



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

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

**Annual Update 2023**

## Table of contents

<b>1. Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
By Lord Reed, President of the UK Supreme Court	
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Progress Updates</b>	
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>12</b>

## Foreword

### By the President, Lord Reed



This report is the second annual update on the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that we published in May 2021. The aims of this strategy are to support the progress of underrepresented groups into judicial roles and to further build an inclusive and respectful working environment for the Justices and staff of the Court where differences are valued.

Diversity brings richness to the entire judiciary. I believe that attracting, developing and retaining a diverse judiciary is essential to the Court and the public that we serve.

This year, I have appointed Lord Leggatt, a Justice of the Court, to lead on the work that underpins this strategy and to help focus our activities on achieving the aims of the strategy.

We have built on the work of the first year, continuing to focus on supporting the entire career pipeline from serving judges, and those considering first judicial appointments, to mid-career and junior lawyers, and university and school students.

One of the highlights of the Court's year continues to be the Bridging the Bar internship. I believe that it has a significant impact on interns' confidence and contributes to a sense of feeling welcomed and respected in the legal profession. In turn, we learn from some of the brightest law students and gain a better understanding of barriers to access and progression within the legal profession and how they might be overcome.

We know that certain people, including women, Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, and disabled lawyers continue to be underrepresented in the judiciary and in more senior levels of the legal profession. We are building strong links and working with representative organisations to help us to understand and learn from the experience of underrepresented groups and to enable us to take action that will lead to meaningful change and progress.

Progress is being made but more needs to be done to increase the pace of change. The Court will continue to play its part in removing barriers that prevent equal access to opportunity.

## 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

Our activities continue to be 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 [July 2022](#).

## 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**

In 2023, Justices undertook further diversity and inclusion training, specifically designed to assist in the considerable outreach work undertaken by Justices. We will continue to assess any gaps in training throughout the coming year so that future training can continue to be tailored to best support Justices in building an inclusive and respectful culture.

The President and Deputy President of the Court 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 feels 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 remains committed to ensuring workplace support and reasonable adjustments are in place for all Justices and staff, with the appropriate supporting policies.

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

In November 2022, the Court welcomed a second cohort of eight 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 as well as the judgment hand-down concerning the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill.

One of the objectives of the internship was 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. As part of this, the interns participated in a roundtable discussion with a number of Justices, facilitated by the Court's Chief Executive. The interns also delivered a presentation to the Justices and Court staff on a topic of their choice. Other activities included a Q&A session on careers in law with Justices.

It was our intention to lead the way with this initiative and since the Court first launched the internship programme in [2021](#), it has now been replicated in the Court of Appeal, High Court, and the Law Commission. Bar Standards Board statistics show that 2022 Bridging the Bar Academy candidates were 2.27x more likely to secure a pupillage than other applicants in their first year of applications. We look forward to welcoming a third cohort of interns in 2023.



*Bridging the Bar Interns, 2022*

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:

**Black Talent Charter:**

On the 28th June 2023, the Court's administration became a signatory of the Black Talent Charter. The Black Talent Charter was launched in October 2020 and its mission is to ensure the percentage of black professionals matches the UK working population within 10 years, with representation at every level. The Charter will support the Court with knowledge and expertise and provide a framework for us to measure our progress. We will also run a joint careers event later in the year for black lawyers.

**Kalisher Trust:**

This charity supports young people who would not otherwise be able to afford to pursue a career at the criminal bar and helps broaden the social and ethnic representation of the criminal bar by supporting able young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Its students' visit to the Court included a guided tour of the building and a Q&A session with two of the Court's Judicial Assistants. The students then had an opportunity to give oral submissions in one of our courtrooms.

**Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Foundation:**

This scheme aims to help young black men from non-traditional and less socially mobile backgrounds to pursue careers in the law and also in the City more broadly. In June 2023, Scholars from the programme visited the Court. During their visit they participated in a Q&A session with Lord Leggatt, and met with the Judicial Assistants and Court officials. They also had the opportunity to observe a hearing and were given a tour of the Court building.



*Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Foundation Visit, June 2023*

### **Bar of Northern Ireland's Legal Diversity Project:**

The Bar of Northern Ireland Legal Diversity Project is aimed at promoting equality, inclusion and social mobility throughout the legal profession. The Project provides opportunities for legal professionals to present and exchange ideas on how to solve existing diversity problems. The Project held an event in June 2023 in Belfast titled 'Diversity – A Supreme Court's Perspective' at which Lady Rose, Justice of the Court, delivered a speech in which she discussed gender diversity in the judiciary. The event was chaired by Dame Siobhan Keegan, the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.

