

BAR STANDARDS BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

BAR STANDARDS BOARD COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2019 – 2022

Introduction

1. The Bar Standards Board is the independent regulator of the Bar. It can only fully achieve its statutory objectives if its work is widely known and understood and key stakeholders are able to contribute to its policy-making. So the BSB maintains a small Communications and Public Engagement (CPE) team.
2. The purpose of the BSB's Communications and Public Engagement (CPE) Strategy is to support the Board in the achievement of its statutory objectives:
 - 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 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.

In particular, between 2019 and 2022 our key CPE objectives will be to help the BSB to address our key risk themes, which are that:

- working cultures and professional environment inhibit an independent, strong, diverse and effective profession;
- innovation and disruption in the legal services market offer threats and opportunities for the profession and for the public; and
- affordability and lack of legal knowledge threaten access to justice.

And to deliver our three strategic priorities which are:

- delivering risk-based, targeted and effective regulation;
- encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession; and
- advancing access to justice in a changing market.

3. This Strategy is designed to accompany the BSB's Strategic Plan for 2019-22 and was approved by the Bar Standards Board on 28 March 2019.

The Strategy

4. To achieve the aims set out in its Strategic Plan the BSB must communicate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including:

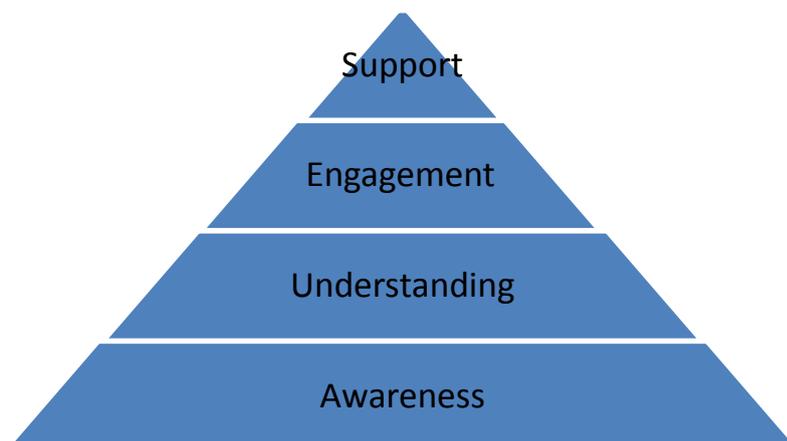
- the public and consumer groups, including bodies promoting access to justice and equality and diversity
- barristers and their representative bodies, including the Bar Council, the Inns, the Circuits and Specialist Bar Associations
- those training for the Bar, Law students and those offering that training
- other professions which support the Bar including clerks and practice managers
- other legal professionals and their representative bodies
- other regulatory bodies
- Government, Parliament and Whitehall and
- the media

With which stakeholders we need to engage and to what extent will vary according to the issue. Our priority is to ensure in each case that those most affected by our decisions have their voices heard in the decision-making process.

5. Our CPE strategy seeks:

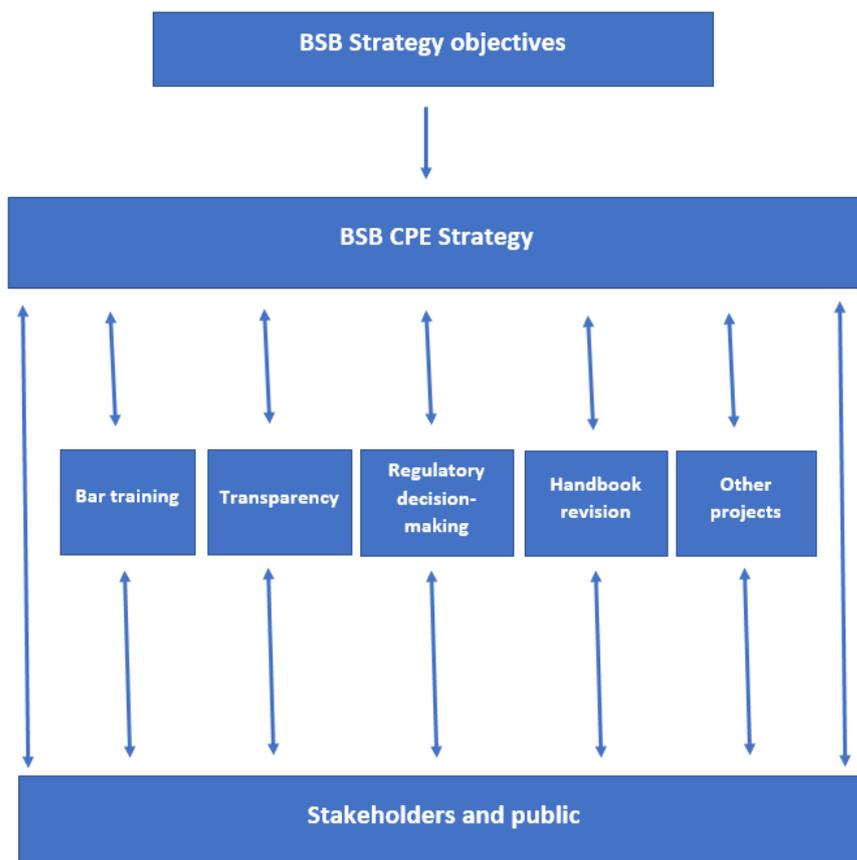
- to maximise **awareness** of our work and
- increase **understanding** of what we do with the aim of increasing trust and confidence
- in the hope that that will encourage the **engagement** which is vital for our policy making, and
- increase **support** for our work (by which we mean ongoing engagement which certainly need not be uncritical).

