



The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council

Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025

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Foreword

By the President, Lord Reed



When I became President of the UK Supreme Court last year, I set out as one of my first priorities to try to improve the degree of diversity on the Court.

The reasons for the lack of diversity have deep roots in our society as well as in the legal profession. There is no simple solution, and it will take time for the legacy of the past to disappear. Change is under way, but more needs to be done to increase the pace of change and to demonstrate our commitment to increasing diversity at every level of the legal profession and the judiciary.

I am strongly committed to supporting this strategy. I want the best qualified and most talented people to become justices of this Court, regardless of their gender or ethnicity. That does not only mean making the processes for appointment to the Court as fair and accessible as possible. More importantly, in the longer term, it means encouraging schoolchildren from all backgrounds to be aware of the law, and of the possibility of a legal career, as the Court does through its work with schools. It means supporting the ambitions of students from all backgrounds and helping them to develop their skills, as the Court does through its work with universities. It means giving particular support to young people from under-represented groups who would like to enter the legal profession, as the Court is planning to do in accordance with this strategy. And it means supporting lawyers from under-represented groups in their ambitions to progress in the profession and to consider applying for judicial appointment, as the Court is also planning to do.

I am equally committed to diversity within the administration of the Court itself. We have a diverse workforce. Equality and inclusiveness are fundamental to our success as an organisation. Our staff need to have confidence that everyone who works at the Court is equally valued and respected.

The strategy set out in this document reflects these commitments. It sets out an ambitious and innovative programme of activities for the Court to undertake, some of them in partnership with other organisations. It will help the Court to play its part in creating a society in which there is equality of opportunity, and in which diversity is valued and respected.



Image description: Portrait by Henny Beaumont which recently featured in the exhibition 'Equal to Everything: Judge Brenda and the Supreme Court' which accompanied the children's book by Afua Hirsch and was displayed in the Supreme Court in 2020.

Vision

The UK Supreme Court's commitment to diversity and inclusion is deeply rooted in our values and will be exemplified in our place of work, our activities and action plan. We recognise that diversity brings richness to the judiciary and helps us better understand and serve the public. We believe that attracting, developing and retaining a diverse judiciary is essential to the Court and the people that we serve.



Introduction



The UK Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for arguable points of law of general public importance arising from civil cases throughout the United Kingdom, and from criminal cases in England & Wales, Northern Ireland and, in a limited number of cases from Scotland. The Court also hears cases to determine issues relating to the legal competence of the devolved administrations, Parliament and Assemblies. The Judicial Council of the

Privy Council (JCPC) is a separate court, but its permanent judges are the justices of the Supreme Court. The JCPC is the court of final appeal for the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, Commonwealth countries that have retained the appeal to Her Majesty in Council or, in the case of republics, to the Judicial Committee.

The Supreme Court has twelve justices who are appointed under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. The appointments process is overseen by an independent selection commission, convened by the Lord Chancellor. Membership of the commission is prescribed by law and includes senior judges and lay members.

The Court recognises that it has a leadership role to play to support increasing diversity of the judiciary and to communicate the Court's support for diversity and inclusion to the legal profession and the public. The overarching aims of this strategy are to support the progress of underrepresented groups into judicial roles and to achieve an inclusive and respectful working environment for justices where differences are valued.

This strategy will guide our work and focus our activities on achieving the objectives below. We have set out some of the actions we will put in place to achieve the objectives in the short and medium term and will keep the action plan as a living document, updating it over the life of the strategy.



Image description: 'Women in Law' artwork, which was unveiled in Courtroom Two in 2019, to commemorate the centenary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. The artwork was commissioned by Spark 21, the charity which manages the First 100 Years campaign. Created by the internationally recognised artist, Catherine Yass, the work features portraits of three female legal pioneers: Cornelia Sorabji, Dame Rose Heilbron, and Lady Hale of Richmond DBE. A fourth image features an unnamed student, representing the potential of the next generation of women lawyers to shape our society through their practice and reforms.

