizing my thoughts and how I look at the evidence. And part of that is it's not sort of organized squares, neat blocks of everything. You need drag and drop and draw lines and write comments. So it can be quite messy and it's going to follow your own thought process. Barrister, employment, medium chambers

You have to be quite flexible, when you're in a trial, you think that the issues are x, y, and z, it turns out that they've shifted to a, b, and c, and you need to be able to access and reorganise your information as you go along. Barrister, KC, commercial, large chambers

Barristers identified parts of their workflow that would be suitable for the application of technology:

- Receiving information from client/law firm
 - Client on-boarding including engagement letter and fee agreement
 - Reviewing case materials (in part)
 - Constructing a chronology (in part)
 - Searching through evidence for example telephone records (in part)
 - Summarising evidence and identifying gaps
 - Recording meetings and interviews and summarising
 - Submitting formal documents to court
 - Tracking clients and commercial information relating to clients
 - Management information for insurers and clients including KPIs
 - Billing, fees and receipt management
- Other areas of work such as drafting pleadings, preparing for trial, interlocutory applications, court appearances and witness examination were felt to be areas which were less suitable for innovative technology (for example generative AI) given their specific nature and importance, or reliance on experienced professional/human judgement.
 - For some practitioners, there is a perception that off-the-shelf technology tools available are not that relevant, suitable or exciting so far – and an acceptance that the nature of the profession and the market conditions don't currently attract innovators, investors or disruptors. Stakeholders also made this observation.

The Bar is so small that actually, companies producing products for them are quite difficult to make money.... they can't invest in the research and development, I think that is a real problem for the Bar.

Stakeholder, barrister, practice management association

When I was in the solicitors' world there were far more companies who did creative things. The Bar is a limited customer base and the supply chain reflects that. There doesn't seem to be the innovative providers.

Finance Director, large chambers

- Unlike law firms, there is **limited centralisation of documents and data**, and therefore less benefit to implementation. For example, law firms can quickly see the relevance of an AI LLM tool improving when it works across a single large database of legal content whereas barristers don't have a large central data repository on which to train and test LLMs.

We're not centralised and corporate, so what we can't do is share our information between ourselves, ... we need to have these information barriers. That's one big problem. We can't aggregate all our knowledge.

KC, commercial, large chambers

I see that there is a possibility for better use of AI in chambers, especially if barristers were to work collaboratively. But there's very little examples. They all seem to be their own little islands, rather than working together in smaller teams. And you'll find that it's partly because the way one likes to work is different from the next person. Even when it comes to sharing documents and information, I rarely see it.

IT manager, large public law chambers

The fact that we're all recording information, collecting it, in millions of different ways, is making life hard for ourselves and others.

KC, commercial, large chambers

- Four barristers also mentioned the **lack of time** available to look into and evaluate new technology, any time spent on discovery, trialling and testing applications comes out of their practice time which is already stretched. Hourly billing means that practitioners who are conducting research on technology which cannot be attributed to a client or matter are losing earnings.

We're a tiny organisation, all of the work I do on the IT committee, I'm not paid for, that's work out of my practice time.

KC, commercial, large chambers

- The **chambers model** for most means that decision-making is collegiate, whether that is via an IT committee or having to get buy-in across chambers more widely, and solutions/systems can't be mandated across the organisation. For example, most chambers support both Mac and PC systems according to individual preference and would find it very difficult to force usage of one or other operating system on members, which limits centralisation, efficiency gains and benefits of scale. Sometimes the investment of time required to get the benefits is difficult. For example, one chambers is looking to deliver more insights to the barristers in terms of the size and scope of their individual practice, to include what type of clients they have, turnover and more longitudinal analysis and other reporting on an individual basis, but the overhead for the clerks to set this up has to be balanced with the benefits.

The general wider issue is trying to get a common system. People have different ways of working within chambers, that is the biggest challenge. Everyone has their own way of operating even at the basic brief management level and we can't mandate across chambers. That's who they are. It's cultural, those that want to move ahead, tend to do that. We're not dealing with an organisation as such.

Stakeholder and barrister, CEO of large chambers

- It can be difficult therefore for chambers to ensure decisions are taken with the appropriate **tech literacy**. To address this, chambers are sometimes using external consultants to advise and assist, consulting with peers or, more typically, avoiding or delaying the adoption of technology if it is contentious or requires significant changes to members' working practices. Whilst this can mean inertia and slower decision making in some instances, smaller chambers and individual practitioners can also be more dynamic and responsive than law firms in the adoption of technology.

Chambers have a big influence. Barristers make their own tech decisions, but it needs to plug into chambers systems. They will guide or direct barristers in those sets, what they should be using. They provide a suite of tech solutions open to barristers, they can pick and choose. Chambers can have an enabling contribution. As individuals they don't have time to research. Stakeholder, representative body

As an individual, you're free to do what you want within reason. And so you can try out some new bit of technology. The demo I saw of this case management software, I did actually sign up for it and tried out for a couple of months. And I didn't have to ask anyone in IT, can I load it on my computer?

KC, commercial, large chambers

- For five of the chambers who participated in the research, the **lack of funding** is a barrier, even with legal technology providers offering appropriate pricing models for

barristers who are adopting at individual rather than chambers level. Even large chambers have small budgets for IT and investment, particularly if they do a lot of fixed-fee work or are legal aid funded, and there is no scope to spend on speculative technology. For some chambers, it is not just the price of technology but also the pricing model in terms of how licenses and subscriptions are structured to regularly increase, as well as maintaining software updates. There is also the amount of resources needed for training and ensuring that chambers are optimising what they are paying for.

So you've got to get buy in from people for it. You've got a simple cost. You've got the cost of evaluating it in the first place, you've got the cost of purchasing it, and you've got the cost of maintaining it.

Operations Director, non-legal, large chambers

The hardest challenge in a self-employed or partnership model makes it so hard to aggregate funds for investment. It's a very real barrier.

Stakeholder, consumer organisation

- **High costs of adoption**, limited financial resources, and concerns about ROI present barriers for barristers and chambers when considering new technology. There is a reluctance to risk investing in tools that might become obsolete, likened to "*accidentally investing in Betamax*." Unlike large law firms with substantial budgets, chambers describe that they operate on flat financial models, leaving little room for explorative investment in technology. Additionally, individual barristers lack collective purchasing power, further complicating access to innovative solutions.

