



Meeting of the Bar Standards Board

Thursday 25 September 2025, 2.00 pm (Hybrid meeting - in person and online)

Rooms 1.4 – 1.7, First Floor, BSB Offices / MS Teams

Agenda – Part 1 – Public

This meeting will be recorded for the purposes of minute taking as previously agreed by the Board. Your consent to this is assumed if you decide to attend. The recording will be deleted once the minutes are formally approved at the next meeting

Page

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. | Welcome / announcements
(2.00 pm) | | Chair | |
| 2. | Apologies | | Chair | |
| 3. | Members' interests and hospitality | | Chair | |
| 4. | Approval of minutes from the last meeting (24 July 2025) | Annex A | Chair | 3-6 |
| 5. | a) Matters arising & Action List | Annex B | Chair | 7 |
| | b) Forward agenda | Annex C | Chair | 9 |
| 6. | Ratification of out of cycle Board decision re: Rule Change Request – Inns' Conduct Committee
(2.05 pm) | BSB 045 (25) | Chair | 11 |
| 7. | Update and next steps – First-tier complaints consultation
(2.10 pm) | BSB 046 (25) | Ahmet Arikan
/ Richard Parnham | 13-28 |
| 8. | Director General's Report – Public Session
(2.20 pm) | BSB 047 (25) | Mark Neale | 29 |
| 9. | Chair's Report on Visits & External Meetings | BSB 048 (25) | Chair | 31 |
| 10. | Any other business | | | |
| 11. | Date of next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thursday 27 November 2025 | | | |
| 12. | Private Session
(2.30 pm) | | | |

John Picken
Governance Officer
18 September 2025

Part 1 - Public
Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting
Thursday 24 July 2025 (5.00 pm)

Hybrid Meeting, Rooms 1.4-1.7, BSB Offices & MS Teams

- Present:** Kathryn Stone OBE (Chair)
Gisela Abbam
Jeff Chapman KC
Ruby Hamid - via Teams
Tracey Markham
Andrew Mitchell KC
Ruth Pickering
Stephen Thornton CBE
- By invitation:** Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council) – via Teams
Steve Haines (Consultant) – via Teams
Barbara Mills KC (Chair, Bar Council) – via Teams
Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council) – via phone
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams
- Press:** Neil Rose (Legal Futures) – via Teams
- BSB Executive:** Graham Black (Head of Communications)
Laura Cassidy (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) – via Teams
Mike Farmer (Head of Programmes and Planning)
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)
Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)
Alex Kuczynski (Director of Legal & Information Management)
Ewen Macleod (Director of Strategy, Policy & Insights)
Rupika Madhura (Director of Regulatory Standards)
Anna McNee (Lawyer) – via Teams
Natasha Mutch-Vidal (Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager)
Mark Neale (Director General)
Richard Parnham (Handbook Manager)
John Picken (Governance Officer)
Mark Platt (Head of Policy)
Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)
Rishi Taneja (Senior Policy Officer) – via Teams
Adelita Thursby-Pelham (Head of Authorisations)
- Resource Group:** Richard Cullen (Director of Finance)

Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements

1. Kathryn Stone welcomed those present to the meeting, in particular Kirsty Brimelow KC who was attending her first BSB Board meeting.

2. **Item 2 – Apologies**

- Emir Feisal JP
- Irena Sabic KC
- Leslie Thomas KC
- Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council)
- Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement)

Item 3 – Members’ interests and hospitality

3. None.

Item 4 – Approval of Part 1 (public) minutes (Annex A)

4. The Board **approved** the Part 1 (public) minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2025.

Item 5a – Matters arising & Action List

5. The Board **noted** the action list (all items completed).

Item 5b – Forward agenda

6. The Board **noted** the forward agenda list.

Item 6 – Performance in 2025/26: Quarter 1 Performance Report

BSB 034 (25)

7. Mark Neale commented as follows:

- in this quarter, the BSB completed more applications from Transferring Qualified Lawyers (TQLs) than it received (so achieved a net reduction in the caseload). This is welcome news and is the result of sustained effort by the Authorisations Team;
- we received a substantially higher number of reports about barristers during this period (a rise of almost a third) which has added to pressure on the Contact and Assessment Team (CAT), although its timeliness performance was nevertheless maintained;
- as a contingency measure, we have utilised external support from one of our retained law firms. This recent event underlines how swiftly the BSB’s workload can fluctuate so we shall need to consider how best to build in short-term resilience in next year’s budget.

8. Andrew Mitchell KC congratulated the Authorisations Team on the reduction in the backlog. He also asked about steps to reduce the overall number of incoming applications - he noted that there are no reciprocal arrangements in place for barristers practising in England and Wales. Adelita Thursby-Pelham confirmed that our immediate focus has been on the administration of applications but that the BSB is aware of, and considering, these wider issues. This may require legal advice.

9. The Chair also expressed her appreciation of progress made on TQL applications. She also asked why a spike in the number of barrister reports had occurred.

10. Mark Neale confirmed this was due to social media usage and associated commentary on international events. These reports may be complex to resolve given they hinge on striking a balance between preserving the reputation of the profession and the rights of an individual to freedom of expression.