6. The purpose of our engagement can be illustrated with the following “communications pyramid”:



7. The pyramid seeks to illustrate that while we want the widest possible awareness of our work, which we hope will lead to greater understanding, engagement and support, we recognise that those who choose to engage with and support us in our work will always only be a proportion of those who are aware of our work. We know from some of our stakeholders that they feel that a degree of awareness and understanding is sufficient. But we do want as many as possible of the public to be aware of the following key messages:

- the Bar is a well-regulated profession which is vital for the rule of law upon which a civilised society depends. So the regulation of the Bar matters to everyone even if they may never themselves use a barrister.
 - the BSB is an independent body operating in the public interest which seeks to ensure that barristers are well trained, competent and trustworthy and dedicated to giving their clients the best service they can; and
 - the Bar is an increasingly diverse profession, where we seek to ensure that entry and career progression is based on merit.
8. Communications and public engagement is not only the responsibility of the CPE team. We seek to encourage all staff to act as ambassadors for the BSB in their dealings with members of the public and key stakeholders and every key programme has a CPE strategy. The responsibility for designing and implementing those strategies is shared between the Programme and CPE teams.
9. The diagram below illustrates how the BSB’s CPE Strategy operates. There is direct messaging between the BSB CPE team and staff and stakeholders and the public and also messaging that is delivered as part of individual programme plans. It is essential that this messaging goes in both directions – we gather vitally important feedback from stakeholders while we also communicate with them:



10. The CPE team’s key overall objectives over the next three years are:
- to increase awareness of our work by all stakeholders;
 - to increase understanding of our work especially by those training for the Bar;

- to encourage greater engagement with our work with a more diverse range of stakeholders, including more engagement with consumer bodies;
- to increase support for our work in the form of ongoing engagement.

11. These objectives support the BSB's strategic objectives in the following ways:

- delivering risk-based, targeted and effective regulation;
 - the Bar and other stakeholders must be aware of our regulatory rules for those rules to be effective; and
 - greater engagement by stakeholders with our work also helps us to understand better the risks to our achieving our statutory objectives and to maximise the appropriateness and effectiveness of our regulation both in its design and its impact.
- encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
 - we need to raise awareness of the progress that is being made to promote equality and diversity at the Bar and its strength and effectiveness but also to promote the need for further progress
 - we also need to engage with barristers and other key stakeholders so that we can better understand the threats and opportunities facing the Bar
- advancing access to justice in a changing market.
 - we need to promote public awareness of how they can get legal help which we seek to do through our own communications and in partnership with others
 - we also need to improve our understanding of the barriers and threats to access to justice so that we can properly target our activities and complement the work of others who share this objective

Activities:

12. Our usual activities include:

- issuing Press Releases and handle Press inquiries
- publishing corporate documents
- issuing a monthly email to all barristers
- using social media especially Twitter and
- holding and attending face to face meetings and events

and in the coming period we will also seek to achieve our objectives by:

- increasing the coverage of our work in the national and specialist Press as well as in the legal Press;
- improving and maintaining the "read" rate for Regulatory Update, our monthly email regulatory bulletin for the Bar;
- refreshing our website and our intranet site, Verity, to make them easier and more attractive to use, including on mobile devices;
- working with the other legal regulators, to improve the public's understanding as to how they can obtain legal advice and how the Bar is regulated;
- seeking other forms of collaboration with stakeholders where possible;
- attending more events hosted by third parties rather than expecting them to attend our own events;
- seeking new ways to encourage engagement with us and with our policy consultations, especially by the public and consumer groups;
- ensuring that our Board and staff feel well informed about our work and are well equipped to act as ambassadors for the BSB;

- establishing new measures for judging the effectiveness of our work; and
- reducing our costs and seeking to maximise our value for money.

Outcomes

13. The outcomes we will seek to achieve will be:

- wider and generally positive coverage of our work in the national and specialist Press and on social media;
- an increase in usage and in user satisfaction for both our website and intranet site;
- working with the SRA and other legal regulators, an increase in public understanding as to how they can obtain legal advice;
- more collaborative events and initiatives with interested stakeholders;
- an increase in interaction with our work through greater attendance at third party events;
- wider understanding of our work among all stakeholders;
- an increase in engagement with our consultations, especially bodies representing consumers and the public;
- Board members and staff feel well informed and well able to act as ambassadors for the BSB;
- we have in place better measures to evaluate our effectiveness;
- we can show that we have reduced our costs while maintaining our effectiveness.