The biggest barrier is cost. For anything truly innovative, it's expensive and we don't have big budgets for those sorts of things.

Head of Chambers, non-legal, medium chambers

Our budgets are fairly small so everything you do really does have to be proven and there needs to be a demand for it.

IT manager, large chambers

- A handful of participants highlighted that **insurance** has an influence on how barristers implement and use technology. This is a concern particularly when managing the risk around cyber security requirements as insurers may require specific encryption standards and data storage protocols for example. Similarly, professional negligence insurance may include restrictions or guidelines to mitigate risks around the use of technology. Chambers gave a few examples of how insurance has an impact on technology usage:

- **Professional negligence** – keeping copies of attachments and submissions both electronically and in paper form in case there is an insurance claim;
- **Service level agreements** – some chambers have SLAs with large clients including document security which require the necessary policies and insurance to be in place;
- **Reputational damage** – one operating director makes it clear to barristers in chambers that if security controls are ignored or bypassed, any reputational damage (from eg hacking or a data breach) would potentially not be covered by insurers if an individual barrister's action enabled that risk.

There was no mention by participants that they saw insurers as a barrier or a block to the adoption of technology. At an operational level, most barristers' chambers understand that insurers are keen to encourage best practice and risk reduction as a shared goal. It will be interesting to see how insurers evaluate and mitigate against the risk of barristers using (or mis-using) AI.

- **Risk of things going wrong:** there are concerns over reputational damage, software providers going bust or being taken over, and a lack of trust in external providers for some practitioners. The very real concerns around data protection and data breaches and client confidentiality create a climate of risk aversion when it comes to technology, meaning barristers look for well-established technology providers rather than new entrants.

The problems, the barriers you've got around things like cybersecurity, you've got client confidentiality, know, if something goes wrong, it's really potentially quite serious, isn't it?
Senior Clerk, employment, small chambers

- It was observed by participants that **courts/judiciary/local government** are not currently driving change, as individual judges are dictating how their courts are run and in what format they wish to receive information. Court listings are not integrated into case management systems. Participants pointed to a lack of a joined-up system and even where central systems are implemented, if they are not made mandatory then workarounds creep in and systems are used in inconsistent ways. This makes it difficult to see the value of a common platform.

I do quite like those [public sector] portal systems because I think they're when they used well, they're good, but I think they could do with being designed by someone who has spoken to somebody who is going to use them as opposed to the cheapest person who tendered for it.

Head of Chambers, legally qualified, small chambers, family, crime and civil

Courts and tribunals are sometimes insisting on a particular format or process but they are excusing it when it doesn't happen.

Barrister, personal injury, medium chambers

3.5 Drivers for change

- The extent to which **law firms who instruct barristers directly are driving change** is mixed. For some barristers, their relationship with some solicitors will be a modest driver of technology adoption. For example, law firms will prefer a file sharing application, which will also extend to online meeting platforms and deal rooms. Smaller law firms and particularly those in legal aid funded areas are stretched for time and budgets and therefore technological sophistication is not a priority.

We are not the dominant partner in the relationships, it's the solicitor. And so therefore, if we bring tech in, it has to be more in line with what solicitors are doing.

Chief Executive, legal, commercial, large chambers

Cybersecurity is the one area where chambers are mandating requirements to members, with some not enabling chambers email accounts unless connected devices have proved themselves secure. This is driven by chambers who have seen others hacked and the damage that occurs. The risks are clearly evident to the profession. Compliance being driven by law firms and, occasionally, as part of barrister's own CPD commitment. For chambers working with larger law firms there is an increasing emphasis on checking compliance with GDPR and cyber security with questionnaires, which can be time-intensive to respond to.

We've had to deal with solicitors firms' increasingly detailed cyber security surveys. There's been an increase in hacking and ransomware attacks. Instructions are much

more conditional on you having good cybersecurity in place.
Barrister, employment, medium

The sets that can mandate, this is your computer and nothing else goes on it. That's a very comfortable place to be, I think. But as I said earlier, I don't think you get to that point until you've had a catastrophic problem.

IT Director, non-legal, medium chambers

- For some barristers there is pressure from law firms, local authorities and other institutions to work in a different way (eg courts driving a common platform, public funding of digital case management systems to improve processes in crime and family law). Participants have seen the benefits of working within a single system with instructing solicitors although again there isn't a great deal of consistency. It makes it difficult for barristers to respond to drivers from law firms when they are varied and inconsistent.

So, as we've already seen with the portals, I think, if it was certain solicitors and not others using them, we'd be much less inclined to do so because we worked on work for such a broad spectrum of solicitors. We wouldn't do something just for one set if I'm doing it. So it's something that would have to be across the board.

Barrister, family law, small chambers

Case study – law firms driving change

The case of the *Ever Given* in the Admiralty Court, 2023

Solicitors are getting much better at handling large quantities of data. An easy example is when there's a container ship casualty. I think of something like the Ever Given, with 18,000 containers. Each container will have at a minimum two parties interested in it, the sender and the receiver and typically a third party as well. Then you want to collect what's called the general average security in respect of every container. You can imagine the sheer volume of data. In the old days, solicitors would deal with that with a vast Excel spreadsheet, which is completely unwieldy. And they seem to have got much better at that. In the Ever Given case, which is running in the Admiralty Court, someone, somewhere is using something very clever to handle the sheer volume of data and who is representing whom and what they're claiming and the classification of their claim and so on. So that has definitely got better.

KC, Commercial, Medium chambers

- Environmental benefits of reducing paper and printing has been observed by many and whilst it isn't necessarily a driver of change, the profession is aware of the beneficial by-products of digital working.

With a digital way of working, there are environmental gains, the Bar is keen on sustainability'

Stakeholder, barrister, practice management association

- Some participants, particularly those more recently called to the Bar, felt that **data security is improved** when using digital transfer rather than paper files due to the reduced risk of leaving a physical copy behind. PDF organisation of papers is now the norm and barristers have benefited from efficiencies here.