11. Kirsty Brimelow KC asked for further information about social media reports ie how such decision making is made and how often external legal advice is needed. Mark Neale agreed to respond to these points outside the meeting.
12. Ruth Pickering referred to the metric on quality of Independent Decision Making Body (IDB) reviews. The 75% KPI figure quoted is outside target but does not fairly reflect the low numbers involved (just four reviews in total and only one decision reversed following receipt of new information). She therefore asked that a more accurate metric be selected instead. Mark Neale agreed and suggested a rolling annual indicator rather than a quarterly figure.
13. **AGREED**
- a) to note the performance report for Quarter 1 (2025/26).
 - b) to contact Kirsty Brimelow KC about the process for resolving reports generated from social media usage (cf. min 11). **MN**
 - c) to change the indicator used for IDB quality metrics from a quarterly to a rolling annual figure (cf. min 12). **MN**

Item 7 – Designation of Right of Appeal for EFTA applicants

BSB 036 (25)

14. Richard Parnham highlighted the following:
- the paper concerns two sets of agreements between the Government and European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) countries. One agreement covers Switzerland and another refers to the remaining countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).
 - the effect of these agreements is both to require changes to the Handbook to designate rights of appeal and to create new classes of applicant (because those covered by the pre-agreement arrangements are differently stated).
 - new delegated powers need to be in place to facilitate these changes to the Handbook. *Note: Richard Parnham asked to amend the recommended course of action in line with advice from the Head of Governance. It is the case that the Board delegates authority to the Director General, who then sub-delegates as appropriate.*
15. **AGREED**
- to approve delegation of authority from the Board to the Director General to introduce rights of appeal for eligible lawyers from EFTA countries. *Note: these powers will then be sub-delegated to the Director of Regulatory Enforcement, the Director of Strategy, Policy and Insights and the Director of Regulatory Standards.*

Item 8 – Director General’s Report – Public Session

BSB 037 (25)

16. At the Director General’s request, Ewen Macleod commented further on paragraph 6 of the report concerning the Inns Conduct Committee (ICC). He stated that:
- in addition to the issues quoted in the report, a further point requiring clarification has arisen. This relates to the permission (which is not clear at present); to hold Inns Conduct Committee meetings online;

- change to the regulatory arrangements for the ICC is reserved for the BSB Board (there is no delegated authority in place);
- in consequence, a proposal will be circulated to the Board immediately after the meeting seeking permission for this change. We hope to have approval before the new term on 1 August 2025.

17. Andy Russell noted that custom and practice has moved ahead of regulations in this case. He confirmed that the intent is to ensure that ICC's Screening Panels can take place online.

18. **AGREED**

- a) to note the report.
- b) to contact the Board with a request to amend the regulations governing the Inns' Conduct Committee as described above (cf. mins 16 & 17).

EM

Item 9 – Chair's Report on Visits and External Meetings

BSB 038 (25)

19. The Board **noted** the report. She again highlighted the value of her external meetings with barristers and stakeholders and confirmed she would encourage the incoming Chair to do likewise.

Item 10 – Any Other Business

20. Kathryn Stone OBE.

Andrew Mitchell KC spoke on behalf of the Board in sending their good wishes to Kathryn Stone who stands down as Chair of the Board after the end of August 2025. He expressed his profound thanks for Kathryn's exceptional performance as Chair. He paid tribute to her hard work, collegiate style and willingness to engage with stakeholders, Board colleagues and the executive alike. Kirsty Brimelow KC expressed the same sentiments on behalf of the Bar Council.

Item 11 – Date of next meeting

21. Thursday 25 September 2025 (2.00 pm)

Item 12 – Private Session

22. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:

- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 22 May 2025.
- (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
- (3) Consolidated Business Plan Update – Q1.
- (4) Risk Tolerance: New Approach and Setting of Tolerance.
- (5) Anti-Racism Action Plan Year 2.
- (6) Performance: voluntary undertakings to Legal Services Board.
- (7) Director General's Report – Private Session.
- (8) Board recruitment, Board reappointment and Chair appointment.
- (9) Any other private business.

23. The meeting finished at 5.20 pm.

BSB – List of Part 1 Actions

25 September 2025

(This includes a summary of all actions from the previous meetings)

Min ref	Action required	Person(s) responsible	Completion Due Date	Progress report	
				Date	Summary of update
13b (24/07/25)	contact Kirsty Brimelow KC about the process for resolving reports generated from social media usage	Mark Neale	25/09/25	16/09/25	To be advised – Mark Neale is currently on leave and will advise on this item at the September meeting
13c (24/07/25)	change the indicator used for IDB quality metrics from a quarterly to a rolling annual figure	Mark Neale / Imogen Kirby	25/09/25	16/09/25	Report updated – annual totals are now given for all KPI metrics, maintaining consistency in reporting throughout the Balanced Scorecard
18b (24/07/25)	contact the Board with a request to amend the regulations governing the Inns' Conduct Committee	Ewen Macleod	25/09/25	16/09/25	Completed – see BSB 045 (25)

Forward Agenda

Monday 6 October 2025 (09.30 am start – Second Board Away Day)

- Vision, purpose, ambition
- Strategic Priorities
- Resources and timetables
- Values and behaviours
- Risks
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Consultation Document

Thursday 27 November 2025 – 5 pm start

- Director General's Report (public & private session)
- Dates for Board Meetings (Jan 2026 – Mar 2027)
- Annual report – Bar Training
- BSB Annual Report
- GRA Annual Report
- Interim report of the PSP Committee to the Board 2025/26
- Q2 performance report
- Enforcement Regulations – outcome of consultation
- BSB Casework Report
- Reform and re-organisation
- Corporate Risk Report
- Handbook Review Key Principles
- Annual Board evaluation
- Board member appointment, appointments of Board members to Committees
- Governance documents – eligibility for lay member vacancies

Thursday 29 January 2026 – 2 pm start

- Director General's Report (public & private session)
- Reform and re-organisation
- BSB Values and Behaviours

Wednesday 25 March 2026 – 5 pm start

- Director General's Report (public & private session)
- Q3 performance report
- Enforcement Regulations revised draft consultation paper
- Reform and re-organisation
- Corporate Risk Report
- Final Strategy approval
- Final Regulatory Risk Framework Report
- Final Business Plan & Budget Plan 2026-27
- Governance review (review of compliance with the 2024 UK Corporate Governance Code)

Ratification of out of session decisions by the Board

Rule Change Request – Inns' Conduct Committee (25 July 2025 via email)

1. The Board received an email on 25 July 2025 with a request that it consider an out of session recommendation from the executive. This concerned a proposed change to the rules of the Inns' Conduct Committee (ICC).

