

Judicial Diversity Forum Priorities and Actions for 2025

Since its inception in 2015, [the Judicial Diversity Forum \(JDF\)](#) has been committed to understanding and addressing the barriers that exist at all levels to achieving a judiciary that better reflects the society it serves. Through the collective efforts, insights and expertise of the legal professions, Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Judiciary, Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), and the Legal Services Board (LSB), a wide programme of work aimed at supporting greater judicial diversity is being delivered. As we look ahead to the future work of the Forum, we will build on the decade of progress and explore opportunities to further increase the diversity of the judiciary and the pipelines to judicial careers, as we know there is more to be done to ensure the judiciary better reflects the society it serves.

Collectively, JDF partners have identified four outcomes around which to align our work to achieve a more diverse and inclusive judiciary. These are to:

- 1. Ensure an inclusive and supportive culture in the judiciary and the wider legal professions.**
- 2. Address barriers to successful applications and identify and eliminate any actual barriers in appointments processes as operated (including in relation to professional groupings).**
- 3. Eliminate structural barriers in access by different professional groups to the judiciary.**
- 4. Address barriers to senior legal and senior judicial positions for women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled people (and other groups as agreed).**

The JDF continued to align its priorities and actions for 2024 around these four strategic priorities, providing clear aims for our programme of targeted and collaborative action. [The 2025 action plan](#) sets out the activities that JDF partners will undertake in the next year to deliver against these outcomes and how the impact of each initiative will be measured.

The Theory of Change methodology and the approach to monitoring and evaluation was adopted in 2022 and has been embedded over the past two years and will continue to be developed. Key highlights from 2024 include:

- **Implementing and delivering a joint qualifying test (QT) work programme, following completion of the [JDF's qualitative research into the JAC QT](#).** Responding to the findings of the JDF QT research project, the JAC and JDF partners agreed a collective work programme for 2024-25, which consists of a coordinated set of actions aiming to reduce barriers for groups with lower success rates at the QT stage. The work programme sets out actions for all organisations under four headings: Communication, Resources, Process and Feedback. To date, progress has been made against all four areas, including the publication of new dedicated guidance and changes to the time limits of the QT.
- **Research to profile the diversity of the judicial talent pipeline.** The LSB commissioned [research](#), on behalf of the JDF, to identify where people whose

sustained inclusion would increase the judiciary's diversity "fall off" the pipeline. The findings of the research have provided insight into where JDF partners and regulators can focus interventions to increase diversity into the judiciary and will be further considered in 2025.

- **Reviewing the skills and abilities required of judicial office holders.** The Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework, first introduced in 2014, has been refreshed by the judiciary to reflect the skills required of contemporary and future judicial office holders. The Framework has been developed to be accessible and readily comprehensible by judges, potential applicants for judicial roles and others. It sets out what is universally expected of those in judicial roles and will be used to support recruitment and development. Throughout 2025, JDF partners will be reviewing relevant processes, resources, and information to ensure that they reflect the updated Framework.

Further work is planned for 2025 for JDF partners to collectively meet more frequently to further strengthen the approach to evaluation and identify any gaps in activity. Where gaps are identified, partners will explore opportunities for further collaboration. Priority areas for JDF partners in 2025 include:

- **Focusing collective efforts to address specific judicial diversity challenges identified by the JDF, with an initial focus on representation of women in senior courts roles, and on black legal professionals aspiring to join the judiciary for the first time.** Although steady progress has been observed across all diversity characteristics throughout the judicial pipeline, we are committed to increasing the pace of change, particularly with regards to black legal professionals and the representation of women in senior courts roles. JDF partners will work collectively to share insights and identify any gaps in activity where further action is required to support the progression of these groups, both into and within the judiciary.
- **Improving the accessibility and coverage of the annual [Diversity of the Judiciary statistics report](#).** MoJ statisticians will work closely with JDF partners on a new interactive online statistics tool to accompany the 2025 report. This will allow greater access to time series data across different reporting years and the ability to visualise differences in diversity data across different judicial or professional roles. The tool will assist the JDF in highlighting new or emerging areas of focus from trends and improve transparency regarding judicial diversity more widely. We will also commit to publishing disability data for every organisation reaching the required declaration rate, improving the evidence base for this characteristic.
- **Continuing to deliver against the joint QT work programme.** JDF partners will continue to complete remaining work programme actions, and the JAC will collect data to assist with evaluating the impact of the changes. The actions aim to improve the success rates of ethnic minority candidates and non-barrister background candidates at the QT, closing the gap in success rates to white and barrister candidates, respectively.

The Judicial Diversity Forum's Theory of Change

OVERARCHING AIM

An individual's protected characteristics, or social or professional background, are not a significant predictor of success in the professional career towards, appointment or progress within the judiciary.



Ensure an inclusive and supportive culture in the judiciary and wider legal professions



Address barriers to successful applications and identify and eliminate any actual barriers to appointments as operated (including in relation to professional groupings)



Eliminate structural barriers in access by different professional groups to the judiciary



Address barriers to senior legal and senior judicial positions for women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities (and other groups as agreed)

OUTCOMES

ACTIVITIES

- Support legal professionals to effectively foster an inclusive culture.
- Provide ways for professionals to report barriers to getting in and getting on in the workplace and promote best practice.
- Target programmes to address the remaining barriers to inclusion, focusing on access to the professions and development.

- Encourage candidates from currently underrepresented groups to apply to roles and provide support to develop their skills and experience.
- Ensure selection processes are fair, and do not specifically deter candidates from underrepresented groups.
- Use data to identify remaining barriers and track impact.

- Bring in untapped talent from professional groups that have faced barriers to applying for judicial roles.
- Promote opportunities to candidates from these groups and provide support to aid their success in applications.
- Improve our understanding of the systemic barriers disproportionately affecting particular professional groups.

- Address barriers to getting on in the workplace.
- Raise the profile of judicial career paths among potential applicants, with visible role models in senior positions, and provide resources to improve applicants' chances of success.