



The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court

Report of Finding and Sanction

Case Reference: 2024/0396/D5

Mr Jonathan French

The Director-General of the Bar Standards Board

The Chair of the Bar Standards Board

The Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, November 1997.

Disciplinary Tribunal

Mr Jonathan French

1. In accordance with an appointment made by the President of the Council of the Inns of Court contained in a Convening Order dated 29 October 2025, I, HH Shani Barnes, sat as Chair of a Disciplinary Tribunal on 18 November 2025 to hear and determine 1 charge of professional misconduct contrary to the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales against Mr Jonathan French, barrister of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.

Panel Members

2. The other members of the Tribunal were:

Lakshmi Ramakrishnan (Lay Member)

Tracy Stephenson (Lay Member)

Yusuf Solley (Barrister Member)

Ruth Gray (Barrister Member)

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbta.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD

Charges

3. The following charge was found proven.

Charge 1

Statement of Offence

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

Particulars of Offence

Mr French engaged in conduct which was likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in him or in the profession, contrary to Core Duty 5, in that on or about 27 March 2023, he:

1. assaulted Person A in a way that amounted to actual bodily harm contrary to s. 47 Offences Against the Person Act 1861;
2. assaulted Person B in way that amounted to common assault contrary to s.39 Criminal Justice Act 1988;
3. damaged a mobile phone in a way that amounted to criminal damage contrary to s1(1) Criminal Damage Act 1971;

to which on 25 July 2023 he pleaded guilty before the Crown Court sitting at Newcastle.

Parties Present and Representation

1. The Respondent was present and was represented by Mr Andrew Faux. The Bar Standards Board (“BSB”) was represented by Mr Nicholas Bard.

Pleas

2. Mr French denied the Charge.

Evidence

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbta.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD

Documents Served

3. Statements from Mr and Mrs French from previous hearings and present hearing. References which included those from several solicitors, colleagues, Head of Chambers, his current employer, and more.
4. Three documents from Carol Stott (Psychologist), Report dated 10th December 2024. A draft from a report dated 4th August 2023 and an email dated 25th June 2025.
5. A report from Dr Ian Cummings dated 5th September 2025.
6. A Skeleton/Opening from Mr Bard has been served and a Response Skeleton from Andrew Faux.

Live Evidence

7. By agreement Dr Cummings appeared via a video link throughout the evidence.
8. Mr French adopted his witness statement and was cross examined. He confirmed that he had changed his mind and now disputed the charge (having previously admitted the charge) because his wife had suggested “he shouldn’t fall on his sword” but should have the question aired before the tribunal vis a vis his diagnosis of Autism.
9. Mrs French adopted her statement and gave evidence in relation to the video she recorded of part of the incident.
10. Dr Cummins gave evidence explaining the final paragraph 141 of his report. He felt it was difficult to know about alcohol consumption now but on balance he concluded that if the tribunal accepted that Mr French had consumed just half a glass of wine before returning to his home on the day of the incident to remove his in laws then he did not consider that alcohol contributed in a negative way to Mr French’s subsequent behaviour and therefore is no longer an aggravating factor.
11. After some prevarication and technical difficulties, Dr Cummins accepted he still believed Mr French’s autism was a significant factor but that Mr French did not lose complete control throughout the events.
12. Submissions had been submitted by skeleton arguments by both parties and therefore summarised briefly.

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbts.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD

13. The question for the tribunal is whether Mr French is in breach of Core Duty 5 of the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales and the standard of proof is the balance of probabilities.

Findings

14. On 25th February 2024 Mr French was sentenced to a 2 year conditional discharge concurrent on each charge.
15. Mr French self reported to The BSB on 19th February 2024. On 24th February 2025 Mr French wrote to the BSB and admitted the charge and that he had breached Core Duty 5 and a sanctions hearing was convened on 24th June 2025. As a result of a Report by Dr Carol Stott Mr French changed his mind and said he would contest the charge. The case was adjourned and The BSB authorised a report from Dr Ian Cummings a psychiatrist who has provided a report for the BSB. This tribunal is to decide on the balance of probabilities whether Jonathan French is guilty of a breach of Core Duty 5 and if he is, what sanction is appropriate.

Principles

16. CD5 says “You must not behave in a way which is likely to diminish the trust and confidence which the public places in you or in your profession”.
17. Mr French’s case is that his conduct was criminal and unacceptable but that he is not guilty of Misconduct because his assaults were wholly attributable to factors beyond his control- ie “an autistic meltdown”. Authorities of Howd and Khan are relied upon. The Tribunal do not find them persuasive in this case, however Dr Stott concludes in an e mail that Mr French’s conduct was out of his control. Dr Cummings agrees Mr French suffered an “autistic melt down” significantly caused by his autism but it was not right to say he lost total control throughout the assaults.
18. Whilst Mr Bard invited the tribunal to conclude if we accept no total loss of control throughout his behaviour this was reprehensible and he was morally culpable. However Mr Faux invited us to say in all the circumstances if his actions were caused by his autism we should find the case not proven. On a balance of probability on a majority of 4 to 1 we find the charge proven. This decision is made on the basis of Dr Ian Cummings conclusion that whilst a significant amount of the events were caused by his autistic meltdown I don’t

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbts.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD

believe he lost total control. There were times when he lost control but other times when he did not.”

Sanction and Reasons

19. The appropriate group is I violent behaviour towards others whether or not resulting in a criminal conviction.
20. Culpability use of violence against two individuals which was sustained. The conduct did amount to criminal offences.
21. Harm injury was caused, harm was caused to the public confidence in the profession
22. So far as seriousness is concerned we believe this is mid range.
23. Aggravating features are that the conduct resulted in criminal convictions. Previous disciplinary finding in result of previous similar behaviour.

Mitigating factors

24. Isolated incidents in difficult or unusual circumstances
25. Early admission and self reported promptly
26. Genuine remorse
27. Cooperated with the investigation
28. He has taken steps to prevent reoccurrence
29. Mr French’s diagnosis of Austitic Spectrum Disorder

Health Matters

30. Mr French’s diagnosis and difficulties he was experiencing from significantly contributed to the events.

Sanction

31. Given the extensive mitigation this lowers sanction and our decision is that a Reprimand is the most proportionate outcome.

Reprimand

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbts.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD

32. This was reprehensible conduct by a member of the Bar. We do not expect Mr French to be in this position again

Costs

33. Costs in the sum of £7,916.20-£8,266.20 (exact amount TBC) to be paid in full to the BSB.

Dated: 19 December 2025

HH Shani Barnes
Chair of the Tribunal

The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

9 Gray's Inn Square,
London
WC1R 5JD
T: 020 3432 7350
E: info@tbts.org.uk

The Council of the Inns of Court. Limited by Guarantee
Company Number: 8804708
Charity Number: 1155640
Registered Office:
9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD