



Bar Council
Strategic Plan
2019 – 2024

Foreword

1. The Bar Council represents 16,000 practising barristers in England and Wales and promotes the values they share.
2. A strong and independent Bar exists to serve the public and is crucial to the administration of justice. As specialist, independent advocates, barristers enable people to uphold their legal rights, often acting on behalf of the most vulnerable members of society. The Bar makes a vital contribution to the efficient and effective operation of criminal and civil courts. It provides a pool of talent, from increasingly diverse backgrounds, from which a significant proportion of the judiciary is drawn and on whose independence the rule of law and our democratic way of life depends. The Bar Council is the Approved Regulator for the Bar of England and Wales: it discharges its regulatory functions through the operationally independent Bar Standards Board (BSB).
3. In the context of the political, economic, social, technological, cultural and legal challenges and opportunities which the UK and its legal services face, the Bar Council seeks to achieve specific and measurable progress against the aims and strategic objectives set out in this five-year Strategic Plan. In doing so, we will work closely with the profession, Government and our many stakeholders.

As specialist, independent advocates, barristers enable people to uphold their legal rights, often acting on behalf of the most vulnerable members of society.



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Our Vision

The independent Bar plays a crucial role in upholding and realising the constitutional principles of government accountability under law and vindication of legal rights through the courts.

4. One Bar: strong, independent, influential and diverse.

Our Mission

5. To champion: the rule of law and access to justice for all in England and Wales; the Bar's high-quality specialist advocacy and advisory services; the highest standards of conduct, skills, ethics; equality and diversity across the profession; and the development of business opportunities for barristers at home and abroad.

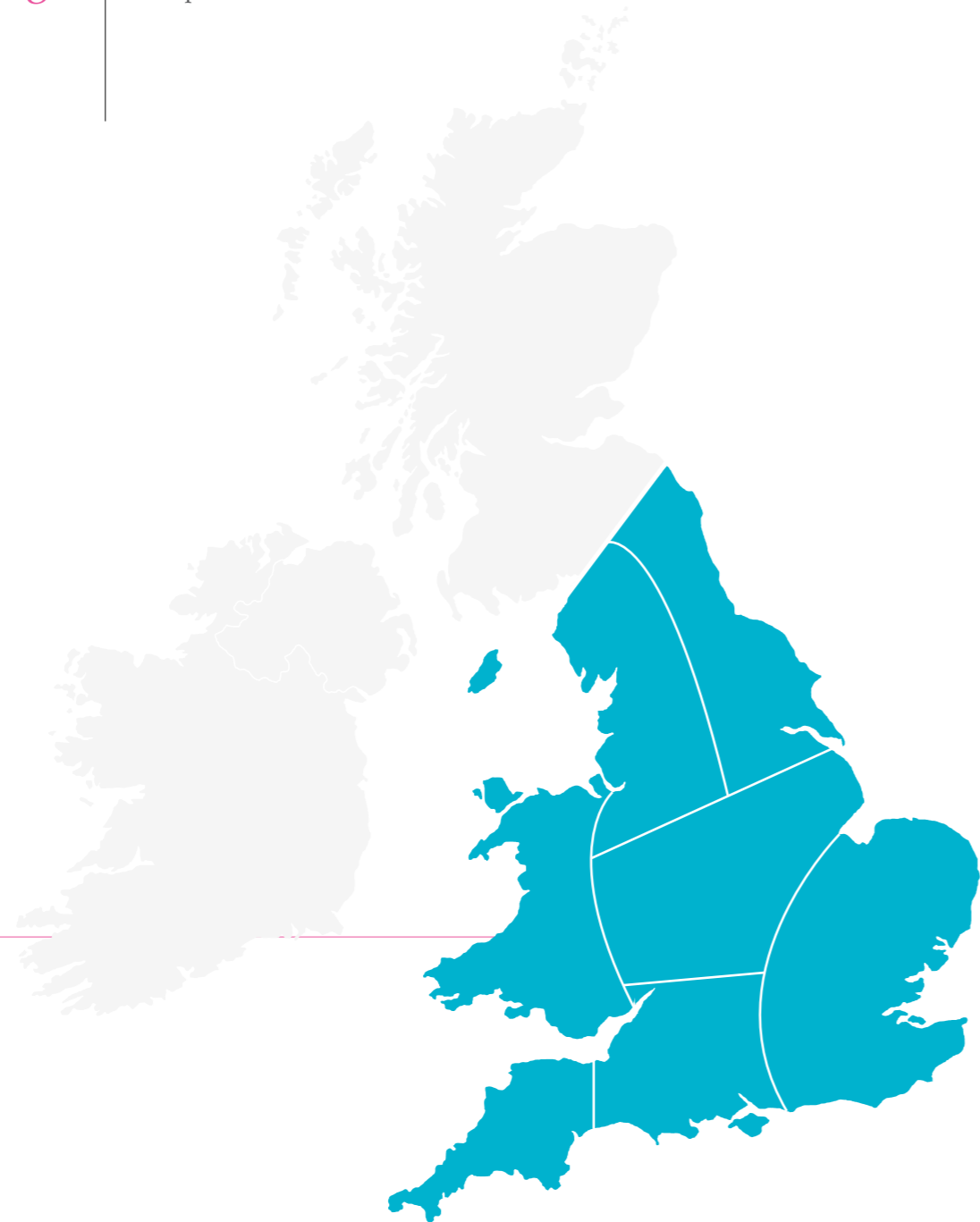
The Bar makes a vital contribution to the efficient and effective operation of criminal and civil courts



