

Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Bar

Excessive Workload



Wellbeing
at the Bar

Excessive workload

"I can't cope with how much work I have to do now."

Ways to deal with an excessive workload

- **Ask for help.** Your clerks will assume that you always want more work. Sometimes more work is counter-productive and your clerks need to know this. If you are very junior and don't feel able to ask for time out of court, you may need a more senior ally. Find a trusted colleague to help you with this.
- **Buy some time.** Identify everything that has any possible room for movement. Remember that you are not the only person with an excessive workload, and that your opponents, your instructing solicitor, other advocates in your case and judges are probably struggling too. Even if they are not they will almost certainly understand the pressure you are under. Make contact with the other people involved in your cases and try to negotiate some latitude. Even when deadlines have passed this is worth doing.. People are more likely to respond sympathetically if you are upfront about your difficulties. Your practice is not going to collapse if you do this.
- **Make a list.** Uncertainty exacerbates panic so try to be as clear as possible about what you actually have to achieve. Write a chronology of your deadlines. Separately identify everything that is already overdue and by how long.
- **Ask for help, again.** If making a list is too daunting, ask someone to act as a sounding board.
- **Be realistic.** Refer to your list, establish what your irreducible minimum is for today and stick to it. Do not try to think about dealing with anything else unless and until you have finished it.
- **Ask for more help. Again.** Some things cannot be delegated, other things *can*. It is counter-intuitive, but stop thinking that you have to do everything, and perfectly. Identify what support can properly be found in pupils, colleagues, your instructing solicitor and clerks.