

2021 Pupillage Application Process Review

As part of the steps we are taking to improve equality and diversity at the Bar, from now on we are going to publish an annual summary of the E&D data gathered during our most recent round of pupillage recruitment. Transparency is important in encouraging all chambers to identify shortcomings in equality and diversity, and to monitor the effectiveness of attempts to improve. This year the headlines are:

Gender: 57% of applicants identified as female, and made up 67% of candidates interviewed at second round. Two of our three pupillages were offered to (and accepted by) female candidates.

Ethnicity: 20% of candidates interviewed at first round, and 11% at second round, came from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Background: 53% of applicants attended UK state schools, as did 44% of those invited to second round interview.

While much of the data is encouraging, there is always room for improvement. Our pupillage committee meets shortly after each round of applications to review the recent process and agree improvements for the following year. We regularly engage outside input from a fair recruitment and unconscious bias expert, herself the author of the Bar Council's Fair Recruitment guide, in order to help us tweak our processes. For some years we have redacted written applications for references to gender and ethnicity, but this year for the first time we also redacted the identity of the schools and universities our applicants attended so that our interview panels did not know them. We are hopeful and confident that with time such measures can only improve equality of opportunity.

We are also conscious that many of the obstacles to the profession start well before people apply to us. That is why this year we have pledged to offer 50% of mini-pupillages to applicants from underrepresented backgrounds; signed up to the BarNone mentoring scheme to provide guidance and support to aspiring barristers from underrepresented backgrounds; and joined the 10,000 Black Interns programme, offering paid work experience in chambers to those who otherwise may not have the opportunities more readily available to others.