Our Role

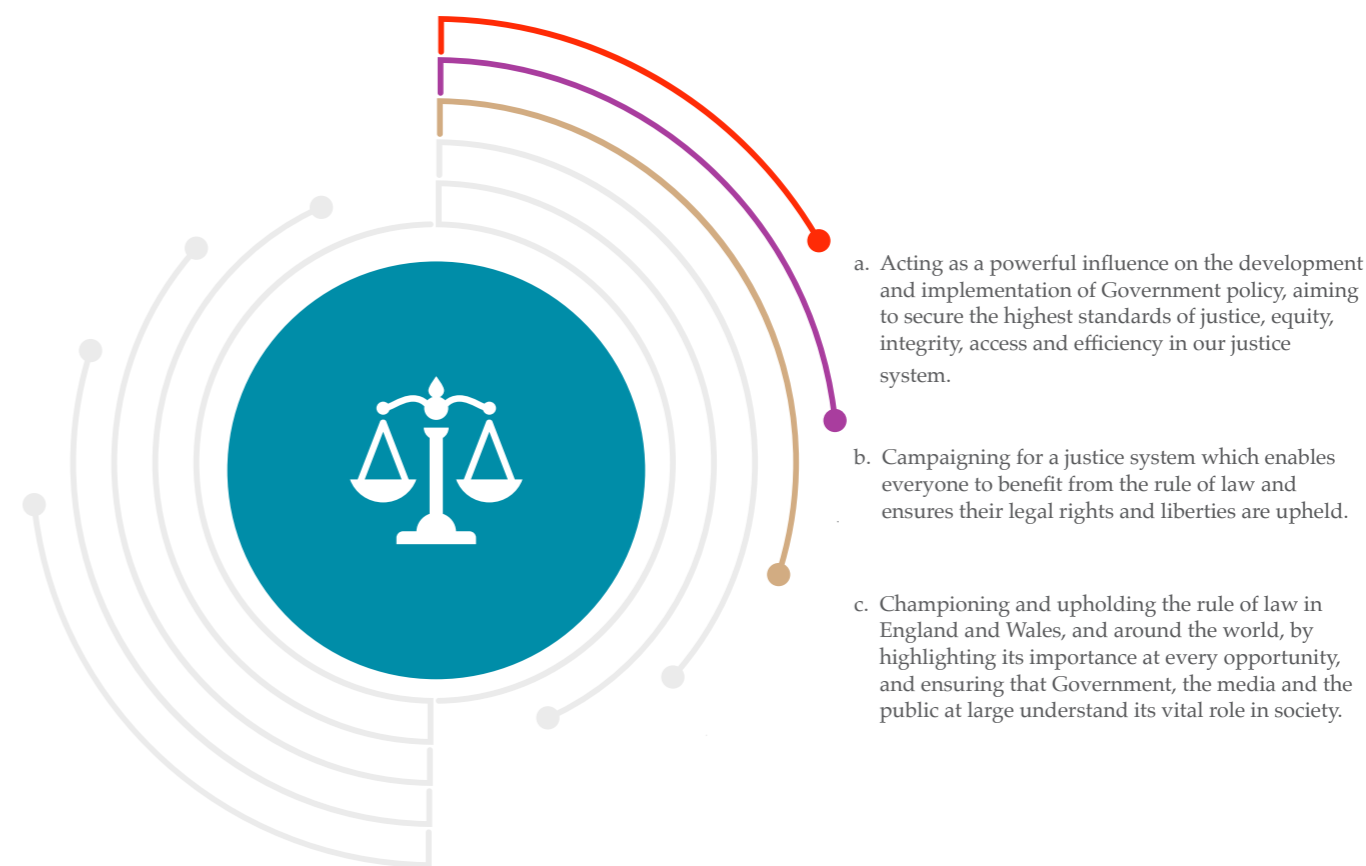
The Bar Council represents over 16,000 practising barristers in England and Wales and promotes the values they share.

- 6. The Bar Council is the lead professional body for all practising barristers in England and Wales. In pursuing our vision and mission we represent, support and promote a strong and independent Bar and enable the independent regulation of the profession, in the public interest.



Championing the Rule of Law and Access to Justice for all

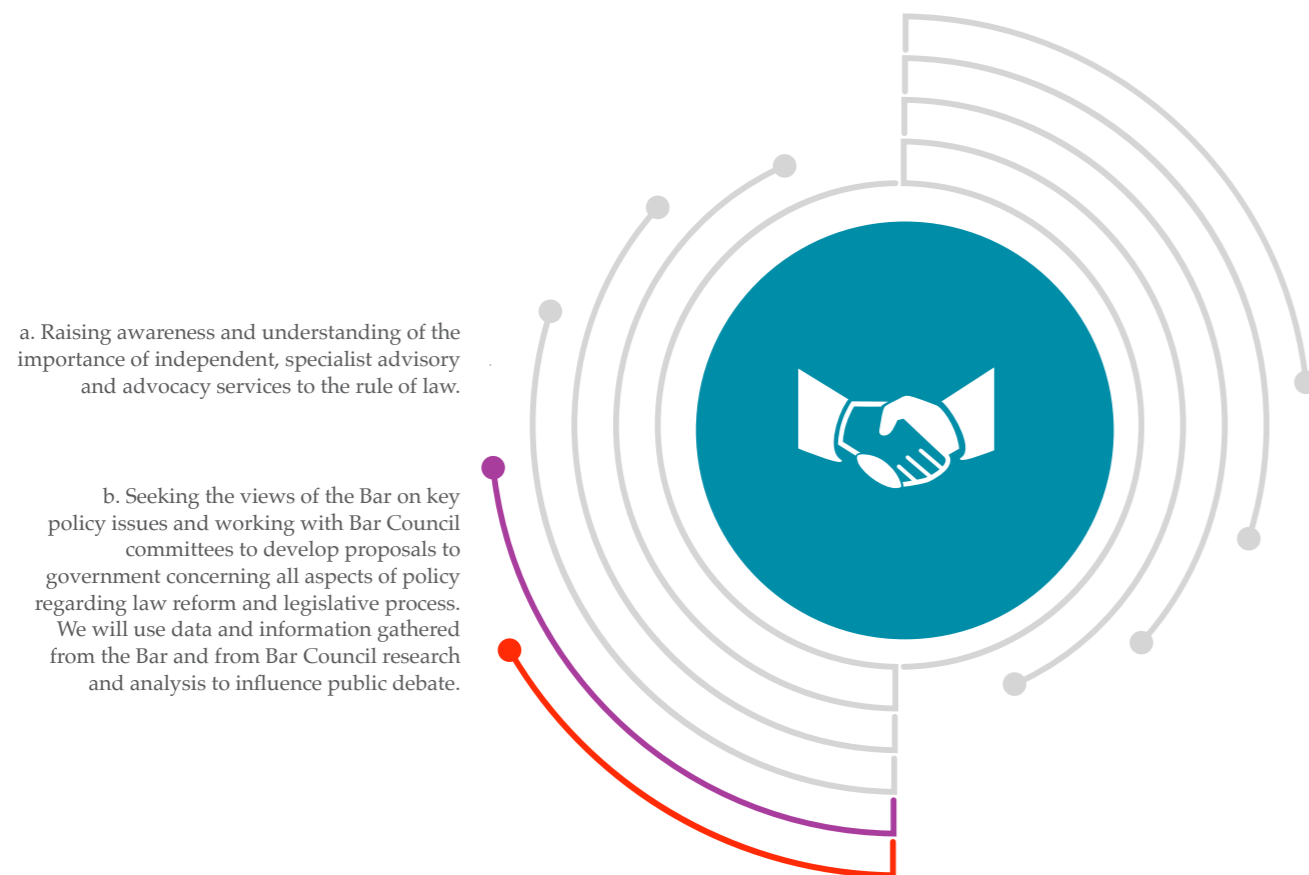
- 7. The independent Bar plays a crucial role in upholding and realising the constitutional principles of government accountability under law and vindication of legal rights through the courts. As the Bar's professional body, we are ideally placed to draw on barristers' expertise and dedication to lead on these issues, in the public interest. We will espouse these principles by:



- a. Acting as a powerful influence on the development and implementation of Government policy, aiming to secure the highest standards of justice, equity, integrity, access and efficiency in our justice system.
- b. Campaigning for a justice system which enables everyone to benefit from the rule of law and ensures their legal rights and liberties are upheld.
- c. Championing and upholding the rule of law in England and Wales, and around the world, by highlighting its importance at every opportunity, and ensuring that Government, the media and the public at large understand its vital role in society.