Objectives

To achieve our vision and aims, the Court has the following objectives:

1. **To support and build an inclusive and respectful culture and working environment at the Court, where all justices support the strategy and lead the way by:**
 - being open to an inclusive environment, valuing differences of approach and opinion
 - improving their knowledge of diverse groups' experience of the Court, and taking action where issues are identified
 - creating an awareness of bias and actively working to minimise its impact
2. **To support the progression of underrepresented groups into judicial roles across the judiciary by:**
 - justices publicly promoting greater diversity within the judiciary
 - supporting and working in partnership on initiatives led by other parts of the judiciary
 - listening and learning from groups underrepresented in the judiciary
3. **To support an increase in the number of well-qualified applicants from underrepresented groups for the role of justice at the UK Supreme Court by:**
 - building a greater understanding of the role of justices
 - introducing mentoring, events and other opportunities for underrepresented groups
4. **To proactively communicate the Court's support for diversity and inclusion to the legal profession and the public through:**
 - outreach and education work
 - supporting and working in partnership with organisations working in this area
 - highlighting the value of diverse perspectives on our website and in our communications

5. **To fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010: As part of the Court's obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the Court is required to demonstrate, in the exercise of its functions, due regard to the need to:**

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other acts prohibited by the Equality Act (2010)
- advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not



Image description: The twelve Judicial Assistants who worked in the Supreme Court from September 2020 – July 2021.

Definitions

Equality is about ensuring individuals and groups are treated fairly and have access to equality of opportunity. Equality is backed by legislation – the Equality Act 2010 - designed to address unfair discrimination based on membership of a particular group. The legislation covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is grounded in, but not limited to, our responsibilities under equality legislation.

Diversity is about recognising that everyone is different in a variety of visible and non-visible ways. It could be in relation to a protected characteristic or something else such as socioeconomic background, working pattern or having caring responsibilities. It recognises that each individual is different and that diverse teams and organisations produce better outcomes.

Inclusion is about creating an environment where everyone can be themselves, feel that they are able to contribute their views and that these will be valued. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect and value difference. Without inclusion the benefits of diversity cannot be realised.

Action Plan

This is a living action plan and will be updated over the life of the strategy. The following actions are those currently agreed for the year 2021-22 and may be added to over the course of the year. We will evaluate and report on progress annually.

Objective 1: To support and build an inclusive and respectful culture and working environment at the Court, where all justices support the strategy and lead the way

Activity	Due date
We will provide training on bias awareness for justices	May 2021
We will provide reverse mentoring opportunities for justices	December 2021
Justices will continue to discuss ways of working to ensure that everyone feels included and valued	Ongoing
We will provide a buddy system for new justices so that they feel supported, included and valued for the experience they bring to the Court	April 2021
We will address any gaps in diversity and inclusion training so that justices gain a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion, and promote positive behaviour and a culture of respect that is sensitive to difference and intolerant of any discrimination	November 2021
We will continue to ensure that justices have access to workplace support and reasonable adjustments	Ongoing

Objective 2: To support the progression of underrepresented groups into judicial roles

Activity	Due date
We will launch an internship partnership with Bridging the Bar	October 2021
We will build links with organisations that represent underrepresented groups so as to better understand and learn from their lived experience	Ongoing
Justices will attend speaking events at a wide range of universities and schools to ensure that we reach underrepresented groups	Ongoing
We will maintain links with the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Office to work with them on shared diversity and inclusion initiatives	Ongoing
We will build links with the Government Legal Department and the Judicial Appointments Commission to support a more diverse judiciary	December 2021

Objective 3: To support an increase in the number of well-qualified applicants from underrepresented groups for the role of justice

Activity	Due date
We will use digital and other outreach tools to attract and encourage applications, promoting selection exercises widely and beyond the conventional career routes	Ongoing
We will continue to advertise that we offer flexible and part time working patterns for justices	Ongoing
We will maintain regular contact between the President of the Court and other judges in a fair and inclusive way to support and encourage career development for judges	Ongoing
We will offer pipeline events for prospective candidates	As part of every recruitment exercise

Objective 4: To proactively communicate the Court's support for diversity and inclusion to the legal profession and the public

Activity	Due date
We will continue to support and build on the outreach, education and engagement work by justices and will monitor this work to ensure that it is reaching groups currently underrepresented in the legal profession	Ongoing
We will deliver targeted speeches by justices, with the aim of inspiring people to consider a career in the judiciary, publicised to a wide audience	Ongoing
We will work with the Judicial Office digital team to spotlight current justices and their different career paths	December 2021
We will expand online opportunities to give people a better understanding of the role of justices, building on an existing podcast series, to show life as a justice.	Ongoing

Objective 5: To fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010: As part of the Court's obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Activity	Due date
We will eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	Quarterly review of the Court's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy action plan
We will advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	
We will foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	
<p>We will ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, named on, to publish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equality objectives, at least every four years • information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty 	