Absence of drivers

- Two stakeholders observed that there is an **absence of push factors** for the adoption of technology:

There just aren't the drivers for change, it's the historic nature of the Bar. It's always going to have the work. There is just no need for the Bar to drive efficiency. It's the nature of the beast, they don't need the tech.

Stakeholder, consumer organisation

- Minimal consumer or client pressure for change** – except from a limited number of law firms – meaning there is not a desperate drive for technology and/or efficiency. This contributes to a lack of momentum and volume of suppliers in the market, and a lack of co-ordination on behalf of the profession to identify and deliver benefits, meaning the profession is largely reactive.
- Barristers did not cite competitive pressure from other chambers as a reason to innovate with technology, although IT directors were keener on innovation as it was felt to be favourable to the perception of chambers in the wider market, particularly on how they are viewed by law firms and larger commercial clients.

I think it's fair to say that for most you know, most barristers' chambers, the existing system serves them pretty well. There's not kind of huge incentive to change in terms of adopting technology.

Stakeholder, public sector

We, the changes we've made have been because we want to work more efficiently, I think. We want to find better solutions. There isn't an external pressure for it at all.

IT director, large chambers

Drivers are external, I'm afraid to say, because of our resource limitation. We switched to Zoom meetings when we had to. We used email because we had to, we used Word, because we had to.

KC, commercial, large chambers

- Market system** – stakeholders and participants pointed out that the market for technology solutions at the Bar is not as sizeable or attractive for technology providers except at the very top end, resulting in a lack of choice around some systems (eg case management) with providers not forced to innovate through pressure of competition. When compared with the solicitors' profession the Bar is a much smaller market with less attractive commercial qualities (low growth, small size, price sensitive) and therefore not as much potential for investment/disruption as law firms or other professional services sectors.

I think the fundamental problem is there isn't much good legal technology available for you. I always keep an eye out for if there is useful stuff for us. And there is a website that has a sort of a big list of all the all the stuff that solicitors can use and it's huge. And the vast majority of it is totally irrelevant to what you do as a barrister.

Barrister, employment, medium chambers

Barristers are not early adopters, some of them are never-adopters. As we're self-employed you can't tell us what to do. Solicitors are so much stricter I have noticed but at the same time not so nimble and flexible, a lot of the solicitors I work with don't know how their IT works. In law firms, employees are told this is the system.... If you don't like it,

you can leave.... It comes down to being self-employed. Barristers like to get the work in, be left alone to do it and then get paid for it.
KC, commercial, large chambers

3.6 Risks

Clients, chambers, sector as a whole

- Barristers are concerned about the **loss of confidential information** through a data breach, hack, or bad actors. Although most think that the implementation of digital working, cloud storage and cyber security has reduced the risk inherent in paper-based working, for example a link can be recalled but a PDF sent by email to the wrong recipient cannot. There is an acknowledgement that the conduct of individuals is still the biggest risk. However there are also concerns about the **reputational damage** of being unable to access critical systems or files due to a cyber-attack, or other consequences of hacking, ransomware and bad actors which has driven the widespread adoption of cybersecurity across chambers of all sizes.
- For four practitioners, the concerns are that using technology such as AI to summarise documents or sift evidence, or using other technological 'shortcuts' will mean a reduction in the accuracy and quality of legal advice and therefore a poorer outcome for the client.
- **Email** is mentioned by several as a risk, as managing multiple nested emails and large attachments gets more challenging given the increasing volume of documentation. There is an acknowledgement that it is inefficient and not fit for purpose.

We lawyers are just stuck with email. We're obsessed with it. Whereas more forward-looking businesses are using Slack and Teams chats.
Stakeholder, barrister, CEO of chambers, practice management association

3.7 Training, advice and facilitation

- Stakeholders were not able to point to much availability of relevant training for barristers on legal technology, overall this seems to be **ad hoc** and until recently focused on GDPR and cyber-security. Stakeholders observed that it is difficult to know where to pitch training for the profession, whether it is around basic IT skills or 'big picture' (eg generative AI). And from the profession too, there was not much agreement on what technology training is needed and what it might look like.
- Barristers who took part in the research had not taken part in much, if any, technology training other than on legal online information services. Participants preferred a '**self-service**' rather than an organisational approach, filling individual gaps in expertise from Inns of Court, sessions provided by chambers, professional associations or other CPD-led training.

I hate being trained in anything. I'd rather just read a book, look at YouTube or Google it. Some people need to be trained but not me.
Barrister, KC, clinical negligence, large chambers

- For most chambers, online legal research tools such as LexisNexis and Westlaw are essential and a significant spend. Training is taken up on these services during a legal career and also when new platform changes are made.

- **Discovery and knowledge is similarly ad hoc**, with barristers finding out about new technology through word of mouth, colleagues, marketing messages, conferences (but most are not Bar specific eg Legal Geek)
- Technology advice is provided to the Bar from externally retained IT support but this is mainly transactional and operational not strategic, suggesting that there is a gap to be filled in terms of strategic advice on the adoption of technology.

All of it [training] is always focused at solicitors. None of those things are ever focused on chambers and the difficulties they have because of the model of working for lots of self-employed people. All of them assume that you can dictate what goes on with the business and for us it's the opposite. We have to find ways of working as to how the barristers want to work rather than the other way around.
Head of Chambers, non-legal, large chambers

3.8 Early adopters of technology at the Bar

- Perhaps unsurprisingly it is the commercial chambers, practitioners undertaking corporate work, and the employed Bar who are seen to be ahead of the rest of the profession when it comes to the adoption of technology. Participants cited commercial arbitration, intellectual property and patents, and the technology courts being practice areas at the forefront of technology adoption. This is due to the greater resources available, higher case values, pressure from commercial law firms and clients, as well as the greater number of moving parts, volume of data and parties to a case being more suited to improved management through technology.
- Other examples of 'good' technology cited by practitioners and stakeholders included:
 - Client and Cost Management (**CCMS**) the online system for civil and family legal aid providers. From the few barristers who had come into contact with this, it was felt to be useful for legal aid cases, making the process of submitting applications, working with solicitors and managing cases quicker and more efficient.
 - Crown Court Digital Case System (**CCDCS**) and the HMCTS **Common Platform** for use in criminal cases have delivered benefits for practitioners. One of the success factors is felt to be that the system was mandated and workarounds are not possible.

