

A photograph of three young children sitting on a green mat, playing with toys. The child in the center is a young boy with a joyful expression, wearing a light blue polo shirt and dark pants. He is holding a yellow toy. To his left is a young girl with blonde hair and a purple bow, wearing a purple and white striped sweater. To his right is another young girl wearing a pink textured cardigan. They are surrounded by various toys, including blue and yellow blocks and a purple toy.

BAR MENTORING SERVICE MATERNITY MENTORING GUIDE



The Bar Council
Integrity. Excellence. Justice.



BACKGROUND

1. Research has identified the positive benefits of mentoring in promoting self-evaluation, one-to-one development, encouraging career progression and supporting an individual's wellbeing (resilience).
2. The Bar Council created the Bar Mentoring Service in 2014 as an umbrella service consisting of different mentoring schemes designed to meet different needs. For example, we have schemes to assist those seeking to join the Bar (access), stay in practice (retention), or to secure silk or judicial appointment (progression).
3. The Bar Mentoring Service enables those with a particular need to speak confidentially with a more experienced barrister who can offer appropriate guidance, advice, and support in a safe environment.
4. The Bar Council's Bar Mentoring Service complements Chambers', practice area or Circuit-specific schemes and enables barristers to find mentors outside of their Chambers or day-to-day practice.

WHAT IS MATERNITY MENTORING?

5. The Maternity Mentoring Scheme ("Maternity Mentoring") is a new mentoring scheme. It satisfies a recommendation for more mentoring made in the Bar Council's gender research 'Snapshot of Self-employed Women's Experience of the Profession'.¹
6. Returning to practice after having had a family can be daunting. A barrister's practice area and type of practice (employed or self-employed), their circuit and chambers, all impact on their experience of taking and returning from a career break to have a family. The challenges of balancing a career (particularly in self-employed practice) with a young family is frequently cited² as a reason for leaving the profession. For some mothers at the Bar, often without family support nearby and sometimes in a chambers where there are no other women in a similar position, the task of rebuilding and maintaining a career can prove too difficult.
7. The Bar Council already provides support and advice for women about to take maternity leave and for those returning from maternity leave³, but we recognise that having access to a more

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and in Bar Council monitoring on the reasons barristers change their Practising Certificate <http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/supporting-the-bar/equality-and-diversity/equality-diversity-information/change-of-status-form/>

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experienced parent who has been through the whole process and come out the other side with a flourishing practice will prove invaluable to barristers who are both contemplating a career break, and upon their return.

8. Although the name connotes otherwise, Maternity Mentoring is intended to be available to all parents/carers at the Bar (both female and male), and is intended to support the retention and progression of members of the profession. To reflect the Bar Council's commitment to promoting diversity within the profession, Maternity Mentoring encourages applications from all members of the Bar. The Bar Mentoring Service recognises that male barristers take parental leave, and will happily accommodate applications from men as both mentors, and mentees.

9. Maternity Mentoring is based on 'spot mentoring': a mentor will share her (or his) experience in a particular matter in order to assist the mentee in dealing with a one-off or specific situation.

10. We will pilot this scheme for a year to ensure the scheme is fit for purpose.

11. Further information about Maternity Mentoring is available on the Bar Council website.

BECOMING A MENTOR

12. Mentoring is a two-way process, and strong mentoring relationships are established on the basis of mutual respect, support, and trust that communication will remain confidential from the outset.

13. The Bar Mentoring Service will be on hand to provide support and guidance to barristers willing and available to lend their time as mentors. Specific mentor training will also be offered to prospective mentors if required.

14. Mentors will be expected to have taken a career break to have a family, and will be familiar with the process by which a barrister returns to practice, changes her or his scope of practice, and able to offer other advice as the mentor sees fit.

15. Mentors should be willing to share their experience in order to assist the mentee in realising opportunities and their full potential in returning to practice.

16. Interested barristers will need to complete an application form disclosing key information about their professional and personal background, and any particular skills that they think may be of benefit to a mentee to know, to assist the Bar Council in matching mentors with mentees.

17. The Bar Mentoring Service will establish a pool of experienced barrister mentors who have taken a family career break and have subsequently established or maintained a thriving practice.

18. The identity of the pool of mentors will not be disclosed online. The matching process will be administered in-house through the Bar Council's Bar Mentoring Service, and contact details will be shared between each party only once the relationship has been brokered.

