



The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court

Report of Finding and Sanction

Case Reference: 2023/1242/D5

Mr Timothy Compton

The Director-General of the Bar Standards Board

The Chair of the Bar Standards Board

The Treasurer of the Honourable Society of: Inner Temple, 1984.

Disciplinary Tribunal

Mr Timothy Compton

1. In accordance with an appointment made by the President of the Council of the Inns of Court contained in a Convening Order dated 2 September 2025, I, HH Nicholas Ainley, sat as Chairman of a Disciplinary Tribunal on 22-24 September 2025 to hear and determine 3 charges of professional misconduct contrary to the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales against Mr Timothy Compton, barrister of the Honourable Society of Inner Temple.

Panel Members

2. The other members of the Tribunal were:

Stephanie McIntosh (Lay Member)

Lakshmi Ramakrishnan (Lay Member)

Alexander Horne (Barrister Member)

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Elahe Youshani (Barrister Member)

Charges

3. The following charges were denied.

Charge 1

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Board Handbook (Version 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

Timothy Compton, a barrister, behaved in a way which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in him or in the profession, in that, on 31 January 2023, while at a Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Probation Service, made the following comments to Person A, a female member of probation staff, using words to the effect of:

- (i) "But darling you are so decorative", and/or,
- (ii) "You are looking at me like I am a fucking dirty pig".

Charge 2

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Board Handbook (Version 4.6).

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Particulars of Offence

Timothy Compton, a barrister, behaved in a way which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in him or in the profession. On 31 January 2023, Mr Compton was instructed to appear at a Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Probation Service. When in a conference room with probation staff, while preparing for the hearing for which he was instructed to appear, Mr Compton made one or more of the following comments to probation staff, in words or terms to the effect of:

- (i) "I keep saying to people, when you come to court bring your fucking statements, bring your fucking laptops".
- (ii) "You work for probation, you should always have your fucking statement, what are you thinking not bringing it with you, it's fucking simple".
- (iii) "Probation need to bring their fucking statements".
- (iv) "You need to have access to your fucking laptops and fucking contact logs".

Charge 3

Statement of Offence

Professional misconduct, contrary to Core Duty 7 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales (9th Edition), Bar Standards Board Handbook (Version 4.6).

Particulars of Offence

Timothy Compton, a barrister, failed to provide a competent standard of work and service to his client. On 31 January 2023, Mr Compton was instructed to appear at a Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Probation Service. When in a conference room with probation staff, while preparing for the hearing for which he was instructed to appear, Mr Compton made one or more of the following comments to probation staff, in words or terms to the effect of:

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- (i) "I keep saying to people, when you come to court bring your fucking statements, bring your fucking laptops".
- (ii) "You work for probation, you should always have your fucking statement, what are you thinking not bringing it with you, it's fucking simple".
- (iii) "Probation need to bring their fucking statements".
- (iv) "You need to have access to your fucking laptops and fucking contact logs".

Parties Present and Representation

1. The Respondent was present and was not represented. The Bar Standards Board ("BSB") was represented by Ms Laura Nash.

Preliminary Matters

2. The BSB made an application to amend the Charge Sheet, this application was successful and the Charge Sheet was subsequently amended to the wording set out above.

Pleas

3. Mr Compton denied all charges.

Evidence

4. The following witnesses provided a witness statement and gave oral evidence which they were cross-examined on:

-Laura Steen

-Emily Moist

-Sophia Milligan (remote)