The criminal team were struggling to use Microsoft and Adobe their hand was forced using CCDCS. In some ways that was fantastic as now all our criminal teams are paperless. It's not 'innovative' but it's been transformational for most barristers. Take them out of the day-to-day software, it's all managed within the new system. That's a significant change to workflow Barrister, CEO of chambers, professional association, stakeholder

- [The International Dispute Resolution Centre](#), arbitration venue in London with technology including an integrated Opus 2 suite for in-person, virtual and hybrid hearings, with the option of court reporting and interpretation services.
- [Valla](#) - legal platform for consumers to raise employment law issues
- [Access Social Care](#) – a bot in the third sector, advising consumers on benefits
- Whilst the Horizon system is an example of technology going badly wrong for Post Office sub-postmasters, several barristers have observed from the YouTube coverage of the Inquiry how digital forensic technology and e-discovery is being used to review evidence and the effective use of digital case management tools.

Internationally, very few barristers were aware of technological innovation examples, although there were mentions of Estonia's and Singapore's legal systems using innovative technology.

Case study (from literature review not from practitioner research)

For the past ten years, the Paris Bar Association has a technology incubator which runs two programmes annually. In January, the first programme has between 2-5 new ideas submitted by Parisian lawyers. In the second part of the year another 2-5 new ideas. They are looking for new ideas for the profession, and for the client, and the founder must be able to deliver. If criteria are met, investment is provided and support for the new company. Recent successes include SWIM, a legal resourcing company.

3.9 Technology viewed by barristers as not quite fit for purpose or not achieving the stated aim so far

- [Official Injury Claim](#) portal (OIC) – minor RTA injuries compensation portal, developed by Motor Insurers' Bureau and designed for claimants to remove the need for lawyers. A barrister observed that the new online technology for the OIC has made it more difficult for claimants to make a claim and the majority are still requiring professional representation.
- Damages Claims portal via MyHMCTS
'initial implementation is disastrous'
- ODR – *'not really seen it make much of a difference in reality'*
- Incumbent case management providers in chambers are felt to be lacking in dynamism and innovation and need to offer greater integration with other chambers systems. Some chambers are using LEX and MLC for diary management in isolation from billing and time recording systems and therefore not realising the benefits of reporting data including debt and managing client communication more centrally.

Both dreadful, they are way behind the times, they don't get it. It's basic document management and PDFs, it could do so much more, linking together with online research services, it could be more efficient'

Chambers Director, legal, large chambers

I think the view is that we need a full system. Because although, you know, we book things and we bill things through Lex but the way that our clerks interact with clients is still very email and handwritten notes, 'it's all up here' kind of thing.

Barrister, PI, small chambers

There are two proprietary systems [for case management]. It is completely separate from our work-based system. It's simply diaries and fees. Barristers have no access apart from looking at it. It has no connection with the substantive part of our work. There is a facility for case papers but we don't use it.

KC, clinical negligence, large chambers

3.10 Regulatory environment and the BSB

- Participants feel that the regulatory framework is adequate and does not need to be changed in order to develop technology and innovation. The BSB do set expectations on

chambers regarding data security and practice management and these were acknowledged¹⁰. One barrister pointed out that increased regulation may create higher barriers to entry and further reduce competition.

- Barristers say that they understand the primary focus of legal regulators on oversight, compliance and maintaining professional standards rather than driving innovation or technological change, although this is part of the BSB's oversight/standards role. However, there could be more support and knowledge provided to help barristers discover and adopt available technological tools in order to drive innovation and encourage a competitive market.
- There was no evidence from participants of legal regulation acting as a barrier to technological innovation. Barristers expressed a desire for greater support and knowledge for 'what's out there' to aid discovery of what could be useful in their practice. An emphasis on collective thinking and shared understanding would be a good starting point - what technology is being used for and why, and the impact of that.
- There is scope for The Bar Council and Bar Standards Board to play a more active role in supporting technology adoption and innovation across the profession. For example, guidance and support on which technology providers are approved for use, guidelines on workflows and providers, and certainly guardrails on the use of AI would be welcomed.

I wouldn't say that regulation is necessarily a barrier, just as long as you're mindful of it, then it is part of implementing something new.

Chambers Director, non-legal, medium chambers

There is just a fundamental danger in regulators stepping into a field too early and saying, this is the way you should and shouldn't do it. So I think it has to be kept light touch and high level.

Barrister, commercial, medium chambers

The BSB are already doing some good stuff. They have started in the right place by doing good research. ...They have listened and taken into account the consumer and client interest. They are on the right track in terms of getting the right research and evidence - what's out there? What's the demand? How is the provision?

Stakeholder, consumer organisation

The BSB is shifting towards sharing more, being less elitist and I hear a lot of good things about it at the moment. The BSB and SRA are sharing more, discovering common areas and becoming a force for good.

Stakeholder, consumer organisation

3.11 The future

- Practitioners and stakeholders point to the need in the future for more **collaborative working** which can be enabled by technology – for barristers and solicitors to get better with data science and management of the volume of documentation that is now part of the caseload, through the use of tools that will support complex workflows and reduce the need for manual data input. Participants see the potential to **improve solicitor-barrister collaboration** including efficient sharing of documents, using more 'live' documents with real-time updates as well as more systematic collaboration across larger teams:

¹⁰ [BSB's guidance for chambers on information security, The BSB Handbook](#)

That sort of team working and collaboration, discuss pleadings. A system where that becomes the norm. If you are instructing solicitors, you get access to those documents, not just producing something at the end, there is communication along the line. It can be used to give a steer along the way. There is an efficiency in that, to ensure expectations are aligned. People need to be more open in their understanding and desire to share.
Stakeholder, practice management

Information in documents need to be shared in open forums. The reason that Teams and things like Slack exist is because organisations have worked out that it's more efficient to work in that way.
Stakeholder, practice management

- Participants point to the opportunity that is greater **interoperability** of court systems with what is being used in chambers. An example given by a participant was the need for court listings to be provided as an electronic feed to chambers' case management system automatically which would save time and reduce error of clerks entering data on a daily basis.
- The creation of a more end-to-end legal system in this way as part of the structural legal process would also enable the **client to have more visibility and transparency** of their matter through client portals, with viewing access to a platform or through a client portal.

