

**BAR
STANDARDS
BOARD**

REGULATING BARRISTERS

Shared Parental Leave

**Consultation on a possible change to parental leave
rules**

November 2016

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Executive Summary

Should self-employed barristers have similar rights to shared parental leave as employed barristers? How might this be achieved? Please give us your views.

In this consultation paper, we consider the issue of whether and how barristers' chambers might allow self-employed barristers to share parental leave with their child's other parent or carer.

We think that this is important because it could contribute to improvements in the **wellbeing and work-life balance of barristers** with families. It could also help the Bar **retain female barristers** and therefore **improve diversity** within the profession.

The proposed change is to the rules within the BSB Handbook. It would require all chambers to include a provision in their parental leave policies for barristers to be able to take **Shared Parental Leave**.

But before we decide whether to do this, we would like your views.

About Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave has been a legal entitlement for all eligible carers who are employees with a child due (or with a child about to be placed for adoption) since April 2015.

It is designed to give parents more flexibility as to how to share child care arrangements during the first year after birth or adoption. It enables carers to share parental leave entitlements between them. They can decide to take leave simultaneously, or can decide to take it in turn.

Since barristers in chambers are self-employed, there is no statutory requirement for chambers to provide shared parental leave. However we would like to explore the opportunities shared parental leave can bring to the self-employed Bar.

About this consultation paper

We invite responses to this consultation paper from anybody wishing to share their views. However, we anticipate that it is going to be of most interest to self-employed barristers and those managing multi-tenant barristers' chambers.

Within this consultation paper, we consider:

- an amendment to the rules in the BSB Handbook to incorporate SPL (we identify different possible options);

- the potential benefits of the proposed change for individual barristers and for the Bar as a whole; and
- the potential challenges of implementing this rule change.

We encourage you to share your views, either formally or informally. Your thoughts will be critical for us when we consider whether or not to change the rule.

To help you consider the impacts of any future rule changes, we ask you to reflect on the effects of a shared parental leave entitlement in different scenarios. Our core proposal suggests that barristers should be able to share parental leave in the following situations:

- One carer is a self-employed barrister, the other is in employment;
- Both carers are self-employed barristers at the same chambers; and
- Both carers are self-employed barristers at different chambers.

We have also made some additional suggestions, on which we would welcome views. One would enable a barrister to take SPL where the other partner is not in paid work and another would entitle all parents to take the same parental leave, whether or not they are the main carer.

The closing date for this consultation is **5pm Friday, 17 February 2017**.

You can respond to this consultation by contacting us as follows:

Email: equality@barstandardsboard.org.uk

Tel: 0207 611 1305

Equality and Access to Justice Team

The Bar Standards Board

289-293 High Holborn

London WC1V 7HZ

If you have a disability and have a requirement to access this consultation in an alternative format, such as larger print or audio, please let us know. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to facilitate feedback other than via written responses.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Part I: Introduction

The Handbook Equality Rules

1. The BSB Handbook sets out the standards that the Bar Standards Board requires from the barristers and specialised legal services businesses which it regulates. In September 2012 the BSB introduced a number of mandatory equality rules into the Handbook that apply to all self-employed barristers in multi-tenant chambers. The rules aim to promote and embed the principles of equality and diversity within chambers. They cover a number of different areas previously untouched by regulation for the Bar such as equality monitoring, fair recruitment training and parental leave.
2. The parental leave rules were introduced in order to support female progression and retention at the Bar. More recent evidence suggests that this is still an issue¹. The number of female practitioners drops significantly after 12 years' call, which is the time when many women decide to start a family. The parental leave rules were designed to support carers, in particular women, by offering self-employed barristers in chambers access to similar provisions as are afforded to the employed Bar through legislation. The current rules enable the 'main carer' of a child to take advantage of time away from practice in order to care for a child.
3. The current parental leave rules for barristers are found at rC110(.k) of the Handbook. They place certain requirements on chambers in relation to the **main carer** of a child. The current rule is shown in detail in Part II.

Shared Parental Leave legislation for employed carers

4. Shared Parental Leave (SPL) is a legal entitlement for all eligible carers with a child due, or with a child placed for adoption, on or after 5 April 2015. It was created by the Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014 and entitles partners who satisfy certain criteria to share between them the maternity or adoption leave that would previously only have been accessible by one of the carers.
5. SPL is designed to give carers more flexibility in caring for their child during the first year following birth or adoption. When taking advantage of SPL, carers are able to share a period of leave between them as they see fit. Rather than being limited to one partner acting as the 'main carer', taking on the majority of caring responsibilities and taking up to a full year of leave, the partners can act as 'joint carers' and share both the responsibilities and leave as they see fit. They can decide to take leave at the same time, or take it in turns, or a mix of the two.

