



Judiciary of
England and Wales



The Lady Chief Justice's Report 2025

Independence, Impartiality, Integrity



**Judiciary of
England and Wales**

The Lady Chief Justice's Report 2025

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of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005



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Introduction by the Lady Chief Justice

This is my second annual report, charting the work of the judiciary from October 2024 to September 2025. Its publication will follow my second anniversary in the role – an apt time to reflect on what I have learned and on what has been undertaken in this period. It provides an opportunity to increase transparency about and understanding of the work of the judiciary. This year's report also includes information about how the courts and tribunals operate, and on the governance of the judiciary.

I remain committed to my three key objectives: i) recognising and promoting our strengths; ii) building judicial unity; and iii) reducing backlogs, improving timeliness and performance.

However, the overarching theme of this reporting period, both within and outside the judiciary, is that this has been a time of change.

The legal year has marked the retirement of many extraordinary judges across all levels of the judiciary, including notable departures from the Court of Appeal: the Senior President of Tribunals (Lord Justice Lindblom), the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal Civil Division (Lord Justice Underhill) and the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division (Lord Justice Holroyde). Lord Justice Holroyde's term finished in July and he retires shortly. The Chancellor of the High Court (Sir Julian Flaux), Lady Justice Macur and Lady Justice Nicola Davies also retire in the coming October. It has been my privilege and pleasure to work with each of them and I thank them for their service.

The membership of the Judicial Executive Board and cohort of leadership judges will therefore look different in the next legal year, as I welcome a new Senior President of Tribunals (Lord Justice Dingemans), Chancellor of the High Court (Lord Justice Birss), Vice-President of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division (Lord Justice Edis), Vice-President of the Court of Appeal Civil Division (Lord Justice Bean), and six new Court of Appeal appointments (Mrs Justice Cockerill, Mr Justice Dove, Mr Justice Foxton, Mrs Justice May, Mr Justice Miles and Mrs Justice Yip).

There has also been very sad news, with several members of the judiciary passing away in service, including Lord Justice William Davis. Lord Justice William Davis chaired the Sentencing Council, having previously been the lead for Youth Justice, and was a member of the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee. He was a fearless judge with outstanding expertise in criminal law.



Outside of the judiciary, a new Lord Chancellor took up office in July 2024 following the general election, a post which she held until early September this year. I thank her for her time and collaboration in office, during which we developed a constructive and productive relationship. I now look forward to working with her successor, soon to be sworn in at the beginning of the next legal year.

Under a new government, the criminal justice system has been a central focus for reform. In May and early July of this year respectively, the two independent reviews commissioned by the then Lord Chancellor – David Gauke’s Independent Sentencing Review and Sir Brian Leveson’s Independent Review of the Criminal Courts – were published. These reviews were conducted in

direct response to the rising backlogs of Crown Court caseloads and the prison capacity crisis. The judiciary has engaged appropriately, and I hope helpfully, with both Reviews. I have throughout urged government to ensure that all reform is well-managed, not rushed and properly resourced. In addition, many of the changes proposed will not ease the immediate challenges being faced in the criminal courts. The Crown Court outstanding caseload has continued to grow, despite the best efforts of the judiciary. By reason of imposed financial constraints, the judiciary is not yet operating at maximum judicial sitting day capacity, but continues to work with the Lord Chancellor to reach this level of sitting. The magistracy must be sufficiently equipped, trained and resourced to meet both current and future needs.

There have been several consultations designed to ensure that the magistracy is fit for the future, themed on Local Justice Areas, governance and the Single Justice Procedure. There must be adequate funding for the 'here and now', as well as for future change.

The outcome of the government's Spending Review was confirmed in July. The sitting day allocations process has commenced earlier than usual, in autumn. This is welcome and we hope for an early settlement so as to enable the judiciary to plan ahead and make best use of available resources.

I have emphasised consistently that the spotlight must not only be on crime. The civil, family and tribunal jurisdictions, where there are also essential funding requirements and initiatives, cannot be overlooked. In the civil jurisdiction, digitisation in the County Court remains incomplete. There has been improved access to justice and pace of civil dispute resolution through recent programmes, including the Small Claims Mediation Service. In the family jurisdiction, the open caseload of public and private law cases has reduced to pre-pandemic levels. Pathfinder is a resounding success, as are the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts. The Reporting Pilot has been concluded and been rolled out to every family court, facilitating greater transparency and, in turn, greater public understanding of family law.

Throughout the last year, judges have had to work in an increasingly challenging landscape: one which has included frequent policy changes and inaccurate and unfair criticism, sometimes personal, with associated security threats.

In this context, I should report the establishment of a new security taskforce this year, led by Mrs Justice Yip. The taskforce seeks to increase judicial office holders' understanding of how they can better protect themselves. Among other things, it has launched new digital security training for the judiciary. It will also work collaboratively with experts from the police and other criminal justice agencies to ensure that the best possible systems and procedures are in place to protect the judiciary. Additionally, Mr Justice Spencer chairs the Security Committee on Judges' Council which is responsible for coordinating judicial security policy and offering supporting and advice to judicial office holders facing specific threats. I am pleased that the Ministry of Justice has committed capital funding to ensure that HMCTS can adequately update courts and tribunals estates to ensure that they are safe.

I have maintained my usual annual round of activities, including tours of each of the six judicial Circuits. These visits offer me the opportunity to speak with judges and magistrates, staff, and legal professionals alike. They also allow me to engage in outreach activities outside of London, such as a visit to Outwood Academy Riverside in Middlesbrough and to a reception to mark the work of the North Eastern Circuit Scholarship Fund. Highlights with the judges have included observing in court with District Judge Terry Phillips in Newcastle, with Her Honour Judge Susan Jones in Coventry, and with District Judge Stewart Hughan in the Family Drug and Alcohol Court in London.

In November 2024, I gave evidence to the Justice Select Committee. In February 2025, I hosted my annual press conference and gave evidence to the House of Lords Constitution Committee. A key message shared on each occasion has been the need to safeguard judicial independence and security, to strike the right balance between healthy and robust public debate on the one hand and unacceptable, inaccurate and dangerous attacks on the judiciary on the other.

Relatedly, it is encouraging that so many Members of Parliament have taken up the invitation to visit their local court or tribunal centre. Following a direct invitation in April 2025 to all serving MPs, 47 visits have already taken place, with 42 scheduled for future dates and 39 more being planned. The visits should allow MPs to learn more about the reality of the modern justice system – with the aim of helping MPs how best to support their constituents and to understand the importance of the separation of powers and the rule of law.

I have continued to enjoy my ‘open forum’ online webinar events with a wide range of judicial colleagues. This year has focused on conversations with Judicial Executive Board members and leadership judges. Guests included Lady Justice King, Lady Justice Whipple, the Senior Presiding Judge, the Deputy Senior Presiding Judge, the Chancellor of the High Court and the National Leadership Magistrate.

A highlight of the year was the launch in May 2025 of a new five-year Judicial Strategy for International Engagement. The launch event in Court 4 and the Great Hall of the Royal Courts of Justice offered an important opportunity to promote the value of our international judicial engagement to a wide audience, including the Treasury, the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, the City of London and the legal profession as a whole. I also attended the Commonwealth Law Conference in Malta in April 2025, and met with the Canadian judiciary in the UK in July 2025, including meeting all nine members of the Canadian Supreme Court. The English and Welsh judiciary’s impressive international training programme continued, with training delivered in Ukraine, Malaysia, Albania and Nigeria. In September 2025, alongside Lord Reed, I attended the J-20 summit in South Africa. The Master of the Rolls attended the European Law Institute Conference, and many judicial colleagues attended the Commonwealth Magistrates’ and Judges’ Association conference in The Gambia. Each of these activities, carried out outside of sitting commitments and often during personal time, offer a chance for the judiciary of England and Wales to share best practice, exchange knowledge and discuss important topics, such as judicial security and artificial intelligence, with international colleagues.

Other achievements this year include ongoing judicial collaboration on the development of the City of London courts – which are on track to open in 2027 as scheduled. There has also been significant progress in the access to justice and open justice space. The Transparency and Open Justice Board – a Board which aims to modernise and coordinate how open justice is delivered across all courts and tribunals in England and Wales – has carried out a comprehensive public engagement exercise to test and refine its key objectives and identify four practical steps for every court and tribunal: timely and effective access to information about cases, access to core documents, effective access to hearings in public and the promotion of open justice principles when a hearing cannot be held in public. There are several pilots afoot, and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has launched Open Justice champions (designated regional leads) to demonstrate its commitment to supporting open justice in practical terms.

The senior judiciary remains committed to achieving a diverse and inclusive judiciary in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. It is a welcome development that this year's judicial diversity statistics included, for the first time, data on disability thanks to increased levels of self-reporting which met the threshold for publication.

In February 2025, the fifth Judicial Attitude Survey was published. For the first time, the survey included Coroners in England and Wales. The response rate to the survey remained very high, with 94% of the salaried judiciary and 55% of fee paid judges and

members completing it. The results illustrated that judges remain strongly committed to the judiciary and to the role judges play in society, and, across the jurisdictions, judges continue to report a high level of general job satisfaction; there was also an increase in the number of salaried judges who say that they would recommend salaried judicial office.

The survey also revealed areas of concern and informed where we will focus our attention over the coming years. In particular, while the vast majority of judges and members do not feel that they have been subject to bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, there remains a minority who do. The results indicated that, in many jurisdictions, workload and stress remain matters of concern.

Ongoing work to ensure adequate support for health, welfare and wellbeing, as well as steps to address instances of unacceptable judicial behaviour, has continued to take place. I have been clear that the senior judiciary does not seek to excuse or minimise inappropriate behaviour by judges. I am absolutely committed to a modern, diverse and inclusive judiciary that upholds our values of integrity, fairness and respect to all.

We have clear standards of behaviour expected from all judicial office holders, which is supported by training and support for judges at all levels, particularly those with leadership responsibilities. Work to review the routes available to raise concerns and resolve issues and working to challenge and change unacceptable behaviour is ongoing.

And I could not leave this introduction without mentioning the inspiring launch event of the UK Association of Black Judges (UKABJ) at the Supreme Court in July 2025. Only 1% of judges in England and Wales are black – a figure which remains stubbornly low. There is more work to be done by the professions and the judiciary to improve the position, and I am confident that the UKABJ will provide a unifying and primary voice for black judges in shaping this work.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the officials from the Judicial Office and HMCTS who have continued to work with the judiciary to deliver invaluable support to the administration of justice in England and Wales over the past legal year.

It takes courage and resilience to be a judge or magistrate, coroner or non-legal member, and to do right to all manner of people, without fear or favour, affection or ill will. I thank them all for their continued dedication to the rule of law and the delivery of justice over the past year in changing – and challenging – times.

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Carr
of Walton-on-the-Hill**





The Judiciary of England and Wales



The judiciary of England and Wales consists of judges, magistrates, tribunal members, and coroners. Together, these individuals uphold the rule of law.

Judges and other members of the judiciary oversee cases in different types of courts and tribunals, and in different areas of law, across the country.

Courts are structured hierarchically across different jurisdictions. The main jurisdictions in England and Wales are civil, criminal, family, tribunals, military, and coroners. Within these jurisdictions, there are different levels of court.

Judicial governance

Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, the Lord/Lady Chief Justice became responsible for some 400 statutory functions, which were previously the responsibility of the Lord Chancellor. For example, the Lord/Lady Chief Justice now decides where judges sit, and the type of cases they hear. To do this, the Lord/Lady Chief Justice has support from their judicial colleagues, as well as from court administrative staff.

The Lord/Lady Chief Justice exercises their executive and leadership responsibilities through, and with the support of, the Judicial Executive Board (JEB) and the Judges' Council, which is representative of all levels of the judiciary.

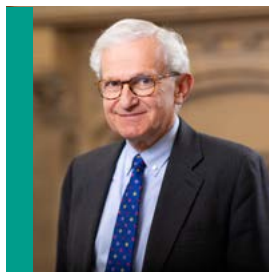
Members of the Judicial Executive Board

JEB is composed of the following members:



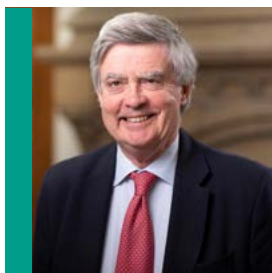
The Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill

The Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales



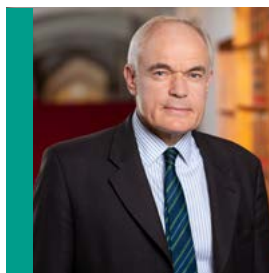
Sir Geoffrey Vos

The Master of the Rolls



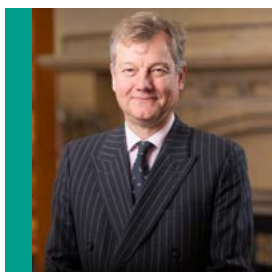
Sir Julian Flaux

The Chancellor of the High Court



Sir James Dingemans

The Senior President of Tribunals



Sir Colin Birss

Deputy Head of Civil Justice



Dame Eleanor King

Chair of the Board of the Judicial College



Dame Victoria Sharp
The President of
the King's Bench
Division



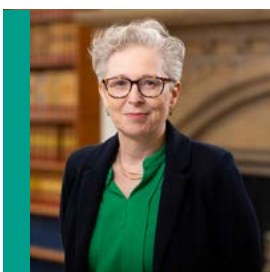
**Sir Andrew
McFarlane**
The President of the
Family Division



Sir Nicholas Green
The Senior
Presiding Judge for
England and Wales



**Dame Philippa
Whipple**
Lead Judge for
Diversity & Inclusion,
Leadership,
Development and
Wellbeing



Michelle Crotty
Chief Executive of
the Judicial Office

The Judicial Executive Board

Lady Chief Justice

The Lady Chief Justice (LCJ) is the Head of the Judiciary of England and Wales and the President of the Courts of England and Wales. The LCJ is the most senior judge in England and Wales.

One of the LCJ's duties is to serve as the President of the Criminal Division of the Court of Appeal and Head of Criminal Justice. The LCJ is supported in both of these duties by the President of the King's Bench Division (acting as Deputy Head of Criminal Justice), the Vice President of the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division), and the Senior Presiding Judge.

The Master of the Rolls

The Master of the Rolls (MR) and Head of Civil Justice is the second most senior judge in England and Wales.

The MR was originally responsible for the safekeeping of charters, patents and records of important court judgments written on parchment rolls. The MR still has responsibility for documents of national importance, being Chair of the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives.

The MR is a judge of the Court of Appeal and is the President of its Civil Division, and is responsible for the deployment and organisation of the work of the judges of this division as well as presiding in one of its courts.

The current MR is Sir Geoffrey Vos.

The President of the King's Bench Division

The President of the King's Bench Division (PKBD) is responsible for the deployment and organisation of the work of the largest of the three High Court Divisions. At its full complement the KBD has 71 High Court judges and has the most varied jurisdiction. By the nature of the office, the President is a judge of the Court of Appeal.

The current PKBD is Dame Victoria Sharp.