We have this funny situation at the Bar where everybody does things in slightly different ways, they've got their own sort of idiosyncratic ways of doing things. There isn't a core systematised way of doing stuff. And that I think should change. You want to have flexibility at the margins, but actually the core of what we do could be better systematised. And that would help our solicitors too, because it would help them to run their systems in the right way to feed us with the information that we need. The fact that we're all recording information, collecting it in millions of different ways, is making life hard for ourselves.
Barrister, KC, commercial, large chambers

There is a cross over between case management and CRM. Make this visible to your clients, be able to share progress with workflow is extremely useful. Reduce the time that people try to contact you. Understand how and where you can apply this across [the] client base. There are of course the people who will always want to ring you. But if the Barrister can have the case portal available that has a massive impact on confidence and trust.
Stakeholder, consumer organisation

- Stakeholders point to the possibility that knowledge departments in law firms, or legal information providers, could easily aggregate barristers' opinions, some of which have been paid for and others from the public domain, and using AI could use this as a **database of barristers' opinions** for training purposes or even advice for clients rather than engaging external counsel. This forecast is now becoming a reality as Legado (formerly Leya) the AI workspace provider formalises their partnership with corporate knowledge database FromCounsel¹¹.

Lawyers are knowledge-based enterprises. Ability to aggregate and investigate that knowledge and identify what you need to make effective judgments, the potential is enormous.
Stakeholder, consumer organisation

¹¹ <https://legaltechnology.com/2025/02/26/legora-leya-formally-partners-with-fromcounsel-to-combine-genai-workspace-with-curated-legal-content/>

- One barrister pointed out how similar databases (as outlined above) could prove useful in **litigation funding** and for predicting the potential success rates in litigation – a growth area.
- Barristers are divided about the impact of **artificial intelligence (AI)** on the legal profession. For most, it is not seen as transformative for the Bar, more so for law firms given that they have a large base of data which is likely to be well organised and cloud-based. Some chambers are more engaged, with AI working groups and actively trialling AI products eg Co-Pilot, Lexis+ AI or ChatGPT. Stakeholders agree that AI is an enhancement of the important human interaction and professional expertise that barristers provide, rather than a replacement.

Law firms are obsessed with AI. It will impact us but not replace us. Data will come into us differently. AI is for process driven, commoditised areas. What we see is the 5% of difficult cases. It's not procedural, its opinion based.

Barrister, chambers director, commercial chambers, medium

One or two participants pointed to the potential benefit of using AI to improve efficiency and benefit the profession.

AI is not going to replace lawyers. But how about AI does all the donkey work, does all the research? Then you're up two days a week, and then you go one day a week to do pro bono work. So, you're still working, you're serving clients the same way, if you're charging for the same piece of work, because it's value-based, not time-based, and your time is spent more fulfilled for your well-being.

Senior Clerk, small chambers

AI won't replace barristers. What I think it will do is the barrister who uses AI will be able to replace those who don't and will be able to increase their income and their market share.

Barrister, employment, large chambers

- Several participants pointed out that **training on AI and guidance** on the usage of these tools would be welcomed.

I think training on prompt engineering and prompts, for example, would increase the likelihood of members of the legal community being competent if not adept at using the tool. Because like any tool, given to a skilled operator, it's a benefit, given to an in competent operator, it gets you into trouble faster.

Employed barrister, public sector

The nature of generative AI is that drawing the right parameters around it will be really important and in terms of the regulatory approach, we're at very early stages, so it will clearly be a role for the BSB and other legal services regulators in terms of determining and developing the frameworks.

Stakeholder, public sector

- Several participants would like to see **a replacement for email** whilst acknowledging the current reliance across the legal profession. There is an acceptance that email is not fit for purpose (in a recent case a lawyer was sanctioned for saying he hadn't received notice of an appeal hearing by email¹²). There is a sense that email is not an efficient way of doing things and leads to law firms and clients 'splurging data' across to barristers as

¹² The Law Society Gazette, [High Court judge criticises solicitor after he missed email from court](#), 23 September 2024

opposed to previously presented as a 'nice, neat bundle in a pink ribbon'. Participants suggest better use could be made of Slack or MS Teams to support better, faster ways of working and reduce the risks inherent in email 'back and forth'.

- Clerks and barristers also felt that the processes around **fees management** and accounting, fee notes, debt chasing, expensing receipts are still all quite manual with scope for improvement and rationalisation.
- **Unmet legal need** – participants pointed out that public legal education has improved through the provision of online guidance, video content and chatbots – all of which has used technology in making the law more accessible. There is an understanding that more can be done to improve access to justice.

Efficiency is a nice to have. Commercial goals, there are advantages to clients but the much much bigger picture of unmet legal need is a much more interesting space.
Stakeholder, professional body

4 Case studies of technology providers

4.1 Associo

Provider overview	Associo
Product	Associo
Year founded	Incorporated 2018
Founded by	David Blayney KC, Serle Court Chambers
HQ	London, UK
Brief overview of key product/services	Collaborative software application that streamlines the process of analysis and evidence collection, and the development of arguments and advice.
Technology offering – product name	Associo
Target audience	Law firms, barristers, in-house lawyers and investigators
Overview of the technology	AI-assisted mapping of issues of arguments, collection of evidence and development of chronologies.
Key features	Visual maps of issues and evidence, coupled with AI-powered extraction of relevant evidence from documents.
USPs	- Assists case teams (with support from AI) to systematically plan and execute the collection of relevant evidence, organisation of arguments, and evaluation of issues. - Ability to accelerate the collection and organisation of relevant evidence from a large volume of material. - Support for collaborative analysis – with law firms and barristers working together. - Use of big case experience to develop tools and techniques that replicate as closely as possible the outputs from skilled human forensic investigation.
Use case(s)	Disputes and investigations
Hosting	Hosted in Microsoft Azure. Can be hybrid-hosted in Azure or in the cloud
Examples of client successes?	Already deployed in major matters by leading case teams
Market entry considerations	- Raising awareness of the benefits of the technology. - Building trust with lawyers and clients around the most effective combination of the use of people and technology. - Developing appropriate pricing structures for the delivery of the products and services and adjusting perceptions as to how value to clients is delivered and charged for. - Balancing economies of scale with the need for bespoke solutions. - Overcoming inertia and unwillingness to try new approaches while under pressure.

