

2020-2025 Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Evaluation

January 2026

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Introduction by the Lead Diversity and Inclusion Judge

In November 2020, we introduced the first Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, outlining a five-year plan to create a judiciary that is more inclusive, representative, and diverse.



Over the past five years, our understanding of what it means to be an inclusive institution has grown. We have embedded responsibility for diversity and inclusion into judicial leadership, expanded our outreach to underrepresented communities, and strengthened the support available to judicial office holders. These efforts have been supported by a growing body of data and evaluation, enabling us to take more targeted and evidence-based action.

We have also recognised the importance of wellbeing and culture in sustaining a judiciary where all can thrive. The Judicial Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the development of inclusion training, and the work of our Diversity and Community Relations Judges and Magistrates, and other judicial office holders with particular responsibility for diversity, inclusion and welfare, have all contributed to a more open and supportive environment.

This work has had its challenges. Progress in some areas has been slower than we would wish, and we must continue to address persistent underrepresentation, particularly at senior levels and among black judges. We must continue our efforts to improve our declaration rates, which allow us to publish our progress annually and provide transparent updates on the effectiveness of our Strategy.

As we begin to consider the next phase of our diversity and inclusion work, I want to thank all those who have contributed to this effort: the Judicial Diversity Committee, the Judicial College, our partners in the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Appointments Commission, and the many judicial office holders who have given their time and energy to this cause. Your commitment is helping to shape a judiciary that is not only excellent in its work but inclusive in its values.

Dame Philippa Whipple

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

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1: Creating an environment in which there is a greater responsibility for and reporting on progress in achieving diversity and inclusion

The first objective of the 2020–2025 Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy aimed to embed responsibility for diversity and inclusion within judicial leadership structures. It recognised that leadership judges and magistrates play a pivotal role in shaping the culture of the judiciary and influencing the diversity of those who apply for and progress within judicial roles. The strategy set out a series of commitments to ensure that leadership judges are accountable for promoting inclusive environments, supported by training, data, and reporting mechanisms.



Achievements

2020-2021

Since the launch of the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in 2020, the judiciary has made steady and structured progress in embedding diversity and inclusion as a core leadership responsibility. The strategy set out a clear expectation that all judicial office holders in leadership and management positions would be accountable for promoting inclusive environments and reporting on their progress. Diversity data was collected in various areas, including sexual orientation and socio-economic background with encouragement to declare continuing to date.

Training programmes were revised to reflect leadership accountability, and the Essential Leadership Programme was updated to include inclusive leadership principles. Roles came into existence for magistrates, with Diversity and Community Relations Magistrates (DCRMs) and Inclusion and Diversity Magistrates (IDMs) appointed. The Senior President of Tribunals also established a Diversity Taskforce to coordinate efforts across the tribunals.

2022

By 2022, Reporting mechanisms were introduced, enabling leadership judges to share progress and good practice. Inclusion training for leadership judges was launched, and resources were provided to support self-reflection and local discussions. The strategy also began to focus on improving data collection, with judicial office holders encouraged to self-classify against a broader range of diversity characteristics

2023

In 2023, the focus turned to embedding diversity and inclusion into everyday judicial leadership. Leadership judges began integrating diversity discussions into meetings and in some areas appointed local leads to support implementation. Some tribunal regions introduced surveys and exit interviews to gather localised data on inclusion. Inclusion training was followed up with practical guidance on handling inappropriate behaviour, fostering inclusive meetings, and navigating resistance to diversity initiatives. Feedback from these efforts informed refinements to local implementation of the strategy's objectives. The DCRJ and DCRM outreach reporting process was also reviewed to better capture impact and share best practices.

The DCRJ and DCRM roles were further strengthened. A review of their outreach activity led to richer data collection, including the types of schools visited, with a focus on state schools in lower socio-economic areas. Impactful practices – such as mentoring schemes for black advocates and university engagement – were showcased at the annual DCRJ conference.

2024

The 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey included new questions on leadership, inclusion, and wellbeing, with expanded diversity monitoring categories. It also included coroners. These data is used to assess the impact of training, workplace adjustments, and local implementation efforts. Mechanisms for reporting on local action were further developed, enabling more effective evaluation and sharing of good practice. The Judicial College continued to deliver leadership training, including five Essential Leadership Programme courses, and commissioned a comprehensive training needs analysis to inform future provision. Additionally, Lead Diversity and Inclusion Judges were appointed in the High Court to mirror efforts in other jurisdictions.

