



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

## **Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025**

**Annual Update 2025**

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## Foreword

### By the President, Lord Reed



When I became President of the Court in January 2020, I identified improving diversity as one of my priorities. For me, this is a fundamental question of fairness: every lawyer should have the opportunity to progress in their career and to apply for judicial appointment without barriers being placed in their path.

Attracting, developing and retaining a diverse judiciary is essential to the Courts and the public that we serve. The public have to be confident that judges are able to understand the cases before them and deliver justice fairly, and that can be difficult if the bench is not diverse. We also need to ensure that we are recruiting the highest quality lawyers as judges – if a section of our society is left out then we will inevitably miss out on talented people.

In 2021, the Court published its first Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which sets out our aim to support the progress of under-represented groups – whether women, members of ethnic minorities, or people from backgrounds currently underrepresented in the legal profession – at every stage of their legal career, and into judicial roles. We have pursued this strategy through a range of initiatives targeted at schools, university students, aspiring lawyers, lawyers and judges at all stages of the career pipeline.

In the last four years, we have undertaken new initiatives, built strong relationships with other organisations and have continued to learn and to understand from the people that we have engaged with. I am particularly pleased that we have been able to undertake new initiatives and to encourage others to adopt them, such as the Bridging the Bar internship scheme. This programme has a significant impact on the interns' confidence and contributes to their success in gaining pupillage offers. This started out, in 2021, as a one-week internship for eight aspiring barristers and has now become part of a year-long Academy programme with over 100 aspiring barristers undertaking professional development training each year.

The Court is very grateful to all of the organisations we have worked with for engaging with us so constructively and for enabling us to learn from the experience of under-represented groups. We have learnt about the barriers to entry and progress in the law. It has been important to us to be able to offer our support to the important work that they do in removing those barriers and in making the legal profession an attractive choice for everyone. We were delighted to host the inaugural event of the newly formed Association of Black Judges this year and have been equally pleased to host events for other representative organisations and demonstrate our support for their work.

In this annual update you will be able to see the work we have done this year and the reflections of organisations we have worked with. The feedback we receive indicates that we are contributing to improved diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. But we still have a long way to go. The Court and I personally remain committed to continuing this work and we will be publishing our new strategy soon. We will continue to play our part in eliminating barriers to progress to ensure equal opportunity for everyone, and to creating a welcoming profession where everyone can flourish.

## Introduction

This document sets out the progress that the Court has made in achieving the five objectives set out in our [Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#):

- 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

Our activities since 2021 have been guided by the action plan set out in the strategy document. The following progress update provides details on the activities and work undertaken to support each of the objectives listed above since we last reported in 2024.

## Progress Update

### **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**

Over the past year, Justices have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy through active participation in a range of activities, demonstrating their support and the Court's values both internally and externally. Through their ongoing leadership and collective engagement, the Justices play an important role in shaping a respectful and inclusive culture and working environment at the Court, reinforcing the values of fairness, respect and inclusion in everything we do.

The President and Deputy President of the Court continue to operate an open-door policy and encourage informal discussions where Justices can raise any concerns. Justices also hold regular meetings to discuss ways of working to ensure that everyone is included and valued.

We continue to offer a 'Peer Support System' for newly appointed Justices at the Court, in addition to a full induction programme. The Court also remains committed to ensuring workplace support and reasonable adjustments are in place for all Justices and staff, with the appropriate supporting policies.

Two Justices participated in the Judicial Office Judicial Reverse Mentoring Scheme. The scheme entails junior legal professionals from under-represented groups mentoring a judge, who is their mentee, with a strong focus on diversity and inclusion. The scheme aims to foster greater understanding among the judiciary of the experience of individual lawyers from underrepresented groups, and of the barriers faced by these groups in accessing a career in law and in the judiciary.

Lord Sales said of the experience:

"The reverse mentoring experience was informative and helpful. My mentor was charming, thoughtful and impressive. She challenged my assumptions about the way our legal system works in practice and pushed me to reflect on my own attitudes. She gave me a perspective from outside the ivory tower of the Supreme Court to help me think more deeply about what we do here."

Reasonable adjustments contribute to an inclusive environment. At the Court, we work with Counsel to ensure that we provide changes needed so that all Counsel can participate in a hearing without disadvantage. Examples include hearing induction loops in all court rooms for those with hearing impairments, testing the loops with Counsel prior to a hearing, screen readers for those with visual impairments, and breaks during a hearing.

