

WHITESTONE CHAMBERS

Barristers



Chambers of Mr Lawrence Power

1 Middle Temple Lane

London

EC4Y 9AA

CHAMBERS' WELLBEING POLICY

2025

1. Chambers aspires to create a safe environment for work, education and training. We aim to encourage and facilitate working practices and services that support the health and well-being of all staff, pupils and barristers.
2. Work can have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing. Healthy and well-motivated barristers and staff members can have an equally positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of Chambers and individual members. Fostering a working environment that protects the physical and mental well-being of its people is good for all of Chambers.
3. Responsibility for health and wellbeing at work belongs to everyone in Chambers. Factors that can influence whether people will have a positive or negative relationship with work include:
 - a. relationships between pupils, pupil supervisors, staff and barristers.
 - b. whether pupils (in line with the principle of flexibility described in the Authorisation Handbook), pupil supervisors (which bolsters the LSB's definition of flexibility), staff and barristers feel involved in organisational issues and decisions;
 - c. income to meet more than just basic needs;
 - d. availability and acceptability of flexible working;
 - e. awareness of occupational health issues and whether they are taken seriously;
 - f. whether the principles of fairness, equality and diversity are experienced in the workplace.
4. This policy provides a framework within which Chambers encourages and facilitates working practices and services that support well-being. It aims to draw upon good practice, recognising informal support arrangements particularly among barristers, and to be flexible rather than prescriptive.
5. Whitestone seeks to protect members, pupils and staff and promote best practice in conjunction with "promoting dignity, courtesy and respect" in learning environments and the workplace. It is our aim to ensure that all members of Chambers have some sense of autonomy and voice and feel supported by colleagues throughout the organisation.
6. Chamber's Wellbeing Officer is Vinit Khurana KC (Scot.)

Work Life Balance

7. Chambers acknowledges and seeks to raise awareness that because barristers are self-employed there is an assumption that they have control of their work-life balance. However, the very fact of being self-employed adds pressures that are not experienced by employees. The desire to maintain a busy practice and to keep staff and solicitors happy can result in taking on too much work. This can seriously upset

work-life balance and may lead to unhealthy work-related stress. Further, we acknowledge the stresses felt by administrative staff who, on occasion, need to be reachable outside of Chambers opening hours.

8. Chambers operate a supportive referral scheme when it is identified that pupils and barristers who display more than occasional cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioural symptoms of stress which give rise to concerns by colleagues or senior staff will be invited, in the first instance, to meet with their pupil supervisor, or a clerk of their choice, to discuss their workload and the management of their practice.
8. At any time, pupils and barristers can arrange to see any member of Chambers or administrative staff if they feel a need to rebalance their practice in light of concerns about their well-being to ensure pupils can “complete their education and training and... achieve the best outcome that they are capable of” (AF 27.2) and all other members and staff feel protected.
9. Chambers operates flexible working and is supportive of providing adjustments, for short reviewable periods where the barrister or pupil feels that this is appropriate for them to manage their work life balance. Our Flexible Working Policy can be found on our website details of working time arrangements for pupils are included in the pupil induction manual. Both documents are provided to pupils electronically and further copies can be obtained from the Head of Legal Operations.
10. There is substantial evidence that a flexible approach to working patterns can have significant organisational benefits, including reduced absenteeism, improved morale and greater productivity. There are many different ways of structuring working patterns and Chambers will consider requests from staff members for part-time working; flexible working hours; compressed working hours or working from home.
11. Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of people in Chambers is important for individuals’ physical health, social wellbeing and productivity.
12. Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all and everyone has a responsibility to contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems, and support them once they are at work.
13. Important aspects of mental health and wellbeing includes providing information and raising awareness, management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, providing a supportive work environment, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to Chambers after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

Other Policies

14. This policy is complementary to established policies including:
Health & Safety, Grievance, Equality and Diversity, Harassment, Reasonable Adjustment, Parental Leave and Flexible Working

Objectives of this policy

15. To develop a supportive culture, address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing, and to develop management skills we will:
 - a. reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of all forms of disability;
 - b. give all members, pupils and staff information on, and increase their awareness of, mental wellbeing;
 - c. give non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff, pupils and barristers that experience mental health problems;
 - d. include information about our mental health policy in induction sessions;
 - e. provide opportunities for staff, pupils and barristers to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events;
 - f. offer staff flexible working arrangements and encourage barristers and pupils to have a good work-life balance;
 - g. set barristers, pupils and staff realistic targets that do not require them to work unreasonable hours;
 - h. ensure all staff have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job;
 - i. manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism;
 - j. establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
 - k. while members, staff and pupils are permitted to opt out, we will establish a “well-being buddy system” that allows people to vocalise well-being concerns in confidentially if they do not yet feel comfortable raising it with Head of Chambers, Pupil Supervisor or Grievance Officer.
16. To provide support for staff, pupils and barristers experiencing mental health difficulties, we will:
 - a. ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently;

- b. where appropriate, clearly communicate to colleagues who are able to support when the symptoms of stress become apparent to prevent further stress;
 - c. ensure individuals are aware of the support that can be offered through the Employee Assistance Program or their own GP.
 - d. in cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a graduated return to work or practice;
 - e. make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment or practice, in consultation with the individual, where a return to the same role is not possible due to identified risks or other factors;
 - f. treat all matters relating to individuals and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.
17. To demonstrate a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues we will:
- a. ensure that all staff and barristers involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Equality Act, and are trained in appropriate interview skills;
 - b. not make assumptions that a person with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant;
 - c. recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue;
 - d. ask about health and wellbeing in exit interviews to help identify factors that may cause stress.

Further Signposting and Best Practice:

Chambers provides an Employee Assistance Program that can be accessed by all staff, members and pupils 24 hours a day for confidential support. Their portal can be accessed at <http://www.employeeassistance.org.uk/>. Log in details are provided to all members, pupils and staff. Further details are available on the posters within chambers or from Robert Pidgeon, Head of Legal Operations.

Further details on Wellbeing from the Bar Council can be found here: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/support-for-barristers/wellbeing-personal-career-support/wellbeing-at-the-bar.html>

This policy will be reviewed by 2027