



EMAIL POLICY

We at 25BR are very well aware of the pressures that this profession imposes on us all. They are more intense now than when our more senior members started their careers. There are more and more Rules and Practice Directions to comply with and much more written work is demanded, often with short deadlines imposed.

The advent of email has increased that pressure and it is seemingly expected that counsel should be on call every day, weekends as well, until midnight and beyond. It is now commonplace for detailed applications, submissions, substantial quantities of evidence or significant disclosure to be served overnight.

There is still a rather macho attitude in the legal profession about this, and many seem to regard working long, unsocial hours as a badge of honour.

This sort of pressure not only sucks the pleasure out of the job, it plays havoc with our personal lives, and at a time when both sides of the legal profession feel undervalued in every way, not just financially.

We at 25 Bedford Row want to take better care of ourselves and our professional clients and, most importantly, of those junior members who are starting out in their careers. We do not want them to feel that they will be judged by how late or how early they start emailing - they have the right to be judged by the quality of their work, not by their capacity for caffeine-fuelled insomnia.

25 Bedford Row has therefore approved the introduction of a voluntary policy on email practice. We stress the word voluntary, because it is up to each of our members as individuals to choose whether to implement it, generally or on any given case, but we very much hope that, at least, all our senior members will abide by it when dealing with pupils and juniors.

The policy is very simple: all our counsel are free to decide that they will not require professional colleagues to respond to their emails outside certain defined working hours e.g. 9-6, or 8.30-5.30 and so on. Our members are also free to decide that they themselves will not respond to emails received outside those hours. It is up to counsel to decide whether they exclude part or the whole of weekends as well.

This will always be a high-pressure job, and there will be times when our personal lives have to take second place but we at 25 Bedford Row, as a chambers which has always tried to foster a culture of equal opportunities, have adopted a policy that is intended to set an example of better working practice. Getting the right work/life balance is difficult but we can at least start by not requiring or expecting our professional colleagues to respond immediately to emails we choose to send outside normal business hours.