Note: changes to the regulatory arrangements for the ICC is reserved for the BSB Board (there is no delegated authority in place).

2. The content of that message is given below:

"Once a student is admitted to an Inn, and before they are called to the Bar, their conduct is overseen by, and any concerns managed by, their Inn to ensure that only those who are fit and proper to practise as a barrister are called to the Bar. If conduct matters are raised in respect of a student member, the relevant Inn will conduct an investigation, referring any matter that calls into question a student's fitness to become a barrister to the Inns Conduct Committee (ICC). The BSB and ICC have agreed guidelines for determining whether an individual is a fit and proper person. A person may be referred to the ICC when:

- *an applicant seeks to become a student member of an Inn;*
- *a student member's conduct calls into question whether they are a fit and proper person; and*
- *a student member of an Inn seeks to be called to the Bar.*

The ICC Chair has spotted that the existing rules do not explicitly permit remote hearings, largely because they were drafted before this became common place.

Andy Russell, Director of the Council of the Inns of Court, has provided the following additional information: For the avoidance of any doubt this refers to Screening Panels only. This is when two members of the ICC meet to triage multiple cases, on the papers, to decide which need to go to a hearing, and which fall below the threshold. No students (etc) are present, and no fit and proper decisions are made. For that reason, I can't imagine any unintended or negative consequences – it is simply an administrative function, and this change facilitates faster and more effective progression of the cases."

3. A majority of Members in excess of the two-thirds required for out of cycle resolutions agreed to this request by email. There were no dissensions. The Board is therefore asked to formally ratify its decision. This is to comply with our Constitution: 'Once a Board written resolution has been adopted, it must be formally ratified at the next Board meeting and appear in the minutes of that meeting'.

Lead Responsibility

Rebecca Forbes
Head of Governance

Meeting:	BSB Board Meeting	Date:	25 September 2025
Title:	Update and next steps – First-tier complaints consultation		
Author:	Ahmet Arikan		
Post:	Senior Policy Officer		

Paper for:	Decision: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion: <input type="checkbox"/>	Noting: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/> (enter text)
-------------------	--	---	---	---

<p>Paper relates to the Regulatory Objective (s) highlighted in bold below</p> <p>(a) protecting and promoting the public interest</p> <p>(b) supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law</p> <p>(c) improving access to justice</p> <p>(d) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers</p> <p>(e) promoting competition in the provision of services</p> <p>(f) encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession</p> <p>(g) increasing public understanding of citizens' legal rights and duties</p> <p>(h) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles</p> <p>(i) promoting the prevention and detection of economic crime.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Paper does not principally relate to Regulatory Objectives</p>

Purpose of Report

- To update the Board on the outcome of the Bar Standards Board's public consultation on first-tier complaints (FTC), to seek approval to publish the results, to take actions in response to findings from the consultation, and to ensure we are compliant with the Legal Services Board's (LSB) new requirements in this area.

Recommendations

- The Board is invited to:
 - Note the responses to our consultation, and approve our recommended implementation approach (paras 6 to 16);
 - Approve the draft BSB Handbook changes which seek to implement our updated complaints handling arrangements for the profession (Annex A); and
 - Approve the draft BSB first-tier complaints data collection policy statement (Annex B).

Background

Legal Services Board's Statutory Requirements on First-tier Complaints

- Under the Legal Services Act 2007¹ the LSB can issue requirements on how legal services providers handle client complaints. These LSB mandated requirements must be built into regulator rulebooks. The previous LSB requirements were published in 2016 and implemented in the BSB Handbook. In May 2024, the LSB issued updated requirements,² meaning we must amend the Handbook to accommodate these changes.

¹ Section 112 of the Legal Services Act 2007, which requires frontline regulators to have regulatory arrangements for how authorised persons handle client complaints, and from time to time, the LSB may publish requirements which regulators must take into account.

² Available here: <https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/s112-Requirements.pdf>

4. Alongside this, the LSB also published its first policy statement on FTC³ setting out specific expectations on front-line regulators. As part of the policy statement, regulators must now monitor complaints trends closely, using data from first-tier complaints and the Legal Ombudsman to identify systemic issues and act where needed. Unlike peer regulators, we do not currently systematically collect FTC data, so we developed proposals to fill this gap in a proportionate way.

BSB Consultation on First-tier Complaints

5. In March 2025 the Board agreed to consult on first tier complaints data collection options, associated Handbook rules mandating data submission to the BSB and impacts, to implement LSB requirements and expectations.⁴ The consultation ran from May to August 2025 and was supported by several stakeholder roundtables. We received 16 written responses to our consultation, including from the Criminal Bar Association, South Eastern Circuit, Bar Council, the Legal Ombudsman, Legal Services Consumer Panel, five chambers, two software/tech companies, two other legal professionals, one barrister, and an academic. A summary of the responses to our consultation and proposed next steps is set out below. A fuller analysis is available in the reading area.