The President of the Family Division

The President of the Family Division (PFD), and Head of Family Justice, leads the Family jurisdiction.

As well as the President – who is a member of the Court of Appeal – the Family Division consists of 19 High Court Judges. It deals with:

- Divorce, including disputes over children, property or money;
- Adoption, wardship and other matters involving children; and
- Judgments on behalf of those who are unable to make decisions for themselves, such as persistent vegetative state victims.

The Family Division also deals with undisputed matters of probate – the legal recognition of the validity of a will – in the Probate Registry of the Family Division in London, and the 11 probate registries in England and Wales.

The current PFD is Sir Andrew McFarlane.

The Chancellor of the High Court

The Chancellor of the High Court (CHC) is the president of the Chancery Division of the High Court and Vice President of the Court of Protection. The CHC holds day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the Business & Property Courts (B&PCs) in London and seven regional centres across the country.

The CHC has responsibility for the Chancery lists of the B&PCs, which includes the Business List, the Insolvency and Companies List, the Intellectual Property List (including Patents and IPEC), the Property Trusts and Probate List, the Competition List, the Financial List (jointly with the Commercial Court) and the Revenue List.

The current CHC is Sir Julian Flaux. With effect from 1 November 2025, following Sir Julian's retirement, Sir Colin Birss will become the CHC.

Senior President of Tribunals

The Senior President of Tribunals (SPT) is a free-standing judicial office created by Parliament through the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. The SPT is the independent head of the reserved tribunals' judiciary in the United Kingdom.

The SPT is the judicial leader of more than 5,000 judicial office holders and is supported by 14 Tribunal Presidents.

The SPT has a number of statutory responsibilities, which include representing the views of tribunal judges and members to Parliament, the Lord Chancellor and Ministers, and having responsibility for training, welfare and guidance within tribunals.

The current SPT is Sir James Dingemans. The SPT for the majority of this document's reporting period was Sir Keith Lindblom, who retired from the post on 31 July 2025.

Senior Presiding Judge

The role of Senior Presiding Judge (SPJ) is a wide-ranging one. As well as being a Board member of HMCTS, the SPJ oversees the work of Presiding Judges on each Circuit in England and Wales. This entails overall responsibility for the deployment of judges and allocation of work in the courts, dealing with personnel issues for judges below High Court level. In addition, the SPJ has special responsibility for the magistracy and acts as a general point of contact and communication between the judiciary, the courts and Government departments.

The current SPJ is Sir Nicholas Green.

The Deputy SPJ supports the SPJ in this work. This role is currently held by Dame Amanda Yip.

Chair of the Judicial College Board

The Chair of the Judicial College Board (CJCB) provides senior judicial leadership for the College's training programme and direction. The CJCB chairs its governing body, the Judicial College Board, which includes representatives from across the courts and tribunals judiciary. The CJCB leads the Board in setting the College's strategy and overseeing the delivery of training within the resources made available.

Dame Eleanor King is Chair of the Judicial College. She was appointed in July 2020 and her term runs to summer 2026.

Lead Judge for Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership, Development and Wellbeing

The Lead Judge for Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership, Development and Wellbeing role includes supporting the LCJ in her statutory responsibilities to encourage judicial diversity, leading the development of further action needed to advance diversity in the judiciary and an inclusive culture. Among other activities, this involves chairing the Judicial Diversity Committee of the Judges' Council; overseeing the implementation and evaluation of the judiciary's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; liaison with the representative bodies of the legal professions and the Judicial Appointments Commission; and supporting the LCJ in the work of the Judicial Diversity Forum, an assembly of organisations from across the legal sector with the purpose to identify ways to support increased judicial diversity.

The role also involves being an advocate for leadership development and capability across the judiciary.

The remit in relation to wellbeing involves supporting the LCJ in her statutory responsibilities to maintain appropriate arrangements for the welfare of the judiciary, including having oversight of the wellbeing provisions for judges.

Dame Philippa Whipple is the current postholder.

Deputy Head of Civil Justice

The Deputy Head of Civil Justice (DHCJ) plays an integral role in the leadership of the Civil Justice System. The postholder supports the MR, who is Head of Civil Justice, in providing leadership for the civil judiciary of the county court.

They are also ex-officio a member of the Civil Justice Council and the Civil Procedure Rule Committee.

The current DHCJ is Sir Colin Birss. With effect from 1 November 2025, following Sir Colin's appointment to the post of CHC, Dame Sara Cockerill will become the DHCJ.



The Courts and Tribunals system in England and Wales

In England and Wales, the courts system has evolved and developed over 1,000 years. Different types of case are dealt with in specific courts, and have different routes into the Court of Appeal and, potentially, the UK Supreme Court.

Most criminal cases will start in the Magistrates' court, and more serious criminal matters are sent to the Crown Court. Appeals from the Crown Court will go to the Court of Appeal Criminal Division.

Civil cases will usually start in the County Court. Appeals will go to the High Court and then to the Court of Appeal – although to different divisions of those courts.

The tribunals system has its own structure for dealing with cases and appeals, but decisions from different chambers of the Upper Tribunal, and the Employment Appeals Tribunal, may also go to the Court of Appeal.

If an appeal lies from the Court of Appeal from any of these routes, it goes to the UK Supreme Court.

The court structure covers England and Wales; the tribunals system covers England, Wales and, in some cases, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Civil

Civil justice captures a wide range of issues, where people, businesses or other organisations are trying to resolve their disputes with each other, or ensure that they have their private law rights respected. The jurisdiction covers a very wide range – from quite small or simple claims, for example damaged goods or recovery of debt, to large claims between multi-national companies.

Judges in the Civil jurisdiction will normally make an award for financial 'damages' to the successful party. The size of this award will depend on the circumstances of the claim. Sometimes the court will make an order or an injunction requiring defined behaviour to take place or to stop. The civil courts also have a process to ensure awards can be enforced.



To achieve the goal of bringing civil justice into the 21st century, we must create a modern system suitable for the people we serve."

Sir Geoffrey Vos
The Master of the Rolls

Criminal

Criminal cases come to court after a decision has been made by a prosecutor, usually the Crown Prosecution Service, to prosecute someone for an alleged crime. The majority of cases (over 95%) are heard in the Magistrates' court, either by a panel of three magistrates, who are non-legally qualified volunteers drawn from the local community, or by a (legally qualified) District Judge (Magistrates' court). They hear the evidence, and make a decision on guilt or innocence. If the defendant is found guilty, the magistrates or District Judge (Magistrates' court) will impose the sentence or send the case to the Crown Court for sentencing if their powers are not sufficient to reflect the seriousness of the case.

More serious criminal cases are heard in the Crown Court, usually by a Circuit Judge or Recorder sitting with a jury but, in the most serious cases, the case may be heard by a High Court Judge sitting with a jury. In the Crown Court, the judge is responsible for ensuring the trial is conducted fairly and explains the relevant law to the jury. The jury is responsible for deciding whether the defendant is guilty.

If the jury find the defendant guilty, then the judge will decide on an appropriate sentence. The sentence will be influenced by a number of factors: principally seriousness of the offence, the impact that the crime has had on the victim, and relevant law. Sentences may include imprisonment, suspended sentences, community sentences, fines, or discharges.

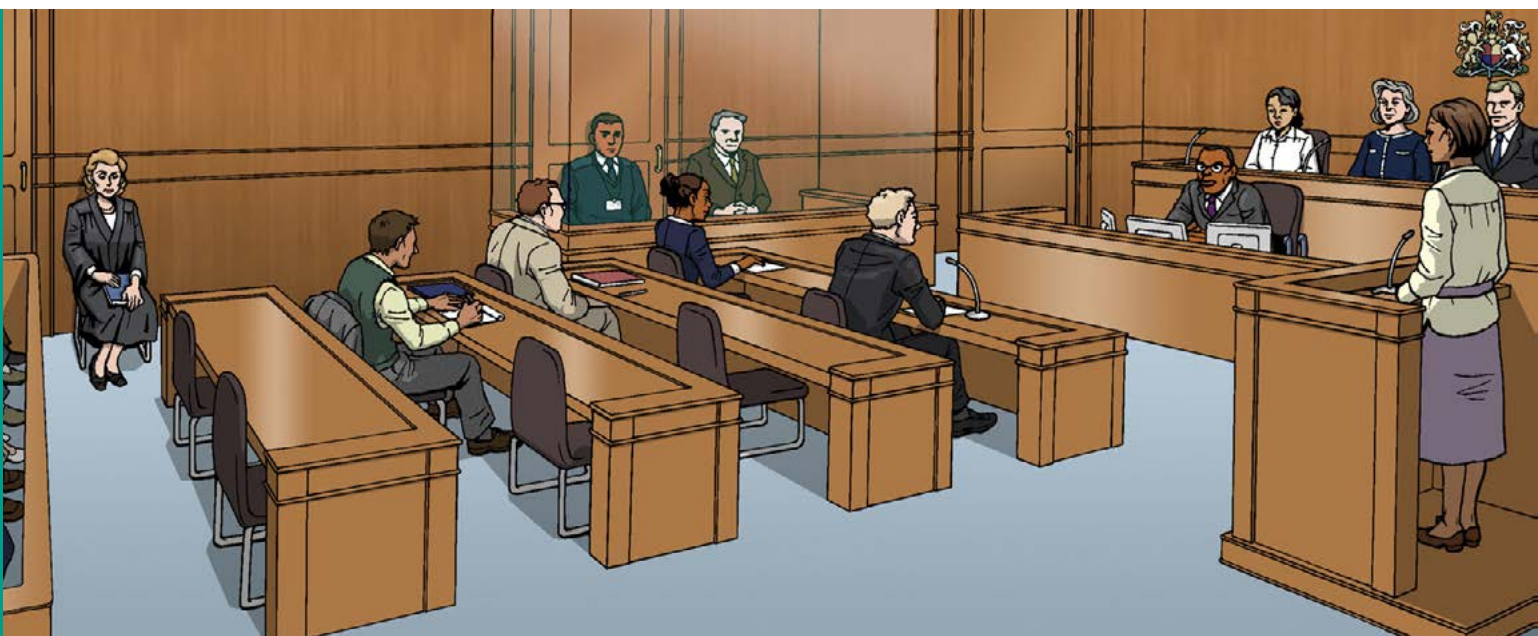
The Sentencing Council for England and Wales is an independent, non-departmental public body which issues guidelines for the majority of sentences to promote greater consistency in sentencing, while maintaining the independence of the judiciary.



In times of change, it remains of critical importance to consider views from across the judiciary and to see how things are working 'on the ground'."

Dame Victoria Sharp

President of the King's Bench Division





Family

The family justice system exists to help families resolve disputes arising in respect of family matters quickly and with the minimum of disruption to those involved.

Family court proceedings are more informal than those in a criminal court. This reflects the often very sensitive nature of family proceedings and the need to ensure that proceedings do not increase the distress of the parties involved.

Hearings in the Family courts are held in private, but the press and legal bloggers may report on what they see and hear while attending any family court, if a transparency order is granted. Open reporting provisions mean that there is a presumption that a transparency order, protecting the anonymity of the children and their families, is granted, unless there is a legitimate reason not to.

Tribunals

The first-tier tribunals are specialist courts whose judges and members hear a wide range of cases, such as tax, employment, and immigration and asylum. The Upper Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal hear appeals challenging some tribunal decisions.

The Senior President of Tribunals publishes his own [annual report](#) for the Lord Chancellor, under Section 43 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.



The volume of public law applications has reduced, and... the length of cases is reducing. The result is that the volume of open public law cases is now back to a level last seen before the pandemic."

Sir Andrew McFarlane
President of the Family Division



Military

The Service Justice System exists to maintain discipline in the Armed Forces and, thereby, to help support their operational effectiveness. The Service Courts include the Court Martial, the Summary Appeal Court (for hearing appeals from summary decisions made by Commanding Officers), and the Service Civilian Court (to hear cases overseas involving civilians subject to Service discipline). There are two permanent Military Court Centres (Catterick in North Yorkshire and Bulford in Wiltshire) which are operated by the Military Court Service (MCS). The courts can sit overseas on an ad hoc basis.

The Judge Advocate General is the Judicial Head of the Service Courts and has a team of Assistant Judge Advocate Generals. All the judges are civilians, appointed through the independent Judicial Appointments Commission.

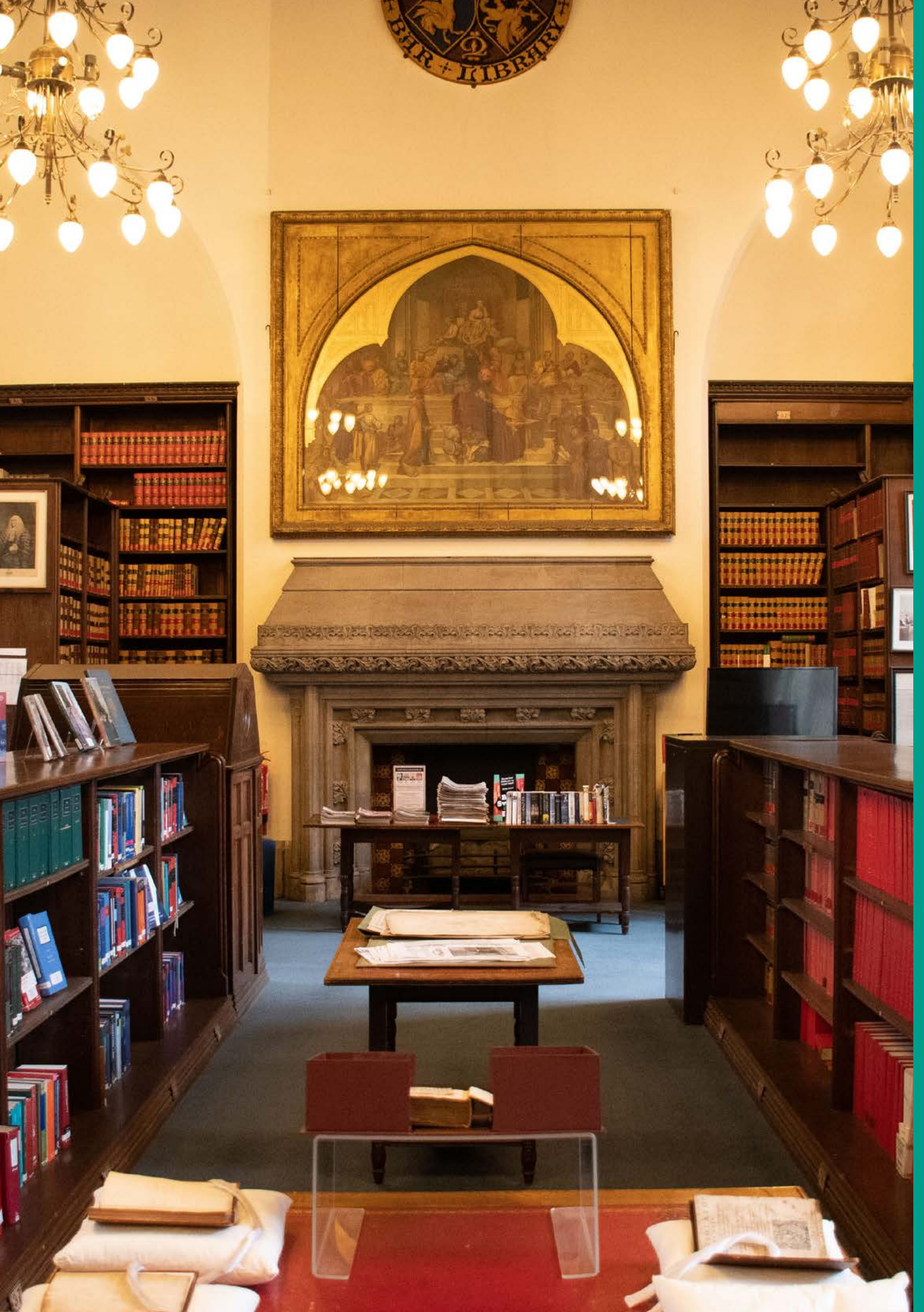
The administration of the courts themselves is managed by the MCS, which is part of the Ministry of Defence.