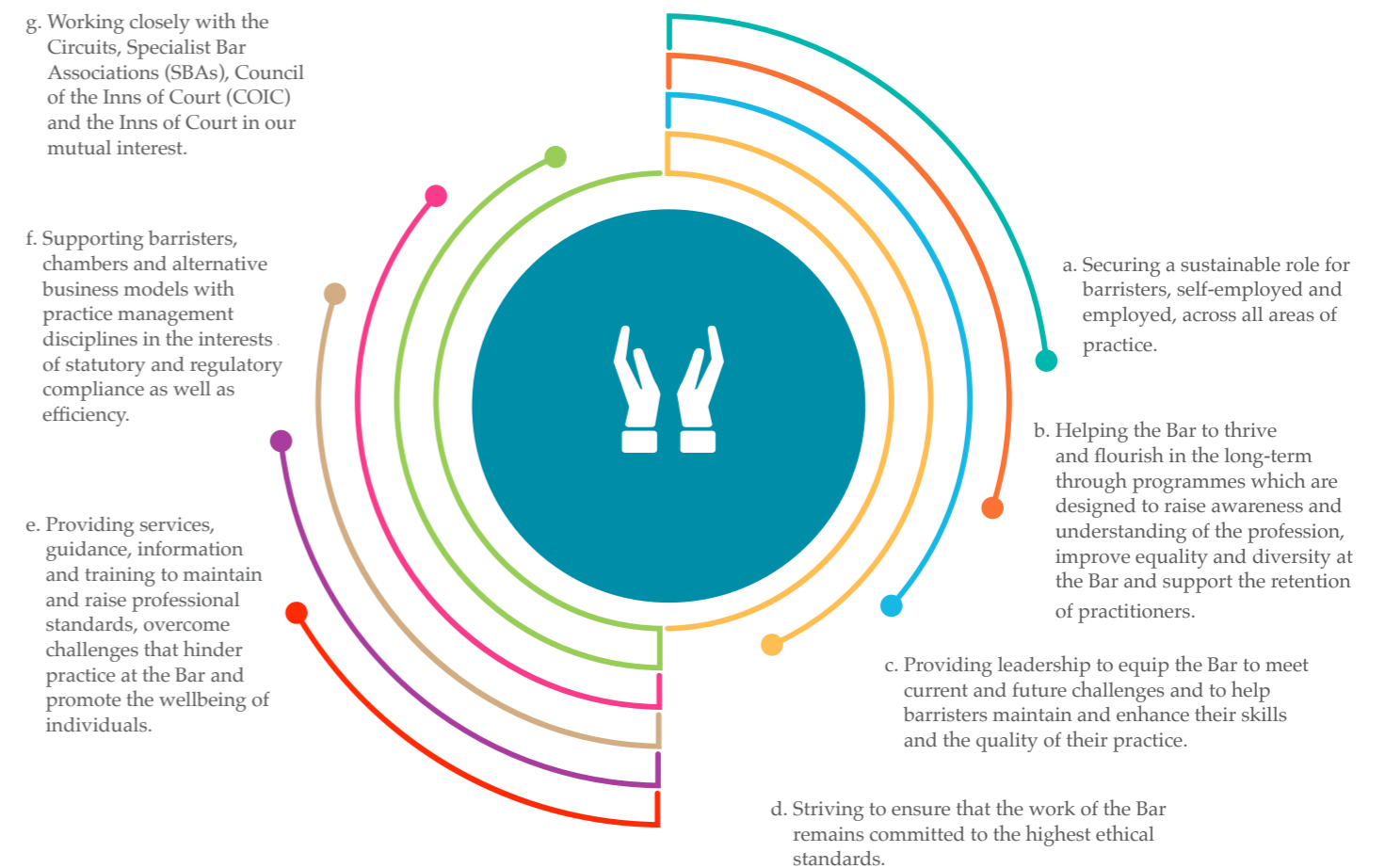
Representing the Bar

8. We will represent the Bar by:



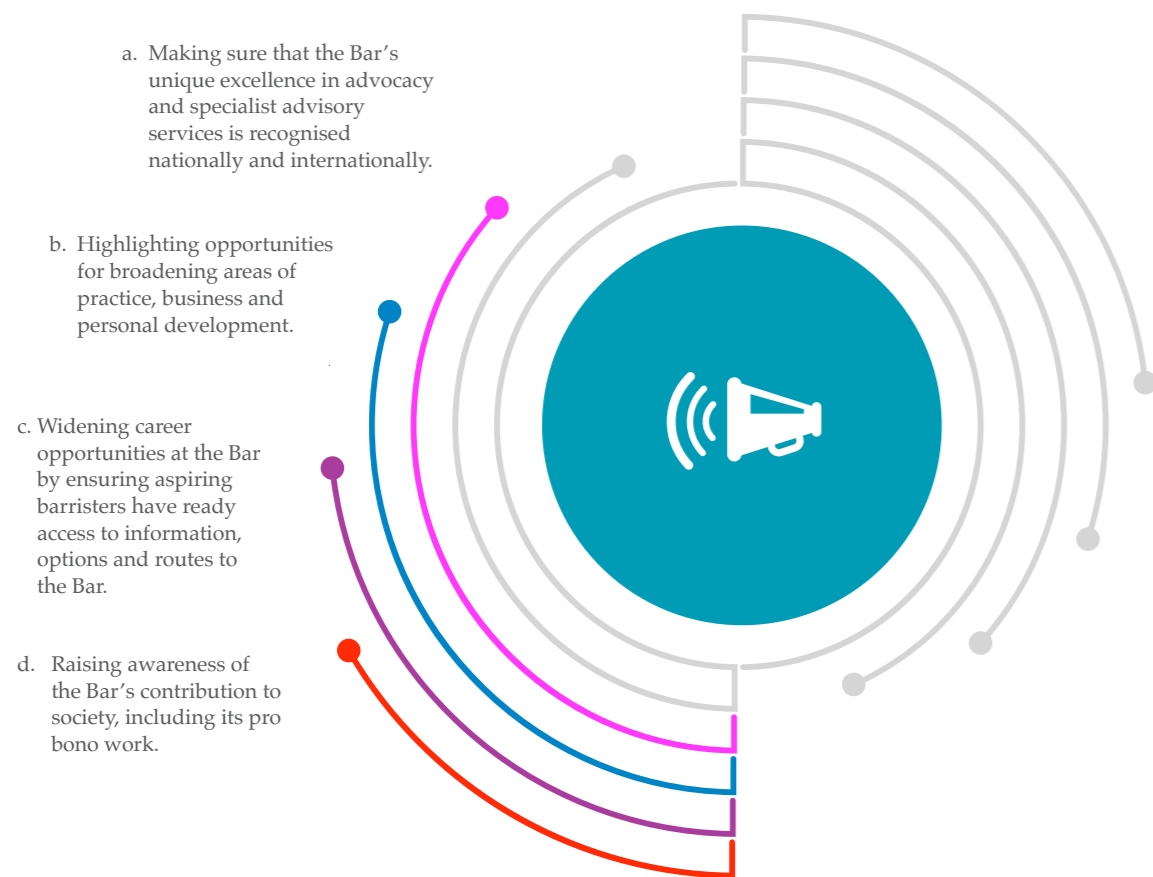
Supporting Barristers

9. We will support barristers by:



Promoting the Bar

10. We will promote the Bar by:



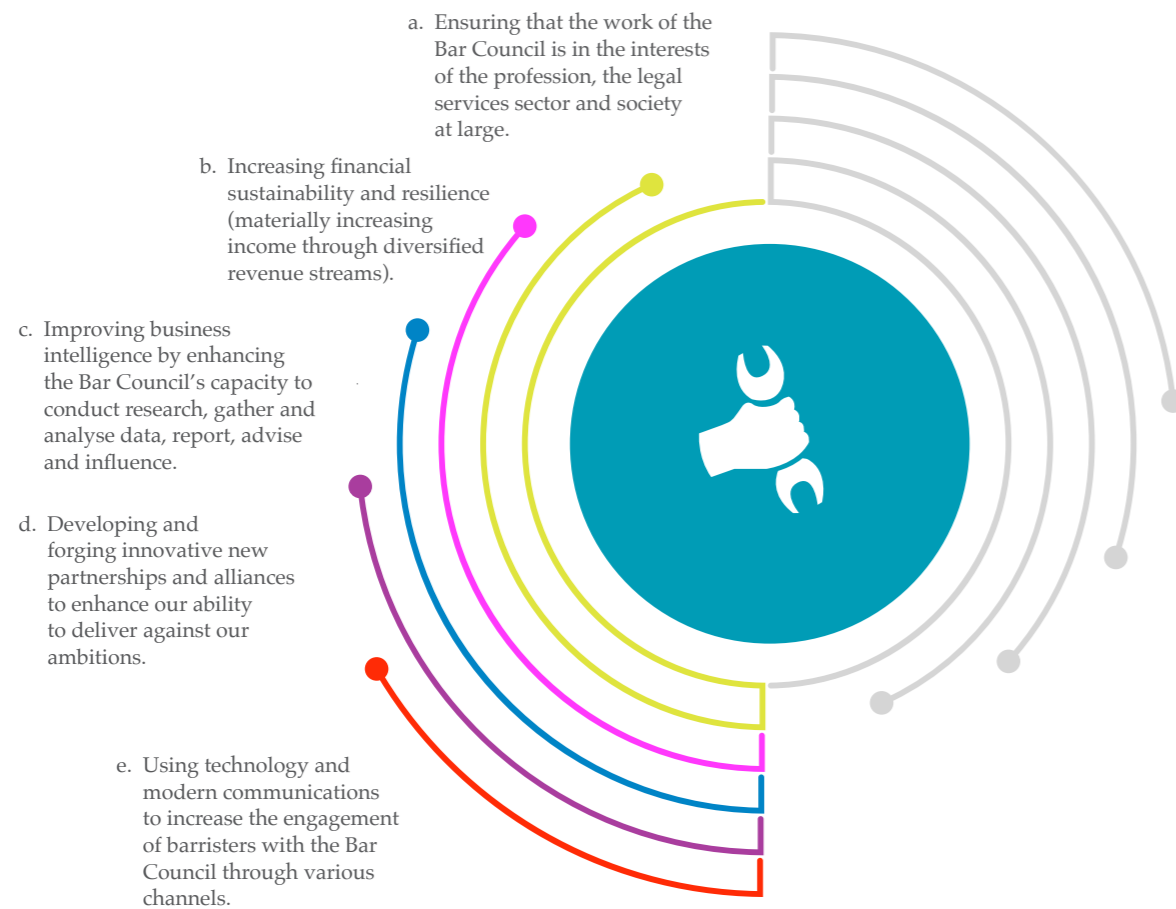
Enabling Regulation

11. As the Approved Regulator, the Bar Council enables the effective, independent regulation of the profession through the Bar Standards Board (BSB), to ensure the highest standards of professional practice and to protect the public interest. The Bar Council will apply fairness and rigour in assessing the resources reasonably required by the BSB, consistent with respect for the independent operation of the Board, and in discharging our statutory functions under the Legal Services Act 2007. We will work constructively with the BSB, the Ministry of Justice, the Law Officers' Department and the Legal Services Board to ensure that regulation of the profession is of high quality, fair, proportionate and appropriate for the provision of legal services by barristers.



Strengthening the Bar Council

12. To achieve our strategic objectives, the Bar Council, as the lead representative body for the profession, needs to be influential, capable, organisationally sustainable and held in high regard by the profession, Government and partners. We will achieve this through:



Our Values

13. In seeking to fulfil the strategic objectives, the Bar Council will embody the following values:

Respect: respect for all, including respecting the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society and seeking to ensure they have the means to achieve equality before the law; respecting others within the profession and those aspiring to join.

Fairness: promoting equal access to justice for all and seeking to ensure that the increasing diversity of our society is reflected in the diversity of all who serve justice.