Consultation Feedback and Recommended Next Steps

Guidance for new BSB Handbook Rules implementing LSB's section 112 requirements

6. In the consultation, we shared proposed Handbook changes (reflecting the LSB's mandatory rules) and asked what additional BSB guidance might be helpful. Stakeholders supported further guidance, particularly on how to help vulnerable consumers, with the Legal Services Consumer Panel calling for consumer-tested materials. As we are required to implement LSB's section 112 requirements, we propose to do this by updating complaints rules in the BSB Handbook (set out in Annex A – BSB Handbook Proposed Final Changes: First-tier Complaints). We will also review stakeholder feedback on guidance and incorporate suggestions. To address the Legal Services Consumer Panel's point, we are also working with the Legal Ombudsman and peer regulators to produce materials.

First-tier Complaints Data Collection

(a) Data Collection Rule Changes

7. In our consultation, we asked for views on our proposed new rule rC108.2 (set out in Annex A) which would mandate complaints data submission by the profession to the BSB. Stakeholders such as the Criminal Bar Association, Bar Council, Legal Services Consumer Panel, Legal Ombudsman and some chambers broadly supported this requirement, contingent on the understanding that support and guidance is provided. A minority did not favour it, including the South Eastern Circuit and some chambers. Additionally, several stakeholders raised concerns about the potential burden on smaller chambers, sole practitioners, and the potential disproportionate impact on

³ Available here: <https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/First-Tier-Complaints-Policy-statement.pdf>

⁴ The updated complaints handling rules in the BSB Handbook, and data collection requirements apply to the self-employed bar, chambers and BSB entities. It does not apply to the employed Bar, apart from those in BSB entities.

women and ethnic minority barristers who work in areas of practice with higher levels of complaints, such as family and criminal law. Having considered the feedback, we propose to proceed with this rule change, with support materials and guidance to help reduce the burden and mitigate the potential impacts

8. To support chambers' and entities' oversight of complaints, we also proposed new rule rC108.3 requiring barristers/BSB entity staff to pass on complaints details linked to work in their chambers or entity (if not already aware). Stakeholder views were mixed. Some welcomed the transparency benefits, while others raised concerns about enforceability and duplication. Supporters, including the Bar Council, Legal Services Consumer Panel and the Criminal Bar Association felt it would improve internal monitoring. Others, such as the South Eastern Circuit, questioned the need given existing rules, and called for clarity on what types of complaints must be reported. On balance, we propose to proceed with this proposal, which will help chambers and entities maintain a complete picture of complaints and ensure there are no gaps when submitting data to the BSB, with guidance to be issued to support clarity.

(b) Data Collection Options

9. We consulted on how best to collect complaints data from the profession, including frequency and submission method. We asked whether barristers should submit complaints data themselves (either through the authorisation to practise process or via MyBar), or whether chambers and entities should submit on their behalf via MyBar. Most stakeholders preferred the chambers/entities option. We therefore propose that chambers and entities collect data on behalf of their members/employees, with submission to the BSB annually. This will be through MyBar, with the use of organisational accounts for chambers and entities (which will also help improve oversight for the organisations). Additional guidance will be produced to support the profession.

(c) Data to be collected and submitted

10. We also consulted on what data should be collected by the profession and developed fields based on existing practice, and to meet specific LSB policy statement expectations. These included when the complaint was made, when and how it was resolved, what the complaint was about, and anonymised client characteristics and vulnerability information. Stakeholders broadly agreed with the data types, though most raised concerns about collecting client characteristics and vulnerabilities data, due to privacy and practical challenges.
11. Going forward, we propose to collect key complaint data types, as set out in our consultation, and will incorporate useful stakeholder suggestions (such as the Bar Council's suggestion on instruction type and case funding details). Given the concerns raised, we do not propose to require collection of client demographic data. Instead, we intend to use external data (such as the Legal Services Consumer Panel's annual tracker) and our future research/surveys to gain a broad understanding of underrepresented and vulnerable client's experiences of complaints, helping us to meet the LSB's expectations.
12. We propose to publish a new BSB 'First-tier complaints data policy statement' (see Annex B), setting out the data we will collect and our approach to collecting it. As the statement will be a regulatory arrangement, we will submit the document for LSB approval alongside our draft final BSB Handbook changes.

(d) Data uses and publication of reports

13. In our consultation, we also highlighted that we would publish aggregated reports on complaints, and that data would be used internally to meet the LSB's policy statement expectations, such as identifying systemic issues with complaints handling. The Legal Services Consumer Panel noted that we had not made a commitment to publish complaints data, although we plan to do so on aggregated basis, which we noted in our consultation. They did not specify the level of complaints data that should be published (i.e. whether at individual level), although in past blogs they have noted aggregate levels are the bare minimum expected from all regulators.
14. We intend to publish aggregate reports on complaints, including emerging themes, which might compare different areas of practice, identify the reasons clients are complaining and the timeliness of how the profession is generally resolving client complaints, with relevant contextual information. This will help us to meet several of the LSB policy statement expectations. We do not intend to publish data at an individual or chambers level as it may provide a distorted view to the public, given the fact that some areas attract more complaints than others. The collected data is intended to help us improve our internal intelligence, and to work with the profession to continually improve the client experience.

Next Steps

15. After Board approval, our immediate next step would be to apply to the LSB for approval of changes to the BSB Handbook, including our data collection policy statement. We will also publish the full summary of responses to our consultation, draft final rules and our data policy statement by the end of September 2025. Subject to LSB review, we plan to publish the final version of the rules, data policy statement and updated guidance in November 2025. We propose to:
 - a. give the profession four months from the date of publication (November 2025) to implement and familiarise themselves with the new rules and arrangements (which we consulted upon, and most stakeholders agreed was reasonable).
 - b. Thereafter, the profession will start collecting the new data collection fields (which will be set out in the new data policy statement and new additional guidance). We propose that the first data collection exercise will take place at least one year following. We will review the impacts of these changes once the rules have bedded in and we have sufficient data.
16. Additionally, we intend to submit a response to the LSB covering the outcomes and expectations set out in the first-tier complaints policy statement (draft available in reading area). It states the steps we have already taken and the further measures we plan to implement. We intend to submit it after the September Board meeting.