Compliance and security – is it compliant with GDPR, data security, legal regulators etc	This is requirement of doing business in this area. The company devotes considerable resources to meeting and demonstrating security and compliance requirements.
Future developments	The product offering is developing very rapidly and will continue to do so, alongside the rapid development of the underlying technologies and Associo's engagement with customers and collaborative exploration of their needs.

4.2 BarBooks

Provider overview	BarBooks
Product	Bar Books
Year founded	2016
Founded by	Founded by Pouyan Afshar, practising barrister in Sydney, Australia, Martin Chee, public accountant and Pedram Afshar, banker and technologist
HQ	Sydney, Australia
Brief overview of key product/services	Legal practice management software for barristers and clerks (SaaS)
Technology offering – product name	Bar Books Practice management software for chambers and individual barristers: - BarBooks for Chambers (chambers offering) - BarBooks Sole Practitioner (individual barrister) - TrustBooks (trust accounting management software)
Target audience	Barristers and clerks in Australia, England (entering in 2025) and the rest of the UK
Overview of the technology	Easy to use fully cloud based software, designed for clerks, professional support teams and barristers Mobile device enabled for example, can record time in court
Key features	- Management reporting / analysis - CRM and contact management / analysis - Time tracking and reporting - Matter management - Invoicing and accounting - Expense recording - Bank reconciliation - Debt chasing - Tax compliance
USPs	Provides important practice metrics reporting based on own data over time - gives barristers and chambers visibility of where they are and where they are going Managing diaries of barristers across chambers, maintaining conflict-free diaries Extensive and deep accounting and management features

	Modern technology platform with infrastructure for implementation of AI
Use case(s)	Practice management and case management
Hosting	Fully cloud based since 2017/SaaS
Examples of client successes?	Too early to say for the UK market, although successful onboarding of clients using existing UK software outside of the UK
Market entry considerations (UK)	It's a product-led approach. Change to working practices are required but once implemented, processes become easier and more efficient. The software is well-thought out and easy to use of software without the constraints of a legacy system. The constraints on development are also removed and BarBooks is moving to implement AI and other modern technologies throughout its systems.
Compliance and security – is it compliant with GDPR, data security, legal regulators etc	BarBooks sell to businesses who face these risks and are compliant with international regulatory structures. BarBooks are open and transparent and intend to meet all regulatory standards. The focus on compliance with cybersecurity has been strict. This has implications for a new entrant and can be a barrier.
Future developments	• Making use of AI, new integrations to enable users to be in control of their software. • Better document integration. • Enabling clerks to build better relationships for chambers. • Scope for wide reporting functions allowing for colour and movement enabling easier analysis. • Apps in development. • CRM system allows for marketing integrations

4.3 Barrister Link

Provider overview	Barrister Link
Product	Secure online platform for clients and solicitors to find, book, work and pay for barristers easily, managing case papers, communication and diary commitments.
Year founded	2021
Founded by	Paul Wright, Quartz Chambers
HQ	London, UK
Brief overview of key product/services	Launched in November 2024, Barrister Link is a networking platform enabling direct access clients, solicitors and other professionals to work directly with barristers in a way that is secure, transparent and centralised

Technology offering – product name	Barrister Link
Target audience	Barristers, clerks, solicitors and clients
Overview of the technology	An opportunity for 6,000 direct access barristers to generate more work and manage the process more efficiently. Solicitors would also find it useful with this type of technology. The system can support any area of law provided that it's privately paid work.
Key features	Saves time, better for work opportunities, better outcomes for clients, improved transparency and cyber security
USPs	Supports independent members of the Bar and clerks; any barrister from any chambers can use the platform saving time and enables a better process. Enables direct access for consumers and making it easier to find and book a barrister, which solicitors can also take advantage of.
Use case(s)	Clients or solicitors can search and find a barrister direct including a search by availability. Barrister Link seeks to address the pain points of direct access, the hand holding that can be required and the more haphazard nature of payments. Solicitors pay upfront for the barrister via Barrister Link which means no aged debt and payments don't have to be chased.
Hosting	Azure, cloud
Market entry considerations	Awareness and education are the main challenges so far, in order to encourage barristers and clients to use the platform. Barristers are increasingly aware that technology can help. Using this platform reduces payment chasing and debt management. Alternative pricing models are supported including privately paid fixed fee.
Compliance and security – is it compliant with GDPR, data security, legal regulators etc	With support from regulators, accreditation from The Bar Council would be useful to instil trust for clients. There are many legaltech providers out there and the regulators could do more to champion technology providers to the sector and support our intentions to be commercially viable. Raising awareness generally would be helpful. Barrister Link has not encountered regulatory barriers in terms of product compliance and is pursuing LOCS23 – cybersecurity and GDPR accreditation. Specialist cyber insurance is in place with cloud based hosting and real time cyber monitoring.
Future developments	Conversational search – using GPT or an AI agent to better help clients and guide them

4.4 Other technology providers mentioned by participants

Case Center	ThomsonReuters solution (formerly CaseLines) for digitising court process: organising files, preparing case material and presenting in court.
Casedo	Workspace for organising and marking up documents, research, sorting and bundling.
Hyperlaw	Software for preparing and presenting cases including document management, review tools and presentation.
LiveNote	Transcription of court proceedings using voice recognition software
Opus 2	Case management for litigation, arbitration and other legal proceedings
Solomonic	Database of court decisions covering various different areas, causes of action and percentage rates of success, used for advising clients and evaluating matters.
TrialView	Litigation platform for preparing and conducting hearings including case preparation, bundling
Vincent AI	Legal specific AI from vLex

5 Conclusion

The research found that the ad hoc and varied adoption of technology and innovation at the Bar is not an issue of barristers who participated lacking capability or confidence, or being impeded by regulatory barriers, but is largely due to structural market characteristics.