Over the past year we have reviewed the art displayed at the Court and will be making changes which enable a more accurate and modern representation of society and the diversity of the



people we serve. The first artworks have been removed from the building during the 2025-26 financial year and this will create space for new artwork in the future.

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

In November 2024, the Court welcomed a fourth cohort of interns for the five-day paid internship programme, organised in partnership with Bridging the Bar. During the programme, each intern was assigned to one of the Court's Judicial Assistants and had the opportunity to meet with their respective Justice. They also had the opportunity to sit in on cases taking place that week. During the week, interns participated in a roundtable discussion exploring topics affecting diversity and inclusion at the Bar of England and Wales. The interns also delivered a presentation to the Justices and Court staff on their journey and experiences.

Reflections from one of our 2024 interns:

*"In the lead up to the internship, I wanted to become a practising barrister and sit on the judiciary one day. However, there were certainly times when I wasn't sure whether I would be welcome or would fit in, particularly at the higher levels of the profession.*

*I leave the internship with a renewed level of confidence and comfort that this isn't the case. In fact, the justices and their assistants very much appreciate the knowledge that comes from having a diverse group of people at the bar and my personal experiences have unique value. Thus, my aspirations have been reaffirmed and are stronger than ever"*



*Bridging the Bar Interns, 2024*



We have continued to build links with representative organisations, not only in relation to recruitment exercises, but also to help us to understand and learn from the experience of underrepresented groups. Over the past year, this has included:

**Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme:**

The Scheme seeks to address disproportionate underrepresentation of Black men from less socially mobile backgrounds in large commercial law firms and the City of London. In June 2025, the Scholars awarded places on the 2024/5 programme visited the Court from their UK universities. During their visit they participated in a tour of the Court and a Q&A session with Lord Leggatt. They also had the opportunity to meet with our Judicial Assistants to discuss a recent case.

**Young Muslim Leadership Programme:**

This programme is organised by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies to encourage greater participation by Muslims in public life. Participants take part in a series of workshops, seminars and institutional visits. In July 2025, we welcomed this year's cohort to the Court for a tour and a meeting with Lord Leggatt.

**BVL:**

The Court works in partnership with BVL to improve social mobility within the law. Students take part in a Mooting Competition and are supported by mentors. The Court hosts the final, which is judged by a Justice. In terms of the students reached through the Mooting Competition with the Supreme Court in 2025:

- 83% of participants have parents who did not go to university
- 44% have been eligible for free school meals at some time in the last three years

Reflections from students that participated in the BVL Mooting Competition in 2025:

*"The opportunity to compete in the UK Supreme Court, let alone win, is one that every single young, aspiring lawyer should get a shot at. The entire Competition, and especially the Final, was extremely well-organised and enjoyable. The structure of the BVL Mooting Competition allows for long-lasting friendships with your mentors, as well as intellectually stimulating challenges through each round. This entire experience has galvanised me to pursue law both academically and professionally."*

*"This experience has completely solidified my desire to pursue law at university and indeed the Bar. The structure of this Mooting Competition provides an invaluable insight into the work of barristers. Advocacy, before this Competition, was quite an alien and vague concept to me as a sixth former - however, I now understand that advocacy is a unique skill that this competition hones in aspiring lawyers. It helped me*

*realise how rewarding legal work is, from compiling bundles to forming concise skeletons. The competition has allowed me to find a practice that I really "click" with - without this Competition, I wouldn't know how thrilling standing in front of a judge and being questioned is! Overall, the BVL Mooting Competition 2025 has greatly clarified my path into the law."*

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

We have continued the practice of regularly inviting senior judges from lower courts to sit on cases at the Supreme Court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), so as to provide a more diverse bench and broaden and cement strong relations with the appellate courts. This practice serves to break down barriers and provide experience of working at the Court. In 2024-25, we welcomed 8 visiting Judges from across the UK jurisdictions.

In addition, in May 2024, Lord Reed had his proposal to enable overseas judges to sit on the JCPC approved by the Government. The Court was honoured to receive Hon. Dame Janice M. Pereira DBE to sit with the JCPC for a week in December 2024, and again remotely in March 2025, as the first judge from a JCPC jurisdiction to sit in the JCPC following the approval of this proposal. Dame Janice recently retired from the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, where she was the first female Chief Justice. In May 2013 she was awarded Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Dame Janice noted that including judges from JCPC jurisdictions as panellists "helps to bridge what is sometimes seen as a distance" and allows the growth of understanding "from both ways". The addition of distinguished judges from JCPC jurisdictions grows connections and allows knowledge sharing, building ties across the global judiciary and supporting the rule of law.