2025

Data on disabled judicial office holders were included in the published statistics for the first time in 2025. This is as a result of the diversity data campaign to encourage judicial office holders to share their information. Also, in 2025 a pilot series of masterclasses were delivered to senior leaders on difficult conversations; on wellbeing and burnout and on having conversations to empower and engage. A new initiative encouraged leadership judges to conduct "inclusion checks" to assess local culture and tailor actions accordingly. A new "core value" was introduced for leadership judges, explicitly embedding responsibility for diversity and inclusion into their roles.

Objective 2: Supporting and building a more inclusive and respectful culture and working environment within the judiciary

The second objective focused on fostering a judiciary where all office holders feel respected, supported, and included, regardless of their personal or professional background. This objective recognises that inclusion is not only about representation but also about the lived experience of judicial office holders. It calls for a culture that values diversity, actively addresses exclusionary behaviours, and ensures that policies and practices are sensitive to the needs of all. Over the course of the strategy, this objective has evolved to include a strong emphasis on disability inclusion, mental wellbeing, and the development of inclusive training and guidance.



Achievements

2020-2021

The early phase of the strategy laid the groundwork for a more inclusive judicial culture. The Equal Treatment Bench Book (ETBB) underwent a substantive review, and its updated version was integrated into induction and continuation training. The Judicial Health and Wellbeing Strategy was launched, aligning closely with diversity goals by promoting mental wellbeing and inclusive workplace practices. The judiciary introduced new HR policies, including whistleblowing and grievance procedures, and began developing infrastructure to support workplace adjustments for disabled judicial office holders.

2022

In 2022, the judiciary began to address deeper cultural issues. A judicial wellbeing survey and qualitative research by external consultants revealed experiences of bullying, harassment, and exclusionary behaviour. In response, a Statement of Expected Behaviour was developed. This statement is the cornerstone of the judiciary's inclusion efforts, incorporated into training and used as a reference point in HR support.

The scope of the Judicial Attitude Survey was expanded in 2022 to include fee-paid judges and non-legal members in the tribunals. For the first time, questions relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination were included.

The Judicial College began a three-phase audit of all training content to ensure diversity and inclusion were embedded throughout. Inclusion training was developed for all judicial office holders, with leadership judges receiving the first wave of training.

The reverse mentoring scheme was piloted, pairing judges with legal professionals from under-represented backgrounds to foster mutual understanding.

2023

In 2023, the judiciary focused on embedding inclusive practices into daily judicial life. Inclusion training was rolled out to all salaried and fee-paid judges, with tribunal members scheduled for the following year. Feedback was positive, and the training was supported by practical resources and guidance.

Mental wellbeing remained a key focus. The Judicial Health and Wellbeing Strategy was aligned with diversity goals, and new guidance was issued on topics such as anxiety, menopause, bereavement, and terminal illness. Welfare judges were offered Mental Health Champion training, and judicial office holders with caring responsibilities were supported through new resources and internal campaigns.

2024

In 2024, disability inclusion became a strategic priority. A comprehensive review of workplace adjustments revealed a robust infrastructure already in place, including adjustment passports, escalation procedures, and liaison with HMCTS. Further improvements were identified, particularly around speed and clarity of support. The Workplace Adjustments Working Group (WAWG) continued to raise awareness and streamline processes, while cross-agency collaboration with HMCTS and MoJ strives for consistency across the judicial estate.

Inclusion training continued for new judges, tribunal members, and coroners. The Judicial College commissioned bespoke research into inclusion within the magistracy and began rolling out standardised templates to improve accessibility of training materials to support digital accessibility.

The 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey was further expanded to include coroners and some additional questions in relation to bullying, harassment and discrimination to assist with gaining a fuller understanding of judicial office holders' experiences.

The ETBB's 2024 edition was published following a triennial review, offering clearer, more user-friendly guidance. The Judicial Health and Wellbeing Strategy continued to promote inclusive practices, with internal campaigns marking national awareness days and highlighting peer support resources.

Over 70 judges participated in the reverse mentoring scheme. This initiative, alongside other inclusion efforts, helped to normalise conversations around diversity and foster a more empathetic and informed judiciary.

