

## **Diversity and Community Relations Judges – Annual Report 2008/09**

### *Introduction*

Diversity and Community Relations Judges (DCRJJs) act as a bridge between the judiciary and the community. They are Circuit Judges, sitting in specific areas of the country, who have volunteered to undertake this role. They form links with the community in the area where they work so that the people affected by their decisions gain a better understanding of the justice system and the role of a judge in criminal, civil and family justice. The judges also gain an understanding of the communities around them. These links are designed to engender good relations with a range of local groups and inspire a positive image of the justice system.

This annual report sets out a summary of the out of court voluntary activities that DCRJJs carried out between April 2008 and March 2009. These activities are designed to explain the law, the courts and the role of judges to the communities in which those judges are located, with the intention of improving public confidence in the courts and the judiciary within the communities that they serve.

A significant development that took place during 2008/09 was the change to the appointment process for DCRJJs. Although the role of Diversity and Community Relations Judge is non-statutory, the process for advertising and selecting DCRJJs has been amended to ensure procedures are clear, fair, transparent and more formalised. This will ensure that the best and most committed candidates are appointed. Vacancies are now advertised among Circuit Judges, who are asked to submit an application in writing, setting out the skills and experience that make them suitable for the role. Applications are considered by a panel chaired by the lead DCRJJ and appointments are made by the Senior Presiding Judge.

In line with this change, a bulk expressions of interest exercise was carried out in November 2008 to replace a number of DCRJJs who stepped down from the role. As a result of the exercise, 14 new DCRJJs were appointed in February 2009.

We are very grateful both to the former DCRJJs, who gave their time and efforts so generously, and also to the new judges, who have offered to undertake this work and to give their time to local communities.

### *Annual Training Conference*

The annual Diversity and Community Relations Judges training event took place in May 2009 in Warwickshire.

The event opened with speeches by Mrs Justice Dobbs and HHJ Geoffrey Kamil (Lead Diversity and Community Relations Judge). It included sessions covering various issues in which the DCRJJs have an interest, including:

- Group feedback meetings, providing DCRJJs with an opportunity to share experiences, best practices or any concerns, followed by a plenary session at which the main issues arising from the discussions were shared with the rest of the conference attendees.
- Presentation and question and answer session from Forced Marriage Unit, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

- Media Training session

The judges were also addressed at the event by Lord Justice Leveson, Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, and guest speaker Baroness Warsi, Shadow Minister for Community Cohesion and Social Action.

#### *Summary of major strands of activity shown in annual reports*

At the end of each financial year, DCRJs submit a report setting out the main activities they have undertaken during the year. A summary of these activities between the April 2008 and March 2009 is set out below. Since a number of newly appointed DCRJs had been in post for only a few months at the end of the reporting year, their activities have been less widespread, as they have concentrated on familiarising themselves with the needs of the community and establishing relevant contacts. We expect that next year's report might include an even wider range of activities, but have been delighted by the enthusiasm, effort and commitment of all DCRJs over the last year.

#### **Activities with Students and young people**

Many judges have undertaken activities with schools such as hosting shadowing or work experience for school, college or university students; delivering talks to students; conducting interactive question and answer sessions with groups of students visiting the court and assisting with mock sentencing exercises or advocacy trials.

- HHJ Peter Thompson (Ipswich Crown Court) conducted sessions with groups of year 11 students. The sessions provided information about legal careers, the work of courts and judges, and included a sentencing exercise based on a real case, prepared by the judge. All students took part in prosecution or defence submissions, with sixth form students acting as jurors. One of the sessions was filmed by the school as a prospective teaching aid.
- HHJ Pamela Badley (Preston Crown Court) was involved in scripting the sentencing remarks for a school play in Skelmersdale commissioned for 'Alcohol awareness week'.
- HHJ Simon Davis (Inner London Crown Court) has hosted work experience for students, delivered talks to sixth form students and assisted in advocacy mock trials for students participating in inter-school competitions.
- HHJ Andrew Hamilton (Derby Combined Court Centre) took part in a mock sentencing exercise as part of 'Schools Day' at Derby Crown Court that was attended by students from two local schools. He also conducted regular interactive question and answer sessions with groups of students visiting the court.
- HHJ Alice Robinson (Basildon Combined Court Centre) helped to judge the mock trials for the Schools Mock Trial Competition in Essex, Chelmsford and two moots in Queen Mary College, London.