During her time in London, Dame Janice heard, with other Justices, several appeals from JCPC jurisdictions and supported the educational work of the Court, meeting with young people and answering questions from them about her work and that of the JCPC.

As well as Dame Janice continuing to sit with the JCPC, the Court will continue to invite additional judges from JCPC jurisdictions in the future. We are delighted that His Majesty The King has recently appointed Sir Anthony Smellie KCMG KC to the Privy Council, and that Sir Anthony will visit London and sit on the Board for the JCPC in the near future.

We continue to offer flexible and part-time working for Justices and advertise this during each selection exercise, along with information on reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities. During each recruitment exercise, prospective candidates are invited to visit the Court and are given the opportunity to meet current Justices.

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

In July 2025 the Court hosted the launch event of the UK Association of Black Judges. The Association aims to be a unifying and primary voice of Black Court Judges, Tribunal Judges and Coroners holding office in the UK, facilitating greater engagement of Black Judges within the judiciary and promoting equality of access, retention and progression including in the appointment process. The Association is open to all salaried and fee-paid judges including retired judges from any circuit or region of the UK and allies who support these aims. Lord Leggatt welcomed members of the Association to the Court, expressing the Court's support for the Association and its aims:

*"I know I speak for all the Justices, several of whom are here, and our executive team; when I say how delighted we are to be able to make the Court available for the launch of this new organisation, the [UK] Association of Black Judges.*

*The Supreme Court is acutely aware of the underrepresentation of black lawyers in the judiciary; and indeed, in the legal profession as a whole. I say that not just because I have no black colleague, but because we are aware of the statistics which show although diversity generally of the judiciary and the legal profession has been improving very gradually in recent years, that has not been true for black lawyers.*

*I hope to make it clear to you that I am deadly serious when I express the desire of the Supreme Court to support your new association and to say that you have an ally here"*

Lord Leggatt's opening remarks were followed by speeches from members of the association, as well as members of the senior judiciary and legal profession. Barbara Mills KC, Chair of the Bar Council of England and Wales, noted during her address:

*"To hold this launch at the UK Supreme Court, the UK's apex court, says in a way that you can say more than in words, how seriously the senior judiciary regard the importance of creating a space for black judges. It says very clearly, that when it comes to changing mindsets, it seems, it intends to lead by example"*



*UK Association of Black Judges Launch Event, July 2025*

In addition to their work in hearing and deciding cases, the Justices are committed to enhancing public understanding of the role of the Court and its work. Justices contribute to the Court's education programmes and participate in a number of speaking events at universities across the UK.

Our education and outreach programmes inspire and engage students of all ages across the UK with the work and role of the UKSC and the JCPC. The Court set targets to widen participation in



its education programmes and to make them more accessible to the whole UK population. During the 2024 – 2025 financial year:

- 26 'Ask a Justice' Sessions were delivered.
- 8 Debate days were held.
- 8 Moots were delivered in-person.



*Queen Mary University of London Moot Final judged by Lord Leggatt*

Each year, the Court invites applications for Judicial Assistants to support the work of the Justices over the course of the legal year. Candidates must be qualified in one of the UK jurisdictions as a solicitor, barrister or advocate. During the 2025 recruitment round, two events were held to raise awareness of the Judicial Assistant scheme and encourage applications from a wide range of candidates from across the UK.

We continue to use RARE contextual recruitment in the recruitment process for Judicial Assistants, which enables the Court to calibrate disadvantage and to identify the candidates who have outperformed others at their school by the greatest amount.

We are entering the final year of an extended five-year access strategy. The first tactile touch tour of the UK Supreme Court building took place in December 2024 with the Society of Visually Impaired Lawyers. The offering of tactile tours will be expanded with new resources during

2025/26. The Court also continues to offer British Sign Language tours for school and community groups.

In June 2025, a team comprising of both Justices and Court staff participated in the London Legal Walk alongside thousands of others from the legal profession. The UK Supreme Court team raised £1000 to support over 100 front line free legal advice charities. These charities make a huge difference to people's lives, reducing debt, poverty and homelessness, and combating discrimination and injustice.

We also continue to use our social media presence on [LinkedIn](#), [x](#) and [Instagram](#) to foster greater awareness of the Court's work and our support for diversity and inclusion.

**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)**

We remain committed to delivering the objectives set out in the [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2021-2025](#) which is closely aligned with the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

This strategy supports the administration's vision to be a true reflection of the society we live in, to respect our differences and support equal opportunity for everyone. The administration undertakes a number of activities to implement the strategy that include quarterly diversity forum meetings. Over the past year, staff members have participated in forum events on a range of topics from allyship to gender specific violence against women and girls.

