



LIBRARY FEES: VALUE FOR MONEY

THE BAR *of*
NORTHERN
IRELAND

BAR COUNCIL STRATEGIC AIM

One of the priorities for the Bar Council, its Committees and Bar Library management is to ensure that Bar Library membership subscriptions represent the best possible value for money. This aim is clearly articulated in the Bar Council Strategy:

“To have Library Services that deliver proven and sustainable benefits to members”.

In delivering value for money the objective is to provide each barrister with the quality services, help and support necessary to thrive in their practices which will ultimately benefit the consumers of the services they provide.

THE BAR LIBRARY

The Library model, which has been in existence since 1933, has proven to be a success for those it serves, that is barristers and consumers. As of 2021 there are approximately 700 full members which represents nearly all Northern Ireland based barristers in independent practice. Each of those members benefit from the advantages that stem from such a large collective and collaborative structure.

Each member of the Library has the benefit of a secure, staffed and fully serviced, modern city centre office environment which is open 7 days a week and in close proximity to all of the Belfast courts. Each member benefits from use of the prestigious Bar Library postal and email addresses which can be replicated on electronic and hard copy personalised professional stationery.

The Library provides members with a GDPR compliant access controlled environment. Qualified GDPR staff support services include provision of Data Protection awareness training, compliance guidance and practical tool kits. These benefits are invaluable in assisting members meet the challenging new compliance requirements of the new GDPR legislation, thus avoiding potential significant financial penalties and preventing reputational damage.

Bar Library members will be able to avail of expert advice in respect of the Statutory Registration Scheme which the Department of Justice plans to introduce. The Scheme will be applicable to all providers of publicly funded legal services in Northern Ireland. This will impose a considerable burden on barristers undertaking publicly funded work each of whom will be expected to complete an annual registration process, submit to an audit procedure and adhere to a Code of Practice. In advance of the scheme's introduction, the Library will be able to advise members of the Bar Library as to the requisite standards to help prevent against any sanctions for non-compliance being imposed by the Legal Services Agency.



COST COMPARISONS

The Legal Services Review Group recognised when considering alternative business structures in it's report on Legal Services in Northern Ireland [TSO, 2006, para 6.42] that "...the Bar Library offers benefits to consumers through providing barristers with economies of scale."

The tables below highlight that Bar Library subscriptions do represent value for money.

Table 1 illustrates the costs of purchasing facilities commensurate with those available within the Library, without the benefit of collective buying power. The Library resources that form the basis of the comparison in the table allow members to build diverse practices as they are not restricted to resources in any 1 practice area alone, thus enabling flexibility in a rapidly changing legal market place

Table1:

Facilities Commensurate with those available to Members of the Bar Library	
PI Insurance (min cover)	1,624
Access to Legal Databases	16,995
Access to Printed Materials	1,394
DX Service	250
Access to Confidential Shredding	200
Access to Secure e-mail & storage (Office 365)	360
Secure managed internet & wi-fi	300
CPD	300
Light & Heat Overhead	360
	21,783

Table 2 compares the total cost shown in Table 1 to the tiered costs of Library membership.

Table 2:

Seniority	Bar Fees	PI Ins (min £500k)	Total	Cost of acquiring Service in open market	Saving
Year					
1	412	215	627	21,783	21,156
2	727	215	942	21,783	20,841
3	1,147	215	1,362	21,783	20,421
4	1,637	215	1,852	21,783	19,931
5	2,339	215	2,554	21,783	19,229
6	3,184	215	3,399	21,783	18,384
7	4,093	215	4,308	21,783	17,475
>7	5,356	215	5,571	21,783	16,212
QC	7,457	309 (£750k)	7,766	21,783	14,017

These tables do not include the many other unquantifiable benefits available to barristers in independent practice who are members of the Bar Library, such as:

Convenience of access to the court estate for members appearing in Belfast

- Within 2 minutes of the Royal Courts of Justice and Laganside Courts;
- Within 2 minutes of the Law Society headquarters;
- Within 5 minutes of the Legal Services Agency headquarters, and most Belfast based solicitors;
- Within 5 minutes of the Resolution Centre

Fees Collection Service

- In the most recent Membership Survey, this service was considered to be of great benefit to many practitioners. Since implementation, the service has recovered more than £2m for members who use the service and at no additional cost to those individuals.

IT Services

- Secure Hosted Email Service with dedicated @barlibrary.com email address
- IT purchasing advice and assistance
- Discount on Apple Products
- Bring Your Own Device Setup and Configuration
- Hardware and Software upgrades and installation
- Cybersecurity and Data Protection Advice and Training
- Fast, Reliable and Secure Wifi Internet Access
- Secure Online Document Storage
- Secure Low-Cost Mono and Colour print and copy
- Indexed PDF scanning service
- Secure Internet Access in NI Courts using LP&C network
- 24/7 access to Barrister Portal
- Equipment Loans including Laptops, Cables, Phone Chargers, etc
- IP Telephony with very low call rates

Library & Information Services

- Staff assisted Enquiry and Research Service
- Practice Direction compliant Authority Gathering Service
- 24/7 access to OLIB, a unique database of NI law only available to full members of the Bar Library
- Staff assisted access to many other commercial legal databases
- A trade discounted Member Bookshop and Subscription Service
- Bespoke practice area Current Awareness Services

On Site Facilities and Services

- Postal, DX and Brief collection and delivery service
- Confidential waste collection and disposal
- Portering service
- City centre messenger service
- Stationery and postal supplies
- Specialist robing laundry service
- Office & desk clearance assistance
- Paging & appointment reminder service
- Office, desk, locker and car parking allocation
- Bar Library business address, DX number, landline and email address
- Exclusive portfolio of member benefits offering exclusive discounts for members in local and national retailers, local restaurants and hotels and hairdressing salons.
- Private dining facility



Finance Department

- Specially negotiated deals in Professional Indemnity Insurance including free run off cover for life, Critical Illness Cover and Private Health Insurance, Bar Library Affinity Pension Scheme
- Easy to manage Direct Debit Service

Education

- Continuing Professional Development programme;
- Unrestricted free access to online CPD resources;
- Pupillage and Master Support
- Bar Association CPD events
- Advocacy training and seminars
- Pupil advocacy training programme
- Advanced advocacy training
- Outplacement and career opportunities

The Policy and Communications Office

- Work with Bar Associations and Bar Council to ensure the views of the Bar are conveyed by way of consultation responses and public engagement programme with local politicians and public bodies;
- Branded personalised stationery
- Media enquiry services
- Event support, including bespoke programme & poster creation, professional printing, PowerPoint presentation design and emails to the membership (ezine, Association newsletters etc)

Collegiality

- Membership of the Library also provides an important benefit to barristers in the form of an open environment which facilitates ready access to experienced colleagues who, embracing the collegiality of the Northern Ireland Bar, are both willing and able to provide assistance, mentoring and guidance in the areas of practice in which they have experience and expertise.

For more information on any of the services available please contact the Bar Council Office on 028 9056 2349 who will put you in touch with the relevant department.



