



WHAT ACTIONS HAVE YOU TAKEN,
OR HAVE YOU SEEN TAKEN,
DURING YOUR CAREER THAT HAVE
HELPED TO **BREAK THE BIAS?**



The role of male champions is absolutely critical: I would not have been able successfully to combine a career at the bar with raising a family, and achieving silk, without the support and encouragement of some amazing male colleagues.

Tamara Oppenheimer QC

Silk Date: 2020





For many years, I have challenged any suggestion that having children, or going on to have children, might be a factor in considering whether to select someone.

Role models are also very important. In my experience the people who have done this for me have not necessarily even been from the same underrepresented group as me.



Chloe Carpenter QC

Silk Date: 2020



I have been encouraged by the increased awareness of the benefits of a balanced and diverse team on large-scale disputes.

Christopher Langley

Call Date: 2011





Just before my maternity leave, I was approached on a new and complex case. My clerk engaged with the solicitor and was open about the fact that I was about to have a baby. We discussed how I wanted to structure work alongside the baby, and my clerk made it clear we would work together to achieve my desired outcome. It meant I could consider the instruction on my terms and it was recognised that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to how women wish to balance work and raising a family.

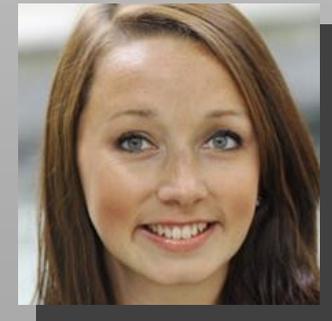


Eleanor Davison

Call Date: 2003



The clerking industry is typically a male environment and, when I joined Fountain Court 14 years ago, I was the only female clerk. Alex Taylor (Senior Clerk) was willing to make an investment in me, recruiting on the grounds of merit but positively addressing gender balance at the same time. I have been mentored and guided by him and other senior colleagues (male and female) to get to where I am, and I am proud to work in a fantastic and diverse team which now includes five female clerks.



Sian Hockett

Deputy Senior Clerk



It has been heartening to see law firms and barristers' chambers hosting seminars on topics such as menopause, which have long been taboo. It is important that we all understand and adapt to the needs of women in the workplace if we are serious about women being (and staying) there!

Francesca Ruddy

Call Date: 2020





As Equality & Diversity Officer, I advocated for strong support networks in Chambers: I have overseen the instigation of a Wellbeing Committee (which I now chair), the introduction of a mentoring scheme which has a focus on the pressures faced by women at the Bar, our Women in Law Pledge and a subscription to a comprehensive package of practical support and advice for members and employees with caring responsibilities.



Stuart Ritchie QC

Silk Date: 2012



I was the first senior staff member to make a request to work flexibly. Despite this being novel, it was agreed with support from the heads of chambers. That arrangement is still in place today and allowed others to follow. I have also raised and chambers has openly addressed issues around menopause which has helped to break a taboo.



Julie Parker

Head of Administration



For me, ‘breaking the bias’ was having the confidence and determination to come back to a career at chambers after studying to become a hairdresser.

Alice Martin

Pupillage & Library Coordinator





One of the most significant developments I have seen in my time at the bar is the introduction of proper arrangements for maternity leave. This is crucial as it often comes at a very important time in barristers' careers.

Louise Merrett

Call Date: 1995





I have encouraged female colleagues to promote actively their professional success to the wider legal market, including by way of submitting to legal directories for ranking, given the excellent work I have seen from them on specific cases.

Akhil Shah QC

Silk Date: 2010





I was proud to set up the Female Advocates' Breakfast initiative which provides a forum for women across the profession to meet and get to know one another and access support or advice. It has now grown to be a very successful programme supported by Fountain Court and various other chambers as well as the Inns of Court which is really fantastic.

Leigh-Ann Mulcahy QC

Silk Date: 2009





WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU
HAD TAKEN DURING YOUR
CAREER WHICH MAY HAVE
HELPED TO **BREAK THE BIAS?**



I would like to have felt comfortable at an earlier stage of my career to talk more openly about my child-related commitments and to have been unapologetic about the fact that work commitments sometimes need to be fitted around those.

Tamara Oppenheimer QC

Silk Date: 2020





I would like to have promoted a more transparent and honest discussion about the pressures which women face at the Bar and how the profession can best respond to them where societal pressures continue to result in a frequent imbalance in domestic responsibility.

Stuart Ritchie QC

Silk Date: 2012





Now that I am older and a bit wiser, I no longer pretend that being a woman is irrelevant to my working life. I have come to understand that “different” doesn’t mean “less good”.

Francesca Ruddy

Call Date: 2020





WHAT STEPS DO YOU INTEND TO
TAKE IN FUTURE, TO HELP TO
BREAK THE BIAS?



To be as open as I can about the fact that I am a mother as well as a barrister; to demonstrate to younger practitioners that being open about one's professional difficulties and challenges (for example, not succeeding in silk or a judicial application, or dealing with stress or anxiety) is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength.

Tamara Oppenheimer QC

Silk Date: 2020





I want to help shift the perception of associating men with careers and women with family, by encouraging others to develop their careers regardless of whether they choose to have a family. No one is immune from bias so we all have work to do!

Chelsea Finnigan

Marketing & Business Development Executive





I will advocate for flexible working, generally and in cases which I lead and to ensure that deadlines which are real and those which are not are recognised – to ensure that women are not disadvantaged by the traditional model of “the working day/week”, where observation of that model is rarely necessary in delivering a premium service.



Stuart Ritchie QC

Silk Date: 2012



I get asked to be on panels or go to events (for example, those run by universities to explain what being a barrister is like). I say yes to as many as possible, as I know it's important for younger people to see that the Bar is diverse and to see people they relate to. Role models are very important.

Chloe Carpenter QC

Silk Date: 2020





Being passive is not enough: we need to be mindful that the problem is not simply with overt bad behaviour but also with more subtle aspects of the working (and social) environment. Small changes matter, and they compound over time to make a big difference.

Christopher Langley

Call Date: 2011

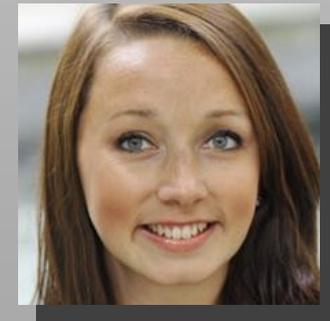




I hope to be able to continue the mentoring and guidance I have experienced since joining Fountain Court and inspire other clerks to reach senior positions in the future.

Sian Hockett

Deputy Senior Clerk





Women can't 'break the bias' alone, or we'd have done it a long time ago! What we can do is look out for one another. I have had some incredible female mentors and role models and I hope to pay that forward to the next generation.

Francesca Ruddy

Call Date: 2020





We all need to play our role in breaking the bias, to enable the Bar to be the best that it can be. Challenging traditional gender stereotypes is a really important part of this.

Max Evans

Call Date: 2015





Fountain Court
CHAMBERS

#IWD2021

#BREAKTHEBIAS