



St Pauls Chambers Wellbeing Policy

Application: This Policy applies to all clerking staff and to all barristers, including pupil barristers.

Aims: This policy sets out Chambers’ approach to health and wellbeing.

Monitoring: Shall be monitored by the Wellbeing Committee, the Senior Clerk, and Head of Chambers.

1. St Pauls Chambers aspires to be an ‘Employer and Chambers of Choice’, and aims to encourage and facilitate working practices and services that support the health and wellbeing 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. Fostering a working environment that protects the physical and mental wellbeing of its people is good for Chambers’ business.
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 may include:
 - a. Relationships between staff and barristers;
 - b. Relationships between work groups and departments;
 - c. Relationships between line managers and other staff;
 - d. Whether staff and barristers feel involved in organisational issues and decisions;
 - e. The job scope of staff;
 - f. The scope of barristerial practice;
 - g. Income to meet more than just basic needs;
 - h. Availability and acceptability of flexible working;
 - i. Awareness of occupational health issues and whether they are taken seriously;
 - j. Whether the principles of fairness, equality and diversity are experienced in Chambers.
4. This Policy provides a framework within which Chambers encourages and facilitates working practices and services that support wellbeing. It aims to draw upon good practice,

recognising informal support arrangements, particularly among barristers, and to be flexible rather than prescriptive.

5. St Pauls Chambers seeks to protect their employees and barristers and promote best practice in people management. We are a democratic Chambers. It is our aim to ensure that all members of Chambers have some sense of autonomy and voice, and feel supported by colleagues and managers right to the top of the organisation.

Mentoring and training

6. As part of this commitment Chambers operates a mentoring scheme, and provides training to support:
 - a. Managers with the skills to manage people, practice development, and the business as a whole;
 - b. Pupils and junior tenants with support and guidance from more senior members;
 - c. Skills training to utilise new systems and technologies;
 - d. Greater awareness of equality and diversity including disability and mental health issues;
 - e. Opportunities for professional development for barristers relevant to their area of work;
 - f. Awareness of the signs of stress in ourselves and in others.

Work-Life Balance

7. St Pauls 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 clerks 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.
8. St Pauls Chambers operates 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 Mentor, or the Senior Clerk (or both), to discuss their workload and the management of their practice.
9. At any time, pupils and barristers can arrange to see one of the designated Mentors or Senior Clerk if they feel a need to rebalance their practice for whatever reason.
10. The Head of Chambers, (with the appropriate Mentor, and Senior Clerk, if necessary) will consider any request for flexible working for any barrister or pupil in Chambers.

11. Staff should inform their line manager at an early stage if they are finding their work commitments too demanding, even if the reasons for their difficulties are external to Chambers.
12. 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 in relation to flexible working, including working at home.

Mental wellbeing

13. 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.
14. 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. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems, and support them once they are at work.
15. 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.
16. We recognise that with the right support people with a mental health condition can, and do, stay in work.

Other policies

17. This policy is complementary to established policies including:
 - a. Health and Safety, grievance, disciplinary, sickness and capability policies;
 - b. Equality and Diversity, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and whistle blowing policies;
 - c. Maternity, paternity, and parental leave policies;

Objectives of this policy

18. To develop a supportive culture, address factors that may negatively impact upon wellbeing, and develop management skills we will:
 - a. Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of all forms of disability;

- b. Give employees, pupils and barristers information on, and increase 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 (including an annual weekend abroad for member barristers);
 - f. Offer staff flexible working arrangements and encourage barristers and pupils to have a good work-life balance;
 - g. Set employees 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.
19. To provide support for staff, pupils and barristers experiencing mental and physical 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 symptoms of stress become apparent to prevent further stress;
 - c. Ensure individuals are aware of the support that can be offered through occupational health (where appropriate), 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.
20. To demonstrate a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues we will:
- a. Have positive statements in recruitment adverts and literature;
 - b. Ensure that all staff and barristers involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Equality Act, and follow the fair selection criteria and process in place in Chambers;

- c. 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;
- d. Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace;
- e. Recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue;
- f. Ask about health and wellbeing in exit interviews to help identify factors that may cause stress.

Communication and review

- 21. All barristers, pupils and staff will be made aware of this wellbeing policy. This will be part of a health at work approach which will be emphasised at induction sessions.
- 22. The 'Wellbeing Committee', Head of Chambers and Senior clerk will be responsible for reviewing the wellbeing policy and for monitoring how effectively the policy meets its aims and objectives.

Further assistance

- 23. Further details on wellbeing from the Bar Council can be found here: <http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the-bar/wellbeing-at-the-bar/>
- 24. Or staff, pupils and barristers can access help here:
www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk/clerks-support/
www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk/students-pupil-support/
www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk/barristers-support/
- 25. There is now a specific confidential helpline available to barristers with a practising certificate, and members of the Institute of Barristers Clerks and Legal Practice Managers Association. Call 0800 169 2040.