



**Judicial  
College**

# **Judicial education in domestic abuse 2026 to 2027**

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## Introduction

This is the fifteenth annual prospectus published by the Judicial College since its establishment in 2011 and the first under the [Judicial College Strategy 2026 to 2030](#).

Effective external engagement and relationships is one of the core priorities in the strategy and underpins our commitment to being open and outward-facing. In support of that commitment, and alongside our annual prospectus, we are publishing this thematic summary of judicial education in domestic abuse, providing details about the training content and development for the first time.

Public understanding of, and confidence in, our role and work is vital. We are prioritising providing further information about training in those areas where public interest is highest, starting with domestic abuse, and following this later in the year with details about training in diversity and equal treatment.

We recognise the importance of the judiciary receiving training in the knowledge, skills and care that cases involving domestic abuse demand, and being equipped to ensure a fair process and just outcome in each case. Domestic abuse has been, and remains, a central focus of the training programme, covering physical and sexual abuse, threatening and violent behaviour, coercion and control, economic abuse and psychological and emotional abuse. It is a pervasive theme woven into training for all magistrates and judges in the family and criminal jurisdictions. This summary draws together the different areas of domestic abuse training across the College's curriculum.

The programme is designed and delivered by the judiciary and the College's legal and education experts. It is informed and enhanced by external input from survivors, psychologists, clinicians and academics, who have expertise in experiences of domestic abuse, the court process, the effects of trauma, medical and forensic evidence, and the psychology of sexual harm. All training is evaluated to inform regular review, make improvements and consolidate what works well, and to reflect developments in law, legal practice and society.

Training is underpinned by a trauma-informed approach to judgecraft. This means that judicial office holders are equipped to recognise how experiences of trauma can affect behaviour, memory, communication and participation, and to respond in a way that supports safe and effective participation and avoids unnecessary re-traumatisation.

Given the prevalence and nature of domestic abuse, the College endeavours to create safe environments for all those participating in, or responsible for, delivering judicial training, and to highlight the welfare resources and support services available.

## Training requirements

All magistrates and judges in England and Wales undertake structured training throughout their careers, delivered by the Judicial College.

### Magistrates

Newly appointed magistrates follow a structured but flexible programme to support training and development during their first 18 months.

As part of the programme and following introductory training, magistrates complete a two-part induction tailored to the family or criminal jurisdiction, which features domestic abuse as a central issue. All new magistrates also complete a day of focused domestic abuse training.

Existing magistrates undertake regular continuation training to maintain their competency against the appraisal framework, including any training deemed mandatory in a particular year.

### Judges

New judges complete initial training on appointment, tailored to the types of cases they will be dealing with. New judges also complete a cross-jurisdiction induction to consolidate their learning following a period of sitting, focused on core judicial skills and decision-making.

Existing judges must complete two days of continuation training every year. The College offers a programme of seminars on a range of topics, from which judges select the training most relevant to their learning needs.

Specific training requirements apply to judges authorised to deal with public family law cases, or cases involving serious sexual offences in the Crown Court or youth court. For these jurisdictions, completion of the relevant induction seminar is a pre-requisite for authorisation. Thereafter, judges must complete the relevant continuation seminar every three years.

Training in domestic abuse is not delivered as a standalone module but embedded throughout the curriculum. This ensures all judges receive regular training in which issues of domestic abuse are a central and continuous theme.

## Magistrates

Magistrates can hear cases in the Family Court, criminal court or both. This section focuses on training provided as part of the initial programme for new magistrates. The College is also responsible for training legal advisers, who support magistrates in court. Legal advisers are required to complete comprehensive induction programmes.

### Family Induction Training

During Family Induction Training (Part One), magistrates learn the essentials of family law, focusing on children's welfare and key court rules. Through practical examples, they develop skills to recognise vulnerability, support participation, manage cases, assess risks and make decisions about child arrangements where domestic abuse may be an issue. Online training covers protective orders, support for vulnerable people and qualified legal representatives. Family Induction Training (Part Two) uses case studies and scenarios to explore structured evaluation of evidence, case allocation, vulnerability and trauma. Training films are used to enhance understanding and encourage reflection.

### Family Presiding Justice Training

This course prepares magistrates for the role of a presiding justice, who is responsible for chairing the court. Reflecting the nature of family proceedings, it explores the impact of conflict on children and parties, vulnerability, the effect of language and behaviour on participation, the impact of stress and trauma, and techniques to support engagement and psychological safety, with a focus on people who are unrepresented.

### Adult Induction Training

During Adult Induction Training (Part One), magistrates consider case studies and practical exercises involving domestic abuse, including in relation to remand decisions, case management, dealing with children or other vulnerable witnesses, sentencing guidelines and judicial reasoning. In Adult Induction Training (Part Two), magistrates engage with domestic abuse case studies exploring allocation, bail and remand decisions, structured evaluation of evidence and sentencing. Training films are used to enhance understanding and encourage reflection.