¹ https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/media/1773934/women_at_the_bar_-_full_report_-_final_12_07_16.pdf.

6. To qualify for SPL the mother or adopter must be entitled to maternity or adoption leave, must have given notice to their employer that they intend to share it, and must share the main responsibility for caring for the child with a named partner.

For a carer to be eligible to take SPL they must be an employee and they must also pass the “continuity of employment test”. (See definition below.) In turn, the other carer who is going to share the parental leave must meet the “employment and earnings test”. (See definition below.)

- **Continuity of employment test:** the employee must have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks at the end of the 15th week before the week in which the child is due (or at the week in which an adopter was notified of having been matched with a child or adoption). The employee must also still be employed in the first week that SPL is to be taken.
- **Employment and earnings test:** the individual with whom the parental leave is to be shared must have worked for at least 26 weeks in the 66 weeks leading up to the child’s due date (or the date when a child is placed with them for adoption) and have earned above the maternity allowance threshold of £30 per week in 13 of the 66 weeks.

Where both parents satisfy these tests they will both be able to share the leave. However, a family can still take advantage of SPL even when only one parent meets the eligibility criteria. For example, a self-employed parent will not be entitled to take SPL but they could still pass the employment and earnings test allowing the other parent in the family to qualify.

The current parental leave rule for self-employed barristers

7. The current rule is found at rC110(.k) of the BSB Handbook:

You must take reasonable steps to ensure that in relation to your chambers or BSB authorised body the following requirements are complied with:

- .k chambers has a parental leave policy¹ which, in the case of a chambers, must cover as a minimum:*
 - i. the right of a member of chambers to return to chambers after a specified period (which must be at least one year) of parental or adoption leave;*
 - ii. the extent to which a member of chambers is or is not required to contribute to chambers' rent and expenses during parental leave;*
 - iii. the method of calculation of any waiver, reduction or reimbursement of chambers' rent and expenses during parental leave;*
 - iv. where any element of rent is paid on a flat rate basis, the chambers policy must as a minimum provide that chambers will offer members taking a period of parental leave, or leave following adoption, a minimum of 6 months free of chambers' rent;*
 - v. the procedure for dealing with grievances under the policy;*
 - vi. chambers' commitment to regularly review the effectiveness of the policy;*

¹ *Parental leave means leave taken by the **main carer** [emphasis added] of a child preceding or following birth or adoption. This could be the mother, father or adoptive parent of either sex (Definition 150, BSB Handbook).*

Background to the suggested rule change

8. The Bar Council asked us to consider amending the parental leave rules in the BSB Handbook to include provisions for SPL. Members of the profession and chambers have been enquiring about whether SPL provisions apply to them and how/if SPL provisions can be applied to their existing parental leave policies.
9. We have considered the request carefully. The problem it identified is that the current provisions do not entitle all barristers to use SPL. Any chambers is free to offer SPL arrangements to its members, but is not obliged by the BSB's rules to do so. The existing combination of SPL legislation and the parental leave rule in the BSB Handbook may allow a self-employed barrister to take advantage of SPL where they are a primary carer entitled to Maternity or Adoption Allowance, and they choose to reduce their allowance and pass their entitlement to an employed partner. So whilst a chambers might be willing to comply more generally with the spirit of SPL legislation, the BSB rules do not require them to offer parental leave to anyone other than the main carer of a child.
10. The BSB has considered this from the point of view of the regulatory objectives and concluded that introducing a provision for SPL into the Handbook would help promote "an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession"². Enabling caring roles to be shared between partners is a practical measure that would help the retention of women at the Bar, and therefore might encourage a more equal gender balance at the top end of the profession. It would also help to foster a more progressive culture in the profession, and break down old stereotypes, eg that 'women have to choose between a career at the Bar and having a family'.
11. The course of action we are considering is:
 - a. Amending the existing rules which limit parental leave and rent breaks to the "main carer"; and
 - b. Producing guidance for chambers on SPL to cover topics such as calculating leave and rent breaks.
12. In order broadly to match the entitlement of employees, we would envisage a new rule that would require parental leave to be available and shared in situations where:
 - a. Both carers are self-employed barristers at the same chambers;
 - b. Both carers are self-employed barristers at different chambers; and
 - c. One carer is a self-employed barrister, the other is in employment.

