

BAR STANDARDS BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

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, which goes into effect 15 June 2026. Our aim is to ensure that data on complaints handled at first-tier (i.e., made directly to a barrister) is captured consistently and systemically across the Bar. This will strengthen our regulatory oversight, improve our understanding of the consumer 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.
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.

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>

5. Further specific guidance on data collection and reporting/using BSB systems will also be published ahead of the first data collection exercise.

Scope of Data

6. These data sets, and scope only apply to data that needs to be submitted to the BSB, for the purposes of rule C108.2. The profession will need to collect and submit data that falls 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 “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, and 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 chamber 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.
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. 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 at paras 3-4 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	<p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs information deficiency (relating to issues around advice and formats/information provided about costs) • 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
<p>Complaint closure details</p> <p>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.).</p>	<p>These include:</p> <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