

NARITA BAHRA QC - 2 HARE COURT

Vice chair manifesto

Thank you for taking the time to read this manifesto. I have deliberately kept it brief, as I know your time is precious.

Should you choose me to represent you as Vice Chair of the Criminal Bar Association, then these will be my top 4 priorities in the role:

1. Redressing imbalances within the Criminal Justice system payment structure. The only way to guarantee that the criminal justice system continues to function is to ensure that Barristers are paid fairly for the work that we do. There must be proper recognition that a skilled, trained and experienced advocate saves public expense and undertakes vital work, often in very difficult circumstances.

2. Enhancing professional development of the next generation of criminal barristers. The career development of Junior Barristers has been adversely impacted by increased remote working. We must ensure that junior colleagues have the best opportunity to build their professional network and skillsets by having access to, and mentoring from, senior members of the bar and judiciary.

3. Ensuring a career within the Criminal bar is compatible with personal health and wellbeing. We must ensure that the wellbeing of Barristers is respected and prioritised by the Judiciary. Late night emails requiring immediate response are not compatible with this. I will lobby for a national framework which will require judges to set parameters for out of hours work during trials.

4. Dispelling the myth that the criminal bar is a vocation of the privileged. Diversity must be promoted and supported through practical action as well as through stronger messaging. Most importantly, we must campaign for more secure incomes for our junior colleagues. It is not acceptable for Junior Barristers to be forced to incur substantial debt whilst building their careers, or to obstruct family-friendly working. I propose that we modernise and refresh the Criminal Bar whilst retaining and celebrating the excellence and traditions of the profession.

During my tenure I will also address:

- The impact of the Criminal Legal Aid Review findings upon the profession
- Defending trial by jury
- The inefficiency of the Blitz Courts Pilot scheme, including the negative impact upon earnings
- Supporting the Bar's reasoned and valid objections to Extended Operating Hours
- Advocating for a national Remote Hearing protocol (Cloud Video Platform)
- Working to improve facilities available to the Bar in all court centres across England and Wales
- Ensuring that protocols in the investigation, charge and trial of Rapes and Sexual Offences balance the rights of the complainant against those who may stand falsely accused
- Reinforcing and cultivating working relationships with experts, other professionals and agencies who work in the Criminal Justice System, in particular the professional clients of the Bar

I will defend the profession fearlessly against the challenges we face. A vote for me is a vote for positive change.