² <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/about-bar-standards-board/what-we-do/the-regulatory-objectives/>.

Part II: The proposed change to the current rule

13. We do not think it would be helpful to seek exactly to replicate the requirements of the statutory scheme, so we have not, for example, sought to introduce the 'continuity of employment' or 'employment and earnings' eligibility tests. We also do not propose to set up any regime to require chambers to check what leave is being taken by a barrister's partner, as we think that would be disproportionate. Given barristers' overriding duty of honesty, we think the risks of abuse are low. The proposed change is that Handbook rule rC110(.k) should be amended to read:

.k chambers has a parental leave¹ policy which must cover as a minimum:

- .i **a provision for shared parental leave that enables a member of chambers to share leave arrangements and childcare responsibilities with a partner during a child's first year;***
- .ii **the right of a member of chambers to return to chambers after a specified period of parental leave (which must be at least one year, or, if taken as shared parental leave with another joint carer, must total at least one year when combined with the other joint carer's leave);***
- .iii **where shared parental leave is taken, a joint carer is entitled to a proportion of the leave/rights available under their chambers' policy, equivalent to the proportion sacrificed by the other carer;***
- .iv **the extent to which a member of chambers is or is not required to contribute to chambers' rent and expenses during parental leave;***
- .v **the method of calculation of any waiver, reduction or reimbursement of chambers' rent and expenses during parental leave;***
- .vi **where any element of rent is paid on a flat rate basis, the chambers' policy must provide that chambers will offer members taking a period of parental leave a minimum of 6 months free of chambers' rent (or, if taken as shared parental leave with another joint carer, a proportionate amount);***
- .vii **the procedure for dealing with grievances under the policy;***
- .viii **chambers' commitment to regularly review the effectiveness of the policy;***

¹ Parental leave, including when taken as shared parental leave, means leave taken by the main or joint carer of a child preceding or following birth or adoption. This could be a mother, father, or adoptive parent of either sex (Definition 150, BSB Handbook).

14. A definition of “shared parental leave” will also be added to the definitions section of the BSB Handbook that reads:

Shared parental leave means leave taken by the joint carers of a child preceding or following birth or adoption. This can be accessed by mothers, fathers, or adoptive parents of either sex (Definition 150, BSB Handbook).

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed change to the wording of the parental leave rule above?

15. The proposed rule change would be accompanied by guidance. Implementing SPL arrangements in chambers could be complex, so it is suggested that guidance does not attempt to cover every eventuality.
16. We recommend that the guidance would encourage chambers SPL policies to include:
- a. That SPL can be taken as one continuous block of leave, or split into a maximum of three separate blocks of leave, all of which must be taken within the child’s first year. (This would put the policies in line with the April 2015 Regulations that apply to eligible employees.)
 - b. ‘Shared Parental Leave in touch’ days (SPLIT days). These are individual days of paid work that can be taken without forfeiting the benefits of being on SPL. Each carer can work up to 20 days while taking SPL. These are in addition to the ten ‘keeping in touch’ days (KIT days) available to those on maternity or adoption leave. KIT and SPLIT days would be encouraged but not a compulsory element of the rule, so would need to be agreed by carers and their chambers³.
 - c. That a barrister taking SPL would show that they are a ‘joint’ carer by not submitting any bills during their time on leave, save for any SPLIT days worked. This would minimise bureaucracy, recognising the practical differences between self-employed barristers and those in employment, and would prevent any infringement on privacy during SPL.
17. The guidance would also illustrate how the rule change would enable SPL to be accessible in each of the three scenarios outlined on the next page.

Question 2: Would the suggestions at paragraphs 16-17 be appropriate guidance for chambers’ SPL policies?

³ <https://www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave>.

Scenario 1:

The first carer is a self-employed barrister. The second carer is a self-employed barrister. Both work out of 'Chambers A'.