5. Mr Compton provided a statement and gave oral evidence which he was cross-examined on.

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Findings

6. Mr. Compton is a barrister of considerable seniority and experience, particularly in the fields of criminal and family law. At the time we are dealing with he was 38 years call and had been in chambers in Southampton for a number of years.
7. On the 31st of January 2023 he was briefed to appear in two contested breach of sentence condition hearings at Southampton Magistrates Court. In one of these hearings he was to be assisted by Lauren Butt, a probation officer, who would be giving evidence if required. It is in respect of his behaviour that day that these charges are brought.
8. He arrived at court early in order to secure a conference room. At Southampton Magistrates Court there is an open plan waiting area with conference rooms off the side. Unless one arrives early these rooms are likely to be taken.
9. There was a number of other breach hearings that day in which he was not instructed, but Rosanna Martin, a junior member of his chambers, was.
10. Laura Steen, a programme facilitator officer for the prison and probation service, was due to appear in one of those other hearings. She told us, and we accept, that while she was in the waiting area she was confronted by the defendant in respect of whom she was to deal. He had been aggressive in his demeanour and she was upset, and understandably so, by his behaviour.
11. We heard from two probation officers who were there that day, Ms Moist and Ms Milligan. Ms Moist was due to give evidence in a breach hearing in which Ms Martin was briefed and Ms Milligan was there to observe what she did. They both arrived at court together and told us that they very quickly realised that Ms Steen had a problem with the behaviour of the defendant in her case and went to her.
12. It is about at this time that there was the first encounter between Mr Compton and any of these officers. Either at his invitation or otherwise, the evidence was not clear, they all went into the room that he had booked, which of course got Ms Steen away from the defendant who had been harassing her.
13. It is at this stage that Mr Compton's behaviour first came into question according to the evidence that we heard from the three officers. They all gave evidence that they found his behaviour to be strange, to put it no higher than that. There was a lot of conversation being instigated by him that had nothing to do with the reason that they were all there,

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but ranged from history to Egypt to the Nile and other matters that they could not recall. Mr Compton told us that there was indeed general chat but there was time to kill and general chat was all it was. He also said that from the outset, and for no reason that he could discern, Ms Steen had taken against him. He said her attitude towards him was obviously hostile.

14. We have had the benefit of hearing Mr. Compton give evidence over a period of over two hours. It is appropriate that we deal at this stage with the way that he gave his evidence. He was representing himself and we make due allowance for that but we have to say that we found him to be an unfocused witness and one who was very difficult to keep on point. He had a strong tendency to veer from evidence relevant to a particular topic to side issues, or matters of no relevance, and to do so repeatedly. He was forceful but repetitive and the tribunal had frequently to intervene to direct him to the points relevant to the issues that we were dealing with. From the evidence that we have heard, including evidence of a later exchange with Ms Moist, to which we will turn in due course, we have no reason to suppose that his behaviour would have been any different on the 31st of January in the conference room. We are quite sure from our experience of his evidence that the three officers might well have found his conduct peculiar, but that is not why we are here. We are here to deal with the charges that he faces, of which charges two and three come first in time and relate to Mr Compton's behaviour towards Ms Butt.
15. Lauren Butt had not arrived when the officers went into Mr Compton's room. She arrived somewhat later. She had not brought with her either her witness statement or any statement, or her laptop. In our view she should have done as she was due to be called as a witness but this was not a major failing as the other officers did have their laptops and could retrieve the relevant documents.
16. She was the only person in the room who had any planned professional connection with Mr. Compton that day. It is said by the three officer witnesses (Ms Butt did not give evidence before us) that Mr Compton was irritated by the fact that she appeared to be unprepared.
17. The evidence as to what was said by Mr. Compton is conflicting as between him and the officers.

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18. According to Ms. Steen, he said "Why not bring your statement? It's fucking simple". According to Ms Moist he said "You need to bring your fucking statements and your fucking laptop and contact logs". According to Ms Milligan, he said "Bring your fucking statement".
19. Mr. Compton denied that he swore at all and said that although he was irritated, the comments that he made were not directed to Ms Butt but against her managers for not preparing officers properly for hearings.
20. There was some agreement between Ms Steen and Mr. Compton and so far as she recalled him saying of probation officers that they were the "poor bloody infantry", a remark that he admitted making.
21. That is the evidence in relation to charges 2 and 3.
22. Time passed without any cases being reached. Ms Martin arrived and was in and out of the conference room during the course of the morning. There was further conversation in which it is accepted that there was reference to probation officer training, Mr Compton referred to the defendants as "punters" something that Ms Moist did not find acceptable although it seems she made no complaint about it at the time, and there was also a reference that everybody remembered to Shrek, although its relevance to any issues that day is marginal at best.
23. At any rate it became clear at some point that Ms Steen was not going to be needed to give evidence and she could therefore leave.
24. It is at this point that the issues in charge one arise. Ms Steen says that as she went to leave the room, Mr. Compton said to her "Darling, you are so decorative" out of the blue. She said she was shocked by this and looked at him, at which he said "You're looking at me like a fucking dirty pig" to which she said she replied "I'm glad that came across".
25. Ms Moist remembered the words "decorative" and "dirty pig" and Ms Milligan remembered "decorative" and "looking at me like pig shit".
26. According to Mr. Compton, these are fabrications, and that is the evidence that relates to charge 1.
27. The breach cases were dealt with in a manner that does not give rise to any issues that we have to deal with. Ms Steen had left the building, but Ms Moist had not, and it is agreed that she spoke to Mr Compton after the hearings had taken place. She says that she also

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spoke to Ms Martin expressing her concern about Mr Compton's behaviour to be told that "he was like that".

