

## **A new dawn for Bar recruitment as largest-ever cohort of pupils at one set to join TBG**



The Barrister Group (TBG) is welcoming 10 new pupils to its practice, believed to be the largest ever single intake of pupils at the Bar.

All have been told that they will have an opportunity for tenancy after completing their pupillage – unlike at traditional sets, provided that the pupils achieve requisite professional standards, there will be no competition or a limited number of tenancies.

The news marks the first anniversary of LDC's investment in TBG, formerly Clerksroom, the first time that a chambers has accepted private equity investment. The backing has allowed TBG to develop a rigorous and unique blind recruitment process, which also offers extensive feedback for unsuccessful candidates and support for them to reapply in the future.

TBG's focus is on recruiting those with the potential to build a sustainable self-employed practice, rather than their background.

TBG ran a pre-recruitment webinar for potential candidates to explain its ethos, how the three-stage process works and what it is looking for. Central to its ethos is the desire to create a sustainable and inclusive chambers that champions diversity and development, supporting members to grow their practice for the lifetime of their career.

The first stage required candidates to complete an anonymous questionnaire that tested standards and competence. Some 509 did so, fewer than half of those who started it, which reflects the deliberately demanding nature of the test. The pass rate was 77%.

Those who passed then had to complete a questionnaire on their suitability – both to be a self-employed practitioner and to work at TBG. This was again anonymous, with an email address the only information they had to provide at this point. Of the 285 who completed this, the top 10% – after their scores from both stages were combined – went on to the third stage, an interview.

The 30 candidates had to provide a mini-business proposal, or skeleton argument, about a particular practice area they wanted to work in, which they then had to present to the panel of three. Each member of the panel had their own scoresheet, meaning there did not have to be consensus about a candidate.

Unsuccessful candidates at stage 2 received feedback from the person who marked their questionnaire, highlighting one thing they did well, one thing they could improve on, and general comments. Those unsuccessful at stage 3 received the same from each of the interviewers.

TBG is also putting together webinars for unsuccessful and future candidates to explain what worked during the process and what did not.

The successful 10 will have unrivalled support, with each assigned a 'pupil buddy' as well as a pupil supervisor, and internal marketing of their skills and availability. As TBG is a national operation, intent on providing rewarding careers, and creating a modern environment focused on building a strong and diverse culture and sense of belonging and unity rather than physical locations, they will be given exposure to many areas of practice and different barristers as part of their training. TBG also has a bespoke training course for supervisors.

Harry Hodgkin, chief executive and co-founder of TBG, says: "This is a new dawn for Bar recruitment. We are now in a position to invest in recruiting the best people from the most diverse range of backgrounds possible and ensuring they receive the work and experience they need to kickstart their careers. We then have significant resources to help them build flourishing practices.

"We believe that TBG in many ways heralds the future of the Bar and that starts with ensuring that the best candidates, whatever their backgrounds, have access to it. These first 10 pupils mark the start of a new chapter in TBG's history."

Lauren Coupar-Evans, TBG's barrister membership officer, adds: "The diversity of this cohort shows that there is no 'typical' TBG pupil. What they share, though, is good experience – including life experience – empathy, initiative, commercial mindedness and a passion for access to justice. That is an extremely strong starting point.

"They are evidence that our new recruitment process works. It has taken time and effort to make it as rigorous and fair as possible, and hopefully we have pointed the way for others at the Bar."

**For further information, please contact:**

Kerry Jack or Sue Carr, Black Letter Communications 020 3567 1208

[kerry.jack@blacklettercommunications.co.uk](mailto:kerry.jack@blacklettercommunications.co.uk) /

[sue.carr@blacklettercommunications.co.uk](mailto:sue.carr@blacklettercommunications.co.uk)

**About The Barrister Group**

The Barrister Group is one of the largest barristers' chambers in the country, covering every court in England and Wales. Over the last 20 years we've been delivering innovative and flexible solutions to barristers, solicitors and members of the public to improve access to justice.

We provide a newer, more efficient model of working for barristers, through our innovative digital platform that facilitates their interactions with solicitors and the public.

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