19. We will aim to have two or more barrister mentors for each practice area, and two representatives from each Circuit during its pilot year. The Bar Mentoring Service will accept applications from willing volunteer barristers of all levels of seniority.

20. Applications to become a mentor are welcome, and can be made through the Bar Council website.

BECOMING A MENTEE

21. Mentees who are interested in being assisted through a family career break, or are currently planning on returning to work, can apply to be mentored. Applications forms can be downloaded from the Bar Council website, and submitted to Mentoring@BarCouncil.org.uk.

22. Applicants will be contacted soon after receipt of the application form to arrange a one-to-one telephone meeting with a representative from the Bar Mentoring Service to assess their requirements, and to confirm the summary of the mentee's profile and the contact details provided.

23. The representative will ask a series of follow-up questions in order to gauge what kind of assistance the mentee requires, and which barrister mentor might be most helpful to advise through this period in the mentee's career.

24. Thereafter the mentee will be informed of the proposed mentor, and if the mentee consents, the representative will initiate contact between the mentor and mentee.

25. In the event that the mentor's identity is disclosed to the mentee and the mentee does not wish to pursue a mentoring relationship with the mentor proposed, the Bar Mentoring Service representative will refer the application form back to the matching process for a further mentor to be identified.

26. Please be assured that all information on the forms are kept confidential, and will not be disclosed to prospective mentors without the mentee's written or oral consent to a Bar Mentoring Service representative.

WHERE DO I START? – FOR A MENTEE

27. The Bar Mentoring Service will initiate contact by introducing a mentor to the mentee via email, with a brief biography and contact details provided.

28. We recommend an email in response from a mentee might include some or all of the following:

- a. Background and experience in practice;
 - b. Previous experience (if any) of taking a family career break;
 - c. If and when the mentee is considering taking parental leave (if not already);
 - d. What the mentee hopes to gain from the mentoring relationship.
29. At the beginning of the relationship we suggest the mentor and mentee agree:
- a. Ground rules for the mentoring relationship;
 - b. Pace and frequency of communication;
 - c. Confidentiality; and
 - d. Timescales (how long the relationship will last).
30. Mentoring starts by building trust and confidence, and it is important to create the right environment for this to thrive from the outset. By using the list above as a guide, we hope to ensure that the mentoring relationship meets the mentee's needs as a mentee.

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP – FOR A MENTEE

31. As the mentoring relationship progresses, the mentee is free to reassess her/his initial goals and tailor them to meet present needs. If a specific issue arises, the mentee should not hesitate to inform the mentor and ask for assistance.
32. If the mentee does not feel confident sharing a particular issue with a mentor, please contact the Bar Mentoring Service so that a representative can advise on how best to approach the situation. This is a new initiative, and the Bar Mentoring Service representatives will be on hand to assist the parties and facilitate the mentoring relationship.
33. Please bear in mind that the mentors on the scheme are volunteers and under no obligation to provide unlimited amounts of time, advice or information.
34. The mentoring relationship is voluntary and neither party is under any obligation to proceed with it any longer than they desire.
35. The Bar Mentoring Service operates a 'no fault' policy, and if either party in the mentoring relationship seeks to terminate the relationship at any point, we will assist in terminating the relationship.
36. In the event that the mentoring relationship is terminated early, the Bar Mentoring Service will contact both parties to see whether they would like to be assigned a new mentor or mentee.
37. Good mentoring relationships are time limited and focused on achieving a specific set of goals. There will come a time when a mentee no longer requires a mentor, so plan for officially terminating any formal mentoring relationship with the mentor.

38. Mentees and mentors are both free to maintain contact informally, but the mentee should be sure to mark her/his successful transition back into practice in any event.

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP – FOR A MENTOR

39. The benefits for mentees is evident, but it is important to note that mentors can equally benefit from the mentoring relationship.

40. Maternity Mentoring provides a barrister mentor with a chance to give back to the profession. At present, too many women leave the Bar after having a family. Volunteering as a mentor enables the mentor to effect positive change within the system by providing the support that is necessary for those considering, or returning, from parental leave, in particular the mentor can help their mentee in managing their successful return to practice.

41. Mentors do not need to have a mentoring qualification, rather, it is the shared knowledge and experience that they bring to the relationship that is of value. The mentoring relationship also provides the mentor with an opportunity to learn from their mentee, enhance their people skills, and can help them to learn more about themselves by reliving past experiences; perhaps sharing better alternatives for the mentee to consider.

42. Bar Council encourages barristers who have taken career breaks in the past to consider coming forward as mentors.

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