- 80% of barristers are **self-employed**, and work within chambers making it challenging to centralise technology and make collective efficiency gains.
- Chambers have **limited funding and limited IT expertise** (often outsourced) when compared with law firms and prioritise compliance eg cyber-security ahead of innovation.
- Cultural differences, varied practice area needs, highly individual and autonomous workflows and collective decision-making make it difficult to standardise processes.
- Barristers are **time-pressured** with existing caseloads and lack capacity to think strategically about technology and innovation which is not viewed as client-led/billable activity (given the **hourly billing** nature of their work, the perceived benefits of technology can seem distant or intangible).
- **Limited external pressure to change** from clients, solicitors, the judiciary and the courts.
- Lack of attractive market characteristics means limited investment and disruption opportunities for technology vendors in the sector, therefore there is an **absence of innovative technology solutions specific to the Bar**.
- **Fragmented ecosystem** with multiple platforms, software solutions and tools available (some generic, some legal-specific) but they are not always interoperable, which creates workarounds and inefficiency. Barristers are unsure which technology tools to invest in and are concerned about making the wrong choices.
- **Slow institutional change**: while some courts have started to embrace digital filing and remote hearings, the pace of digital transformation by the judiciary and the courts has been inconsistent.
- **Limited provision and/or take up of technology training** for/by barristers has created awareness, knowledge and expertise gaps.

There is a growing recognition of **opportunities** to streamline various aspects of barristers' workflows. Tasks like time and billing, client onboarding, compliance questionnaires from law firms, evidence review, and creating chronologies are areas where barristers acknowledged that technology could significantly enhance efficiency. These processes are suited for automation and digital solutions, offering the potential to save time, improve efficiency, improve usability and reduce risk. The **benefits** of implementing technology solutions were commonly observed and these included:

- improving working processes and relationships with clients and law firms and increasing transparency;
- reducing document overload;
- fairer allocation and easier reallocation of work;
- reducing risks and improving data security;
- improving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) outcomes; and
- improving efficiency, reliability and speed of delivery, more responsive to client needs;
- reduced environmental impact;
- saving time and increasing billings, increasing profitability.

Artificial intelligence is being used thoughtfully and cautiously, with barristers recognising its potential to enhance their work rather than replace the human elements that define the profession. While AI is expected to make welcome contributions to certain tasks including

legal research, document drafting, summarising, transcribing and organising data such as chronologies and evidence, it is seen as a tool that will support and complement the expertise, judgment and skills of barristers.

Legal services regulation is not seen as a barrier to technology adoption. In the LSB research, 3% of barristers who completed the survey (109 chambers) said that legal services regulation is a constraint to adopting new or improved services. Similarly the participants in our research did not view the legal regulatory framework as an impediment to technology adoption. However, that does not necessarily mean that regulatory changes are not needed in order to promote technology adoption. The BSB may want to do its own thinking around how to have a more impactful role in this space as part of the outcomes arising from this research and there is much scope for legal regulators, stakeholders and professional bodies to do more to show barristers what can be done with the technology to improve efficiency and client outcomes.

Barristers, in line with many professionals, require assurance from trusted peers that an innovation is adoptable and beneficial. They value innovations that require limited training or investment and are already used by others they know and work with. They are looking for incremental, proven ways of improving what they already do. Chambers and barristers are looking for off-the-shelf compliance, minimum disruption, modest commitments of time, minimum learning and reliable interoperability with existing systems and data. Barristers appreciate the practical benefits of technology and innovation but do not have a lot of time to investigate, and they are not keen on unnecessary complexity.

Recommendations

The Bar Standards Board has a unique and impactful role to play to set the standards for best practice and to overcome the systemic barriers to effective technology adoption in order to benefit users of legal services. More broadly, the recommendations from this research are also intended for consideration across the legal sector by regulators, stakeholders, technology vendors, investors, practitioners and professional bodies, as they require greater engagement. Organisations in this space have the power of convening, to bring together stakeholders in the legaltech arena to facilitate knowledge sharing for the benefit of the profession and consumers of legal services, to both **educate and assist**, and to actively contribute to a receptive climate for innovation.

1. **Drive greater collaboration and standardisation:** adoption of technology by barristers is in isolated pockets rather than through a coordinated, profession-wide approach which limits the potential benefits. There is no clear framework for scaling individual successes into systematised practices and cross-collaboration is limited. Stakeholders in particular point to the gains that could be made if the whole sector was able to integrate, with technology supporting the process from initial client on-boarding, evidence management, collaboration with solicitor and barrister and other third parties (eg expert witnesses), downstream to court processes, completion and even post-case evaluation. Standardisation, and more joined-up systems create efficiencies and opportunities for barristers to benefit. In some instances these would need to be adopted on a widespread basis or even mandated in order to reduce workarounds and duplication of effort. Collaborative technology-sharing schemes or government-backed advantages eg tax deductions for investments in specific standard technologies could be considered for smaller chambers.
2. **Foster collaboration and innovation:**
 - a) **With technology providers:** the BSB could move into more **dynamic and informal conversations** with technology providers, if they are not already doing so, to find

solutions that work for the profession and perhaps drive a degree of standardisation. Lawtechs can be encouraged to create agile tools that solve real problems for barristers, that deliver value and have a pricing model that is suitable for the market. The BSB can be a useful voice for the profession in terms of articulating market needs to providers but also providing guidance for technology providers and helping lower hurdles in bringing products to market such as:

- i. guidance and support on how to understand and comply with regulations – both generally and for specific innovations on a case-by-case basis;
- ii. setting up a technology accreditation scheme including a code of conduct for technology providers to promote consumer trust; and/or
- iii. providing a BSB compliant badge for accredited vendors.