Coroners

Coroners investigate certain deaths which are deemed to be unnatural, violent, or where the cause is unknown.

Coroners are independent judicial office holders. They are a type of specialist judge who investigates and explains certain kinds of deaths. Unlike the rest of the judiciary, coroners are appointed by local authorities. There are currently 74 coroner areas across England and Wales and each jurisdiction is locally funded.

The Chief Coroner publishes her own [annual report](#) for the Lord Chancellor, under Section 36 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.





Work of judges and magistrates



Civil

Court of Appeal Civil Division

The workload of the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) has continued to increase. This can be measured statistically in terms of numbers of permission to appeal applications received, numbers of appeals heard, and numbers of appeals waiting to be heard.

The timeliness of decision-making in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) has stabilised. The average time taken from each of the date of issue, the grant of permission to appeal, and the hearing of the substantive appeal to the hand-down of the judgment has fallen.

The new administrative structure introduced to the Court last year ([see pages 8-9 of last year's report](#)) has firmly bedded in, with the Court and the staff benefitting from the restructure.

The Court of Appeal (Civil Division) has continued to increase its transparency and accessibility, with the majority of hearings being live-streamed. The Court is currently operating a pilot scheme to allow access to the parties' skeleton arguments on a number of selected live streamed cases.

The Court has continued to sit outside of London, including in Wales on two occasions during the reporting period.

High Court

The High Court consists of three divisions: the King's Bench Division (KBD), the Family Division, and the Chancery Division. The KBD includes within it a number of specialist courts, including the Administrative, Commercial, and Technology and Construction courts.

King's Bench Division

There has been a general increase in applications raising national security issues, applications for injunctions against persons unknown, group litigation and high-profile claims, which has added additional demands on the judiciary. Similarly, claims relating to asbestos-related diseases and road traffic accidents have driven a notable increase in workload. In the last year, there has also been a noticeable increase in enforcement work being filed at the High Court, with Writs of Possession and Stays of Execution being notable examples of this increase in work.

A working group consisting of HMCTS staff, court users and the judiciary have updated guidance in relation to the operation of the Foreign Process section and processes have been reviewed, resulting in much improved turnaround times for service of documents both domestically and abroad. A new digital Deed Poll form went live on 18 August and, in the first week, the court received approximately the same number of applications as would usually be received in one month. Additionally, a new, improved online guidance for users was made available on GOV.UK, resulting in fewer Deed Poll applications being returned due to errors.

The Media and Communications List has continued to deal with both the transformative effect of social media in providing means and opportunities for defamation and harassment, as well as the pressures on both privacy and free speech in the modern communications context.

Administrative Court

Judicial review claims are the mainstay of the Administrative Court, alongside professional regulatory and extradition appeals, and appeals and applications in criminal and national security matters. The Court has dealt with several high-profile and complex cases, including matters relating to international relations, terrorism, tax and social security. The digital case management system CE-File became available in the Administrative Court for electronic filing, although its use is not mandatory.

The Planning Court, part of the Administrative Court, has had another busy year dealing with planning and environmental claims, including energy and transport projects. The potential impact of national significant infrastructure projects on the Planning Court has been assessed following the Government's commitment to 150 planning applications in its current term. The implications of changes in the Judicial Review process to prevent delay in such cases and the anticipated impact of claims is being fully considered.

Both the King's Bench Division Civil List and the Administrative Court are seeing a marked increase in the number of applications submitted by Litigants in Person (LiPs), typically requiring greater administrative support.

In 2024-25, applications lodged by LiPs in the Administrative Court rose 14.5% compared to 2023-24, from 1,322 applications to 1,514 applications.

Commercial Court

The Commercial Court has remained at the forefront of the resolution of international business disputes, with 75% of its cases having an international element. The 2025 edition of Portland's Commercial Courts Report described the past year as a "record breaking year for diversity of nationalities represented". This reflects international parties' continuing trust of the court system of England and Wales and their willingness to choose English law and jurisdiction for their contracts.

The level of new claims started in the Commercial and Admiralty Courts has remained at similar levels to the general trend in previous years, but the size and complexity of the cases has increased. This was manifested in high numbers of substantive judgments, paper applications, urgent applications and expedition requests. There have been more long trials than in most previous years, including two year-long trials and several term-long trials.

There has also been an increase in the number of claims and applications relating to arbitration (particularly international arbitration), representing about 25% of the Court's work, where the Court plays a key role in supporting and, where needed, supervising arbitrations seated in England & Wales, which is itself a very large and thriving part of the legal sector.

Technology and Construction Court

The Technology and Construction Court (TCC) has continued to see more of its work undertaken outside of London. The coming into force of the Procurement Act 2023 will require consideration of changes to the TCC's procedures for dealing with procurement claims; the TCC's Procurement Working Group has begun this review, which is ongoing.

International disputes have continued to form a significant proportion of TCC work undertaken in London, and the importance of AI has been reflected in the events organised for judges and practitioners by the TCC AI working Group. A new TCC Guide will be published in autumn 2025.

Chancery

The workload in the Business and Property Courts (B&PCs) of England and Wales has remained stable compared to recent years. The workload has signified that the Court continues to be a global centre of excellence for the resolution of business disputes, hearing some of the most complex and high-profile domestic and international specialist civil claims in the world.

The Insolvency and Companies Court receipts have continued to grow year on year, reflecting the revenue market.

One of the key objectives of the CHC throughout his time in this role has been to promote and deliver unification of the judiciary within the Business and Property Courts, particularly within the Rolls Building. The optimal way of achieving this has been through cross-deployment, allowing judges to sit across different divisions, enabling

the best use of judicial resources. This has allowed Commercial Court judges to sit in the Chancery Division, and more recently two Chancery judges being authorised to sit in the Commercial Court.

The CHC ran a series of seminars throughout the legal year. These were a joint enterprise between judges, practitioners and professional associations, discussing developing areas of law, such as expert evidence, litigation funding, AI and disclosure. This is in addition to the CHC's annual B&PC conference held every February. Most recently the CHC hosted an event to mark London International Disputes Week, and an event to mark the 50th anniversary of the Mareva Injunction. These events offered an opportunity for judges across England and Wales to come together to participate, whether that be in person or online.

The CHC launched a consultation on the Practice Statement for Schemes of Arrangement and Restructuring Plans under Parts 26 and 26A of the Companies Act 2006 in spring 2025. The primary aim was to take account of nearly five years' experience of the use of restructuring plans, with a view to improving the efficiency and fairness of the process under Part 26A. The existing Practice Statement was issued when Part 26A was introduced during the COVID pandemic. The responses have now been considered, and a [revised practice statement](#) was published on 18 September 2025.



One of the most rewarding parts of the CHC's experience has been my pastoral role of ensuring that judicial morale is as good as possible. This is an area I have particularly enjoyed."

Sir Julian Flaux
Chancellor of the High Court

County Court

The priorities for civil justice have remain focused on digitisation, improving county courts performance, and enhancing public understanding of the civil justice system.

Civil Claims received in the county courts have continued to rise and are currently at the highest level since Q3 2019. Compared to the same period in 2024, County Court claims from January to March 2025 were up 18% to 490,000. This represents an 18% increase against the same period in 2024. This increase was driven mostly by money claims, which increased by 19% to 409,000 claims compared to the same period in 2024, as well as other damages claims, which increased by 81% to reach their highest level since Q2 2011.

The number of claims defended and claims that went to trial have also increased over the same period, increasing by 8% and 16% respectively against the same period in 2024.

The average time between issue and trial for small claims and fast/intermediate/multi track claims decreased in the January to March 2025 quarter, at 1.5 and 7.2 weeks faster respectively compared to the same period in 2024. This continues a gradual fall in average timeliness across all tracks since the beginning of 2024.

Delivery of Civil justice

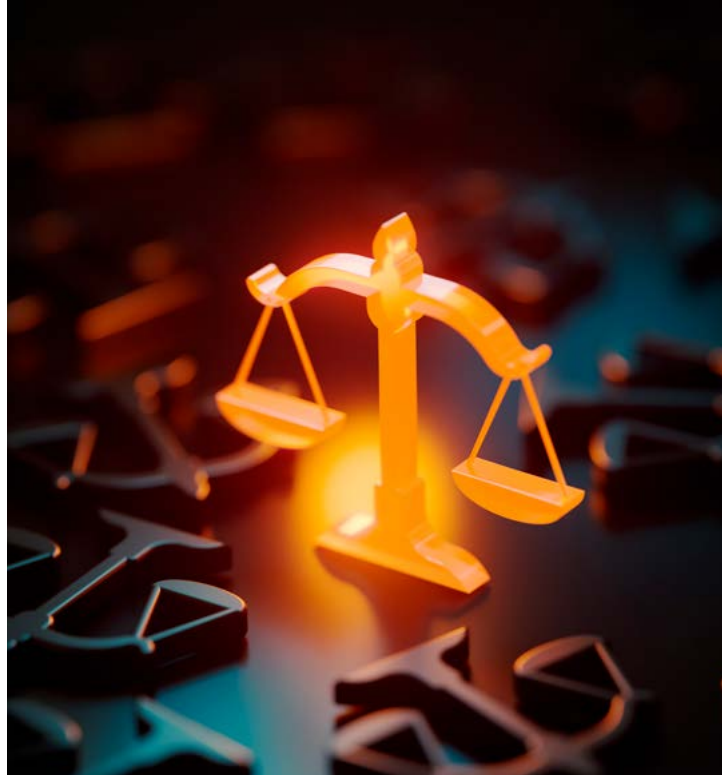
Civil Reform

Intermediate and Multi Track cases, in which the parties are represented, are now progressing digitally through both the Online Civil Money Claims (OCMC) and Damages portals. Additionally, the OCMC service has expanded to support litigants in person pursuing Small Claims and Fast Track cases in 16 early adopter hearing centres, with a national rollout planned for early autumn 2025.

Although the Reform Programme officially concluded in March 2025, work has continued in the county courts to deliver the remaining scope. This work is scheduled for completion by autumn 2025 and will result in 23% of civil claims being issued online.

There have been some notable successes including:

1. **Improved timeliness:** His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) reports significant reductions in time from claim issue to key milestones – up to 23 weeks faster to directions order in Damages Claims and up to 60 weeks faster for Fast Track cases on the Reform system.



2. **Greater user engagement:**

Reformed systems show higher defendant response rates (43% vs. 11%), more defended cases (35% vs. 16%), and fewer default judgments (31% vs. 74%), indicating better user participation.

3. **Increased early settlements:**

Cases settling before judgment or directions order have doubled under the Reform system (19% vs. 9%).

The Small Claims Mediation Service

The Civil Automatic Referral to Mediation (CARM) project introduced mandatory referral of defended claims under £10,000 to the Small Claims Mediation Service (SCMS). The SCMS will operate under a pilot Practice Direction until March 2026, ahead of which a full evaluation will be completed.

The figures to date from SCMS are encouraging; from April 2024 to January 2025, 29,551 cases went to mediation, of which 40% settled.

Civil Justice Council

The Civil Justice Council (CJC) has published a number of influential reports, including on the Procedure for Determining Mental Capacity in Civil Proceedings, a final report on Pre-Action Protocols, a report on Civil Enforcement, and an interim and final report on Litigation Funding.

The 2024 National Forum enjoyed a record number of delegates. Speakers included Heidi Alexander MP, Director Rachel Rossi (Director of Office for Access to Justice, U.S. Department of Justice), and the MR.

The CJC has recently taken on vital new projects addressing (a) the use of AI for preparing court documents; (b) civil work in the Magistrates' court; and (c) the availability of High Court and Court of Appeal (Civil Division) judgments.

Online Procedure Rule Committee

The Online Procedure Rule Committee (OPRC) was set up under the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 to make rules governing the practice and procedure for specific types of online court and tribunal proceedings across the Civil, Family and Tribunal jurisdictions. On 1 May 2025, a Statutory Instrument gave the OPRC the power to make rules in relation to property and in family financial remedies proceedings.

The drafting of the rules for the new digital possession system have begun and will be the first of their kind in England and Wales.

The OPRC has also launched its first Public Engagement Document on its framework for digital inclusion and the creation of a pre-action model.

Criminal

Court of Appeal Criminal Division

Receipts to the Court of Appeal Criminal Division (CACD) have begun to level off. In the years preceding the pandemic, there was a downward trend in receipts, in relation to both conviction and sentence. Post-pandemic receipts began to rise steadily until June 2024, when they peaked at a level higher than 2023, but below that seen pre-pandemic.

The proportion of applications lodged by Litigants in Person (LiPs) has remained consistent and amounts to around 40% of conviction applications received, which is a result of the steps taken to improve access to justice. Criminal Appeal Office lawyers devote a considerable amount of time assisting LiPs and ensuring their applications are properly prepared for consideration by a single judge and the full court. Use of the easy-read form has helped LiPs to present the points they seek to raise but such applications can be time consuming to understand fully.

The number of Attorney-General's References under the Unduly Lenient Sentences scheme, however, has increased significantly this year. References heard by the full court stood at 172 in 2024-25, up from 109 in 2023-24. The court has also continued to receive a consistent number of interlocutory applications, such as prosecution appeals against a ruling made during a trial; such applications frequently require urgent listing.

Notwithstanding that there has been a slight fall in the number of renewed

applications – which are applications for leave to appeal against conviction and/or sentence which have been refused by a single judge, then renewed to the full court – the volume of work outstanding has continued to rise. This increase is largely due to a rise in the number of applications awaiting allocation to a single judge, which reflects the complexity and length of grounds of appeal lodged by legal representatives as well as the proportion of applications lodged by LiPs. Consideration of applications has therefore required more judicial time, and the time available to judges to consider paper applications is limited.

A focus on the efficient preparation and listing of cases before the full court, particularly where leave to appeal has been granted, has meant that the average waiting time from receipt of an application to final disposal has not risen as dramatically as it might have done. However, any delay in the final determination of an appeal is necessarily of concern and the focus will always be on prioritising appeals over renewed applications for leave to appeal.