1. Under the current rule the "main carer" of the child has the right to return to chambers after a specified period of leave (which must be at least one year), taken as a single block of leave. The main carer also has the right to a waiver, reduction, or reimbursement of chambers rent and expenses during this period of leave (and where rent is paid on a flat rate basis this must be at least 6 months free of chambers rent). The second carer would not have any specific leave or rent free entitlement.
2. Under the suggested rule change the two carers would have a joint entitlement to the leave and rent free arrangements offered by 'Chambers A'. The total leave allowance would be equal to that available to a main carer under the current rule. The carers would be able to split the leave and rent relief as they saw fit, and each split their leave into up to three blocks (rather than taking it as one continuous block).
3. For Scenario 1 the suggested rule change would have a net-zero financial impact on the Bar as a whole, and on individual chambers (assuming that both barristers were paying the same rent). 'Chambers A' would have had the same total amount of leave and rent free entitlements taken as before the rule change, it would simply be shared between two people rather than entirely taken by one person.

Scenario 2:

The first carer is a self-employed barrister in 'Chambers A'. The second carer is a self-employed barrister in 'Chambers B'.

1. Under the suggested rule change the two carers would each be entitled to a percentage of the parental leave offered by their own chambers. If 'barrister A' at 'Chambers A' gives up a percentage of his/her entitlement, then 'barrister B' at 'Chambers B' would be entitled to take that sacrificed percentage of Chambers B's parental leave policy.
2. For example, 'Chambers A' may have a parental leave entitlement of 2 years, and a full relief of paying chambers rent for the duration of leave taken. 'Chambers B' may have a parental leave entitlement of 1 year, and a 6 month relief from rent taken on a flat-rate basis. If the carers arranged to take 50% of the leave each then the barrister at 'Chambers A' would have 1 year of leave with no rental payments during that time, and the barrister at 'Chambers B' would have 6 months of leave with a 3 month relief from chambers' flat-rate rent.
3. In terms of the total amount of parental leave and rent relief used in Scenario 2, the suggested rule change would have an approximately net-zero impact on the Bar as a whole. However the financial impact on the Bar as a whole would depend on how the financial impacts will be felt by different chambers.
4. One of the expected effects of the rule change would be that the amount of parental leave by female barristers would reduce, and the amount taken by male barristers would increase. Therefore chambers with a higher percentage of women might experience a net-positive financial impact, and chambers with a higher percentage of men experience a net-negative financial impact.

Scenario 3:

The first carer is a self-employed barrister. The second carer is employed.

1. Under the current rule, SPL would only be available if the self-employed barrister were the main carer entitled to Maternity or Adoption Allowance, and they chose to reduce their allowance and pass their entitlement to an employed partner.
2. Under the suggested rule change SPL would be available to the self-employed barrister as a joint carer, regardless of their entitlement to Maternity or Adoption Allowance. The same approach to sharing the entitlement would be adopted as in Scenario 2. The percentage of entitlements sacrificed by the employed carer could be taken by the self-employed barrister as a proportion of the chambers' policies. The carers would determine their relevant shares, and communicate this with the first carer's chambers and the second carer's employer.
3. As we know from our monitoring data¹ there are nearly twice as many men practising as self-employed barristers as there are women, and this ratio is even higher for barristers of 15 years call or more. This fact is a major driving force behind our consideration of this policy change. However for the reasoning outlined in paragraph 25 it also means that there will be a net-negative short-term effect on the finances of individual chambers and the Bar as a whole.
4. The long-term financial implications across all of the scenarios should be positive. If the policy were successful in improving the retention of women at the Bar, then chambers would see an increase in the number of experienced female tenants staying after having children. Retention of female tenants, as they enter the stage of their career in which they can command the highest fees for their expertise, would have a strongly positive impact on chambers' finances.

Question 3: What are your views on how the suggested rule change will affect these three scenarios?

Question 4: Are there any additional scenarios we should consider?

Potential benefits and challenges of the suggested rule change

18. The proposed change has the potential to have a number of direct benefits to the equality and diversity of the profession, but there are also a number of potential challenges to the implementation of the proposed new rule. Below is a table containing those identified so far:

Potential benefits	Potential challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the self-employed Bar in line with current SPL provisions for the employed Bar; • Allow parents greater flexibility in how to best care for, and bond with, their child during its first year; • Allow fathers to take a greater role in childcare responsibilities; • Improve the gender diversity at the senior end of the self-employed Bar by supporting the retention and progression of female self-employed barristers; • Increase income for chambers that would otherwise have failed to retain female members; • Reduce the likelihood that chambers lose female members for a full year after having a child; • Improve flexibility when compared with current parental leave rules; • Help to change the culture at the Bar and the traditional view of caring roles; • Improve wellbeing at the Bar through the effect on work/life balance; • Mitigate possible unconscious bias against selecting women of child-bearing age as pupils or tenants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All chambers will have to amend their Parental Leave policies; • Introducing SPL will be a professional conduct issue, rather than a legal requirement; • SPL provisions may be subject to abuse (e.g. two barristers in different chambers could each claim full parental leave entitlement). However the risk of this is assessed to be low and would breach Handbook rules on dishonesty; • Cost implications for chambers with a high number of members who previously would not have been able to take leave or request a rent rebate. This may be a particular challenge in predominantly publicly funded chambers.