2025

Much of this work continued through 2025, with disability inclusion remaining a priority, the continued delivery of inclusion training and ongoing monitoring of the ETBB. In 2025 the Lady Chief Justice announced a revised internal process for raising concerns about inappropriate judicial behaviour. She indicated her commitment to addressing complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination and exclusionary behaviour and signalled work in the following areas: i) opportunities to promote HR and wellbeing support for judicial office holders ii) leadership training with a greater focus on preventing exclusionary behaviour iii) more information and greater clarity about the sort of behaviour which can cause offence. These plans are set out in the 2026 to 2030 strategy and are overseen by the Culture Change Board, now chaired by the lead judge for diversity and inclusion and involving other senior judges and officials, whose remit is to oversee work taking place to address inappropriate judicial behaviour.

Objective 3: Supporting and developing the career potential of existing judges

The third objective of the 2020–2025 Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy focuses on ensuring that all judicial office holders are supported and encouraged to develop and fulfil their potential, including those from personal or professional backgrounds currently underrepresented. This objective recognises that career development is a key component of inclusion and that leadership judges have a responsibility to identify and nurture talent across the judiciary. The strategy set out to embed structured support mechanisms such as mentoring, career conversations, and flexible deployment, while also addressing barriers to progression, particularly for those from underrepresented groups.

Over the course of the strategy, this objective has matured from foundational support mechanisms to targeted development programmes and cross-jurisdictional opportunities.



Achievements

2020-2021

The initial phase of the strategy concentrated on establishing the infrastructure to support career development. Leadership judges were tasked with providing focused support for the aspirations of judicial office holders, including those from backgrounds currently underrepresented. Appraisals and career discussions were refreshed to help judges identify development needs and opportunities. A Flexible Deployment and Assignment Framework was launched to facilitate movement between jurisdictions, offering judges broader experience and career growth. Early mentoring schemes were piloted, and training resources were developed to assist leadership judges in supporting their colleagues.

2022

In 2022, the judiciary began to expand its career development offerings. Peer mentoring schemes were introduced for Circuit and District Judges, enabling judges to receive guidance from more experienced colleagues. These schemes were designed to promote confidence, broaden perspectives, and support leadership development. Career discussions became more widespread, and leadership judges were encouraged to embed them into regular practice. The Strategy also began to explore how flexible deployment could address resource gaps while supporting career progression.

2023

By 2023, career development initiatives were becoming embedded across the judiciary. Leadership judges reported regular career conversations with their judges, helping individuals understand the pathways to progression and encouraging those who might not naturally see themselves in senior roles. The peer mentoring scheme continued to grow, with positive feedback from both mentors and mentees.

The Tribunals Diversity Task Force launched a dedicated Career Development and Progression Scheme, matching tribunal judges with experienced mentors. Flexible deployment exercises increased, allowing judges to sit across jurisdictions—for example, tribunal judges in county courts and district judges in the Crown Court. These opportunities were well received and demonstrated the value of cross-jurisdictional experience in supporting career growth.

2024

In 2024, the judiciary started to take a more strategic approach to career development. A working group was established to evaluate flexible deployment exercises and improve future expressions of interest. The peer mentoring and tribunal career development schemes continued, with efforts to expand participation and refine delivery.

Disability inclusion became a key focus, with a seminar held for aspiring judges with disabilities. This event featured judges sharing their lived experiences and career journeys, helping to demystify the application process and highlight available support. The Judicial Diversity Committee endorsed further actions to support disabled judicial office holders, including better signposting of resources, showcasing positive adjustment outcomes, and raising awareness of neurodiversity.

2025

Through 2025 efforts were also made to improve transparency and accessibility in judicial appointments. The judiciary worked with the Judicial Appointments Commission to provide more detailed vacancy information and allow candidates to express location preferences—particularly helpful for those with caring responsibilities. Plans were developed to pilot feedback mechanisms for leadership judges, enabling them to reflect on how they support inclusion and career development.

Through sustained investment in mentoring, leadership development, and inclusive career pathways, the judiciary worked to ensure that all judicial office holders could thrive and progress in their roles.

Objective 4: Supporting greater understanding of judicial roles and achieving greater diversity in the pool of applicants for judicial roles

This objective focuses on broadening the pool of applicants for judicial roles by increasing awareness, accessibility, and support – particularly for individuals from under-represented backgrounds. Over the course of the strategy, this objective has evolved from early engagement work to targeted, data-driven engagement and collaborative programmes with legal sector partners.



Achievements

2020-2021

The early years of the strategy focused on building the infrastructure for outreach and engagement. The judiciary launched a judicial careers portal to provide a central hub for information and resources. Outreach activities, including the Judicial Work Shadowing Scheme (JWSS) and Judicial Mentoring Scheme (JMS), were adapted for remote delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A substitute scheme, “Conversation with a Judge,” was introduced to maintain engagement. The Pre-Application Judicial Education (PAJE) programme and targeted outreach by the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) began to take shape, aiming to support lawyers from under-represented groups.

