

Press release: Lord Chancellor announces drive to increase judicial diversity

- government to fund new judicial education programme
- support from Judiciary, Judicial College and legal professional bodies
- online education platform for potential candidates
- targeted support for underrepresented groups

Talented people from all backgrounds across the legal profession will be given greater support to apply to become a judge, Lord Chancellor David Gauke announced today (25 April 2018).

A new online learning platform will enable candidates from all legal backgrounds to develop their understanding of the role and skills required of a judge, and how their legal experience has prepared them for judicial office, prior to making an application.

The Pre-Application Judicial Education (PAJE) programme is a joint initiative from the Judicial Diversity Forum, which is made up of MOJ, Judiciary, Judicial Appointments Commission, Bar Council, Law Society and Chartered Institute of Legal Executives and coordinates action to remove barriers to candidates from underrepresented groups applying to be judges.

Additional, targeted support will be available to those applicants from groups that are underrepresented in the judiciary via discussion sessions led by judges. This will give potential candidates insight into the realities of the role and offer an opportunity to address any perceptions they may have on barriers to judicial office.

Development of the programme will be funded by the MOJ, with Forum partners contributing to further running costs.

PAJE is the first initiative delivered jointly by all members of the Judicial Diversity Forum and partners will continue to work together on actions to drive diversity.

Lord Chancellor, David Gauke said:

Becoming a judge is a crucial form of public service at the very heart of our society.

From my time as a solicitor I know there are excellent candidates from right across the legal profession, and we want to make it easier for people from all backgrounds to aspire to these roles.

We have seen improvement in diversity in recent years, and it is clear that widening the talent pool from which judges are drawn can

only make our world-renowned justice system even stronger.

Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett of Maldon said:

I am committed to working to further improve judicial diversity. This programme of work is an important opportunity to offer practical assistance to underrepresented groups.

I hope that this scheme, which the judiciary and particularly the Judicial College is taking a leading role in devising and delivering, will widen the pool of applicants to ensure that the best candidates, from a wide range of backgrounds, apply for judicial posts.

Lord Kakkar, Chairman of the Judicial Appointments Commission and the Judicial Diversity Forum, said:

The Commission warmly welcomes this initiative which will give candidates from the widest range of backgrounds the opportunity to better understand, prepare and develop themselves for a future judicial role.

We look forward to reporting on its impact in future years and hope that it will encourage talented candidates from underrepresented groups to consider applying for judicial appointment at the right stage in their career.

The online education programme will be available from early 2019, with the discussion groups to follow and MOJ will work with partners to increase awareness amongst practising legal professionals.

The initiative builds on our £1 billion investment to reform our courts service, to modernise processes and improving the environment and working conditions for those who work within it, including judges.

Notes to editors

1. MOJ funding will amount to an estimate of £152,000 over three years. The total cost of the programme will be approximately £300,000 including contributory costs from partners.
2. Places on the discussion sessions will be available by application, details will be available in early 2019. Preference will be given to applicants from underrepresented groups; women lawyers, BAME lawyers, lawyers with disabilities and those from a non-barrister professional background (including solicitors and chartered legal executives).

3. For more information contact the MOJ press office on 02033340185