Question 5: Are there any additional potential benefits or challenges to the proposed new rule?

Part III: Considering additional options

Sharing care where one partner is not in paid work

19. We have also identified one further scenario where parental leave rules might impact on how self-employed barristers share caring responsibilities for a child during its first year:

Scenario 4:

The first carer is a self-employed barrister. The second carer is not in paid work and does not receive state benefits.

20. In an equivalent to this scenario, where one carer is employed and the other is not in paid work, SPL would not be available under the current legislation: applicants would fail either the 'continuity of employment test', or the 'employment and earnings test'. Currently where one carer is employed and the other is not in paid work, the employee can access any maternity or adoption leave entitlements. But if, for example, the parent giving birth is not in paid work, then that parent would have no maternity leave to share with the employed carer and so SPL would not be available.
21. The current Handbook rule has a similar effect. A self-employed barrister, with a partner who is not in paid work, can only access parental leave if they are the main carer (in practice, either a mother who gives birth to the child, or the carer named as the main adopter).
22. The objective of SPL is more equal sharing of traditional caring roles, particularly where very young children are concerned. This is just as important in families where only one carer is in paid work.
23. Consequently, we have determined three alternative approaches to this fourth scenario:
- a. Align the Handbook rule with SPL legislation. This would mean that the self-employed barrister in scenario 4 would only be entitled to parental leave if they were the main carer;
 - b. Entitle the self-employed barrister to 50% of their chambers' parental leave policy. This would mirror the position the barrister would be in if their partner was employed and they shared their SPL entitlement equally; or
 - c. Entitle the self-employed barrister to 100% of their chambers' parental leave policy. This would mean that all self-employed barristers would have access to a full parental leave policy, no matter what their partner's employment status was. Unlike in options (a) and (b), self-employed barristers, whose partner is not in paid work, could choose to be the main

carer in their child's first year.

24. While options (b) and (c) present a different situation from that currently on offer to employed carers, they would serve to promote shared caring of children even in families where only one carer is in paid work.
25. Option (a) would have the smallest financial impact on individual chambers, and option (c) would have the largest financial impact. However it is possible that in most cases like Scenario 4, the self-employed barrister, as the sole earner for the family, will not take a lengthy period of parental leave. And therefore the negative financial impact on chambers, of either (b) or (c), would be minimal.

Question 6: Which of the options in paragraph 23 (a, b, or c) should be the minimum standard required by the BSB of chambers in their SPL policies and why?

Giving full parental leave entitlements to both carers

26. Both the current Handbook rule on parental leave, and the suggested change, would set the minimum standards on chambers' parental leave policies, not the upper limit. By seeking to replicate the statutory SPL scheme, we have perhaps arrived at a relatively complicated rule. There may be value in simplifying the requirements (albeit that might increase the amount of parental leave that was taken by the self-employed Bar in total – whilst that may be a desirable thing, it might impose additional costs on chambers).
27. An alternative approach would be to give all self-employed barristers who become the carer of a child full access to the chambers' parental leave policy, regardless of whether their partner is a barrister at the same chambers, a different chambers, is employed, or is not in paid work. The impact of this change would be that any parent or carer could claim the parental leave rights that are currently only available to the main carer. However, a potential benefit might be improved work-life balance for both carers and a cultural shift towards shared parenting across the profession.

Question 7: Would you support this alternative approach and why?

Question 8: Would the increased burden on chambers be justified in the light of any benefits?

Question 9: What do you estimate the financial cost of giving full parental leave entitlements to both carers would be for your chambers?

Part IV: About this consultation

How has this consultation been developed?