28. As far as the conversation between her and Mr Compton goes, she said that he said "I think your curly haired friend found me quite annoying. Can you apologise for me to her?" Mr. Compton remembered a conversation along those lines although he could not remember specifically mentioning curly hair and said that he asked this because he could not work out why she seemed to have taken against him.

29. What then followed seems to us to be extraordinary. According to Ms Moist he mentioned something about a waltz, which she couldn't understand. Mr Compton was able to fill in the blanks here because he said that was not referring to a waltz but a tango and he told us that what he had actually done was recite the first verse of Tom Lehrer's "Masochism Tango". He recited it to us as well:

*"I ache for the touch of your lips, dear
But much more for the touch of your whips, dear
You can raise welts like nobody else
As we dance to the Masochism Tango."*

30. When asked by the panel what reason there could possibly have been to say that to a woman whom he did not know, and in circumstances where it was of no conceivable relevance to anything she had done or said, all that Mr Compton was able to say was that it was a joke. He was unable to explain to us the point of the joke or what he was trying to convey by uttering these words. We find that this is a powerful indicator of how odd his behaviour must have seemed to be, indeed was on that day.

31. The officers all met up later that day at work and talked about what had happened. A senior probation officer became aware of the nature of their conversation and asked them to email her with what they remembered. They have said that they did this. We do not have the emails that were sent that day, but we do have the emails of the 7th of February where they, broadly speaking, set out the evidence that they gave before us.

32. We must decide on a balance of probabilities whether the alleged comments of Mr Compton were made at all, and if so whether they amount to professional misconduct, and we have come to the firm conclusion that on the balance of probabilities the evidence of the officers is to be preferred to his. We do this for these reasons.

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33. First, their evidence is broadly corroborative of each other, involving as it does recollection of swearing at Ms Butt in front of them, on charges 2 and 3, and also, in respect of charge 1, completely inappropriate comments made to Ms Steen. It is said by Mr Compton that what they have said may be made up or they may be the victims of innocent contamination from a hostile Ms Steen.
34. We can see no reason for them to be maliciously inclined towards Mr Compton, certainly not to the extent of making up a false account; and innocent contamination can, we feel, be rejected out of hand. These are adult professional officers who made records of what they recalled had happened a week earlier; events that disturbed them sufficiently on the day for Ms Moist to report the matter to Ms Martin, and for the officers to want to discuss it amongst themselves. Something prompted this and, having heard their evidence, we are satisfied that they were genuinely concerned by what they had seen and heard.
35. Second, on his own admission as to what he said, particularly the tango reference, it is plain, although he appeared to have little insight into this point, that Mr Compton's behaviour was strange and inappropriate that day.
36. It follows from this that we are satisfied that he swore at and was offensive towards Ms Butt, his client, when that kind of language was not called for, particularly in front of other people and work colleagues.
37. As far as his behaviour to Ms Steen is concerned we are quite satisfied that he referred to her, unprofessionally and inappropriately, as being “decorative”, that this was a demeaning comment that he had no business making and that he followed that with an expletive and a reference to her looking at him as if he was a pig.
38. We must then turn to whether his misbehaviour on that day, taken as a whole, passes the seriousness threshold, which of course it must in order to be properly before a tribunal at all. In deciding this point we have been assisted by reference to the cases of Khan and Kwiatkowski. We are entirely satisfied that it does. His behaviour that day was simply not appropriate for a professional and quite understandably caused genuine disquiet as well as offence. The charges are, and are all, fully made out.

Sanction and Reasons

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39. Mr. Compton has surrendered his practising certificate and has not worked for a couple of years. He told the Tribunal that he has no intention to work again as a barrister. In the circumstances we consider that the most appropriate sanction is to impose a reprimand in respect of each charge which we do.

Costs

40. Mr Compton is ordered to pay costs in the sum of £2,841 to the BSB.

Dated: 15 October 2025

HH Nicholas Ainley
Chairman of the Tribunal

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