Resource implications / Impacts on other teams / departments or projects

17. Implementation will incur costs, primarily for developing new systems for data collection and generating insights, mainly updating MyBar for data collection. We do not have estimates for potential costs at this stage, as this will vary depending on the final design choices- however, we are looking to develop a system that is efficient and provides value for money by only implementing what is necessary and proportionate in order for us to collect and analyse complaints data. There may also be longer-term resource impacts, resulting from actions required to address issues uncovered by increased monitoring and oversight. The impacts will be most likely to affect the BSB's

Insights, Policy, Supervision and Enforcement teams. The Insights team will review and analyse the data, improving our intelligence base. For supervision, the improved complaints intelligence will support their decisions to take regulatory action and may help them better to focus efforts with individuals/chambers or wider thematic reviews (which will need to be built into strategic and business planning). The LSB has also recently published (and is due to publish) requirements on economic crime, ethics and equality, which is likely to have a cumulative impact on resources more broadly. There is likely to be some resource implications for the profession, in updating their complaints arrangements and collecting and submitting data to the BSB.

18. Once data arrangements are in place, further resources will also be required, i.e. for the team chasing responses/data, (which is to be decided), and potential designated helpdesk support for the profession during the data submission process.

Equality and Diversity

19. Our initial equalities impact assessment found that the BSB's new requirements are likely to have a positive equality impact on the public and consumers, as it will potentially raise awareness of how to complain, and the focus on accessibility. However, the Handbook changes proposed, and the associated regulatory activities will place additional requirements on the Bar, especially in respect of support for vulnerable consumers. There is also a risk of negative impacts on smaller providers, and those operating in areas of law which attract more consumer complaints; both are more likely to have certain protected characteristics, namely women and ethnic minority barristers. Stakeholders agreed with our view on these impacts, particularly on the Bar, and called for additional support to be provided. We plan to mitigate these issues via several initiatives, including publishing guidance for the profession to minimise administration burdens. We will also work with the Legal Ombudsman and our peer regulators to develop toolkits and support materials to reduce the burden of complaints. We are planning to review impacts, once the new arrangements have bedded in, and we have sufficient data to undertake the review.

Risk implications

20. An immediate risk is compliance with the timetable set by the LSB for implementing these requirements; by November 2025. We have planned our work to secure approval within the standard 28-day period; however, it is possible that the LSB may use its prerogative to take longer (up to 90 days), which could mean we miss their deadline. In mitigation we have advised them of our timetable and have kept them up to date with our progress, which we noted was set to afford sufficient time for robust stakeholder consultation. More generally, we are required to implement LSB's new statutory section 112 requirements on handling of complaints, and to meet the outcomes and expectations of their policy statement.

Annexes

21. Annex A: BSB Handbook Proposed Final Changes: First-tier Complaints Rules
Annex B: BSB FTC Data Policy Statement

ENDS

BSB Handbook Proposed Final Changes: First-tier Complaints Rules*Changes are in red; text deletion is in strikethrough.***Part 2: Code of Conduct****Part 2 – C3. You and your client**Outcomes**oC19**

~~Clients understand how to bring a complaint and complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly, openly and effectively.~~

Guidance to Rules C22-C24 (Defining terms or basis on which instructions are accepted)

gC84

~~Disputes about costs are one of the most frequent complaints. The provision of clear information before work starts is the best way of avoiding such complaints. The Legal Ombudsman has produced a useful guide “An Ombudsman’s view of good costs service” which can be found on its website.~~

Part 2 - D. Rules Applying to Particular Groups of Regulated Persons**Part 2 - D1. Self-employed barristers, chambers and BSB entities Rules**Outcomes (C26-C29)**oC26**

Clients are provided with appropriate **and accessible** information about redress, know that they can make a **complaint** if dissatisfied, and know how to do so, **including any rights they may have to make a second-tier complaint.**

oC27

Complaints are dealt with effectively, efficiently and are resolved fairly and promptly. Clients are kept informed throughout the complaints process. ~~are dealt with promptly and the client is kept informed about the process.~~

Rules C99-C109 - Complaints rules**Complaints handling procedures****rC99A**

- .1 You must have a first-tier complaints handling procedure which:**
 - .a enables clients to make a complaint free of charge;**
 - .b is prominent and accessible;**
 - .c sets out the steps that will be taken in resolving a complaint;**
 - .d explains how a complaint will be handled;**
 - .e provides information on the possible outcomes of a complaint;**
 - .f is effectively communicated to each client in a format or formats reasonably tailored for the client’s circumstances, having due regard to their information needs; and**

- .g makes provision for a client to be able to make a complaint in a way that is reasonable and accessible to the client.
- .2 You must ensure your *first-tier complaints* handling procedure is:
 - .a documented in writing, and available across your organisation, where relevant;
 - .b endorsed by the appropriate member/committee of *chambers*, or *HOLP*, or person responsible for implementation of the complaints procedure; and
 - .c implemented consistently and periodically reviewed.
- .3 Your *first-tier complaints* procedure must provide for a *complaint* to be:
 - .a assessed competently, diligently and impartially;
 - .b responded to fairly, consistently, and promptly; and
 - .c to be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