This year, two Court User Group meetings have been held, the first in March 2025 and the second in early July 2025 with up-to-date newsletters circulated for each. Items raised at the spring meeting included the need to comply with the Criminal Procedure Rules, issues around funding and the ongoing Law Commission project on Criminal Appeals. In July 2025, users' attention was drawn to the new platform for publishing the hearing (cause) lists for the Royal Courts of Justice, CaTH (Court and Tribunals Hearings Service), and the need to

register to be able to access this information. In furtherance of the drive towards transparency and open justice, the Criminal Appeal Office, with the approval of the Vice-President, is making available online a [Quick Guide to proceedings in the CACD](#) [the currently available version published in May 2024]. To assist non-legal professionals attending CACD hearings, whether victims, appellants' families, or tourists, the link to the Quick Guide on judiciary.uk will be accessible via a QR code displayed in all relevant courtrooms.

The CACD has continued to sit regularly in Wales at least once, and usually twice, each term. This year, the court has sat at both Swansea and Cardiff Crown Courts; organisation of these sittings has required regular liaison with the HMCTS Wales Support Office. This year, the Vice-President presided over a constitution of the Court Martial Appeal Court (CMAC), sitting at Bulford Military Court Centre. This was the first time CMAC had sat on circuit. Prior to the sitting, the Army hosted the Vice-President and the Registrar at Army HQ in Andover, where they met members of the Army Legal Service and heard a very informative presentation by Major General Allen about its work.





Crown Court

The Crown Court faced a particularly challenging time during this reporting year. The outstanding caseload continued to grow, reaching an all-time high of 78,329 by 30 June 2025.

While the number of cases being heard through to conclusion has remained stable, rising receipts increased pressure across the system leading to longer delays for complainants, witnesses and defendants. Delays impacted on all parts of the criminal justice system throughout the reporting year.

The high demand in the Crown Court was exacerbated by the prison capacity crisis. The adult male estate operated above the 95% population threshold for much of the reporting year, reaching 87,336 by 29 September 2025. Emergency measures, including the Standard Determinate Sentence 40 scheme and extended Home Detention Curfew, were introduced by the government to ease prison capacity pressure, reflecting a system under severe strain. A high prison population, especially a high population on remand un-convicted, has had a huge impact on the operation of the Crown Court; for example, late delivery of prisoners to court has led to trials starting later in the day and lasting longer overall.

Uncertainty around sitting day allocations further compounded these issues. The initial allocation of 106,000 days (out of a total potential capacity of 113,000 days) for 2024/25 created an immediate shortfall. While an additional 2,500 days were allocated by the Lord Chancellor in November and December 2024, the timing meant that Resident Judges had already, in light of the original allocation, taken difficult listing decisions to cancel Recorder sittings and remove trials (including RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) and violent offences). This meant additional delays for complainants, witnesses, defendants and advocates whose cases were ready to be heard before April 2025.

The Crown Court Improvement Group has continued to build on its strong foundation of cross-jurisdictional collaboration and improving efficiency across the Criminal Courts. To reflect its expanded remit to formally include the magistracy, the group has been renamed the Criminal Courts Improvement Group (CCIG) and restructured with a new governance model and wider membership from agencies across the criminal justice system.

The CCIG now operates through two permanent bodies which meet regularly:

- The Executive Board
- The Plenary Group

At the inaugural meeting of the Executive Board in March 2025, four key projects were approved. Each is being led by a Working Group chaired by a senior judge:

- Standardisation of Crown Court Listing – chaired by Lord Justice Edis
- Remote Participation – chaired by Mrs Justice Yip, Deputy Senior Presiding Judge
- Pre-Sentence Reports – chaired by His Honour Judge Menary KC, Honorary Recorder of Liverpool
- Artificial Intelligence – chaired by Mr Justice Johnson

In June 2025, two further projects were approved:

- Better Case Management – chaired by Mrs Justice Cutts
- Listing of Domestic Abuse Cases – chaired by Mrs Justice Knowles

Each Working Group has held its initial meeting and is now focused on delivering practical outcomes to support the operational effectiveness of the courts.

The listings working group is considering recommendations to improve listing practice produced by HHJ Edmunds KC in spring 2025, with the view to producing a national listings policy framework during the course of 2026.



Magistrates

Caseload

Caseload in the Magistrates' court has remained high. From October 2024 to December 2024, 377,873 cases were received; from January 2025 to March 2025, 387,240 cases were received; and from April 2025 to June 2025, 374,916 cases were received.

In November 2024, the Government increased magistrates' sentencing powers from six to 12 months' maximum imprisonment for a single triable either-way offence, which enables more cases to be retained in the Magistrates' court and in turn reduces the demand on the Crown Court.

Recruitment

There were 14,636 magistrates in post on 1 April 2025, including 894 new magistrates recruited in 2024/25. Work is ongoing to make improvements in recruitment, onboarding and training processes for 2025/26 and beyond, given existing and increasing demand on the magistracy in the coming years.

There has been ongoing work to improve diversity across the magistracy, with 58% of appointments in 2024/25 being female, 23% from an ethnic minority background, and 41% under the age of 50. Sex and age remain consistent with 2023/24 appointments, while applicants from an ethnic minority background have increased from 16%.

Local Justice Areas consultation

In November 2024, the Government confirmed its intention to enact legislation to abolish Local Justice Areas (LJAs). LJAs create geographical boundaries relating to four main components of Magistrates' courts administration: initiating and listing cases; the payment and enforcement of fines, suspended sentence orders, community orders and youth rehabilitation orders; magistrates' recruitment; and magistrates' deployment. They are also linked to magistrates' leadership and training arrangements.

In March 2025, the Judiciary of England and Wales and the Ministry of Justice jointly launched a public consultation to seek views on the proposed changes. Responsibility for the areas covered in the consultation are shared between

the LCJ and the Lord Chancellor. Over 1,400 responses were received and a response to the consultation will be published later this year.

Magistrates governance review

In May 2024, the Senior Presiding Judge (SPJ) published a consultation on proposed changes to governance structures of the magistracy, which is separate to the issue of LJAs. The intention is to establish a clear decision-making structure at local, regional and national levels, ensuring that the magistracy is supported and represented at every forum.

Single Justice Procedure

In February 2025, the judiciary commenced an audit of the Single Justice Procedure (SJP), which is a statutory mechanism through which Magistrates' courts can deal with minor, non-imprisonable offences without the need for defendants to appear in court in person; for example, some motoring offences or TV licence evasion. A working group has been set up, chaired by the SPJ, to develop a set of recommendations for how it might be improved.

The Government has separately been looking at potential reforms to the SJP and private prosecutions, with which the judiciary has been engaging appropriately.

Sentencing Council

The Sentencing Council for England and Wales

The Sentencing Council is an independent body. The Lady Chief Justice is its President, though not a member of the Council, and it is chaired by a senior judge. There are 14 members of the Council, including non-judicial representation. The Lord Chancellor continues to have a representative at every meeting of the Council.

The Council reaches decisions through discussion and consultation. It decides priorities for the development of guidelines, researches and produces draft guidelines, and consults with statutory consultees, criminal justice professionals and the wider public over a 12-week period. Definitive versions of the guidelines are published with careful consideration to the responses of the consultation and guidelines are monitored, once they have come into effect.

The Council has a statutory duty to produce its own [annual report](#), the latest of which was published on 16 July 2025.

The year 2024/25 was marked by the sad death of the Council's Chair, Lord Justice William Davis, on 7 June 2025. Sir William had many years of experience as a member of the Council and had served as its Chair since 1 August 2022. He was succeeded on an interim basis by the Vice Chair, Lord Justice Holroyde and, latterly, Lord Justice Edis.

Throughout the reporting period, the Council has continued to meet its primary duty of developing guidelines that promote a clear, fair and consistent approach to sentencing.

The Council has published new and revised offence specific sentencing guidelines covering strangulation and suffocation, blackmail, kidnapping, false imprisonment and aggravated vehicle taking, as well as an overarching guideline for driver disqualification. In March, following consultation, the Council also published a revised version of the overarching guideline, Imposition of community and custodial sentences. The guidance became the subject of Parliamentary debate and, ultimately, emergency legislation, introduced by the Lord Chancellor. To be confident that all sentencing guidelines comply with the legislation, which received Royal Assent on 19 June, the Council made amendments to existing guidelines as well as to the Imposition guideline, which came into effect on 1 September 2025.

During the reporting year, the Council also ran consultations on draft guidelines for offences relating to hare coursing and a package of new and revised guidance on ancillary orders available on conviction. It also ran the fourth annual consultation on miscellaneous amendments to sentencing guidelines, with consequent changes coming into effect on 1 June and 1 July 2025.

The Council published findings from a review of existing research on the effectiveness of sentencing options and three evaluations of existing guidelines, namely offence specific guidelines relating to bladed articles and offensive weapons and intimidatory offences, and an evaluation of the overarching guideline for sentencing offences committed in the context of domestic abuse.

Criminal Procedure Rule Committee

The Committee's substantial programme of work during the reporting period included the making of a wide range of rules and rule amendments. These included revised rules about contempt of court, rules about costs in receivership proceedings, applications for information from bank records for use in a criminal case, prosecution appeal against a Crown Court ruling, notice of an application for reporting restrictions, service of a notice of appeal in confiscation proceedings, and the taking of a sworn deposition from a witness for use in the Crown Court.

In 2025, the Committee made another reconsolidation of the Criminal Procedure Rules, the first since 2020. It began work to supplement new statutory provision made by the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, and provision that would be made by the Victims and Courts Bill and the Crime and Policing Bill, if those pass. It published a new index to the Rules and guidance for unrepresented defendants. Members joined cross-jurisdictional reviews of contempt of court procedure and of provision for open justice.

During the year to come, the Committee expects to make rules to supplement reforms recommended by Sir Brian Leveson's Independent Review of the Criminal Courts.



The Service Justice System

The judiciary

The Judge Advocate General, His Honour Judge Alan Large, is the judicial head of the Service Courts.

During this reporting year, two new Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate Generals (DAJAGs) have been recruited: DAJAG Sarah Magill and DAJAG Holly Scott-Mason. DAJAGs are fee-paid judges. DAJAG Sarah Magill is due to start hearing cases in September 2025 and DAJAG Holly Scott-Mason will do so when she returns from maternity leave.

The full-time judiciary in the Service Courts is at full complement.

Case numbers

The last year has seen another increase in the number of Service personnel coming before the Court Martial. In the period from 1 August 2024 to 21 July 2025, 221 individual Service personnel were tried in the Court Martial and their cases were completed. This compares with 207 individuals with completed cases the previous year, amounting to an increase of 6.7%. The proportion of the case involving sexual offences amounted to 26.7%, compared to 27.5% the previous year.

Listing times

Plea and Trial Preparation Hearings are listed within 42 days of case direction by the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA). This is a KPI for the Military Court Service (MCS), which they have met in 100% of cases in the second quarter of 2025.

The average waiting time from direction by the SPA to trial in the Court Martial, for this reporting year, stands

at just under 156 days, or about five months, compared with 176 days, or over six months, in the previous year. The most common factor requiring cases to be listed beyond the KPI is the availability of defence counsel.

Short listing times in the Service Courts, especially for high priority cases like those involving allegations of rape and serious sexual assault, are an important means of supporting the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces by providing timely resolution to the benefit of victims, defendants, and their units.

Publication of sentencing remarks

Sentencing remarks in cases in the Court Martial, which result in dismissal, are now published on the MCS website. This measure has been introduced to promote transparency and public understanding of the sentencing process in the Court Martial. This policy has also been adopted to emphasise the deterrent effect of cases resulting in convictions and dismissal, by highlighting the serious consequences of unacceptable behaviours.

Cases involving secret material

The necessary IT and supporting infrastructure have been installed at both Bulford and Catterick for trials involving secret evidence. All four courtrooms are now able to hear secret evidence in a closed court – fully compliant with MOD security requirements – reverting to open court with public access, when unclassified evidence is being presented.

Board members

The pilot scheme testing tri-Service boards (equivalent to juries) in the Court Martial and Summary Appeal Court, which commenced in October 2023, has been endorsed by MoD ministers. The pilot received positive feedback from board members and court users. Tri-Service boards, where each Service is equally represented on the board, are now the default for all trials in the Court Martial and the Summary Appeal Court. Judges retain powers to order a single Service board if it is in the interests of justice to do so; for example, where there are Service-specific technical issues best considered by members of that single Service.

Changes have been made to the seniority of the president of the board in the Court Martial and Summary Appeal Court. The president's rank has been increased to the OF4 level which equates to Commander (RN), Lieutenant-Colonel, and Wing Commander. The Judge Advocate General has welcomed this change which reflects an appropriate level of experience and seniority for the role of president.

Operational issues

The MCS has now completed its first section 28 hearing, relating to the pre-recorded examination-in-chief of vulnerable witnesses, with other cases listed in the months ahead. Starlink WIFI backup systems have been fitted at both court centres which have improved the resilience of court proceedings.

Family

Public law

Children public law proceedings involve cases brought by local authorities to protect a child from significant harm and ensure that they receive the care that they need.

In the year to March 2025, 15,851 cases were started compared to 15,757 cases started in the same period up to March 2024. The average case length in the first quarter of 2025 was 39.6 weeks, down from 42.1 weeks during the same quarter of the previous year.

As of April 2025, there were 10,045 open Public Law cases compared to 10,604 open cases in April 2024.

Private law

Private law children proceedings resolve disputes between parents or others and are focussed on the future arrangements for a child's care and wellbeing.

In the year to March 2025, 51,284 cases were started, compared to 51,074 cases started in the same period up to March 2024. The average case length in the first quarter of 2025 was 41.0 weeks; this is down from 43.2 weeks during the same quarter of the previous year. In April 2025 there were 37,254 open private law cases. This is down from 40,997 in April 2024, a decrease of nine per cent.

This period also saw the continued expansion of the Pathfinder Courts (Pathfinder), which have transformed the court's engagement with disputing parents into a model aimed at problem solving, based upon an early clear account of the voice of the child. Pathfinder moves Private Law family cases into a new, less adversarial and more investigative environment. It provides better support for the victims of domestic abuse, reduces the number of hearings needed for each case and supports speedier outcomes for children and families, including out of court resolutions when appropriate.

Pathfinder launched in Mid and West Wales in March 2025, and in West Yorkshire in June 2025. This was in addition to Dorset and North Wales which launched in February 2022 and South East Wales and Birmingham which launched in April and May 2024 respectively.

In February 2025 the MoJ published data showing open caseloads fell by over 50% and average case duration was 11 weeks faster in both North Wales and Dorset compared with their position at the launch of Pathfinder.

Financial Remedies Court

The Financial Remedies Court helps ensure that, following the breakdown of a marriage or civil partnership, family finances are resolved fairly and efficiently.

45,731 financial remedy applications were made in the year to March 2025, a 3% increase on the same period last year. The number of applications which had been already agreed and simply asked for a consent order was 34,137.

These formed 74% of all applications made, an increase of 3% from the year ending March 2024. Comparatively, cases which were contested decreased by nearly 9% from 12,717 in April 2024 to 11,594 in April 2025.

