

Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Bar

Assistance Programme
FAQs



Wellbeing
at the Bar

Assistance Programme FAQs

Who will be providing the Bar Council/Wellbeing at the Bar Assistance Programme ('AP')?

Health Assured. This is the same provider the CBA and some leading chambers have used (See <https://healthassured.co.uk/>)

Who will be able to use the Assistance Programme?

Any self-employed barrister with a practising certificate as well as members of the Institute of Barristers' Clerks (IBC) and Legal Practice Managers' Association (LPMA).

What will be on offer?

A comprehensive telephone helpline will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Telephone support will include:

- Counselling and emotional support
- Family issues
- Bereavement
- Trauma
- Relationship issues
- Stress related conditions
- Addictions
- Tax information
- Legal information
- Medical information
- Money management and debt support

Online health and wellbeing resources including webinars, mini-health checks and four-week self-help programmes covering topics such as sleep, smoking cessation, hydration and healthy eating.

Also, and where possible, additional counselling including:

- Face-to-face counselling
- Structured telephone counselling
- Online video counselling

How will I be able to access the Assistance Programme?

Anyone eligible to use the Service will be given a telephone number (advertised on the Wellbeing at the Bar website www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk); you will be asked if you are a self-employed barrister or a member of the IBC or LPMA.

The Service is provided by an independent third party (Health Assured). The Chair of the Bar has approved that this Service remain entirely confidential. No personal details are provided to the Bar Council or the regulator. Bar Council will only receive anonymised data on which groups have used the Service and how the Service has been used to enable us to evaluate Service use. Health Assured collects Personal Data only insofar as it allows them to comply with their statutory and safeguarding duties. Any data regarding access or use of services will be provided in anonymised format to the Bar Council for evaluation purpose.

Is this Service confidential?

The Service is entirely confidential. The Chair of the Bar has approved that this Service remain entirely confidential. No personal details are provided to the Bar Council or the regulator. You will be asked to identify as a self-employed barrister or a member of the IBC or LPMA for cross billing purposes by the partners who are funding the Service. Bar Council will only receive anonymised data on which groups have used the Service and how the Service has been used to enable us to evaluate Service use. However, in order to provide the support services, Health Assured will collect Personal Data such as name, address, date of birth and in the case of structured counselling, GP contact details. All Personal Data is stored securely and will not be shared with the Bar Council or the regulator.

Will the Assistance Programme be open to the employed Bar?

The Service will only be made available to the self-employed Bar. Members of the Employed Bar will be covered by their own employers' Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).

Who will be funding this scheme?

The Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund ('BMIF') will fund the support for self-employed barristers. Funding for members of the IBC and LPMA will be provided by these two organisations. Budget (approximately £15,000) has been set aside to fund the Service and each organisation (Bar Council, IBC and the LPMA) will be charged on a per use basis by its members. We will be purchasing bundles of calls and counselling and whilst we believe we have set aside enough funds to cover provision against expected

demand, some elements of the Service may need to be suspended if use exceeds budget available.

Doesn't the Criminal Bar Association ('CBA') already have a similar scheme?

Yes, the Criminal Bar Association already offer a similar scheme. This scheme will now be incorporated into the new Bar Council scheme. The offer to criminal practitioners will be enhanced. This enables Bar Council to use BMIF funding to support CBA members reducing costs to the CBA.

The Bar Council will be taking over the CBA's helpline number from the beginning of November.

My chambers already has an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), who should I call?

Some chambers have already taken out an EAP for their members and your chambers' EAP may offer a higher level of support. You now have a choice and can either use your own chambers' programme or the scheme provided by the Bar Council.

What about the LawCare helpline?

The Bar Council also supports LawCare <https://www.lawcare.org.uk/> to provide a helpline for the profession. The new AP provides more comprehensive support, but you may still prefer to call LawCare. This is about giving you more choice.

How are the AP staff trained?

All Health Assured staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and are governed by and adhere to the respective Code of Ethics and Practice of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the British Psychological Society.

On the telephone helpline Health Assured have counsellors trained in 140 specific disciplines. Callers are triaged by a central telephone system and may be signposted to resources or referred for counselling sessions with a specific expert.

The counselling team have been trained to diploma level with at least two years' and 450 hours' post qualification supervised counselling. They must also provide evidence of on-going clinical supervision in accordance with the Codes of Ethics and Practice of their respective professional bodies and must be willing to undergo an enhanced DBS check.

Is there a cap on how many times someone can use this service?

There are no caps on use of the Service but once the budget has been used up the Service may need to be suspended for a period. Unfortunately, we have had to place some limits on, for example, access to counselling. This Service is intended for those in immediate need. Health Assured offer a 24/7 confidential support helpline that can be accessed as and when support is needed. The structured counselling support available is short-term, solution-focused structured therapy.

If I need counselling, will I get it?

We will try to provide counselling whenever we can (See FAQ 12). You may however wish to see your GP, particularly if you may need ongoing counselling support.

Are chamber's employees who are not members of the IBC or LPMA able to access the Service?

No, but all Chambers' staff will be eligible to join either the IBC or LPMA to access this Service. Both organisations welcome membership enquiries. The IBC has a junior clerk rate, which is £15 per year and full membership of the LPMA is £50. Many chambers pay membership fees for their staff and so the AP is affordable to all. LPMA and IBC membership provides additional benefits to the AP.

Does the AP extend to partners and family?

Yes, the scheme currently extends to any partner, spouse or dependent (where dependents are defined as between the ages of 16 – 24 in full time education registered at the same address).

What happens with respect to the AP when the pilot year ends?

We will evaluate use and feedback and if positive we will maintain the Service subject to securing continuing financial support.