Provision of information rC99B

- .1 You must notify *clients* in writing or in formats tailored to specific *client information needs*: ~~when you are instructed, or, if that is if not practicable, at the next appropriate opportunity:~~
 - .a of their right to make a *complaint*, including your *first-tier complaints handling procedure*, ~~including their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman (if they have such a right), how, and to whom, they can complain, and of any time limits for making a *complaint*;~~
 - .b that after eight weeks following the making of a *first-tier complaint*, if the *complaint* has not been resolved to the *client's* satisfaction, that they may have a right to complain to the *Legal Ombudsman*.
 - .c .2 if you are doing referral work, that the lay *client* may complain directly to *you*, *chambers* or the *BSB entity* without going through *solicitors*.
- .2 The information in rC99B.1 must be provided:
 - .a when you are *instructed*, or if that is not practicable, at the next earliest appropriate opportunity;
 - .b at the conclusion of the matter;
 - .c upon request; and
 - .d if a *complaint* is made during a matter.

rC100

If you are doing public access, or licensed access work using an *intermediary*, the *intermediary* must similarly be informed.

rC101

If you are doing referral work, you do not need to give a *professional client* the information set out in Rules rC99B.1 and rC99B.2, in a separate, specific letter. It is enough to provide it in the ordinary terms of reference letter (or equivalent letter) which you send when you accept *instructions* in accordance with Rule rC21.

rC102

If you do not send a letter of engagement to a lay *client* in which this information can be included, a specific letter, **or communication in formats specific to the client's needs**, must be sent to them giving them the information set out at Rules rC99B.1 and rC99B.2.

rC103

Each website of *self-employed barristers*, *chambers* and *BSB entities* must display:

- .1 on the homepage, the text “regulated by the Bar Standards Board” (for sole practitioners) or “barristers regulated by the Bar Standards Board” (for *chambers*) or “authorised and regulated by the Bar Standards Board” (for *BSB entities*); and
- .2 in a sufficiently accessible and prominent place:
 - .a information about their complaints procedure, any right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, how to complain to the Legal Ombudsman and any time limits for making a *complaint*, **and including details of alternative and accessible formats for accessing this information**;
 - .b a link to the decision data on the Legal Ombudsman’s website; and
 - .c a link to the Barristers’ Register on the BSB’s website.
- .3 All e-mail and letterheads from *self-employed barristers* and *BSB entities*, their *managers* and employees must state “regulated by the Bar Standards Board” (for *self-employed barristers*) or “authorised and regulated by the Bar Standards Board” (for *BSB entities*).
- .4 *Self-employed barristers*, *chambers* and *BSB entities* must have regard to guidance published from time to time by the *Bar Standards Board* in relation to redress transparency.

Response to, **and resolution of, complaints****rC104**

~~All *complaints* must be acknowledged promptly. When you acknowledge a *complaint*, you must give the complainant:~~

- .1 **When a *complaint* is first notified you must provide the complainant:**
 - .a **with a prompt acknowledgement of receipt of the *complaint*;**
 - .b ~~1~~ **the name and contact details of the person who will deal with the *complaint* and a description of that person’s role in *chambers* or in the *BSB entity* (as appropriate);**
 - .c ~~2~~ **a copy of the clear and comprehensive information about the *chambers*’ complaints procedure or the *BSB entity*’s Complaints Procedure (as appropriate) that will apply to their complaint and how it will be handled, including the information required in rC99B.1 and rC99B.2;**
 - .d ~~3~~ **the date by which the complainant will next hear from *chambers* or the *BSB entity* (as appropriate), including the timeline for the resolution of the *complaint*.**

2. Regular updates must be given to the *complainant* on the progress of their complaint.
3. You must communicate with the *complainant* clearly, using plain and appropriate language.
4. A *complainant* must be informed about the options available if the *complainant* is dissatisfied with the outcome of their *first-tier complaint*, including:
 - .a of any rights the *complainant* may have to make a *complaint* to the Legal Ombudsman (right to make a *second-tier complaint*) including the information specified in rC99B.1.b;
 - .b how to make a *second-tier complaint*;
 - .c the time limit for making a *second-tier complaint*;
 - .d information about how to make a *second-tier complaint* available from the Legal Ombudsman; and
 - .e full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.
- .5 You must communicate promptly the outcome of the *complaint* to the *complainant*, and if the outcome includes any offer of a suitable remedy, comply promptly with the remedy if accepted by the *complainant*.

rC105

When *chambers* or a *BSB entity* (as appropriate) has dealt with the *complaint*, *complainants* must be told in writing, or in accessible formats which meet their information needs, of their right to complain to the *Legal Ombudsman* (where applicable), of the time limit for doing so, and how to contact them.

Documents and record keeping**rC106**

All communications and documents relating to *complaints* must be kept confidential. They must be disclosed only so far as is necessary for:

- .1 the investigation and resolution of the *complaint*;
- .2 internal review in order to improve *chambers'* or the *BSB entity's* (as appropriate) handling of *complaints*;
- .3 complying with requests from the *Bar Standards Board* in the exercise of its monitoring and/or auditing functions.

rC107

The disclosure to the *Bar Standards Board* of internal documents relating to the handling of the *complaint* (such as the minutes of any meeting held to discuss a particular *complaint*) for the further resolution or investigation of the *complaint* is not required.

rC108

- .1 A record must be kept of each *complaint*, of all steps taken in response to it, and of the outcome of the *complaint*. Copies of all correspondence, including electronic mail, and all other documents generated in response to the *complaint* must also be kept. The records and copies should be kept for 6 years from resolution of the *complaint*.
- .2 A summary of *complaints* received shall be submitted to the BSB in a manner determined by the BSB from time to time.
- .3 Barristers in chambers, and employees and managers of BSB entities, must ensure that details of any *complaints* they receive and deal with are provided to their chambers/BSB entity, if the *complaint* relates to work at those chambers/BSB entity.

rC109

The person responsible for the administration of the procedure must report at least annually to either:

- .1 the *HOLP*; or
- .2 the appropriate member/committee of *chambers*, on the number of *complaints* received, on the subject areas of the *complaints* and on the outcomes. The *complaints* should be reviewed for trends, risks or issues. Reviews also need to include possible systemic issues in how *complaints* have been assessed, and resolved, and any service issues. ~~and possible training issues~~ Measures must be implemented to address those risks and issues. Appropriate training must be considered and undertaken, including provision of appropriate resources, to address the identified risks and issues.