Court of Protection

The Court of Protection (CoP) is a specialist court that makes decisions on financial or welfare matters for people who lack the mental capacity to make those decisions. In the financial year from April 2024 to March 2025, the CoP received 37,127 applications under the Mental Capacity Act. This is an increase of over 2,300 applications (6%) from the year up to March 2024, where 34,808 applications were received.

Deprivation of Liberty Orders

Children who are at risk of causing serious harm to themselves or others may require placement within a regime that restricts their liberty and freedom of movement. Since 2022, applications to deprive young people of their liberty under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court have been issued at the Royal Courts of Justice, as part of the National Deprivation of Liberty List. During the first year 1,389 applications were received (July 2022 to June 2023). During the year from April 2024 to March 2025, 1,311 applications were received.

Wales

The Lady Chief Justice visited Haverfordwest in October 2024 for the annual Legal Wales Conference, the meeting of the Association of Judges in Wales, and the service marking the opening of the legal year in St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire.

The Haverfordwest conference provided a platform for continuing dialogue on constitutional and legal developments in Wales, including the proposed reform of the Welsh Tribunals.

The LCJ returned to Wales in February 2025 to sit in the Court of Appeal Criminal Division. The divisions (Civil as well as Criminal) of the Court of Appeal sat in Wales 14 times in the period August 2024 to September 2025, dividing the sittings between Cardiff and Swansea.

The LCJ met the First Minister of Wales, Baroness Eluned Morgan MS, and the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS in Cardiff. They discussed a range of topics related to justice in Wales, including pressures on the justice system, the court and tribunals estate and divergence of laws.

While in Wales, the LCJ, together with Parliamentary Liaison Judges, Lord Justice Dingemans and Mr Justice Mould, visited the Senedd attending a gathering with officials. The visit helped to develop relationships with the Senedd, enhance knowledge of the judiciary and its work and enhance the judiciary's knowledge of the work of the Senedd. Additionally, the LCJ met with the Llywydd of the Senedd, Elin Jones MS, and visited courts across Cardiff and Newport, meeting judges and magistrates, among others.



The LCJ's Annual Report was published in Welsh, as well as English, for the first time in 2024. Similarly, the Welsh Language Unit in Caernarfon made it possible to publish Sir Brian Leveson's Independent Review of the Criminal Courts (Part 1) at the same time as the English version in July 2025.

The Private Law Pathfinder pilot (which started in Swansea) was expanded to cover the whole of Wales when it was adopted by Mid and West Wales in March 2025. The success of the pilot in Wales laid the ground for its adoption in England.

A Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) pilot began in all courts in North Wales in April 2025. The implementation plan was widely praised in the Ministry of Justice and Home Office and provides a model for future pilots elsewhere, with the pilot being extended from autumn 2025.

The Crown Court in Swansea has become the national pioneer for Digital Jury Bundles which it began testing in trials in two of its courtrooms, starting in June 2025.

Road Traffic Single Justice Procedure cases were introduced throughout Wales when they began in Gwent and South Wales in September 2024, following North Wales, Dyfed and Powys which introduced Single Justice Procedure earlier in 2024.

The first significant judgment interpreting the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 was delivered by the Divisional Court in Cardiff in October 2024. The judgment was delivered in both English and Welsh.



Swansea Civil Justice Centre was the original early adopter for the Private Law digital system and the first to pilot the new digital way of working. Staff at the Swansea Civil and Family Justice Centre have been heavily involved in system testing and identifying system changes and enhancements required to ensure that the system meets the success criteria ahead of further roll out.

The Case Coordinator pilot continues at the Crown Court at Cardiff, which has been extended until the end of March 2026. The pilot provides a dedicated case progression resource with delegated judicial powers for the extension of service deadlines.



Modern judiciary



The Lady Chief Justice is committed to ensuring the judiciary is appropriately resourced, well-equipped for the future, and is diverse and inclusive. This includes ensuring training delivered by the Judicial College is of the highest quality.

The Lady Chief Justice is supported in these aims by two JEB members: the Chair of the Judicial College Board, Lady Justice King and the Lead Judge for Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership, Development and Wellbeing, Lady Justice Whipple. The Judges' Council also supports the Lady Chief Justice in fulfilling her statutory duties including through appointing three members of the Judicial Appointments Commission and chairing working groups and committees. The current committees of the Judges' Council, and their Chairs, are:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution Liaison Committee (chaired by Lady Justice Asplin)
- Communications Committee (chaired by Mr Justice Constable)
- Diversity Committee (chaired by Lady Justice Whipple)
- Judicial HR Committee (chaired by Mrs Justice Eady)
- International Committee (chaired by Lord Justice Snowden)
- Library Committee (chaired by Mr Justice Andrew Baker)
- Resources Committee (chaired by Her Honour Judge Raeside)
- Security Committee (chaired by Mr Justice Martin Spencer)
- Tribunals Committee (chaired by the Senior President of Tribunals)
- Wales Committee (chaired by the Lady Chief Justice)

All judicial office holders have a shared responsibility to foster a positive environment, both in and out of court, in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The judiciary is subject to follow the Guide to Judicial Conduct and the Statement of Expected Behaviour.

A working week for the Lady Chief Justice

The breadth of work of the senior judiciary can be best illustrated by an insight into a working week in the life of the Lady Chief Justice.

She sits on the most serious and important cases in the Court of Appeal, and so her week will often include time for reading papers, sitting in court,

and drafting or delivering judgments, including summaries to aid open justice and transparency of the courts and tribunals.

Outside of her court responsibilities, a working week will include internal meetings with a variety of judicial office holders who support the Lady Chief Justice in her work. These may include meetings with members of the Judicial Executive Board and judges with leadership responsibility. She also has a wide ambassadorial role and meets with organisations and individuals, such as ministers, senior civil servants, judicial associations, and justice partners. She will often attend meetings or events hosted across the legal profession, for example at the Inns of Court or the Old Bailey. She holds the primary relationship with the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor (LC), other Secretaries of State, and Ministers.



The LCJ undertakes important but regular and routine work; for example, approving appointments to leadership positions for existing judicial office holders, which are not run by the independent Judicial Appointments Commission.

She will also sit on, or chair, JAC panels, following the requirements set out in section 79 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

The LCJ and the LC are jointly responsible for judicial discipline. Supported by the independent Judicial Conduct Investigations Office, the LCJ will decide whether there has been misconduct in complaints made. If the LC and the LCJ find that there has been misconduct, then they will issue the judicial office holder with a sanction.

The LCJ will regularly give speeches or lectures and attend conferences; these events will align with key messages or areas of focus for the judiciary. Likewise, the LCJ undertakes an annual calendar of visits to the six judicial Circuits; these visits will include meetings with local judges and magistrates, observing hearings and cases, and outreach activity, such as a school or university visit.

Behaviour and discipline

The Statement of Expected Behaviour continues to set the baseline for how all judicial office holders behave towards each other, staff and court users, both inside and outside of the hearing room. Being open to feedback is one of the behaviours listed and guidance has been introduced to support in the giving and receiving of feedback. Inclusion training for the judiciary has continued to be delivered in the last year, including to coroners.

The 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey has informed plans to address issues, including around bullying, harassment, discrimination and exclusionary behaviour. A process to support judicial office holders in raising concerns quickly and informally, if this is their preferred route, was introduced in May 2024. Ways for advocates and lawyers to raise concerns are also being considered. Resources to assist with defining behaviours related to bullying, harassment, discrimination and exclusionary behaviour and improving understanding of the impact of such behaviour have been developed and disseminated across the judiciary.

In September 2025, an [Independent Review of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination at the Bar](#) by Baroness Harriet Harman KC was published. The review was commissioned by the Bar Council. The Lady Chief Justice's [response to the report](#) was published on the Judiciary.uk website.

The review has made a number of recommendations for the Bar Council, judiciary and other bodies to consider. The judiciary welcomes the Bar Council's focus on this important issue and will work with it on solutions.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity, inclusion, and equality are fundamental to the rule of law and underpin much of the work of judicial office holders. The first edition of the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020 to 2025) is now in its final year. Development of the new five-year strategy (2026 to 2030) started earlier this year, using insights from the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey, evaluation of the current Strategy and through consultation with the judiciary. This is due to be published in early 2026. Progress updates will be published annually. A cohort of judges and magistrates work to support inclusion within the judiciary known as Focal Point Diversity and Community Relations Judges and Inclusion and Diversity Magistrates respectively.

For a second year, the annual update on the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy identified the current underrepresentation of black judges as a focus area, as the most underrepresented group. Outreach events have particularly targeted black lawyers to support this focus and connections with networks representing these lawyers have been made. 10% of attendees at targeted events this year have identified as black; this compares favourably with the

eligible book of legal professionals (3-4% identify as black). A judicial mentoring scheme aimed at legal professionals from underrepresented backgrounds was reviewed and relaunched as a cohort model allowing more structure and support to participants. There are 70+ matched pairs (20% identify as black), and feedback at the launch event was very positive. Weeklong internships at the High Court and Court of Appeal were offered to 18 aspiring barristers from underrepresented backgrounds in November 2024, through the Bridging the Bar charity.



I am pleased to report positive engagement from a range of judicial office holders who attended my diversity and inclusion round tables, providing me with the opportunity to listen and learn from them.”

Dame Philippa Whipple
Lead Judge for Diversity and Inclusion, Leadership, Development and Wellbeing

The 2025 annual strategy update also identified support for disabled judicial office holders as a priority area to ensure they can carry out their judicial responsibilities without unnecessary barriers or delays in the provision of reasonable adjustments. Collaboration continues between the judiciary, HMCTS and MoJ to improve this. Workplace adjustments guidance was updated in December 2024 and the MoJ Reasonable



Adjustments Policy for Judicial Office Holders in February 2025. In 2025 for the first time, the judiciary has been able to publish data indicating the profile of disabled judicial office holders. This data will be tracked over time and will inform work to support and promote greater diversity in the judiciary going forward.

In November 2024, history was made when Nick Hanning became the first legal executive to be sworn in as a Recorder. Nick was the first CILEx Employment Judge, when he was appointed in 2020, and broke further ground as the first appointment of a legal executive to the Circuit Bench level.

The Judicial Diversity Committee of the Judges Council supports the Lady Chief Justice in fulfilling her statutory duty to encourage diversity, through the implementation of the strategy.

The Committee has been extended over the last year to ensure greater representation across the judiciary. A significant addition has been the new Lead D&I Coroner, Nadia Persaud.

A key activity for the judiciary is to undertake outreach activities and support applications for judicial office from those currently underrepresented within the judiciary. 130+ judges and 40+ magistrates volunteer as Diversity and Community Relations judges and magistrates, in which they undertake outreach work with legal professionals, community groups, and educational establishments. DCRJs have undertaken circa 700 engagements over the 2024/25 year. The judicial application seminars and shadowing schemes continue for those considering judicial appointment for the first time or considering internal movement to other judicial roles. From August 2023 to September 2024, 300+

legal practitioners applied to the Judicial Work Shadowing Scheme. Over 4,000 registered for pre-application judicial seminars since August 2024. It is not possible to make a direct correlation between participation in these schemes and judicial application rates, as applicants may have accessed more than one support programme offered by the judiciary or partner organisations, such as the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC).

The Lady Chief Justice represents the judiciary as a member of the Judicial Diversity Forum, which also includes legal professions, the JAC, and MoJ. It has a common goal to drive up diversity within the judiciary. The legal professions are key stakeholders as they provide the pipeline into the judiciary. In July 2025, updated statistics were published on diversity within the existing judiciary, the appointments process, and the legal professions. This provides trends for the judiciary and the legal professions who make up the eligible pool of potential applicants.

The judiciary collaborate with the JAC by providing 163 judges to act as judicial guides on the Targeted Outreach Programme. The programme is available to legal professionals from underrepresented groups. This strengthens the support available to candidates in understanding all aspects of the selection exercise process. The programme is currently supporting 449 candidates.

The Judicial Reverse Mentoring Scheme continues to enable judges to gain an insight into experiences and barriers faced by legal professionals from under-represented backgrounds. The 2025 cohort has 35 judges participating.

Internal judicial communications

The Judicial Office Communications team has continued to support the senior judiciary's communications to all judicial office holders, with the aim of enabling them to feel engaged, informed and proud to be part of the judiciary.

The team has built on the success of the Lady Chief Justice's open forums by introducing a new 'in conversation' style of online events. These enable all judicial office holders to hear regularly from the Lady Chief Justice and members of the senior judiciary about their work and to ask questions on the topics that matter to them.

Leadership

The results of the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey, which was published in February 2025, showed that the majority of judges value the support they received from their immediate leadership judge and feel they are treated fairly. Leadership judges undertake their roles in addition to their judicial workload and it is important, therefore, that development and support is provided in ways that enable judges to manage these responsibilities. This year has seen further progress in developing resources and support for leadership development. An updated Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework (JSAF) was launched in January 2025. The framework supports recruitment, appraisal, training and development, and includes a new section on

leadership skills. This work was led by Lady Justice Falk and other judicial colleagues, and was supported by the Judicial Appointments Commission.

It is important that new leadership judges receive timely and effective induction. Continuing the approach developed in 2023/24, in 2024/25, new Presiding Judges, as well as Resident Judges, Designated Civil and Designated Family Judges, attended induction programmes provided by HR for the judiciary. These were arranged to take place outside of court time and to complement relevant Judicial College training. To support newly appointed Presiding Judges, an initiative of 'Leadership Partnering' has been introduced, where new appointees are offered a link to an experienced leadership judge. Developments have taken place across the year to strengthen and better publicise the mentoring offer, including for leadership judges, or those judges looking to progress into leadership roles.

It is important that a culture of openness to giving and receiving feedback is developed within the judiciary, and in particular, among leadership judges. The 12-month 'Leadership Feedback' pilot which started last year was positively received and has now become part of the leadership development offer. Structured Leadership Conversations, launched in January 2025, provide a structure for leadership judges to discuss their progress with their senior leadership judge. Additional guidance and support for leadership judges in receiving and using feedback has been published. More resources will be made available during the 2025/2026 legal year.

Recruitment and appointments

Between August 2024 and September 2025, 907 courts and tribunals judges and non-legal members were appointed.

The Court of Appeal saw the announcement of six new appointments: Dame Sara Cockerill DBE, Sir Ian Dove, Sir David Foxton, Dame Juliet May DBE, Sir David Miles and Dame Amanda Yip DBE.

After another successful recruitment exercise, the High Court remains at full complement. Planning for the next exercise is underway.

A Circuit Judge exercise launched in September 2024, with the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) recommending 37 candidates for appointment. The exercise for District Judge to fill 80 vacancies in London and the South East is currently progressing; the exercise targeting the recruitment of 15 Midlands, North Eastern, Northern, South West and Wales circuits will report in February 2026. The Deputy District Judge exercise resulted in the JAC identifying 125 candidates for immediate appointment, with additional candidates being identified for future appointment.

