

New action plan to boost judicial diversity

Press release

Under-represented groups will be better supported to become judges following the launch of a new action plan to increase diversity on the bench.



- raft of measures to tackle under-representation in the judiciary
- new statistics provide most complete picture of diversity in the legal system ever
- flexible working hours to help those with childcare

A series of measures are designed to encourage more women and people from BAME backgrounds, or with a disability to apply for judicial roles. These include more flexible working hours, targeted guidance on applications, as well as a review of the eligibility criteria to ensure no one group is being unintentionally deterred from applying.

The plan has been drawn up by the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF), which includes the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice, the chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) and leaders from the legal professions. It was set up in 2019 to provide strategic direction for improving diversity and to challenge structural barriers to judicial appointment.

Today's (17 September 2020) announcement comes as a new report, for the first time, combines the diversity data of the legal professions, judicial appointments and the judiciary. It revealed that while significant progress has been made – women remain under-represented in judicial roles, making up only 26% of more senior positions in the High Court and above. Meanwhile, despite the number of BAME judges increasing in recent years, they comprise just 8% of all court judges and 12% of tribunal judges.

Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC, said:

Encouraging diversity is vital if we are to have a legal system

that truly reflects and represents the range of voices in our society.

Today's figures show there are more women and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in judicial roles than ever before. But we must do more, and this action plan will help to ensure talented people from all walks of life can join the judiciary.

The action plan also includes steps to boost the number of solicitors appointed to the parts of the judiciary where they are currently underrepresented. Other measures consist of:

- A 2 year pilot programme of targeted outreach and support activity by the JAC.
- A unit within the JAC providing advice and guidance to potential candidates from underrepresented backgrounds including BAME, women, disabled and solicitor candidates for specific senior court and tribunal roles.
- A review of the eligibility criteria for appointment with the aim of reviewing and removing any unnecessary barriers that discourage or prevent applications for judicial posts.
- Continued support for Pre-Application Judicial Education programme (PAJE) and a campaign to reach over 200 applicants a year.
- A revised Salaried Part-Time Working policy (SPTW) will be introduced which offers the judiciary a more flexible working offer – accounting for childcare commitments.
- An ongoing recruitment programme to recruitment not only more, but more diverse magistrates.

Notes to editors

Published 17 September 2020