- b) **Technology innovation hubs** are one example where barristers can collaborate with technologists to develop and test new tools. Similarly, **tech incubators and/or regulatory sandboxes** have been established in other jurisdictions such as Singapore (FLIP Accelerator and Legal Innovation Lab) and the Paris Bar Association with productive results and can also help technology vendors to comply with regulatory standards if needed. The LSB guidance states that the use of regulatory sandboxes is having a positive impact on the adoption of technology¹³.
 - c) **With investors:** at the moment there seems to be a gap in the market for independent VC funds and accelerators specifically focused on lawtech. There may be room for a home-grown UK lawtech fund to develop, similar to The LegalTech Fund in the US¹⁴. Networking/matchmaking events for lawtech founders and investors could be held and support provided for lawtech startups relevant to the Bar to attend conferences and events (for example GREAT Legal Services providing UK lawtech companies with exposure to export markets).
 - d) **With government funded initiatives** such as Lawtech UK (managed by CodeBase and Legal Geek) to encourage a focus on the self-employed barristers' profession.
 - e) **With the third sector:** technology can assist the improvement of access to justice in areas like virtual legal clinics, online dispute resolution, chatbots to help individuals understand their legal rights, matching consumers with pro bono advice, and in the use of platforms that enable users to create legal documents without a solicitor. It is important that regulators promote the social impact of lawtech and work with investors and stakeholders to consider the advice sector including working with regional programmes and key local networks.
3. **Educate and inform:** provide barristers with a list of technology providers as well as guidance on how to adopt technology, where to start, focusing on the small wins to begin with, to provide practical tips and then encouraging **greater standardisation**. For example the Singapore Academy of Law's vision is to define a baseline set of legal technology which all lawyers are expected to adopt¹⁵. The education and information piece could include **sharing opportunities for technology in barristers' workflow**: there are clear signs of progress and evidence for an interest across the profession in improving efficiency. Areas like time and billing, client onboarding, compliance questionnaires from law firms, evidence review, use of AI and creating chronologies are all areas where barristers acknowledged that technology could enhance efficiency. These processes are suited for automation and digital solutions, offering the potential to save time, improve efficiency and reduce risk. Focusing on small wins, publishing case studies of barristers who have successfully integrated technology into their practice and

¹³ Legal Services Board: [Consultation Paper](#)

¹⁵ Singapore Academy of Law: [Legal Technology Vision](#)

how it was done, would be helpful to drive adoption as well as providing guidelines on emerging technology such as AI. Practitioners could also learn from champions and ambassadors who can advocate for the benefits of legal technology within the profession.

4. **Invest in technology training and facilitation:** traditional training for barristers (including pupillage and continuing professional development) is focused on legal theory, advocacy skills and case law, rather than technology skills. This has left many barristers without the necessary skills or knowledge to effectively integrate technology into their practice. Strategies to integrate technology training into professional development pathways (eg pupillage, **CPD**) were not observed in this research. Regulators and professional bodies could do more to introduce mandatory or optional training modules focused on technology, for example making it part of CPD, in order to raise barristers' knowledge and awareness of the latest tools. Other elements could include workshops, seminars and webinars on legal tech featuring demonstrations from vendors and hands-on, relevant use cases. Supporting this could be an **online resource** of FAQs, tutorials and case studies and best practice on legal technology adoption **specific to the Bar**. The CPD scheme is also a mechanism by which the BSB can require barristers to report on their use of technology, to encourage adoption and build up a national picture of what solutions are working well for the profession.
5. Related to this is to provide a **future roadmap for the development and implementation of technology at the Bar**, perhaps learning from the Canadian Bar Association's Legal Futures Initiative which provides a framework for ideas, approaches, and tools to help the legal profession adapt to change. Bringing to life the future of the profession, as part of a collaborative effort, may encourage barristers to adopt more innovative practices in the short-term, or at the very least create a conversation about next steps.
6. **Collaboration and the role of law firms:** whilst chambers and self-employed barristers may not be large buyers of innovative tech, there may be potential for law firms and solicitors to involve barristers in conversations that shape the development of legaltech and AI, to leverage barristers' expertise and for the BSB to work with the SRA and HMCTS to support barristers interacting effectively and securely with broader legal technology. There could be further investigation into how law firms and barristers can co-develop tools and strategies to improve efficiency and integration. The extent to which law firms may support or influence the adoption of technology by barristers is underexplored in this research and is an area worth further investigation.
7. **Investigate court and judicial levers:** the judiciary's inconsistent pace of digital transformation has been observed by barristers, with judges and court processes acting either as a brake or an accelerator for the adoption of technology. An interesting next step would be to investigate how courts and judiciary-led initiatives could act as a catalyst for wider adoption of technology among barristers as part of the legal process.
8. **Assess client demand including direct/public access:** the research found that clients are not demanding technological innovation therefore barristers are unlikely to see a strong enough business case to invest or adopt. However as the research focused on barristers' perspectives and did not include clients or consumers, their actual needs may have been assumed by the Bar. It may be useful to investigate client and consumer needs and expectations directly, building on the 2022 LSB research¹⁶, and how they might drive change in the provision of legal services for example in the area of digital tools, making an informed choice and improving transparency. The sample of barristers who undertake direct access work was small and this is another area that warrants

¹⁶ [Attitudes of the public and solicitors towards using technology, LSB Research, May 2022](#)

further investigation in terms of potential technological solutions to make this easier for both client and barrister.

- 9. Ensure ethical use of technology** – all legal regulators, particularly in view of the LSB's consultation on ethics¹⁷, have an obligation to ensure ethical guidelines are upheld around cybersecurity, data protection and privacy and AI. Audits could be implemented to ensure that technology is being used in compliance with both regulatory and ethical standards.
- 10. Monitor and evaluate** – not a straightforward task but it would be interesting to regularly assess the impact of technology adoption on the quality of legal services provided by the Bar as well as any impact on access to justice and the overall efficiency of the legal system. With perhaps a feedback mechanism for barristers to share their experiences and challenges, and wins with technology, which would allow the profession to benefit from shared knowledge and for the regulator to adjust strategy when necessary.

As the legal landscape continues to evolve, it will be essential for barristers to overcome current barriers to stay competitive. Embracing technology and seeking efficiencies where appropriate is a way that barristers can drive a better and more efficient service for clients. While legal regulators and professional bodies have played a supportive role, there is more they can do to help barristers to realise the benefits of technology and innovation, especially as we recognise that technology does not have to be disruptive or innovative to be impactful. They can help to demystify technology for the profession, to raise awareness of the providers and the benefits, to create a more dynamic environment for innovation, and facilitate collaboration between technology providers, law firms, clients and barristers. A proactive stance on technology adoption can not only enhance individual practice, improve client outcomes and mitigate risk, but also elevate the Bar as a whole, ensuring it remains confident, viable, relevant and competitive whilst undergoing digital transformation.

¹⁷ [Upholding professional ethics, LSB Consultation, February 2025.](#)