Due to a number of government policy changes increasing demand into the Tribunals (for example, changes to employment legislation), there is a need to recruit additional judges into the First-tier Tribunals. These recruitment exercises will be run as part of the 2025-2026 independent Judicial Appointments Commission

Recruitment Programme. For example, the JAC successfully recruited over 160 part-time judges for the Immigration and Asylum Chamber, Health Education and Social Care Chamber, Social Entitlement Chamber and War Pensions and Armed Forces Chamber. Recommendations for the appointment of 72 salaried judges were made in September 2025.

Work continues to encourage applications to salaried judicial office. The judiciary is heavily engaged in such work, as are the legal professions and the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC).

Training

The Lady Chief Justice has a statutory duty to maintain appropriate arrangements for the training of the courts judiciary; the Judicial College fulfils this responsibility by providing a programme of training and resources to support judges and magistrates from all backgrounds in their professional development.

The College delivered a total of 1,754 training seminars to 29,663 participants between October 2024 and September 2025. This included 100 induction programmes for more than 2,400 judicial office holders who were either new to the role or taking on new responsibilities. 91% of courts judges and 95% of magistrates who gave feedback rated their training as meeting its aims and outcomes.

The College continued to support the needs of the magistracy throughout the period. Training for magistrates represented more than 1,300 of the

total training seminars delivered this year and almost 15,600 delegate places. Learning pathways were launched in October 2024, which set out a structured approach to required training for magistrates during their first 18 months on the bench. Refreshed training was launched in November 2024 to support magistrates to take on enhanced sentencing powers.

The College maintained its support for inclusion and judicial diversity. Training was delivered to 363 new judges over this period in fostering inclusion and promoting a positive culture for all who work in and with the judiciary. Themes of diversity and setting aside unconscious bias were a central part of training for magistrates in initial and ongoing training.

Support for effective judicial leadership through training remained an important focus. The College delivered two Essential Leadership programmes for newly appointed leadership judges over the period and piloted a new approach to training for the senior judiciary between March and June 2025.

An interim update to the Equal Treatment Bench Book was issued in May 2025 to reflect developments in law and practice, supported by relevant evidence. The Book remains a core reference work to guide the judiciary in ensuring a fair court process and participation for all parties. An updated version of the Crown Court Compendium was published in April 2025, a key resource for criminal judges to support effective jury management and sentencing.

The College supported the judiciary's international work, including by presenting to the 11th International Organisation of Judicial Training conference in November 2024 on judicial education, technology and artificial intelligence. Other engagements included participating in the UK and Ireland Judicial Studies Council annual meeting in December 2024, and supporting efforts to build judicial capacity in Ukraine, particularly in relation to the prosecution of war crimes.

All training figures in this section are bespoke figures produced for this report to cover the period October 2024 to September 2025. Detailed annual figures on training are published in the Judicial College's [annual activities reports](#).



The College's successes are only possible thanks to the dedication of the judges who contribute their expertise to the design and delivery of training, the hard work of its staff and the commitment and enthusiasm of all those who attend its training."

Dame Eleanor King
Chair of the Judicial College

Welfare

Maintenance of the appropriate arrangements for the welfare of the judiciary of England and Wales within the resources made available by the Lord Chancellor is one of the Lady Chief Justice's statutory responsibilities. In addition to Lady Justice Whipple's role, there are two judges who hold delegated portfolio responsibility for welfare for the courts and tribunals judiciary who provide confidential peer support to colleagues and leadership judges. Local welfare judges are also appointed within some jurisdictions and chambers to support their colleagues.

Judicial HR capture anonymised statistical information from external providers and welfare judges to identify any emerging themes with a view to working with the judiciary to identify where greater focus may be required to meet their health and wellbeing requirements.

Internal news items are used to promote the launch of new wellbeing initiatives and increasingly these items are written by judicial office holders who are keen to make colleagues aware of the benefits of support or who want to draw attention to a particular wellbeing topic.

The original Judicial Health and Wellbeing Strategy was introduced in 2021 and is currently under review to determine the judiciary's priorities for the next five years. The new Strategy will consider the results from the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey and internal wellbeing data produced over the last 12 months building on existing work.

The new Strategy will be supported by a wellbeing action plan which will be reviewed annually.

A range of wellbeing support has been developed over the last five years to support the judiciary including new guidance and bespoke psychological, emotional and stress support. Between August 2024 and September 2025, the following activity has taken place:

- The creation of a workplace wellbeing website and app exclusive to the judiciary, developed in collaboration with our Occupational Health provider. The platform contains a section dedicated to judicial leaders with support materials and links to judicial guidance to enable them to effectively carry out their pastoral responsibilities. The platform, which contains videos, podcasts and fact sheets on a range of health and wellbeing topics, was launched on 12 March 2025.
- A review of the judicial mediation service has taken place following feedback from members of the judiciary; the new service will be called Early Facilitated Conversations and will allow for a more flexible approach to resolving workplace disputes that is better suited to judicial requirements. The service was launched in July 2025.



Security of the judiciary continues to be a top priority and an area of ongoing concern. We see far too many instances of judges experiencing threats and harassment, both physically and online.”

Sir Nicholas Green
Senior Presiding Judge

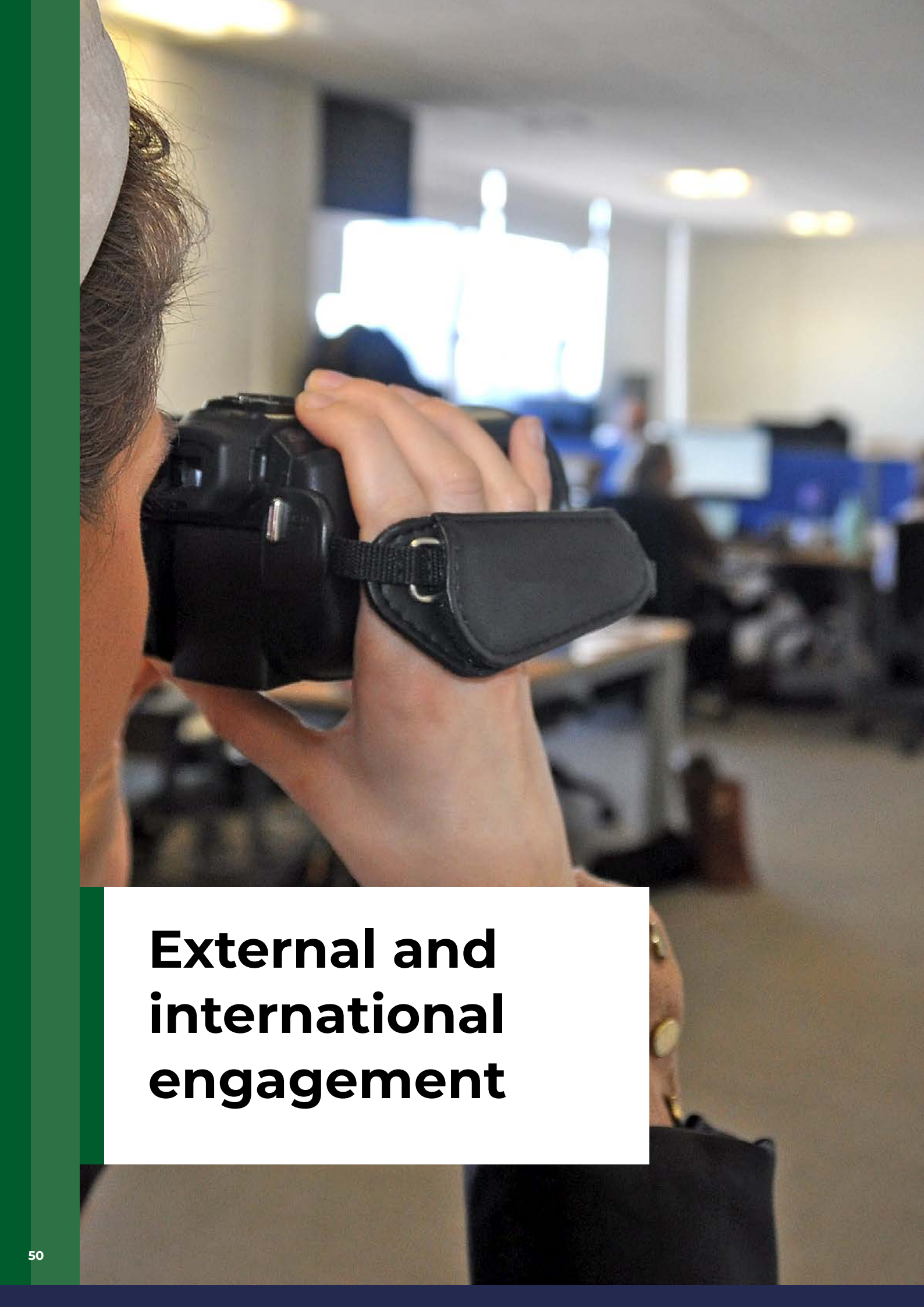
Artificial intelligence

The Deputy Head of Civil Justice, Lord Justice Birss, has continued to lead a cross-jurisdictional judicial group overseeing the use of artificial intelligence within the judiciary. In April 2025, an updated version of the AI guidance was published, featuring an expanded glossary of key terms and additional detail on risks such as misinformation, bias, and dataset quality.

All leadership judges have access to Microsoft Copilot 365. In addition, all other judicial office holders now have access to Copilot Chat via eJudiciary. These tools provide generative AI assistance for tasks such as summarisation, drafting, and information retrieval.

Information on both tools is included in the updated [Judicial AI Guidance](#), which sets out principles for the responsible use of AI within the judiciary.



A close-up, side-profile shot of a person's head and hands holding a black DSLR camera. The person has dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket with gold buttons. The background is a blurred office environment with desks, computers, and bright overhead lights. A green vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

External and international engagement



A key aspect of the Lady Chief Justice's responsibilities is to promote a greater public understanding of the role of the judiciary, the administration of justice and the rule of law.

These aims are supported by relevant committees of the Judges' Council, as well as other initiatives, such as the Transparency and Open Justice Board and the existence of Parliamentary Liaison Judges. Many judges undertake international engagement, which may include diplomatic engagement, knowledge sharing and training. Other judicial office holders volunteer as Diversity and Community Relations judges and magistrates, with the aim of engaging with the public to support the pipeline of future judges and magistrates.

External communications

The Judicial Office Communications Team and Press Office delivered a range of communications activity on behalf of the judiciary to help improve public understanding and knowledge of the judiciary.

A new series of videos called 'who am I to judge?' were launched in August 2025, with the remaining short films being released over the course of the year. In the videos pairs of judicial office holders talk about their different backgrounds, along with what they have in common.

Social media continues to play a valuable role in reaching a wide range of audiences, with 130,000 followers and

subscribers across the five channels used by the judiciary: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and UK Judiciary YouTube. This is an increase of 10,000 compared to the previous reporting period.

The communications team continue to work closely with the MoJ on a magistrate recruitment campaign across England and Wales. This contributed to 894 new magistrates being recruited in 2024-25.

Judgments and sentencing remarks

are made available to the public and media in a timely manner; this ensures comprehensive and accurate coverage of the work of the judiciary. Press summaries may be provided in complex or high-interest cases to assist understanding of the Court's decision; during the reporting period, the most downloaded press summary was the *Home Secretary and Somani Hotels -v- Epping Forest District Council* case with 5,465 views. Ongoing work is focussed upon increasing the number of press summaries across all areas of the judiciary.

In addition to online publications, the Lady Chief Justice hosts an annual press conference, which took place in February 2025, giving national and specialist media the opportunity to ask questions on the topics of interest to them.

The broadcasting of sentencing remarks has increased with 45 sentences broadcast between 1 September 2024 and 11 July 2025, compared to 40 during the period 31 August 2023 to 1 September 2024. This enables the public to see and hear judges in the Crown Court explain the reasons for their sentences, aiding public understanding of how decisions are reached. The most viewed broadcasting of sentencing remarks during the reporting period was *The King -v- Linda De Sousa Abreu* in January 2025, with 486,000 views.



Legal profession

The judiciary's relationships with the Bar Council, the Law Society, and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives remain strong. The Lady Chief Justice has met regularly with senior representatives from each branch of the profession over the past 12 months.

The Lady Chief Justice gave the 2025 Sir Henry Brooke lecture in March 2025. Her theme was 'valuing lawyers'.

In June 2025, the Lady Chief Justice gave a keynote address at the Bar Conference in Birmingham. Her theme was the future of the judiciary and the need for close collaboration with the legal profession.

The Bar Council published guidance in July 2025 on court dress for barristers; this was approved by the Lady Chief Justice and Judicial Executive Board.

Engagement with the professions continues, with 'in conversation' online events planned for the 2025/26 legal year with the Chair of the Bar Council and the Law Society respectively.

School engagement

Overall, the Diversity and Community Relations Judges (DCRJJs) and Magistrates (DCRMs) have visited over 380 primary and secondary schools, colleges and further education establishments as part of their outreach over a 12-month period. DCRJJs and DCRMs help to inform and educate the general public about what judicial office holders do, as well as encourage individuals from under-represented backgrounds to consider a judicial career. These visits to educational establishments as part of the Schools and Universities Outreach Programme play a key role in supporting both of those aims. These school outreach activities encompassed a diverse range of activities, including school and court visits, mock trials, and educational initiatives delivered in partnership with the National Justice Museum (NJM) and Young Citizens. The NJM, in particular, supports the judicial Diversity and Inclusion objectives by focusing on activities with "diverse and not yet engaged groups".

The Lady Chief Justice visited Outwood Academy Riverside in Middlesbrough in June 2025 to speak to pupils about the work of judges, the justice system, and the rule of law. She was accompanied by Mr Justice Poole, the Family Presiding Judge of the Northeastern circuit, and local judges, HHJ Mark Thomas and HHJ Joanne Kidd.



Transparency and open justice

The Transparency and Open Justice Board is chaired by Mr Justice Nicklin and has delivered significant progress since its establishment in April 2024.

The Board has invited the bodies with statutory responsibility for court and tribunal procedural rules to consider incorporating an express reference to open justice in their overriding objectives. To progress this work, the Board's membership has been expanded to include representatives from all procedure rule committees, except the Family Procedure Committee. The President of the Family Division has already established the Transparency Implementation Group to embed open justice and transparency within the Family Division, and that Group is represented on the Board to ensure coordinated progress. An observer exchange with the Scottish Open Justice Steering Group (chaired by The Lord President, Lord Pentland) has been formalised, and magistracy representation alongside participation from the Deputy Chief Coroner for England and Wales ensures cross-jurisdictional perspectives.

Between December 2024 and February 2025, the Board undertook a public engagement exercise on its Key Objectives, receiving 48 substantive responses. The consultation informed emphasising open justice as a pillar of legal legitimacy, alignment with

both common law and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and guidance on transparency for decisions made without hearings. The final version of the Key Objectives, accompanied by a formal response to consultation, published in July 2025, will serve as the strategic touchstone for transparency reforms.

