

Research Summary

Women at the Bar: Exploring solutions to promote gender equality



Why we undertook this research

The BSB Equality Objectives for 2017-2019 make a specific commitment to identify what can be done to improve the retention and progression of women at the Bar. The 2016 'Women at the Bar' survey of over 1,300 barristers, identified a number of areas that negatively affected the retention of women in the profession.

As a follow-up to that survey, in 2017, the BSB conducted further research by running five workshops with over 50 attendees, including barristers, clerks, chambers' directors, circuit leaders, specialist Bar associations, and Bar Professional Training Course providers. Workshop participants were invited to suggest potential solutions that might be taken forward by the BSB, or by others, to address some of the barriers to the retention and progression of women at the Bar. A series of recommendations arose from workshop discussions and can be grouped into following themes:



How will the BSB use these findings?

The findings of this research have informed the development of an action plan which sets out specific actions for the BSB and other key stakeholders to help improve the experiences of women in the profession and drive improvements to retention. The action plan has three areas of regulatory focus: the BSB Handbook, Guidance (produced either by the BSB or the Bar Council), and Engagement and Partnership. The actions broadly reflect the areas in which there was greatest consensus at the workshops.

What do the findings mean for key stakeholders?

For chambers' management and clerks, the findings highlight examples of good practice. They also discuss how improvements to chambers' policies and procedures can help the retention of women, and how training can improve how any issues are addressed within chambers.

For the Bar as a whole, the findings suggest what could be done to help improve the experiences of women at the Bar, such as by working towards changing certain behaviours within the Bar through developing a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

The BSB will continue to engage with the Bar Council, Legal Practice Management Association, Institute of Barristers' Clerks, Inns of Court and other stakeholders to deliver the action plan.

The main report, which sets out these findings in more detail, can be found at <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/media-centre/research-and-statistics/research-reports/>