### Domestic Abuse Training

New magistrates complete this training within their first 18 months. It focuses on the dynamics of coercive control, understanding survivor impact, case management, assessing evidence and exploration of bias. It offers a toolkit of interventions to support magistrates in dealing with cases where domestic abuse may be involved. For adult court magistrates, the training also includes a focus on sentencing guidelines and non-fatal strangulation. Training films illustrate the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds affected by domestic abuse, supported by expert commentary from a psychologist. For magistrates who also sit in the youth court, additional training films explore the impact of trauma on children.

## Judges

This section focuses on the main elements of domestic abuse training for judges in family and crime. Issues of domestic abuse also surface in training for civil judges, coroners and tribunals judiciary, as relevant to the jurisdiction.

### Family

Judges receive training in private and public law according to their authorisations. Judges must have training and sitting experience in private law before undertaking public law work.

#### Private Law Induction

This training includes protective injunctions, child arrangements and contact where domestic abuse may be involved, vulnerability and safe participation, prohibitions on the cross-examination of certain witnesses, guidelines for children giving evidence, litigants in person, the appointment of qualified legal representatives and the role of Cafcass/Cafcass Cymru. It incorporates dramatised scenarios that realistically bring to life the nature, effects and impact of coercion and control and other forms of abuse.

#### Private and Public Law Continuation

These seminars deepen judges' understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children and other victims. The training includes protective orders to prevent applications to the court that could constitute further abuse, and understanding so-called "honour"-based abuse. This year's programme incorporates new training in Child-Focused Courts, an approach to family justice that promotes a better understanding of domestic abuse and puts children's safety and welfare at the centre of proceedings.

#### Financial Remedies Induction and Continuation

Specialist judges in the Financial Remedies Court are trained in the treatment of domestic abuse, including hearing management and the role of qualified legal representatives. The court may appoint qualified legal representatives to conduct cross-examination where appropriate to prevent a victim, or alleged victim, of domestic abuse having to cross-examine, or be cross-examined, by their abuser or alleged abuser.

### Criminal

Training is delivered to new and existing judges who sit in the Crown Court or youth court, or as district judges in the magistrates' court, including specialist training on serious sexual offences. Live training is complemented by guidance in the [Crown Court Compendium](#), which supports judges when directing juries and at sentencing.

#### Crown Court Induction

This seminar equips judges to acquire and apply the practical skills and knowledge they need to manage all stages of a criminal case, from early case management considerations through to sentencing. A central focus is vulnerability and safe participation, and the approach to sentencing in cases involving non-fatal strangulation and coercive and controlling behaviour.

## **General Continuation**

The programme offers a range of continuation seminars designed to support continued competence and effectiveness in the judicial role. Domestic abuse is a central feature, including vulnerability and safe participation, survivor impact, the effects of trauma, non-fatal strangulation and sentencing issues.

## **District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) Induction and Continuation**

Training includes safe participation for victims of domestic abuse and other vulnerable witnesses, and the dynamics of domestic abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour.

## **Serious Sexual Offences Induction and Continuation**

These seminars equip judges to deal with serious sexual offences in the Crown Court or youth court skilfully and sensitively. Domestic abuse is a central theme, including vulnerability and safe participation, protective orders, understanding offender and survivor behaviour, consent, restrictions on evidence or questions about a complainant's sexual history and non-fatal strangulation. Training films detail the experiences of complainants from different backgrounds, alongside expert commentary on the psychology of sexual harm and trauma.

## Cross-jurisdictional

Cross-jurisdictional training supports best practice in common judgecraft skills and knowledge, and a grounding in the social context in which contemporary judging takes place.

### Practical Judgecraft Seminar

This new face-to-face course forms part of the judicial induction pathway, designed and delivered with input from external subject matter experts. It has a central focus on trauma-informed practice, supporting judicial office holders to recognise and manage the impacts of trauma and vulnerability, and take practical steps to support effective communication, participation and understanding, provide a fair and inclusive hearing, achieve best evidence and avoid re-traumatisation.

### Trauma-informed practice module

This new foundation module aims to equip judicial office holders with enhanced understanding of the effects of trauma. It promotes a trauma-informed approach to case management, communication and decision-making to support safe and effective participation and a fair and inclusive hearing.

### Equal Treatment Bench Book

The [Equal Treatment Bench Book](#) (ETBB) is a core resource for training, and the principles of fair treatment and equality before the law are threaded through the College's programme for all jurisdictions. The ETBB provides practical guidance and insight on domestic abuse, including vulnerability and ensuring safe participation in the judicial process, the dynamics and complexities of coercion and control, understanding the challenges faced by those who have experienced domestic abuse and intersections with religious, cultural and social factors.



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