The Court of Appeal (Civil Division) has commenced a pilot providing more information about some of the live streamed cases via provision of skeleton arguments and judgments on the live stream page. It was launched on 1 April 2025 and ran through 31 July 2025 with one case per week chosen to test system performance and user experience. There were no technical issues or objections reported. A secure QR code was also posted outside the courtroom to enable in-person attendees to retrieve documents. The pilot will be reviewed with a view to expand in autumn 2025.

Separately a Criminal Procedure Rule Committee sub-committee looking at improving public access to documents has proposed a pilot scheme for online provision of documents which enter the public domain. Such documents would then be available to the public in the same way that claim forms, pleadings and orders are already. This pilot is expected to launch in the Commercial Court, Financial List and London Circuit Commercial Court in Autumn 2026.

Work on publishing judgments from the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) has moved from setting principles to planning how it will work in practice. In partnership with HMCTS, the Board is reviewing the

best platforms and processes to make all judgments publicly available. As an interim step, a request process for media organisations was introduced in summer 2025. A scoping exercise to guide the full rollout of judgment publication is expected to finish within the next three to six months.

Following approval from the President of the King's Bench Division (PKBD) to extended broadcasting to the Administrative Court, the Board is working with MoJ to explore the scope for taking this work forward. Further details will be made available as the work progresses.

HMCTS is establishing Open Justice Champions for Courts and Tribunals on a regional basis. These Champions will act as single points of contact for judges, court and tribunal staff, media and members of the public raising issues with open justice – for example, accessing a remote hearing. They will be the contact point for enquiries or problems relating to open justice.

Working with Government and Parliament

In line with the Lady Chief Justice's statutory responsibilities, and in line with constitutional boundaries, it is her duty to regularly engage with government as is appropriate and necessary.

She has regularly met with the Lord Chancellor. She also met with the current, interim and former Permanent

Secretary for MoJ (Dr Jo Farrar CB DBE, Amy Rees, and Dame Antonia Romeo respectively), and other senior officials within MoJ. Regular topics of discussion with the Lord Chancellor have included matters that have an impact on the judiciary including finance, efficiency, modernisation, prison capacity, the rule of law and judicial independence and judicial recruitment. The potential outcomes of the Independent Sentencing Review, led by former Lord Chancellor David Gauke, and the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts, led by former President of the King's (then Queen's) Bench Division, Sir Brian Leveson, have also formed a part of these discussions.

The Lady Chief Justice met with the Prime Minister twice in the reporting period to discuss a wide range of topics of mutual interest. Their most recent meeting was in August 2025.

The Lady Chief Justice also met with senior officials and ministers from a range of government departments, as well as the Cabinet Secretary in March. Other members of the senior judiciary also have bilateral meetings with relevant ministers to ensure that the views of the judiciary on the practical implications of policy decisions are conveyed to the government.

The Lady Chief Justice met with the Speaker of the House of Commons in July, when he visited the Royal Courts of Justice and observed cases being heard.

The Lady Chief Justice gave evidence to the Justice Select Committee of the House of Commons in November 2024. She also appeared before the Constitution Committee of the House of Lords in February 2025.



The 2024 general election resulted in many members of Parliament leaving Parliament. In April 2025, the Lady Chief Justice and Senior President of Tribunals invited all MPs to visit their local court and tribunal centres, with the aim of assisting MPs to build their understanding of the work of the judiciary and what happens day-to-day in the courts in their constituency. Since spring 2025, 47 visits have taken place, 42 are scheduled for a future date and 39 are pending a confirmed date.

The Parliamentary Liaison Judges have continued their work in support of building this understanding, joining the Lady Chief Justice at an event hosted by senior parliamentary clerks at the House of Commons in February. This followed the Lady Chief Justice hosting a reception for parliamentary committee staff at the Royal Courts of Justice in December 2023. This engagement is aimed at increasing the knowledge of the justice system among all of those working in Parliament.

International

The judiciary of England and Wales has engaged internationally to promote the rule of law and judicial values, including by training and supporting judges in other jurisdictions, making international visits and participating in international conferences. This engagement maintains and enhances the judiciary's global reputation for excellence and judicial independence. It also encourages the adoption of the underlying principles and practices of English and Welsh law internationally; maintains the pre-eminence of England and Welsh law as the law of choice in international finance and trade; enhances the attractiveness of England and Wales as a leading centre for international dispute resolution; supports the provision of international legal services by UK law firms; and encourages inwards investment into the UK.

The judiciary has welcomed a significant number of Chief Justices and other senior judges on visits to this jurisdiction, both as part of the Opening of the Legal Year in October 2024 and over the course of the legal year.

The Lady Chief Justice launched the [new international strategy](#) in May 2025 which set out the mix of thematic and geographic priorities for the next four years. The approved annual plans will focus on priority jurisdictions and organisations across Europe, the Commonwealth and other global areas.

The specific strategic priorities outlined in the Judicial Strategy are to promote:

1. the rule of law and capacity building;
2. international financial and commercial law
3. international family law;
4. technological innovation;
5. international environmental law.

Incoming visits

Requests to visit from judges around the world are regularly received, with almost 40 incoming visits from jurisdictions around the world taking place between January 2024 and May 2025. Visits in 2025 have included judges of all levels from Japan, Nepal, Tanzania, Australia, Ghana, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Albania, France and Moldova.

These engagements allow foreign judges to gain an insight into the judicial system of England and Wales, while also providing local judges with the opportunity to promote best practices, enhance judicial cooperation, and foster a deeper understanding of different legal systems.

Outgoing engagements

Commonwealth

Within the Commonwealth, engagement continued with a number of jurisdictions. Malaysia was an important focus, and continuing magistrates training in Nigeria involved a mixture of online webinars and face-to-face sessions. Separately, work was undertaken with Jamaica to aid the development of their judicial college.

Europe

Engagement with European judicial counterparts has continued through membership of a number of organisations. Through the European Judicial Training Network, UK judges attended seminars covering a variety of topics as well as exchange programmes throughout Europe. Bilateral cooperation with Western Balkan states has been developed, including through a judicial exchange partnership and training programme in Albania and developing links in Montenegro.

Judges continue to lead on training Ukrainian judges on several topics, including trial management of war crimes, following previous successful iterations. Further opportunities for training have been identified and judicial expertise sought.

International family law

In international family law, judges have continued to strengthen relationships with other jurisdictions (including members of the International Hague Network of Judges). Activities have included attending international conferences and meetings to discuss the practical operation of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention and the 1996 Child Protection Convention. This engagement has contributed to the overarching goal of developing common approaches in family law, promoting the effective and consistent operation of international instruments and assisting with the expeditious resolution of individual cases.

International financial and commercial law

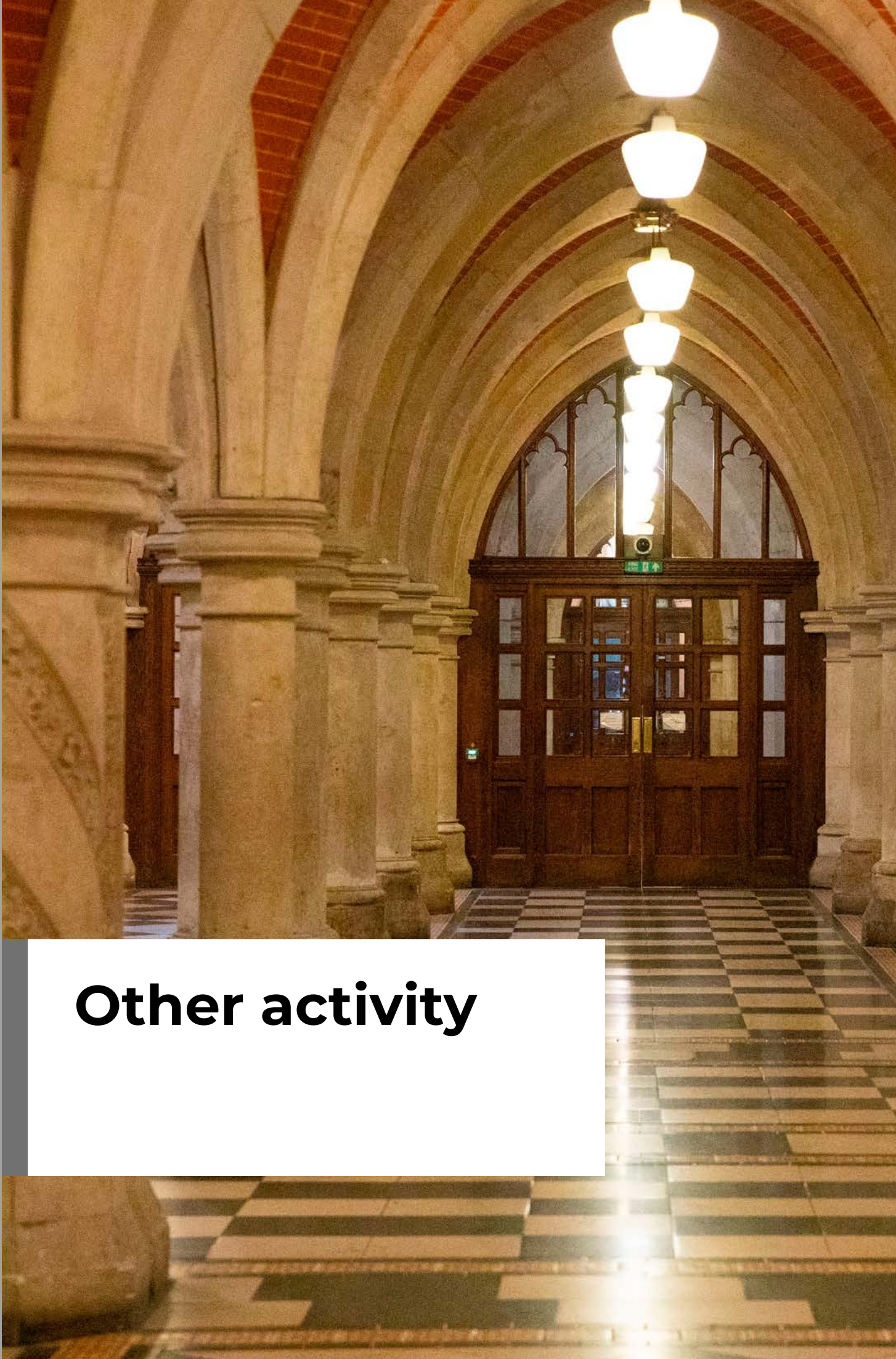
Judges from the Business and Property Courts involved in intellectual property, competition law and insolvency and restructuring have continued to engage with judges from other jurisdictions through bilateral meetings, international conferences and by conducting international training. Jurisdictions visited have including many EU member states, the US, Canada, Brazil and Singapore.

Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts

The Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts (SIFoCC) is a forum that brings together the world's commercial and appellate courts to facilitate judicial collaboration and cooperation between jurisdictions.

In the reporting period, SIFoCC has continued to increase its worldwide membership, which now stands at 65 judiciaries. Online roundtable discussions on topics such as maritime law and insolvency law have generated considerable interest. SIFoCC also held its first continent specific roundtable discussion in Uganda in May 2025 in partnership with the Africa Chief Justices ADR Forum (ACJADR Forum). This focused on effective commercial dispute resolution for Africa and brought together Chief Justices and senior members of the judiciary from more than 20 jurisdictions across the continent. SIFoCC also hosted its sixth observation programme in the Rolls Building in London in June 2025 for judges from Montenegro, The Gambia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Ukraine.





Other activity



Judicial activity

Coroners

The Chief Coroner's jurisdiction covers England and Wales and includes a range of formal powers and duties including extensive case management powers, supervising coroner appointments and reporting to the Lord Chancellor on the coronial system by way of an [annual report](#). The Chief Coroner provides national judicial leadership to Coroners which includes the provision of guidance and training.

On the 4 December 2024 it was announced that, pursuant to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, the Lady Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor had appointed Her Honour Judge Georgina Sharkey and Senior Coroner Joanne Kearsley as Deputy Chief Coroners of England and Wales. These appointments were made following Her Honour Judge Alexia Durran's appointment to Chief Coroner and the retirement of Senior Coroner Derek Winter. The appointments took effect on 1 January 2025 for a three-year term.

HHJ Dhir KC was nominated in May 2025, by the Lady Chief Justice following consultation with the Lord Chancellor, under paragraph 3, Schedule 10 Coroners and Justice Act 2009 to investigate the death of Alexander Ahmed Kareem.

In June 2025 the Chief Coroner concluded the inquest touching on the death of Rhianan Rudd having been nominated to conduct the investigation in December 2023 and the former Chief

Coroner concluded the inquiry touching on the death of Jumal Uddin in July 2025.

The Ministry of Justice are responsible for publishing annual coroner statistics which cover a range of metrics that include:

- the number of deaths reported to a coroner area.
- inquests and post-mortems held.
- inquest conclusions recorded; and
- finds reported to coroners under treasure legislation.

The 2024 annual statistics published on 8 May 2025 cover the calendar year and present a decrease in deaths reported to a coroner. 174,900 deaths were reported, a 10% reduction from the previous reporting year and the lowest level reported since 1995. While the number of deaths may have decreased, it can be reasoned that the complexity of cases being reported is growing given that the number of deaths reported that required a post-mortem increased. On the anecdotal evidence available there is a strong assumption that the decrease is linked to the implementation of the Death Certification Reforms and Statutory Medical Examiner scheme introduced on 9 September 2024. However, as the statistics reporting period is the calendar year January to December 2024, it is hoped the 2025 statistics will provide more evidence on the reforms impact.

On 1 July 2025 the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (Alteration of Coroner Areas) Order 2025 was laid before Parliament, merging the four coroner areas of Central and South East Kent, Mid Kent and Medway, North East Kent and North West Kent to create a new

coroner area to be known as Kent and Medway. This merger results in there now being 74 coroner areas across England and Wales.

In September 2025, the Chief Coroner published her first statutory [annual report](#) to the Lord Chancellor, covering the calendar year 2024, pursuant to section 35 Coroners and Justice Act 2009. In this report she will cover a number of items, including those she has a statutory duty report upon. It will provide an assessment for the year of the consistency of standards between coroner areas, Reports to Prevent Future Deaths and deaths of Service Personnel. The report will also cover a summary for the year of the number and length of cases lasting more than a year, beginning with the day on which the coroner was made aware that the person's body was within the coroner's area.

City of London Courts

Work on the new City of London Law Courts at Salisbury Square has progressed significantly over the last year. The Deputy Senior Presiding Judge, Lady Justice Yip, is the judicial lead for the project, supported by Mr Justice John Cavanagh. The Lady Chief Justice and PKBD continue to closely follow developments of this exciting project which will provide a multi-jurisdictional centre in the heart of the city. The new court will provide eight Crown Courts, five civil courts and four Magistrates' courts, with an additional courtroom designated as a multi-purpose court. The project is on track for completion and the court is expected to be operational by spring 2027.

The judiciary has been liaising closely with the City of London Corporation and HMCTS as the building work continues, and in preparation for the opening and operationalisation of the new court. Lady Justice Yip and Mr Justice Cavanagh visited the site in April 2025 and the Lady Chief Justice visited the site in September 2025.