The Court's diversity and inclusion calendar continued to mark significant awareness days and religious events throughout the year. Volunteers from across the Court led sessions and wrote articles that were also published on the Court's intranet to mark these occasions.

We continued to offer one additional day of learning and development to all staff to focus solely on Diversity & Inclusion (D&I). All staff also have at least one annual performance objective linked to diversity each performance year.

## Reflections on the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 2025

As we come to the end of this 4-year strategy, we are meeting with the groups that we have worked with to review the strategy and we will be publishing a new strategy in the early autumn. Over the last 4 years, the strategy has been well received, and the Court has undertaken a considerable number of activities. We have learnt that we can lead and influence other parts of the legal profession to undertake work in this area and that we can successfully work in partnership with others.

### Evaluating impact

Qualitative feedback on our events and activities is very positive, but it is difficult to measure the longer-term impact of what we do. We do know, for example, that Bridging the Bar interns are more likely to receive pupillage offers after their internship with us. But identifying causality between particular D&I activities and outcomes is almost impossible to do where there are countless variables and many other interventions as well.

We review every activity and seek feedback and will continue to work to improve how we evaluate our work as effectively as possible. We believe that transparency and accountability are important, and we will continue to publish an annual report of all our D&I work.

### Leading and Influencing:

The Court recognises that it has a leadership role to play in increasing the diversity of the judiciary, and a responsibility to support and encourage diversity within the legal profession at every level. We do this not only through focusing our activities on supporting the entire career pipeline but also by leading on new initiatives to support increasing diversity across the legal profession.

Part of the success of the strategy has been our openness to take the lead in participating in new initiatives. For example, the Bridging the Bar internship in 2021 were the first of their kind. Following the success of that first internship at the Supreme Court, the one-week internship programme for eight aspiring barristers has now become part of a year-long Academy programme with over 100 non-traditional aspiring barristers undertaking professional development training each year, which now includes internships at the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the Law Commission. As a small organisation we have limited capacity to undertake large programmes, but we can take the lead and influence others to follow suit.



Mass Ndow-Njie, Founder and Chairperson of Bridging the Bar, noted the importance of the Court's leadership role:

*"Since 2021, Bridging the Bar has been proud to partner with the UK Supreme Court. The Court's leadership has shown that issues of equal access to opportunity can no longer be sidelined. The Court's commitment has sent a clear message across the profession: equal access to opportunities is not an optional extra, but core to the future of the legal sector and justice more generally."*

### **Broadening and deepening relationships:**

Another key success factor has been in working in partnerships with representative organisations. This has worked well for three reasons:

- i. These organisations are best placed to identify interventions that will have an impact;
- ii. Holding events at the Court enhances the profile of the organisations and sends a clear message from the Court and;
- iii. There is enormous positive value in inviting people to the Court building, and offering a very warm welcome. Our partnerships have included Bridging the Bar, Black Talent Charter, Sikhs in Law Association, BVL, the Law Society, the Black Barristers Network, the Scottish Young Lawyers Association, CILEX, and Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholars Scheme amongst others.

BVL, one of our education partners since 2011, reflected on the importance of our partnership:

*"BVL has been fortunate to have the support of the UK Supreme Court since 2011. That backing has meant we can do more than just teach students about the law, we've been able to bring them right through the doors of one of the UK's most important legal institutions and introduce them to its top judges. It's moments like these that help break down the barriers around law and show the young people we work with that the legal profession really is open to them."*

### **Learning and listening:**

Beyond the relationships that we have built with such organisations, our D&I activities have also given us opportunities to progress our learning and understanding of the lived experience of underrepresented groups.

### Justices Reverse mentoring scheme

Our two Justices found it a powerful learning experience, and it shone a light on some of the continuing barriers for underrepresented groups in the early stages of their career. Lord Reed has since raised some of these issues with the Chair of the Bar Council.

### Bridging the Bar Internship Scheme

One of the objectives of the internship programme is to facilitate mutual learning to enable the Justices and Court staff to gain a better understanding of barriers to access and progression within the legal profession and how they might be overcome. Every year we continue to learn from aspiring lawyers and gain a better understanding of these barriers. See below for a quote from one of our BtB interns in 2023:

*"Part of our internship was to share some of the barriers we've faced in trying to access the profession and engage the Justices in a meaningful, broader conversation about diversity and inclusion. It was clear across the week that there was a genuine desire to understand these issues and to proactively do something about them where possible."*