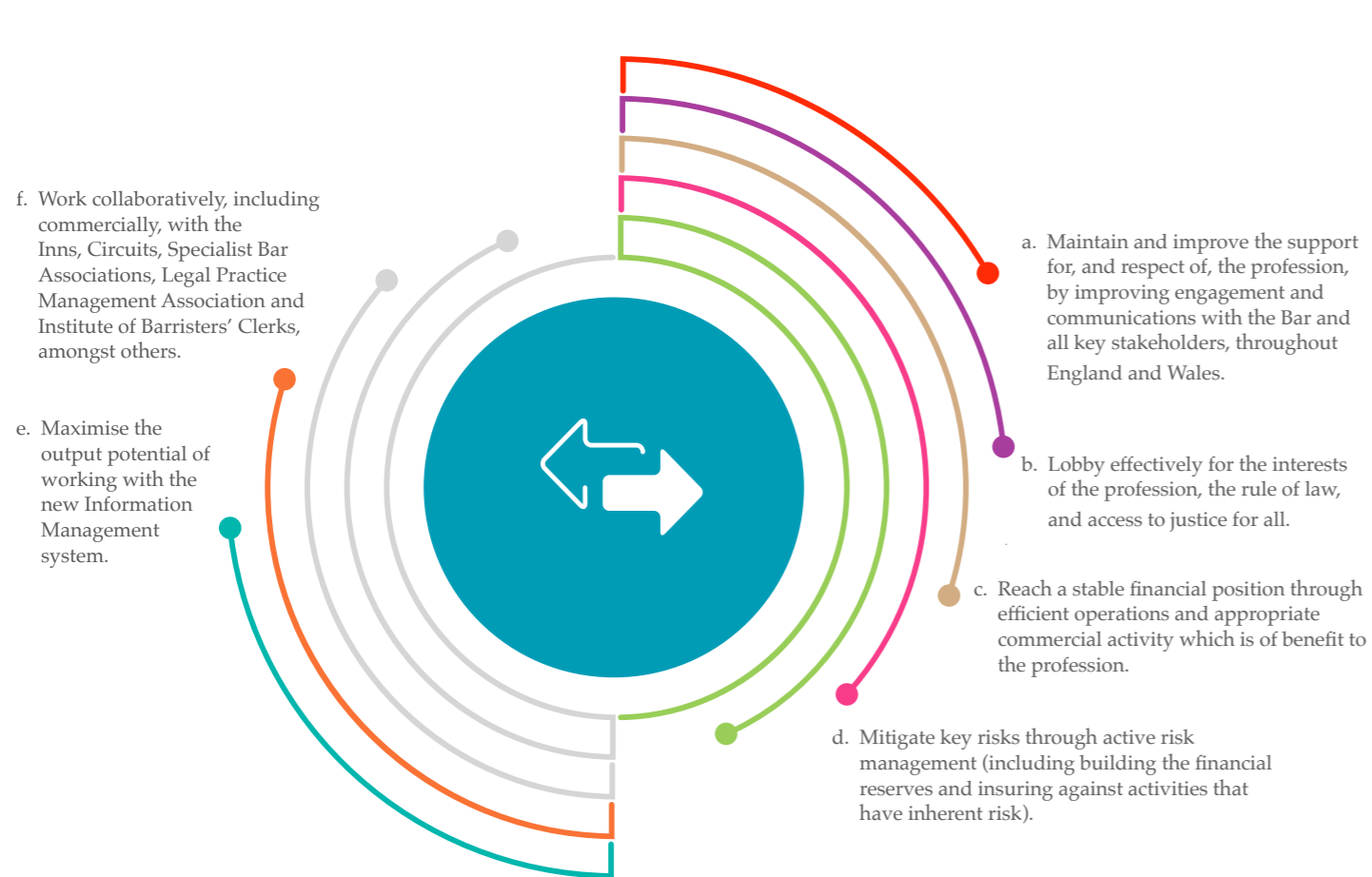
Integrity: trusted by the government, judiciary, clients, wider society and other professions, founded on the highest levels of professional integrity.

Excellence: an independent Bar of specialist advocates and advisors seeking to excel.

