

THE RT HON. THE BARONESS CARR OF WALTON-ON-THE-HILL
SWEARING IN OF THE LORD CHANCELLOR, ATTORNEY GENERAL AND SOLICITOR GENERAL
COURT 4, ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE
1 October 2026

1. My Lord Chancellor, it is a pleasure to welcome you, your family and friends to court today. Your wife, of course a politician in her own right and Vice Chamberlain of the Household, your mother, many friends, and many from your Nottingham constituency office.
2. My Lord Chancellor, you, like your predecessors since the Lord Chancellor's oath was introduced by the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, have, as we know, already taken it – as required by statute – before His Majesty The King.
3. Is today's swearing-in then 'just for show'? Is it akin to a wedding vow renewal, when a married couple reaffirm their marriage vows? Or is it, perhaps, as when President Obama had to retake his oath of office because Chief Justice Roberts strayed, accidentally, from the prescribed wording?
4. It is, of course, none of those things. It is neither show, nor reaffirmation, nor a retake. That you take the oath today before His Majesty's judiciary reflects a constitutional convention, one that each of your predecessors since Sir Jack Straw was sworn-in in 2007 has affirmed: a convention that was notably respected even during the Covid pandemic. Its consistent observance reflects a shared understanding by successive Lord Chancellors and the judiciary as to the importance of the occasion.
5. Taking the oath here, today, once more affirms – publicly – the particular, the fundamental relationship that the Lord Chancellor has with the judiciary, and the office's statutory duty to defend judicial independence. That duty has many facets to it, but it includes a duty to speak out publicly in defence of that independence whenever necessary.

6. My Lord Chancellor, your oath-taking today may not be required by statute, but it is a well-established part of our constitution. These two elements underpin the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, both of which your office exists to defend.
7. My Lord Chancellor, it has, you will also know, become something of a tradition on these occasions to remark on the fact that the appointment marks some sort of historic first. You were, of course, born in Manchester, at a time before Manchesterism was 'a thing'. But you are not the first Lord Chancellor to have that distinction. Lord Simon, who was born in Manchester as long ago as 1873, got there before you.
8. There is one first of which we can be sure, however. Since 2005, there have been five non-lawyers appointed to the office of Lord Chancellor. Four of those served consecutively from 2012 to 2018. You are the first non-lawyer Lord Chancellor since 2018. That, however, is not your real first. That comes from the fact that you are the first non-lawyer Lord Chancellor in a Labour Government; a fact all the more interesting as the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 was steered through by a Labour Government. Lord Falconer was, as we all know, the architect of that Act. He was also, so I am told, the last Lord Chancellor to manage to make it in that capacity to three of the City of London's Mansion House Dinners for His Majesty's Judges. No pressure then.
9. My Lord Chancellor, you studied politics and history at the University of Nottingham. You liked Nottingham so much that you stayed and put your degree into practice - being elected to the City Council, serving as its portfolio holder for Adults and Health, while also working as an Area Organiser for UNISON. From there, in 2017, you were first elected to Parliament for Nottingham North. You were subsequently re-elected for that constituency in 2019, before being elected as MP for its successor constituency, Nottingham North and Kimberley in 2024.
10. Your Parliamentary experience since your first election has been extensive. In Opposition, you served as PPS to the Shadow Health Secretary from 2017 to 2019, before becoming an Opposition Whip. From there you moved to the Opposition frontbench, first as Shadow Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care and

then as acting Shadow Minister for the Department of International Development. In 2023, you were then appointed as Shadow Minister for Policing. The 2024 General Election saw you move to become Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth, before you became Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum in 2025.

11. My Lord Chancellor, you have a breadth of experience in both local and national politics.

You have experience of the importance of preventative care from your time as a Shadow Minister. You therefore understand the importance of promoting constitutional and legal literacy; an essential underpinning of the rule of law, which you have sworn to protect and defend. You have experienced international development, again, as a Shadow Minister. You also therefore understand the real importance that the rule of law has where that is concerned, and that national well-being and economic growth depend upon it. You have experience of policing, as a Shadow Minister. Again, you therefore have a deep understanding of every Government's first duty – to protect its citizens. And, again, your experience as a Minister underscores your understanding of the importance of a properly functioning, accessible, and fair justice system. I should also add that, on the evidence to date, when it comes to the law, you are proving a fast learner!