Supporting activity

Judicial Data Protection Panel

Progress has continued in raising awareness within the judiciary of data protection requirements and embedding compliance. This work continues to be overseen by the Judicial Data Protection Panel. Its role is to supervise the processing of personal data by individuals, courts and tribunals when acting in a judicial capacity.

The Panel reviews all judicial data incidents to identify themes and inform advice and guidance. There have been few incidents reported over the past year; and none that have had serious consequences.

The Panel also considers complaints from individuals about how their personal data has been processed by a court, tribunal or individual when acting in a judicial capacity.

Judicial Library and Information Service

Between August 2024 and September 2025, the Judicial Library and

Information Service (jLIS) supplied over 29,000 print publications to judges in the courts and tribunals.

The range of online resources provided to judges has continued to expand; judges now have access to an unrivalled, comprehensive range of online legal resources via eLIS, the online legal library for judges. Use of online databases continues to increase, and the eLIS training programme has expanded accordingly as it is crucial that judges have the skills to exploit fully the resources available to them. On average, over 3,200 judges use eLIS each month; that number continues to rise year-on-year. Training has increased accordingly; almost 1,000 judges received training in the past twelve months.

jLIS continued to support the International Law Book Facility (ILBF) charity, which sends unwanted legal books to not-for-profit organisations around the world. Over 950 donations were sent to Turks and Caicos Islands, Zimbabwe and various courts in the Caribbean. On 13 May 2025, the RCJ Library welcomed a delegation of judges and library officers from Sierra Leone and Nigeria, as part of a visit organised by ILBF.

Just over 6,000 new judgments have been added to the Find Case Law (FCL) service hosted by The National Archives (TNA), and many tribunal decisions are also being transferred to FCL from existing MoJ legacy IT systems. As part of wider open justice work, jLIS is also preparing to transfer 2,000 paper transcripts from the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) (1992 – 2001) to TNA where they will be made available to the public.

Reflections from the Judicial Executive Board

Reflections from the Master of the Rolls

As Master of the Rolls and Head of Civil Justice, I have continued to make it my highest priority to support and promote modernisation of the civil justice system.

There are some 15 million civil disputes each year. In my written evidence to the Justice Select Committee and House of Lords Constitution Committee, I listed 38 examples of civil dispute, demonstrating the breadth of this jurisdiction.

I am pleased to share several recent initiatives that have improved access to justice and the speed of civil dispute resolution, including the Small Claims Mediation Service, and the changes to the Civil Procedure Rules to embed referral to mediation following the Court of Appeal's decision in *Churchill v. Merthyr Tydfil CBC* [2023] EWCA Civ 1416. There is, however, still work to be done.

I have continued to work collaboratively with HMCTS to make plans to digitise all civil claims and have identified three priorities to achieve this goal. Firstly, to continue the process that was started with Reform to get the paper out of the County Court. Secondly, to replace CE-file, which is currently used for complex cases in the High Court and the Business and Property Courts, with a proper, AI-enabled, digital case-management system fit for the future. Thirdly, to continue the creation of the

pre-court Digital Justice System being created by the Online Procedure Rule Committee (OPRC), which will allow many more disputes to be speedily and economically resolved online before they enter the court system.

To achieve the goal of bringing civil justice into the 21st century, we must create a modern system suitable for the people we serve.

Reflections from the President of the King's Bench Division

The last year has seen increasing demands placed upon the King's Bench Division. The KBD, which I lead, deals with a huge range of the most difficult and high-profile civil cases to come before the courts. These cases often attract significant interest domestically and internationally and can lead to a great deal of media scrutiny and public comment.

On top of this, much additional work for the KBD has been generated by new legislation and policy changes. Examples include parole referrals to the High Court, reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime and to the current system of immigration and asylum. Such changes put pressure on judicial resources, and require additional administrative support and judicial training. Obviously, the courts and jurisdictions affected must be adequately resourced and funded. One of my priorities this year has been to ensure that the resource

implications of such changes are properly considered within Government and to work with HMCTS to create new and efficient systems for the KBD to support any changes that are made.

In addition, it is the KBD judges who sit in Crown Courts throughout England and Wales, to try the most difficult and challenging criminal cases, work which is of the highest public importance. Moreover, most KBD judges also take on significant leadership responsibilities within the judicial system: as Presiders for example, and on issues such as judicial training, diversity, and wellbeing which are relevant to all levels of the judiciary.

Whilst KBD judges continue to deal with these pressures, their security when doing their work must be a priority. I am grateful for the recognition this has within Government; and I am continuing to work with Ministers and HMCTS to ensure judges across the High Court, and beyond, are given the support and security that they need, in particular when working on circuit.

As Deputy Head of Crime, this year has been an exceptionally busy one. Together with other senior members of the judiciary I have engaged with both the Sentencing Review and the Independent Review of Criminal Courts and with leaders across the criminal justice system, in relation to legislative changes that are likely to have important implications for the work of the judges in years to come. And I have also continued to visit Crown (and other) courts across the country to speak to judges at all levels. In times of change, it remains of critical importance to consider views from across the judiciary and to see how things are working 'on the ground'.

Reflections from the Chancellor of the High Court

One of the most rewarding parts of the CHC's experience has been my pastoral role of ensuring that judicial morale is as good as possible. This is an area I have particularly enjoyed.

The regional centres, situated across England and Wales, are a pivotal part of B&PCs, supporting local cases to remain in the parts of the Country where they are impacted most. This has enabled this specialist area of law to be dealt with by practitioners in those regions and promote the rule of law across the country.

I have continued to visit the regional centres regularly, spending time with the judiciary to increase morale, speak to staff to discuss local issues, and engage with local practitioners to encourage work to be heard in the regions. Spending time visiting the regional centres has resulted in an increase in the local B&PC Forums, bringing the legal community together to share insights on topical matters, and strengthening the work and relationships of the profession and judiciary in these areas.

After years of lobbying for a suitable space, I was pleased to be joined by the LCJ to open the new B&PC court rooms in Leeds in October 2024.

Reflections from the President of the Family Division

This period has seen positive results recorded across the Family Justice system as a result of a range of initiatives aimed at reducing demand and increasing efficiency. I am very grateful to all involved for their hard work and commitment to the delivery of these initiatives. The positive results that we now see are the fruit of their collective endeavour.

The volume of public law cases started has reduced, and, following the relaunch of the Public Law Outline ('PLO') in January 2023, the length of cases is reducing. The result is that the volume of open public law cases is now back to a level last seen before the pandemic.

In private law, again, the open caseload has been reduced to 2019 levels. The major development in private law has been the introduction of 'Pathfinder Courts', which have transformed the court's engagement with disputing parents into a model aimed at problem solving based upon an early clear account of the voice of the child. In February, the Government announced its intention to expand the model to four additional Designated Family Judge areas – Wolverhampton, Worcester, Stoke-on-Trent and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight – by the end of the 2025/2026 financial year. The primary aim of Pathfinder is to provide a better, and safer, route to dispute resolution. The work of local domestic abuse professionals is embedded in the operation of these courts. However, a secondary benefit is that Pathfinder needs less court time,

thus freeing up judges and court space to be used for other work.

The Reporting Pilot concluded successfully and every Family Court now operates on the basis that, if a journalist attends a hearing, an order is likely to be made permitting reporting of the proceedings subject to clear restrictions to preserve the anonymity of the parties.

The number of young people who require authorisation from the Family Division so that social services may restrict their liberty in order to protect them from harm continues to be a cause of great concern. In 2018, when I became President, the annual number of applications was 280; that figure is now closer to 1,300.

Funding for Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) remains a continuing issue so that, when a new FDAC venue opens (for example recently in Liverpool and Northampton), another is forced to close (Newcastle).

Reflections from the Senior Presiding Judge

I took up the role of Senior Presiding Judge (SPJ) in October 2024, alongside Mrs Justice Amanda Yip (now Lady Justice Yip) as my deputy. As SPJ I provide support, leadership and guidance for courts judiciary and magistrates across England and Wales and, in particular, for leadership judges. My role is, in effect, that of 'Chief Operating Officer' for the Lady Chief Justice, as I deal with day-to-day issues affecting the judiciary and the operation of the courts. This includes matters relating to the appointment and deployment of judges, judicial

security, the court estate, and the overall performance of the courts. I also have delegated authority for the operation of the magistrates' courts and the welfare and training of magistrates.

There is much to reflect on as we reach the end of my first year in post. One of my priorities has been to strengthen the role of the Criminal Courts Improvement Group (CCIG) and establish a series of projects to deliver substantive improvements to the processes of the criminal courts. I also launched a review of the governance of the magistracy earlier this year, with a view to streamline and clarify decision making structures and ensure the right structures are in place to deal with the significant change that is coming down the line. These will both continue to be significant areas of focus for me as we go into the next year, to ensure that momentum continues and changes are implemented well.

Security of the judiciary continues to be a top priority and an area of ongoing concern. We see far too many instances of judges experiencing threats and harassment, both physically and online. New security training for the judiciary was launched in July, and in March we launched a new Security Taskforce, chaired by the Deputy SPJ, which has been set up to evaluate and improve arrangements for judicial security.

In October I set an ambition for myself and the Deputy SPJ to each visit all of the six circuits in England and Wales over our two-year term. We have visited more than 20 courts between us over the last year and have thoroughly enjoyed getting out and about to meet with judges, magistrates and staff, and

to see how things are operating day-to-day. We are grateful to everyone who has hosted us and made sure these visits are a success.

Reflections from Lady Justice Whipple

This has been a busy year! As lead judge for diversity and inclusion, I chair the Judicial Diversity Committee of the Judges' Council. Following a very successful away day in 2024, we have recently introduced five Working Groups to focus on social inclusion, race, disability, LGBTQ+ and women. By ensuring progress in these areas, we will increase diversity and help to foster an inclusive environment for all.

I am pleased to report positive engagement from a range of judicial office holders who attended my 2024 diversity and inclusion 'round tables', providing me with the opportunity to listen and learn, and identify the most pressing issues for change; those sessions have fed into my work in 2025 and beyond. In 2025 the focus of these round tables moved to engagement sessions to support the development of the next Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which will run from 2026-2030.

We continue to work hard to achieve a positive working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We have embedded our inclusion training and extended it to all judicial office holders, at the start of their judicial careers and as part of their continued training. We have promoted awareness of inclusion issues by articles on the judicial intranet, talks and discussions, and encouraging the development of an inclusive style of

leadership. This work will enhance our ability to make 'One Judiciary' a reality.

Many judicial office holders work hard undertaking outreach work with the aim of bringing more diversity into the judiciary. Our Diversity and Community Relations Judges (DCRJJs) and Magistrates have particular responsibility here. There are many outstanding examples of their work. One initiative worthy of mention is the programme developed by DCRJJs in the North West working with Manchester Metropolitan University. They have offered marshalling to more than 200 students. We aim to target outreach activities where they are most needed, engaging with communities which are currently underrepresented within the judiciary. Our DCRJJs are ably led by our new lead DCRJJ, President of the First-tier Tribunal, Social Entitlement Chamber, Elizabeth McMahon.

Leadership judges play an important role in developing a strong workplace culture and bringing on the careers of team members. In the past year, we have seen the enhancement of mentoring arrangements for leadership judges and opportunities for leadership judges to receive 360° feedback. We have piloted a senior leaders' training course. The new Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework is more explicit about the skills required for judicial leadership. Good leadership is the key to much of the progress which has been and still needs to be made on diversity and inclusion.

My role as lead judge for judicial wellbeing is a natural fit within my portfolio of other responsibilities. It is important that the wellbeing

of the judiciary remains a priority. I meet termly with Judicial HR and the Chair of the Judicial HR Committee to review wellbeing data and assess initiatives with a view to ensuring that appropriate support is available to all judicial office holders.

We have analysed the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey data with care, to ensure that our policy initiatives in all the areas discussed above are based on and responsive to the evidence.

Reflections from Lady Justice King

The Judicial College had a demanding and successful year, delivering a significant programme of training and resources for 24,000 office holders across the judiciary.

The College remained focused on delivering a high standard of judicial education to support the judiciary from appointment and at every career stage. The year saw a strong commitment to training in support of inclusion, leadership and meeting the evolving needs of the magistracy.

The College's successes are only possible thanks to the dedication of the judges who contribute their expertise to the design and delivery of training, the hard work of its staff and the commitment and enthusiasm of all those who attend its training and for whom the College exists.

Glossary

Circuits: the courts of England and Wales are divided into six geographical regions, known as 'circuits'. These regions are Midland, North Eastern, Northern, South Eastern, Wales and Western.

County Court: deals with civil (non-criminal) matters in which cases arise when an individual or a business believes their rights have been infringed.

Court of Appeal: the highest court within the Senior Courts of England and Wales, it deals only with appeals from other courts or tribunals. It is divided into two Divisions, Criminal and Civil.

Crown Court: deals with the most serious criminal offences. It sits in over 70 court centres across England and Wales, including the Central Criminal Court, more commonly known as the Old Bailey.

High Court: deals at first instance with all high value and high importance civil law (non-criminal) cases, and also has a supervisory jurisdiction over all subordinate courts and tribunals, with a few statutory exceptions. The High Court consists of three divisions: the King's Bench Division, the Family Division, and the Chancery Division.

Litigant in person (LiP): an individual, company or organisation who has to go to court without legal representation from a solicitor or barrister.

Local justice areas (LJAs): Local justice areas create geographical boundaries relating to four main components of Magistrates' courts administration: initiating and listing cases; the payment and enforcement of fines, suspended sentence orders, community orders and youth rehabilitation orders; magistrates' recruitment; and magistrates' deployment. They are also linked to magistrates' leadership and training arrangements. There are 75 LJAs, known as benches, each containing between one and five magistrates' courts. LJAs will be abolished when section 45 of the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 is commenced following a consultation.

Magistrates: are trained, volunteer members of the local community who make decisions in criminal and family cases in Magistrates' courts and the Family Court. The most complex cases in Magistrates' courts are heard by professional District Judges.

Magistrates' courts: deal with around 95% of criminal cases and virtually all criminal court cases start in them. More serious criminal offences are heard in the Crown Court, either for sentencing after the defendant has been found guilty in a Magistrates' court, or for trial with a judge and jury.

Private law: the areas of law dealing with those relations between individuals with which the state is not directly concerned, e.g., the relations between husband and wife or parent and child, and disputes arising from property, contract, torts, trusts, legacies, etc.

Public law: the part of the law dealing with the role of the state. It governs the conduct of public bodies (including central and local government) and regulates the relationship between individuals and the various branches of the state.

Presiding Judge: High Court Judges who are responsible for the deployment of judges and allocation of cases on their Circuit. They also have a responsibility for general supervision of judges on their circuits.

Resident judges: senior circuit judges who oversee the administration and management of an individual court or courts.

Single Justice Procedure: The Single Justice Procedure was introduced by the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 in England and Wales. It allows a single magistrate, supported by a legal adviser, to deal with minor, non-imprisonable offences without requiring a court hearing, unless the defendant chooses to attend.



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