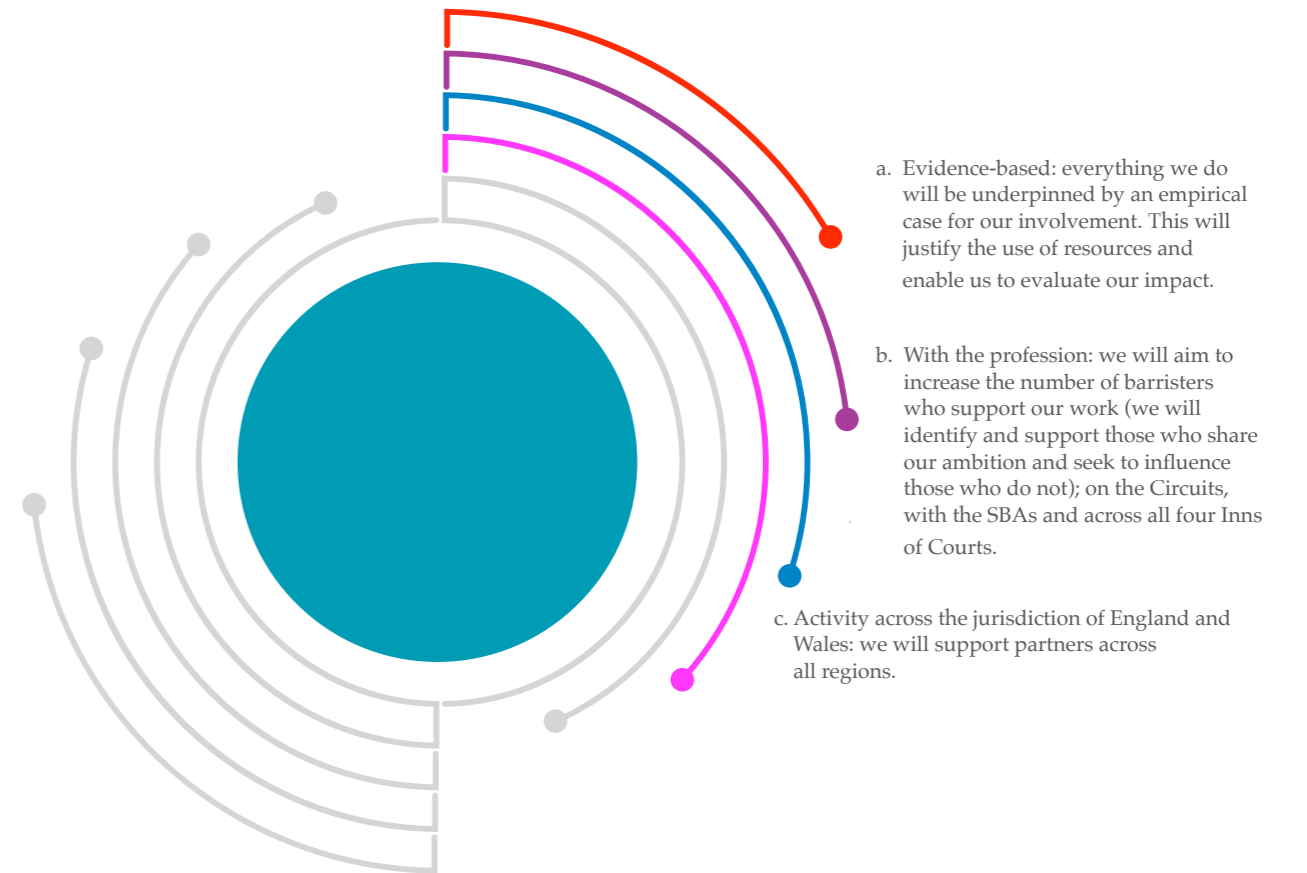
Efficiency: The Bar Council and the BSB will operate as effectively and efficiently as possible in support of their respective strategic aims and objectives and work to assist barristers (employed and self-employed), chambers, and entities to be more efficient.

Our Approach

14. To achieve our strategic and organisational objectives, in line with our values, whilst recognising the need to react appropriately to changing circumstances and emerging issues, risks and opportunities, the Bar Council will:



15. We will adopt the following principles in the design and implementation of our work programme.



Performance Management

16. Performance against the Strategic Plan will be monitored and managed by tracking what we want to achieve (objectives), how we will measure success (key performance indicators - KPIs) and what we will do to achieve it, shown in the tables below. These are not exhaustive and will be developed further in future business plans.



What we want (Objective)	What we will measure (KPIs)	What we will do
1. Broader legal aid coverage and both fair and sustainable remuneration for publicly-funded barristers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal aid coverage • The level and coverage of fees for publicly-funded work, over time (compared to other areas of the legal market). • Time taken to pay fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with legal aid policy debates to highlight the value of access to justice, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable in society. • Through the LASPO Post-Implementation Review, argue for broader legal aid coverage and perhaps the establishment of a suitably funded Contingent Legal Aid Fund. • Campaign for fair remuneration which ensures the long-term future of the profession. • Fight for fees to be 'future-proofed', whether by index-linking or through an independent fee review body.
2. The rule of law is understood, respected and promoted at home and abroad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our responsiveness to emerging events where the rule of law is at risk directly raises the profile of issues and leads to a solution. • Level of awareness and support from decision makers and the public/media. • Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC) success in supporting lawyers and the rule of law around the world. • The indefinite detention of immigrants is ended. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion the rule of law and pursue specific campaigns to uphold citizens' legal rights (e.g. intervention letters, Public Legal Education, lectures). • Work closely with the BHRC • Engage actively with international legal organisations, other Bars and judiciaries and (where appropriate) other bodies and governments abroad.
3. A tailored and proportionate regulatory environment that meets the needs of a specialist Bar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear recommendations produced. • Feedback from the profession. • Awareness of Bar Council proposals and policy positions. • Bar Council policy positions taken up by regulatory decision-makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign for high quality, proportionate regulation by an independent, specialist regulator for the Bar (through engagement with the BSB, Legal Services Board). • Ensure that the development of new markets and business models is not constrained by excessive regulation, but is also consistent with maintaining standards of performance and conduct.