12. My Lord Chancellor, in taking your oath today, you have joined an illustrious group of individuals who have, for close to a 1000 years, served justice. The proper administration of justice is one fundamental area where its achievement depends upon constitutional co-operation, with Government and the Judiciary working together where they can, such as in the management of His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, judicial appointments and discipline, as much as it does judicial independence, which, as I have said, you have sworn to uphold.

13. In the coming, days, weeks, months – and years – I very much look forward to working with you, as our constitution provides. I wish you well, as we all do, on your appointment.

14. Madam Attorney, it is equally a pleasure to welcome you and your family to court today – including your husband, Lord (John) Cryer, who on this occasion, unlike in the Constitution Committee, must listen to me without question. And your parents and friends.
15. It seems like only yesterday when I welcomed you on the occasion of your swearing-in as Solicitor-General. It is a long tradition for there to be promotion from that office to your present one. Sir Francis Bacon, Edward Coke – who, of course, went on to become a famous Lord Chief Justice – walked that path. In the 19th century, three-quarters of Attorney Generals were first Solicitor Generals.
16. You were called to the Bar by Inner Temple in 2004, having studied law at St Catherine's College, Oxford. From there you practised as an employment law specialist, before establishing a legal consultancy, the focus of which was assisting women on discrimination issues.
17. You soon, however, moved from a legal career to politics, having joined the Labour Party in 2006, at the age of 15, to help campaign for better funding for your school. In the same year you were elected to the Labour Party's National Executive Committee, going on to be its Vice-Chair in 2015. It was a short step from there to election to Parliament in 2017. You continue to serve in Parliament as the MP for Lewisham West and East Dulwich.
18. Come the last General Election, having served as Shadow Solicitor-General from 2020-2021, your appointment as Solicitor-General, could have been foretold. It was a pleasure to swear you in one-year ago. And since then, as Madam Solicitor, you continued to champion women's rights, not least through the Early Victim's Right to Review as part of measures to tackle violence against woman and girls.

19. Madam Attorney, I am sure that given your experience in law, politics and as Solicitor-General, you are well able to truly and faithfully discharge your many and serious duties. I also look forward to working with you, as appropriate, in the years to come.
20. Finally, last but not least, Mr Solicitor. It is a pleasure to welcome you and your army of friends in court today. You studied English at Exeter University, before being called the Bar by Middle Temple in 1993. You then practised at the Bar, from Bridewell Chambers until 2006, and then from Lamb Chambers. From 2005 though, your main focus had shifted from legal practice to national politics. You had for quite some time combined practice with significant work in local politics, having been deputy leader, from 1991 to 1996, and then leader from 1996 to 2005, of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough Council.
21. On the national political scene, you were first elected that year as MP for Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush. Following boundary changes and the General Election in 2010, you have been MP for Hammersmith, now Hammersmith and Chiswick. In Parliament you have gained a wealth of experience. In Government from 2005 to 2008, you served as a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department of Transport, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. You then – in Opposition – variously, served as Shadow Justice Minister, Shadow Minister for Housing, and – like our new Attorney-General – Shadow Solicitor-General. During your time in Parliament you have also served as a member of several Select Committees, most recently of course as an excellent Chair of the Justice Select Committee. Again, as with Lord Cryer, the shoe is on the other foot today!
22. Mr Solicitor, it can very properly be said that you are well-qualified for your new office. And I congratulate you on it.
23. May I therefore wish all three of you well today. You each have significant roles in defending, in upholding the rule of law within our constitution. The importance of doing so cannot be underestimated. I look forward to working with you over the months and years to come, as each of us discharges our own specific constitutional roles to that end.