- HHJ Geoffrey Kamil (Leeds Combined Court Centre) hosted shadowing by several minority ethnic students from Bradford Law School.
- HHJ Philip Statman (Maidstone Combined Court Centre) delivered a lecture to students of the Bar Vocational Course. He also contributed to the structure of its ethics course and assisted in the preparation of a podcast for students.
- HHJ Philip Hughes (Wrexham County Court) spoke at the High Sheriff's Clwyd Crimebeat Awards at Mold Crown Court. The event recognises the work of young people involved in projects aimed at reducing crime and making safer communities.

### **Activities with minority groups in the community**

#### ***Women***

- HHJ Pamela Badley (Preston Combined Court Centre) was involved in a 'You be the judge' event in Cumbria in the local theatre, at the request of the local Women's Institute and Friends of the Parish Church.

#### ***BME***

- HHJ Andrew Campbell (Kingston-upon-Thames Crown Court) was an official guest at the Kingston Carnival which was organised by the Kingston Racial Equality Council where the judge had the opportunity to meet a number of community leaders.
- HHJ Anthony Goldstaub QC (Chelmsford Crown Court) was involved in a rolling programme of 'Lunches with judges' where community, cultural and faith representatives were invited to share a working judicial lunch. Guests included, for example, an Imam who was visiting a Muslim chaplain at one of the court's receiving prisons.
- HHJ Simon Hammond (Leicester Crown Court) attended several events hosted by cultural and religious organisations in Leicester including the Federation of Muslim Organisations Youth Awards ceremony, functions arranged by the Society of Asian Lawyers, a Police Inter-Cultural Social Evening, and events run by the Society for Intercultural Understanding, Leicester. He also paid visits to local Sikh temples, a Hindu temple and a mosque.
- HHJ Simon Hammond also held a discussion with the Faith Training and Development Manager at St. Philip's Centre in Leicester, which provides education and training to churches and people from different faith backgrounds. The purpose of the event was to discuss inter-faith training for various officials including local councillors, police and magistrates.
- HHJ Zoe Smith (Reading Crown Court) attended the inter-faith conference in Berkshire and the Reading Friendship Walk which included visits to local temples, mosques and a Polish church.

- HHJ Adele Williams (Canterbury Combined Court Centre) has organised several receptions at Canterbury, inviting various community leaders.

### ***Disabilities***

- HHJ Geoffrey Kamil arranged an event for solicitors, barristers and judges at Leeds Combined Court on disability issues such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism.

### **Activities with the general public**

Events held for the general public included court open days, mock trials and 'You be the judge' events. Court open days give the public an opportunity to visit a court so that they become more familiar with its layout and settings and aware of the functions of the court and the role of judges. 'You be the judge' events allow the public to hear evidence presented in a mock case, think about it from the perspective of a judge and decide what decision should be made.

- Court open days were held at Kingston Crown Court, Liverpool Community Justice Centre, Basildon Combined Court Centre, Reading Crown Court, Southwark Crown Court, Canterbury Combined Court Centre.
- 'You be the judge' events were held in Liverpool, Burnley, Lancaster and Preston Courts.
- HHJ Andrew Hamilton (Derby Combined Court Centre) was on the panel for a public event: 'Speakers' Corner'. The panel also included an MP, a representative of the police and a community worker. It was hosted by Radio Nottingham and broadcast live on local radio.

### **Activities with Criminal Justice agencies/other organisations**

- HHJ David Fletcher (North Liverpool Community Justice Centre) joined the Area Equality and Diversity Board as judicial member. The Board was established in January 2009 to focus on equality and diversity initiatives and to oversee the various strands of work in this field. The Board's aim is to provide HMCS customers and staff with a service which is fair and respectful of each individual's needs.
- HHJ David Fletcher also attended a meeting with Narcotics Anonymous, which looked into the possibility of former drug users playing a part in restorative justice activities across the area.
- Merseyside Criminal Justice Board ran three events entitled 'Race Hate on Trial' in February and March 2009 dealing with different target groups: gay and lesbian, ethnic and religious minorities and travellers. A professional company acted out a case, using members of the criminal justice agencies in Merseyside who took part as themselves, and HHJ Fletcher acted as judge.

- HHJ Andrew Hamilton (Derby Combined Court Centre) was a main speaker at a conference entitled 'Tag with Confidence' in Derby, for those involved in the administration of justice.
- HHJ Geoffrey Kamil (Leeds Combined Court Centre) attended the Kirklees Racial Equality Council and delivered a presentation to members on community engagement.
- HHJ Christopher Prince (Durham Crown Court) established, with the additional support of local full-time judiciary, a working group of recently appointed Recorders who are all willing volunteers and enthusiastic about involvement in community engagement.