



The Bar Council

TAKING ACTION POST HARMAN: QUICK GUIDE FOR CHAMBERS

Harriet Harman's [independent review into bullying, harassment and sexual harassment](#) was published on Monday 8 September 2025.

The report sets out 36 recommendations for radical change.

The Bar Council team have identified **seven** immediate actions that all chambers can take.

Everyone working at and around the Bar will need to take some time to digest the detail of the report, there are steps chambers can take straight away to address some of the immediate concerns laid out by the review.

1. Check your anti-harassment policies

Check over your policy to ensure it covers:

- Clear standards of behaviour including express prohibitions of bullying, harassment and victimisation
- The prohibition on members and employees engaging in intimate relationships with students, mini-pupils (or others on any type of work experience) or pupils (trainees)
- Clear informal and formal procedures for handling complaints in relation to bullying and harassment
- Provisions for sanctions following a finding of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment, including suspension and expulsion from chambers, prohibitions on attendance at certain events, and prohibitions on appointments to positions of responsibility
- A list of trained nominated people who can support complainants of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment within chambers

Read [our guide to managing an allegation of sexual harassment in chambers](#) which includes the BSB model for an anti-harassment policy for chambers.

2. Ensure everyone refreshes their anti-harassment and bullying training

Training won't stop bullying and harassment from ever happening, but it can ensure everyone is clear what the rules are, including the expected codes of behaviour, what will happen if they fall below expected standards, and how to raise a concern. Training should:

- Be specific to those working in and around the Bar
- Be clear on expected behaviours and provide detailed examples of behaviour which falls short of/crosses the line
- Set out informal and formal routes to complain or raise an issue
- Reassure everyone, but particularly junior colleagues, that complaints will be taken seriously and acted upon
- Be clear on everyone's responsibilities to protect against victimisation of complainants

We also provide [anti-harassment and bullying training](#) and [bespoke advice and support to chambers](#).

3. Ensure all members and chambers' staff know behaviour expectations and how to make a complaint

You can do this in your chambers by:

- Making the bullying and harassment report an agenda item for chambers and team meetings
- Sharing your policy and ensuring everyone knows who to go to if they have an issue or want to make a complaint
- Promote [Talk to Spot](#) to members and colleagues – our confidential tool for recording incidents of harassment. Download our Talk to Spot posters and display them in shared areas of chambers
- Consider developing a code of conduct so everyone working in and around chambers knows exactly what's expected of them

For training for leaders in chambers to understand how to manage complaints, [book our online or in-person training](#).

4. Put in place appropriate measures to protect students, mini-pupils and pupils

Baroness Harman's review highlighted the extent and impact of sexual harassment on students, mini-pupils and pupils, and was clear on the responsibility on every part of the institution to prevent this from happening in the future. In addition to prohibiting sexual relationships with students, mini-pupils or pupils, other measures should include:

- The prohibiting of informal mini-pupillages. These should only take place following a formal process within chambers and not informally via individual members
- Mini-pupils, or anyone undertaking any form of work experience, should be given copies of chambers' anti-harassment and safeguarding policies and should be signposted to a trained individual within chambers who is responsible for their pastoral care

For members who are looking to undertake refresher training, or for those who are looking to become a pupil supervisor, [take a look at our course](#) which helps you to understand your role, and supports you to build positive relationships with your pupil.

5. Agree a victim centred process for managing complaints

The review highlights the many challenges faced by complainants who try and raise these issues within chambers. When thinking about how to better support those who make complaints chambers could:

- Read paragraphs 73 - 79 and 136 - 150 of the report – these sections describe the issues in detail
- Ensure a number of colleagues at different levels of seniority and experience are trained and able to support complainants

[Read the report](#)

6. Check your constitution allows for appropriate sanctions

The review sets out the challenges faced by some chambers in dealing with members who have breached their policies. Too often there are constitutional barriers to dealing properly with these issues, and it can be too late to make an amendment once a problem has arisen. The review recommends:

- Chambers' constitutions, and relevant employee policies, should set out clearly the range of sanctions available for findings of serious misconduct
- Constitutions, and relevant employee policies, must require members and employees to comply with policies, procedures, and decisions as to sanctions
- Sanctions provisions must include a power to expel or suspend a member or dismiss an employee where the seriousness of the conduct warrants such action. The power to expel or suspend ought to be exercised by a trusted committee within chambers, which includes members and senior employees

- Chambers must require any applicant for tenancy to disclose whether they are, or have been, subject to any disciplinary investigations or findings whether by any of their previous chambers, Inn or BSB/JCIO, or other regulators and to make provision for expulsion, and reporting to BSB (for dishonesty) in the event of a false declaration

Scott Leonard and Clare Kelly discuss key issues in their Counsel article: [Making your chambers constitution fit for purpose](#)

7. Understand the risks and take steps to mitigate them

The duty to prevent sexual harassment which came into force in 2024 has introduced more preventative safeguarding thinking in workplaces. [Read our 8 steps in this article about the new duty.](#)

Take a look at [our guidance and template for carrying out a sexual harassment risk assessment.](#)

What else you can do

If you would like to discuss this report, or an issue in chambers, please contact our Equality team equality@barcouncil.org.uk.

To anonymously and confidentially raise concerns about inappropriate and abusive behaviour use [Talk to Spot](#).