### **Big Voice London:**

The Court works in partnership with BVL to improve social mobility within the law. Students take part in a moot competition and are supported by mentors. The Court hosts the final, which is judged by a Justice.

### **Sikhs in Law Association:**

The Sikhs in Law Association promote, encourage, empower and develop the UK Sikh community within the legal profession and judiciary. The Association held their inauguration ceremony at the Court in April 2023. Lord Leggatt opened the ceremony and delivered a speech during which he praised the contributions of prominent Sikhs to the rule of law, such as Sir Mota Singh and Lord Justice Rabiner Singh, and spoke of the importance of increasing diversity within the profession. The Court's Chief Executive Officer also attended the ceremony.



*Sikhs in Law Association inauguration ceremony, April 2023*

### **Exhibition celebrating 100 years of women at the Bar:**

A pop-up exhibition about the centenary of the first woman to be called to the Bar was on display at the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom outside Courtroom 1. The exhibition featured judges and other woman pioneers in the legal profession over the past 100 years.

### **The Way We Are Now Photography Competition:**

The Next 100 Years project arranged a photography competition to showcase women in the law. The Court's CEO was invited to be on the judging panel and the winners were invited for a tour of the Court and tea. The winning photo was of the Bridging the Bar Supreme Court interns at a pre-internship seminar.

### **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 2022-23, we welcomed 13 visiting Judges from across the UK jurisdictions (including 4 female judges and 1 judge from an underrepresented group).

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. The most recent recruitment

announcement was advertised on our website, social media channels such as LinkedIn, and the Guardian online, in order to reach a wide audience. A webpage on the Supreme Court website ([Judicial Vacancy 2023](#)) was also created to explain the role, detail the application process and how to apply. It includes a range of supplementary material, including:

- A short video by the President of the Court providing information on the recruitment process.
- A series of podcasts with current and previous Justices. In these podcasts, Justices speak about their career path and why they applied to become a Justice, as well as sharing insights into what the application process felt like and what advice they would give someone considering applying.
- A series of videos produced in partnership with the Ministry of Justice in which Justices talk on themes such as: the qualities of a Justice; tips for Justices; and diversity in the judicial profession.

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

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.



*Lord Reed, President of UKSC, with students from the Aberdeen Law Project at the University of Aberdeen*

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 2022 – 2023 financial year:

- 15 'Ask a Justice' Sessions were delivered. This included three schools from Scotland, two from Wales and four from Northern Ireland, as well as three schools from areas of multiple deprivation in England.
- 9 Debate days were held, both virtually and in-person. All of the schools that participated were state schools, including one school from Scotland, two from Wales and two from Northern Ireland. Two of the schools that participated from England were schools from areas of multiple deprivation.
- 15 Moots were delivered in-person, with participation from universities in England, Scotland and Wales.



*SOAS University Moot Final, judged by Lady Rose at the Supreme Court in February 2023*



*SOAS University Moot Finalists, February 2023*

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. Over the past year, events were held in Edinburgh and Manchester as well as with Bridging the Bar, a charity committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity at the Bar of England and Wales, to raise awareness of the Judicial Assistant scheme and encourage applications from a wide range of candidates from across the UK.

RARE contextual recruitment was also introduced in the recruitment process for Judicial Assistants this year, which enables the Court to calibrate disadvantage and to identify the candidates who have outperformed others at their school by the greatest amount.

We continue to use our social media presence on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to foster greater awareness of the Court's work and our support for diversity and inclusion. For example, in recognition of international Women's Day, we published a [video](#) of some of our Judicial Assistants offering advice to women starting out in the legal profession.

## **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 led forum events on a range of topics from White Privilege to The Unite Campaign to end 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. This has included, International Women's Day, Black History Month, World Refugee Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Pride Month, amongst many others.



*Women of the UK Supreme Court, International Women's Day 2023*

An extra day of learning and development was allocated to all our staff to focus solely on Diversity & Inclusion (D&I). The aim of this is to share knowledge amongst teams and across the Court so each member of staff had a greater responsibility for their own D&I development and could feedback to their respective team.

We have rolled out training on Hidden Disabilities to our public facing staff and we offer sunflower lanyards at our reception, for staff and visitors with hidden disabilities. The sunflower is a globally recognised symbol for non-visible disabilities. Our customer facing staff have also

received training in Visual Impairment Awareness and Autism Understanding to raise awareness and improve visitor experience.

We are in the third year of an extended five-year access strategy. This year we completed the second year of the access survey with our partner AccessAble. An [access guide](#) for the UKSC appears on the AccessAble website, which enables visitors with disabilities to plan their visit to the Court.

We also offered four British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted tours during the year.



*British Sign Language Tour of the Court*