Part 6: Definitions**complaint**

means, for the purposes of Part 2, a complaint by a *client* about the standard of service received that is addressed either to the *Legal Ombudsman* or the *chambers* or the *BSB authorised person*, which can be communicated orally or in written format, and can include an expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered (or may suffer) financial loss, distress, inconvenience, or other detriment.

complainant

has the meaning given by section 128(2) of the Act, and as prescribed under the scheme rules made by the Office for Legal Complaints under Part 6 of the Act.

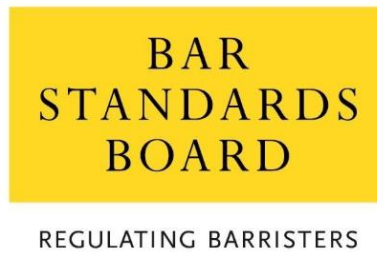
first-tier complaint

a relevant complaint made by a *complainant* to a *chambers* or *BSB authorised person* about the services provided.

second-tier complaint

a *complaint* made to the *Legal Ombudsman* under the scheme rules made by the Office for Legal Complaints.

FTC Data Collection Policy Statement



Bar Standards Board First-tier Complaints Data Policy Statement

Purpose and Background

1. This statement sets out the Bar Standards Board's (BSB) approach to the collection of first-tier complaints data from the profession, that is the self-employed bar, chambers and BSB entities, as of November 2025, with data collection to start 4 months thereafter. Our aim is to ensure that data on complaints handled at first-tier (i.e., made directly to a barrister/BSB entity) are captured consistently and systemically across the Bar. This will strengthen our regulatory oversight, improve our understanding of the client experience, and enable us to identify emerging issues, encourage good practice and promote continuous improvement across the profession.
2. This follows the Legal Services Board's introduction of section 112 complaints¹ handling requirements, and a new policy statement on first-tier complaints in May 2024. The BSB consulted on options for implementing the LSB's new complaints arrangements and published its final proposed rules changes in September 2025 for approval to the LSB.
3. Rule C108.1 of the BSB Handbook requires that a "record must be kept of each *complaint*, of all steps taken in response to it, and of the outcome of the *complaint*". Rule C108.2 requires that a "summary of *complaints* received shall be submitted to the BSB in a manner determined by the BSB from time to time."
4. This document sets out the detail and scope of complaints data that the profession is required to collect and submit, per rule C108.2 of the Handbook. This policy statement may be updated from time to time.
5. Further specific guidance on data collection and reporting/using BSB systems will also be published ahead of the first data collection exercise.

¹ Under section 112 of the Legal Services Act 2007, the Legal Services Board can specify the first-tier complaints handling rules that front-line regulators must have in place in their regulatory arrangements. The latest version is available here: <https://legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/s112-Requirements.pdf>

FTC Data Collection Policy Statement

Scope of Data

6. These data sets and scope only apply to data that need to be submitted to the BSB, for the purposes of rule C108.2. The profession will need to collect and submit data that fall under the definitions as set out in the BSB Handbook:
 - a. A complaint is defined as: “for the purposes of Part 2, a complaint by a *client* about the standard of service received that is addressed either to the *Legal Ombudsman* or the *chambers* or the *BSB authorised person*, which can be communicated orally or in written format, and can include an expression of dissatisfaction which alleges that the complainant has suffered (or may suffer) financial loss, distress, inconvenience, or other detriment.”
 - b. A first-tier complaint is a “relevant complaint made by a *complainant* to a *chambers* or *BSB authorised person* about the services provided.”
 - c. A complainant “has the meaning given by section 128(2) of the Act, and as prescribed under the scheme rules made by the Office for Legal Complaints under Part 6 of the Act.”
7. This means data about complaints that fall under these definitions, i.e. first-tier complaints, will need to be collected where the clients (who the authorised person acts for, including prospective and former clients) are⁸:
 - a. individuals;
 - b. a business or enterprise that is a micro-enterprise⁹;
 - c. a club/association/organisation, the affairs of which are managed by its members/a committee/a committee of its members, that has an annual income net of tax of less than £1 million;
 - d. a trustee of a trust that has an asset value of less than £1 million
 - e. a personal representative or beneficiary of the estate of a person who, before they died, had not raised a complaint with the authorised person.
8. Complaints that fall under these definitions relate to self-employed barristers and BSB regulated entities.

Data Collection Methods

9. Chambers and BSB regulated entities will need to capture and report complaints data that fall within the scope of this policy statement to the BSB.
10. Chambers will need to collect and submit first-tier complaints data on behalf of all associated self-employed barristers, including tenants, door tenants and pupils. Self-employed barristers will need to ensure that their chambers are aware of any complaints relating to work stemming from the associated chambers, including any direct access work. Barristers in multiple chambers will need to ensure that each chambers is aware of any complaints relating to work stemming from the respective chambers. The entity to which the work relates is usually set out in engagement letters.
11. BSB entities will also need to report any complaints received about them.

