

COMBAR E&D Committee: 2020/2021 Projects

1. This short papers sets out the work that COMBAR's E&D committee has been doing over the last year. The pandemic has had an impact of the types of projects undertaken. In broad terms the projects the E&D committee have undertaken are broken down into three broad categories:
 - (1) Projects aimed at particular protected characteristics;
 - (2) Projects aimed at access to the profession (mainly aimed at university students); and
 - (3) Projects aimed at progression once in the profession.

2020/2021 Projects

Protected Characteristic Projects

2. ***The Black Inclusion Group***. BIG is a cross SBA working group jointly set up by ChBa, COMBAR and TECBAR. Its remit is to investigate and issue an advisory report with recommendations on enhancing outreach to and recruitment, retention and progression of ethnic minority barristers, with a focus on Black (African and African Caribbean and mixed Heritage) barristers in the Commercial, Chancery and Technology and Construction Bar.
3. BIG is made up of 5 main members, Mr. Jeremy Richmond QC is the dedicated COMBAR member on the working group. The chairs of the SBA's E&D committees also attend meetings and assist where required but are not involved in issuing the advisory report.
4. As part of its data gathering BIG have carried out a survey which was sent to all COMBAR, ChBA and TECBAR members. It was also circulated more widely to capture barristers and lawyers who had wanted careers at the commercial, chancery and technology bars but were not currently working in those fields. It has also carried out confidential round table discussions with Black barristers (using a format similar to that used by the ChBA in their work on Voices of Women). They have also met with, and sought information from, the Bar Council, the BSB, Mr. Harry Matovu QC of the Black Talent Charter, Deeds and Words, Black Solicitors Network, Bright Network and the Bar Race Working Group.
5. It was hoped that the they would report in Spring 2021 but this has been pushed back to autumn. It is a large project and the commitment and dedication to those on the working group has been impressive.

Projects aimed at Access

6. ***Law Fairs*** - The Law Fairs programme which COMBAR E&D set up many years ago is now being administered by the Bar Council together with the Inns and a number of SBAs (including COMBAR) and employed barrister organisations. The law fairs are chosen to by reference to geographical location (to make sure all circuits are covered) and generally to universities where around 10% of their students or more are from low participation neighbourhoods (according to [HESA data](#)).
7. COMBAR attended (and members of COMBAR sets gave talks at) the Bar Council's virtual pupillage fair in October 2020.
8. Victoria Windle the Vice Chair of the E&D Committee is currently attending meetings to discuss how best to take this forward next year. Due to Covid restrictions the number of fairs available diminished in 2020/2021 and it is currently unclear how many will operate in the next academic year.
9. ***Inner Temple and Middle Temple COMBAR scholarship schemes*** – these are existing schemes which we support. They are administered by the Inns and look at under-represented groups. The schemes are slightly different – both involve a week's mini-pupillage at a commercial set and ongoing mentoring – the Middle Temple scheme also includes a week's marshalling with a judge in the commercial court whereas the Inner Temple scheme has multiple events aimed at (for example) CV clinics etc.
10. Understandably the Inns have had trouble placing students in 2020 and 2021. Georgina Peters on behalf of E&D is liaising with both Inns about the schemes and how we might facilitate further virtual placements or in person placements can take place in 2021. We will update the Exec as and when we have further information.
11. ***Cake & Counsel*** – this is an organisation set up by a criminal practitioner (Ruth Reid at 3 Temple Gardens) but whose outreach extends to all practice areas. Cake & Counsel provide informal and formal networking and learning opportunities for aspiring lawyers and law students from all backgrounds and have held highly successful events targeting aspirant BAME barristers in the past.
12. We have been partnering with Cake & Counsel for about 2 years. In the last year members of COMBAR have taken part in a number of remote sessions including a panel session on pupillage reflections (where half the 6 person panel was from COMBAR) and CV and mock interview practice.

13. **Mock Interview and CV workshop for commercial pupillage applicants** – this is done in conjunction with TECBAR’s BAME Network and also ChBA’s E&D Committee. This was online this year. Even when Covid restrictions are lifted we will continue to offer a remote option as it has allowed us to reach students from a much wider geographical pool (including those studying overseas).
14. **Recruitment Best Practice.** A member of the E&D committee (Richard Fisher QC) has carried out some research into best recruitment practices and produced a short paper which was then shared with the COMBAR recruitment sub-committee in September 2020.
15. **Gray’s Inn Griffin LAW Programme.** Gray’s Inn have a programme called GRIFFIN LAW (Law and Advocacy Workshops) which is their vehicle for promoting social mobility and access to the Bar. The Griffin Access Programme (“GAP”) forms part of the outreach programme and is an 18 month programme working with students in Years 12 & 13. This year COMBAR E&D ran a session on the commercial bar. It was split into a panel discussion of 4 COMBAR practitioners, 1 Tecbar and 1 ChBA, a Q&A session and then break out to do a mock advocacy exercise based on a real insurance case. The feedback from the course director, Tony Charles was *“The session was absolutely brilliant and the GAP students loved it – it was an inspiring panel.”*

Projects aimed at progression within the profession/ practising barristers

16. **The Silk Application and Life as a Junior Silk – a panel discussion.** We run this event every year with ChBA and TECBAR. This is an annual event in January so as to catch those who are thinking of applying in that year. We have had excellent engagement from the judiciary and the QCA and each year the panel is made up of recently appointed silks (within their first three years), members of the judiciary and members of the QCA panel. It is always well attended.
17. **Joint event with COMBAR, ChBa, TECBAR, Gray’s Inn and the UK Association of Jewish Lawyers & Jurists (UKAJLI).** This has become an annual event. The new chair of the UKAJLI is Mr. Justice Waksman. An in person event had been organised for 22 June 2021 with Lady Rose speaking on *“Judicial decision-making: case studies from biblical times and now”*. That has been postponed to a date in October 2021 and is hoped to be an in person event.
18. **Female retention and career progression.** E&D plus TECBAR and ChBA E&D have been working with Rachel Kryz, an Equality & Diversity Consultant, who is leading the QCA funded Bar Council project looking at women’s retention and career progression at the Bar with a particular focus on

mentoring and equitable briefing/ pay. We are awaiting her report (which was looking at the Bar as a whole).

Projects for 2021/2022

19. In addition to the projects highlighted above (many of which will continue into next year) below is a selection of matters currently on our radar.
20. ***Under-represented groups***. Following on from the Voices of Women Report produced by ChBa this year it was agreed that the E&D Committee would consider how to run a similar but expanded exercise to look at under represented groups more generally. That work is likely to involve a survey of all COMBAR members as well as confidential round table discussions. This is a large piece of work which will be picked up by the incoming Chair of the E&D Committee.
21. ***FreeBar events*** – COMBAR has good links with FreeBar and there will be another event (which are social in nature and open to all legal professionals, clerks, students) but Covid has put that on hold.
22. ***Disability*** – there are no projects aimed at disability issues. We would also like someone to join the E&D Sub-Committee to have the disability portfolio and will continue to advertise this vacancy in the next COMBAR newsletter.

Ruth Hosking

Outgoing Chair of the E&D Sub-Committee

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