

Bar Standards Board  
289-293 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 7HZ

Dear Baroness Blackstone,

I am an elected member of the Bar Council, representing junior barristers under 10 years' Call.

I am also a participant on the Bar Council's Leadership Course, and you will see below that other junior barristers on that course have signed this letter in support.

You may recall that at the last Bar Council meeting (30<sup>th</sup> January 2021), I raised the profound concern of many barristers that the Bar Standards Board and Bar Tribunals and Adjudication Service ("BSB" "BTAS") were not dealing with incidents of barristers committing violent crime, or sexual misconduct, or both together, adequately.

Recent examples include:

- Craig Tipper, who was suspended for 3 months and fined for sexually assaulting two women;
- Daren Timpson-Hunt, suspended for 6 months and fined for "upskirting" a woman;
- Dominic Woolard, reprimanded and fined, who sexually assaulted a 22 year old Chambers' pupil on three separate occasions;
- Felix Evans, who was suspended for 3 years and fined after being convicted of grievous bodily harm (assault with a hockey stick);
- Sami Rahman, suspended for 3 months for repeatedly breaching a non-molestation order (for which he was convicted)<sup>1</sup>.

None of the above were disbarred. In general, the punishments meted out have been manifestly insufficient. Such decisions give the impression that this kind of conduct is acceptable at the Bar. Certainly, they are out of line with the decisions of those who regulate other professions such as medicine, the police, and solicitors.

Women barristers see that men guilty of such transgressions have been allowed to continue practising in the courts, leaving them in turn feeling unsafe and unsupported in their professional arena. Women are deterred from pursuing careers at the Bar. The public see that male barristers, with convictions, do not face the consequences of their actions and their view of the profession is thus eroded.

I am sure that you will agree that this is unacceptable. The BTAS sanctions Guidance is not fit for purpose.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tbta.org.uk/hearings/findings-and-sentences-of-past-hearings/>

<sup>2</sup> For a stark comparison see Crime Girl's thoroughly researched blog: <https://crimegirl.co.uk/2021/01/30/misconduct-at-the-bar-missing-the-mark/>

In reply to my query at Bar Council, you said that this was “under review”. The recent joint statement from the BSB and BTAS referred to a review and consultation to be published in the summer. Yet there is no information about the consultation on either the BSB or BTAS website. In the face of such serious and continuing concern, there is a worrying lack of transparency about this process. In particular:

- What is the scope of the review and who is leading it?
- Who is being consulted? (Notably, the Bar Council has not been asked to contribute)
- Will the result of the consultation be published?
- When will the new Guidance be drafted and imposed?

I would appreciate hearing from you on those questions, and with any other reassurance you can provide, as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Francesca O’Neill, 1 Chancery Lane

Kirsten Sjovoll, Matrix Chambers  
Khadija Leuenberger, 36 Stone  
Laura Bayley, Crucible Chambers  
Lydia Pemberton, 3 Paper Buildings  
Bo Kay Fung, Financial Conduct Authority  
Andrew Powell, 4 Paper Buildings  
Chris Gutteridge, Exchange Chambers  
Bianca Jackson, Coram Chambers  
Narinder Jhittay, Maitland Chambers  
Shazia Akhtar, Hardwicke  
Lena Amartey, 9 St John Street  
Steve Broach, 39 Essex Chambers  
Simone Bowman, Bow Law Chambers  
Sarah Salmon, Field Court Chambers  
Jessica Powers, New Square Chambers  
Charlotte Pope-Williams, Pinsent Masons  
Rebecca Griffiths, Apex Chambers  
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