2022

By 2022, in-person outreach resumed. The judiciary expanded its outreach to schools, universities, and community groups. DCRJs and DCRMs played a key role in this effort, conducting hundreds of visits and engagements. The Bridging the Bar internship scheme was introduced, offering aspiring lawyers from under-represented backgrounds placements in the High Court and Court of Appeal. Social media campaigns and judicial testimonials were used to showcase the diversity of the judiciary and inspire future applicants.

2023

In 2023, outreach efforts became more targeted, and data driven. The JAC’s Targeted Outreach Programme expanded to support around 280 candidates, with over 100 judges trained as guides. The programme achieved strong outcomes, particularly for women, ethnic minority, disabled, and solicitor candidates. The JWSS and JMS were evaluated and improved, leading to increased applications and mentor recruitment.

Efforts to engage schools became more strategic, focusing on institutions with diverse student populations and lower socio-economic indicators. DCRJs and DCRMs were recruited in greater numbers, and their activities were tracked to inform future planning. Locally led outreach initiatives flourished, including partnerships with under-represented legal networks and student shadowing schemes. The judiciary also supported public exhibitions and media campaigns to highlight judicial diversity.

2024

In 2024, the judiciary sharpened its focus on addressing the persistent under-representation of black judges. A review of black lawyers' participation in outreach activities revealed representative engagement levels but uneven interest across jurisdictions. This insight informed plans for more targeted outreach through representative networks and jurisdiction-specific engagement.

General outreach seminars continued to be delivered ahead of all judicial selection exercises, with strong participation from under-represented groups. A bespoke seminar was held for Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) members, aiming to demystify the application process and encourage participation from this under-tapped pool—77% of whom are women.

2025

The Bridging the Bar internship scheme became a regular fixture, offering placements in both 2024 and 2025. Interns were paired with judicial assistants and gained exposure to senior judges, while judges benefited from reverse mentoring insights.

DCRJs and DCRMs continued their extensive outreach, visiting over 550 schools and engaging with more than 220 community groups and 200 legal professionals (April 2023-March 2024). This also took place in 2025, providing an opportunity for engagement with legal professionals early in their careers. A review of the role of DCRJs concluded in early 2025 with plans to bring greater focus and accountability to the role. These changes will bed in in 2026.

Collaborative efforts with the JAC and MoJ continued through the PAJE programme and the Targeted Outreach Programme. Judges played a central role in delivering workshops and mentoring, with strong outcomes for participants. Social media and website content continued to highlight diverse judicial role models and outreach activities, maintaining high engagement rates.

Targeted outreach seminars have also been taking place during 2025 these included (with Law Centre legal professionals) encouraging judicial ambition and practical steps into the judiciary, and a further event with CILEX.

The Senior President of Tribunals' Diversity Taskforce has continued to focus on diversity and inclusion in the Tribunals through a series of project groups.

A review of the workstreams and membership of the Judicial Diversity Committee of the Judges Council was undertaken. This resulted in new members being recruited in 2025 with membership widened to ensure greater representation across the jurisdictions. Additionally, a range of working groups were established to focus on specific topics. In 2025, the Judicial Associations Consultation Group was formed and held its first meeting with the lead diversity and inclusion judge.

Looking Ahead

Judicial office holders will continue to develop and support a wide range of opportunities to deliver change internally and externally to provide a more diverse and inclusive judiciary. The aims of the next Strategy are broad and require a high level of commitment and drive from judicial office holders to deliver meaningful change. We will continue to consider the below in applying lessons we have learned over the last five years.

Expanding mentoring opportunities across a broader range of jurisdictions. This aims to address the current uneven levels of interest and ensure that support is available wherever it's needed most.

To better understand and improve the effectiveness of initiatives, efforts are also underway to enhance the tracking of participant journeys – from initial outreach through to application. This data-driven approach will provide valuable insights into what works and where further improvements can be made.

Targeted outreach to black legal professionals will continue to be a central focus, with a strong emphasis on evaluating the impact of all outreach activities. These evaluations will inform future strategies and ensure that interventions are meaningful and effective.

Through sustained, collaborative, and increasingly data-informed efforts, the judiciary is committed to making judicial careers more accessible. The goal is clear: to build a judiciary that truly reflects the diverse society it serves.



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