28. We have considered the issue of how SPL could be applied within barristers' chambers. We have done this by using a task completion group consisting of staff, board members, and members of the profession.
29. The change being considered will not be directly relevant to those at the employed Bar, unless they have a partner at the self-employed Bar, as the potential rule change would only affect self-employed practitioners. We recognise that there is a wide variety of different practising models within the profession. This poses a challenge when assessing the impact of a potential rule change to different business structures.
30. We are extremely grateful to the Shared Parental Leave Task Completion Group, a small collection of practising barristers and internal staff, who gave up their time, energy and expertise in an effort to provide external challenge and fresh perspectives on our internal thinking.

How we will use this consultation

31. This consultation will be used to explore the impacts of this potential rule change, from the perspective of anyone who is interested in the issue, but we would particularly welcome the views of those listed below.
32. Once we have listened to your views on the proposed rule change, we will evaluate them in relation to our regulatory objectives and other statutory obligations.

Who should respond to this consultation?

33. We are particularly interested in hearing from:
- Self-employed barristers;
 - Employed barristers;
 - Members of chambers' business management, including clerks;
 - Members of the judiciary;
 - Bar special interest networks and associations; and
 - Students: current law students, BPTC students and anyone interested in a career at the Bar.
34. There are a number of different ways of engaging with the consultation process and responding – see Part IV of this document for more details.

Part V: How to respond to this consultation

35. The deadline for this consultation is **5pm Friday, 17 February 2017**. You do not need to wait until the deadline to respond to this consultation.
36. A response does not need to be a comprehensive written document, although it can be if you wish. It can also be short form answers to the very specific questions we have posed. It is however far more useful to us (and we are better able to take your views into account) if you are able to address the questions we have posed specifically, rather than, for example, simply stating your general view. We will of course never exclude consideration of a response, whatever its form or content.
37. We want to hear your views on all of the questions posed, and are taking into account all responses.
38. You do not have to respond to this consultation in writing. If you would like someone from the BSB to meet you or the organisation you represent, to listen to and accurately record your views, then as far as possible we will try to accommodate this request. Please contact us either by email, telephone or post as soon as possible if you would like to do this.
39. Whatever form your response takes, we will normally want to make it public and attribute it to you or your organisation, and publish a list of respondents. If you do not want to be named as a respondent to this consultation please set this out in your response.
40. Please send your response, or otherwise get in touch, as follows:

Email: equality@barstandardsboard.org.uk

Tel: 0207 611 1305

Equality & Access to Justice Team

The Bar Standards Board

289-293 High Holborn

London WC1V 7HZ

Next steps following the end of the consultation

41. The consultation will close on **5pm Friday, 17 February 2017**. Once the consultation has closed we will collate and analyse the responses. We will use them to determine the potential for the suggested rule change. If we decide to go ahead with a rule change, we will finalise the drafting of the new rule.
42. If the rule changes, we will amend and update the relevant guidance on the BSB website.

Appendix 1: About the BSB

About the BSB and what we do

43. The Bar Standards Board is the regulator of barristers in England and Wales. We are also responsible for setting the education and training requirements for those who wish to practise as barristers in England and Wales.
44. We are responsible for the Code of Conduct ([the Handbook](#)) which sets out how barristers must work once they are qualified. We monitor how well barristers are meeting our practising requirements.
45. If they breach the Code of Conduct, we can take enforcement or disciplinary action against them. Through our activity, we protect the public interest and consumers, and help uphold the rule of law and the proper administration of justice. You can find out more about us on our [website](#).

Strategic context and our approach as a regulator

46. Along with other legal services regulators, such as the Solicitors Regulation Authority⁴ (SRA) and CILEx Regulation⁵, our regulatory objectives are:
 - protecting and promoting the public interest;
 - supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law;
 - improving access to justice;
 - protecting and promoting the interests of consumers;
 - promoting competition in the provision of legal services;
 - encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
 - increasing public understanding of citizens' legal rights and duties; and
 - promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles.
47. Earlier this year, we published our Strategic Plan for 2016-2019. [This Plan](#) and the accompanying annual business plans which support it, set out our strategic aims for ensuring we are best placed to respond to our regulatory objectives. These include:
 - regulating in the public interest;
 - supporting barristers and those we regulate to face the future; and
 - ensuring a strong and sustainable regulator.

⁴ The body responsible for regulating solicitors.

⁵ The body responsible for regulating legal executives.

We are a risk- and evidence-based regulator. This means that our approach must focus on identifying potential risks which could prevent us from meeting our Regulatory Objectives⁶. We use evidence to prioritise the risks that we focus upon, and then review our effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes to inform future adjustments to our regulatory approach.

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/section/1>