What we want (Objective)	What we will measure (KPIs)	What we will do
4. The high ethical and regulatory/practice standards of the Bar are maintained and recognised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on and regard for our services within and outside the profession. Ethical guidance is consistently up to date and relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the Ethical Enquires Service and Hub as flagship Bar Council support services. Work to address identified areas of concern.
5. Legislation fit for the 21st Century and the Bar Council recognised as a thought leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear recommendations produced. Feedback from the profession/key stakeholders (e.g. the Law Commission). Awareness and adoption of Bar Council proposals and policy positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop constructive proposals for law reform in the public interest. Assist in ensuring rigorous consideration of, and procedures relating to, new legislation. Seek to influence proposals for legislation and Parliamentary Bills.
6. Government court reforms enhance both access to and the quality of justice, do not exclude users digitally or financially and ensure the court estate is fit for purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HM Courts and Tribunal Service's (HMCTS) response to our proposals on court reform. Ministry of Justice / HMCTS operating and capital budget plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby HMCTS with specific proposals in relation to key court reform projects such as Flexible Operating Hours, Case Officers, Scheduling and Listing, Video Hearings and Open Justice, improvements to the physical condition of the HMCTS estate and the facilities therein. Lobby for, and where feasible commission, empirical work on reform proposals.
7. A Bar 'of and for all', that reflects the society it serves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chambers' pro-activeness in going beyond regulatory minimum requirements (feedback from chambers). The access, retention and progression of under-represented groups. Recognition of the Bar Council as a source of expertise on Equality and Diversity issues. MyBar data and Pupillage Gateway differential attainment statistics across protected characteristics. The number of women and BME barristers attaining QC and reaching the upper echelons of the judiciary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a catalyst for an increasingly diverse Bar, that reflects ability by delivering tailored programmes and supporting individuals and chambers.

What we want (Objective)	What we will measure (KPIs)	What we will do
8. Bar Training delivers high quality new practitioners ready for practice with requisite skills at a fair cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordability. Access. Quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and promote reform of Bar Professional Training, including working with the Inns of Court.
9. The Bar is a flourishing profession, with improved career opportunities, in particular for the Young Bar, Employed Bar and publicly funded Bar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level and trend of junior barristers' earnings, by practice area. Number of self-employed practising junior barristers. Student and pupillage pipeline data. Number of employed QC appointments. Advocates' fees. Barristers' wellbeing (working lives surveys) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and promote career opportunities within key parts of the profession, running targeted programmes and campaigns. Publicise trends, and identify and promote potential action by the Bar and/or others. Put in place programmes and initiatives that support barristers' wellbeing
10. Consistently high standards of practice management across the Bar are developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on and regard for our support within and outside the profession. Take up of training events / programmes. BSB regulatory data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster improvements in practice management by providing training and support (e.g. chambers package).
11. The UK reaches a settlement for leaving the EU that ensures legal certainty and upholds the rule of law, protects the position of UK legal services, including arrangements which enable barristers to practise their profession throughout the EU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of Bar Council recommendations. Feedback from the profession/key stakeholders (e.g. the UK Government, Parliament, professional bodies). Awareness of Bar Council proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and submit policy proposals and negotiating positions which enable barristers to continue to practise across the EU, protect England and Wales as a jurisdiction of choice for dispute resolution, and ensure workable transitional arrangements respecting the rule of law.

What we want (Objective)	What we will measure (KPIs)	What we will do
12. Value of the Bar’s international business to UK GDP continues to increase and the number of barristers undertaking work with a foreign element grows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of barristers with an international practice. • Value of earnings from international practice. • Feedback on programme activities. • International contacts/ opportunities established and developed on behalf of the Bar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an international business development programme which raises the profile of the Bar in key growth markets.
13. Bar Council finances ensure its continuing ability to meet the needs of the Bar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of Practising Certificate Fee (PCF) and of non-PCF income. • Bar Representation Fee (BRF) income. • The Bar Council (RP&S) share of the PCF. • Level of financial reserves (progress against a target). • Level of commercial income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run the Bar Council efficiently to meet the needs of the Bar. • Identify other sources of income, and partnerships, that may help to deliver our objectives.
14. The Bar Council is recognised as the lead body for issues that impact on the whole profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of BRF subscribers. • Website hits/ feedback. • Percentage opting into receiving messages about Bar Council activities. • Percentage ‘click’ and read statistics for BarTalk and other publications. • Level of response to surveys, including the regular working lives survey. • Level of use of valued services (e.g. Ethics hub, wellbeing, training courses offered by the Bar Council). • Feedback from Specialist Bar Associations, Circuits, Chambers and the Employed Bar. • The number of barristers standing and the number of votes cast in Bar Council elections. • The number of chambers’ ambassadors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate effectively and proactively with the profession, media, public, decision-makers and other stakeholders, including via an effective website.

What we want (Objective)	What we will measure (KPIs)	What we will do
15. The Bar Council delivers a portfolio of tailored and popular commercial and non-commercial services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback. • Take-up. • Income (where appropriate and relevant). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use our expertise to provide services (including Member Services and Training & Events) that are tailored to the profession.



Sub-strategies and Business Planning

16. Several sub-strategies will complement the Strategic Plan and annual Business Plans will develop targets for the KPIs.
17. There will be a Policy Strategy, focussed on such matters as legal policy development, law reform and legislative change, professional regulation, accreditation and human rights and fundamental freedoms. A Services and Commercial Strategy will cover all the services that the Bar Council offers to the profession, whether provided to all practitioners without charge or discounted to those who pay the Bar Representation Fee (BRF) or which are made available for a fee. It will include a review of what the practising Bar values and a pricing review. An Engagement Strategy will link the Bar Council's strategic objectives to specific communications and engagement activity, with the Bar, government and parliament, the media and our wider stakeholder base. A Digital and Information Strategy will capture & harness the intellectual knowledge and material that comes out of committees, consultations and other work.





The Bar Council
Integrity. Excellence. Justice.

*The General Council of the Bar is the Approved Regulator of the Bar of England and Wales.
It discharges its regulatory functions through the independent Bar Standards Board.*

www.barcouncil.org.uk

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