FTC Data Collection Policy Statement

12. Data submission will be on an annual basis. Timeframes will be communicated further by the BSB.
13. For chambers and BSB regulated entities, data will be collected via MyBar organisational accounts, i.e. chambers and BSB entities using their own MyBar account to update data for all registered barristers who work for or to them.
14. Self-employed barristers will need ensure that any complaints they receive are passed on to their chambers for reporting to the BSB. They will also be asked to confirm at Authorisation to Practise (AtP) that all of their complaints data has been submitted for that reporting year. Managers of BSB entities and staff employed by a BSB entity, including contractors will need to ensure any complaints are reported to the entity's administration, in relation to work at those entities.
15. Sole practitioners will need to report their complaints data directly through MyBar.
16. Standardised MyBar forms will be developed to capture complaints data. Guidance on how to use and upload data onto MyBar will be provided to the profession.

Data Fields

17. The following complaints data fields will need to be collected for each complaint that falls under the definitions and scope of this statement. A template format for the complaint fields below, and additional guidance will be issued.
18. Chambers, BSB entities and sole practitioners may record the data below in formats that work best for them, but they will need to complete standardised MyBar forms.

Data	Options/Notes
Complaint received date	When the client made the initial complaint
Complaint acknowledged date	When the provider acknowledged the complaint
Funding type	Whether privately funded, or by legal aid, or other
Classification of the instruction	Whether via solicitor, insurer, union, public access, and others, for instance accountants, licensed access
Area of law	This is in line with the areas of law that the Bar Standards Board already sets and captures at the Authorisation to Practise process.
Complaint category/reason	These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs information deficiency (relating to issues around advice and formats/information provided about costs)

FTC Data Collection Policy Statement

Data	Options/Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost excessive (issues relating to the costs of services provided) • Delays (issues around service/advice delays) • Poor information (lack of clarity or sufficiency of information provided to client) • Failure to follow instructions (not adhering to client instructions) • Failure to keep informed (lack of communication to client) • Failure to respond (lack of response to client) • Miscellaneous (free text, to capture other complaint reasons)
Case outcome, if case concluded	To help understand the level of complaints brought by clients regarding dissatisfaction with case outcomes
Whether advice sought from Bar Mutual	To help understand the wider context of complaints and outcomes when advice from Bar Mutual is sought
Complaint closure details Some of these will require the profession to ask and capture client responses to the questions, when closing a complaint (such as d. and e.).	These include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Date closed, and reason for closure (such as resolved/upheld, partially resolved etc) b. Whether complaint was upheld c. Remedy/resolution details d. Whether the complaint was resolved to the client's satisfaction e. Whether the client was satisfied with the way you handled the complaint

September 2025
Bar Standards Board

Bar Standards Board – Director General’s Update – 25 September 2025

For publication

Harman Report

1. Baroness Harman’s report on bullying and harassment at the Bar was published on 8 September. The Bar Standards Board collaborated closely with the review, submitting evidence and running a roundtable for the review team to provide insight into our enforcement process.
2. We welcomed the review report on publication and look forward now to working with the profession on a concerted response to the cultural challenges highlighted by the Review. We also recognise that we must improve the speed of our own enforcement process and the support we provide to witnesses in harassment cases. Our public response to the report set out the steps that we are already taking to improve in both these respects:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/resources/press-releases/the-bar-standards-board-welcomes-the-independent-review-of-bullying-harassment-and-sexual-harassment-at-the-bar.html>

Vocational Bar training

3. The Bar Standards Board authorises and regulates the providers of vocational Bar training which constitutes the second stage of the qualification process to practise as a barrister. There are currently ten authorised Bar training providers. To ensure that prospective students are well-informed about the prospects of obtaining pupillage and able to make informed choices between providers, the Bar Standards Board publishes annually a report on the costs and progression rates by Bar training provider. This year’s report was published on 31 July:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/resources/the-bar-standards-board-publishes-annual-report-on-bar-training-statistics-by-provider.html?>

Mark Neale

Director General

Chair's Report on Visits and External Meetings from 1 September 2025**Status:**

1. For noting

Executive Summary:

2. In the interests of good governance, openness and transparency, this paper sets out the Chair's visits and meetings since the last Board meeting.

List of Visits and Meetings:**Meetings**

1 September	Met with Kathryn Stone OBE
10 September	Meeting with Professor Stephen Mayson accompanied by Mark Neale
10 September	Met with Senior Leadership Team
13 September	Attended Bar Council meeting
24 September	Attended Board Briefing meeting
25 September	Attended Chairs' Committee meeting

1-2-1 Meetings

1 September	Introduction meeting with Emir Feisal JP
2 September	Introduction meeting with Leslie Thomas KC
2 September	Introduction meeting with Ruth Pickering
3 September	Introduction meeting with Ruby Hamid KC
3 September	Introduction meeting with Jeff Chapman KC
4 September	Introduction meeting with Andrew Mitchell KC (Vice Chair)
4 September	Introduction meeting with Irena Sabic KC
4 September	Introduction meeting with Tracey Markham
5 September	Introduction meeting with Gisela Abbam
9 September	Introduction meeting with Steven Haines
15 September	Introduction meeting with Stephen Thornton CBE
23 September	Introduction meeting with Barbara Mills KC (Chair of BC)
24 September	Introduction meeting with Catherine Brown (Interim Chair, LSB)

Forthcoming Events

30 September	Due to attend Opening of the Legal Year Dinner
1 October	Due to attend the of the Legal Year Service at Westminster Abbey