



Judicial Appointments Commission

Strategy 2024 to 2027

Business Plan 2026 to 2027



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About the JAC

Our purpose

The independent Judicial Appointments Commission selects candidates for judicial office in England and Wales, and for some tribunals with UK-wide powers. Our core statutory duties are:

- to select candidates solely on merit
- to select only people of good character
- to have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of people available for selection.

We report performance against our aims in our Annual Report and Accounts, which includes performance indicators and success benchmarks. We also publish a 6-monthly 'Diversity Update' which sets out more detail about the work we are delivering on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Our vision

Attracting and supporting the widest range of high calibre candidates for judicial office and making independent selections on merit through fair and open competition. Doing this to help maintain the world-class independent judiciary, assist in ensuring a full complement of judges and play our part in supporting the creation of a more diverse judiciary.

Our values

Our five values represent the culture within our organisation and are the guiding principles behind everything we do:

- **Fairness:** Commitment to equitable opportunity and progression for all staff. We aim to accelerate equity for underrepresented groups within the organisation.
- **Respect:** We are respectful and sensitive of people's individuality, creating an environment where we treat people with dignity and respect regardless of their culture, religion, age, race, sexual orientation, gender or disability.
- **Professionalism:** We aim to achieve excellence by working to the highest standards.
- **Learning:** We strive for continuous improvement, encourage feedback and personal growth.
- **Clarity and Openness:** We communicate in a clear and direct way.

Recent achievements

Over the four years the Commission was guided by the vision of the 2020-25 Strategy, the JAC achieved a number of important successes across a range of areas:

Delivery of the judicial recruitment programme

25,000+

applications processed



4,074

recommendations for
judicial appointment



102

selection
exercises during
2020 to 2023



35

exercises are set to
be finished by the
end of our 2023 to
2024 programme



- We successfully ran 102 selection exercises during 2020 – 2023 and processed over 15,000 applications resulting in 3,207 recommendations for judicial appointment. A further 37 exercises are set to be finished by the end of our 2023-2024 programme.
- 100% of our recommendations were accepted by the appropriate authority.
- We delivered full programmes of recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the needs of the courts and tribunals. The hybrid approach to assessment that we introduced during that time has now been fully developed and embedded, providing efficiencies in our approach and flexibility for candidates.
- We have supported over 100 remote and in-person outreach events, working with partners in the legal professions to reach wider audiences and support groups of diverse and talented candidates to apply for judicial appointment.
- The JAC-led Targeted Outreach programme has been developed, piloted and expanded. Working alongside the judiciary, we have provided targeted support to candidates from underrepresented groups. Evaluation of the programme has shown improved outcomes for programme participants.
- We chair the **Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF)** and have worked with our partners from across the legal sector to develop a thematic JDF action plan underpinned by common monitoring and evaluation principles. Four annual combined statistical reports have been published through the JDF, shining a light on the progression of underrepresented groups through the legal professions, JAC processes, and within the judiciary. The JDF's Pre-application Judicial Education (PAJE) programme has supported over 600 target group candidates to feel more confident and better informed about making a judicial application.

Supporting diversity

- We have implemented a range of measures in support of increasing judicial diversity, including extending the use of our Equal Merit approach to cover the shortlisting stage and analysing progression of underrepresented candidate groups through a statistical 'deep dive' analysis. A subsequent research project used quantitative and qualitative methods – alongside an independent review – to examine the qualifying test and identified improvements to support diversity.
- Following the independent review of the operation of statutory consultation, we implemented changes to the approach and guidance to enhance transparency and effectiveness.

Developing our people and tools

- We have enhanced the support provided to panel members and have introduced a policy of monitoring and publishing the ethnic diversity of all our selection panels.
- We have increased our digital capability through developing our online application platform, providing candidates with a positive customer experience. We have also designed interactive digital tools for candidates to use as part of their preparation and new digital selection tools including non-live video assessment.
- We have delivered our People Plan to recruit, develop, support and retain a diverse workforce within an inclusive environment.

Strategic aims for 2024-27

In achieving the purpose and vision outlined above, we have adopted the following four strategic aims:

1

Ensure we are a centre of excellence in selection, applying best practice to fairly select talented individuals with the necessary skills and abilities across the entirety of judicial roles.

2

Work with partners to attract well-evidenced applications from the widest range of high-calibre candidates, supporting the achievement of greater judicial diversity.

3

Ensure the JAC is widely recognised as the trusted expert body on independent, merit-based and inclusive appointment to the judiciary.

4

Develop people and tools to support the delivery of the Commission's aims.

Strategic aims in detail

1

Ensure we are a centre of excellence in selection, applying best practice to fairly select talented individuals with the necessary skills and abilities across the entirety of judicial roles.

In the first year of the strategy (2024-25) we:

- Worked with delivery partners to consider options, and deliver more targeted recruitment to certain salaried judicial roles with the aim of reaching a wide and diverse audience of high-quality candidates. This included an exercise for the district bench specific to the South Eastern circuit, where the majority of vacancies currently arise, and bespoke selection exercises for some First-tier Tribunal chambers which required the assessment of specialist knowledge and experience.
- Launched a project with the Work Psychology Group (WPG) to understand the latest research and best practice in supporting neurodivergent applicants through recruitment processes. The project is reviewing key elements of our processes to ensure they are inclusive, accessible and fair.
- Evaluated the approach to recruitment of non-legal tribunal members to enable candidates from a wide range of backgrounds to give evidence of their eligibility and suitability for the roles to which they are applying for.
- Inputted into the judiciary-led review of the Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework (JSAF) via Commissioner

membership of the steering group.

The review produced an updated JSAF suitable for use in the recruitment, training and appraisal of all judges. The JAC has committed to use the revised JSAF, **published by the Judicial Office in January 2025**, for selection exercises launching from autumn 2025 onwards.

- Evaluated the revised approach to the operation of statutory consultation, introduced in 2022 in response to the independent review published in 2022.

In 2025-26 we have:

- Introduced the new JSAF for all exercises launching from October 2025. This was accompanied by a suite of new candidate guidance on how to best provide evidence in line with the JSAF throughout the selection process.
- Increased our selection exercise capacity to run up to 40 selection exercises a year from 2026.
- Reviewed our approaches to shortlisting and the use of competency-based/skills and abilities-based interviewing within the judicial recruitment process. The review identified that our shortlisting tools remain in line with best practice, and that interviewing remains a valid mechanism to fairly and sustainably assess candidates in both large

scale fee-paid exercises and smaller, more senior exercises.

- Evaluated the operation of the revised approach to statutory consultation which was introduced in 2022. The evaluation was published alongside updated guidance provided to the senior judiciary and statutory consultees.
- Worked with delivery partners to pilot regional or circuit level recruitment for some salaried exercises where persistent shortfalls have been identified. This has provided greater clarity about where candidates may be deployed, thereby more effectively meeting the needs of the justice system.
- Published the review conducted by WPG into best practice in supporting neurodivergent candidates through the recruitment process, and implemented a range of the recommendations.
- Commissioned the Government Internal Audit Agency to conduct an audit of how we gather selection exercise materials. Their report was issued in September 2025 and received the highest possible assurance rating, confirming that our internal processes are well-designed and consistently applied.

In 2026-27 we plan to:

- Deliver an expanded programme of up to 40 selection exercises, recruiting for up to 1200 vacancies, alongside supporting the delivery of a significant amount of senior appointment recruitment.

- Place a particular focus on considering how we can limit our use of judicial resource on exercises, given the pressures on the courts and tribunals. This is likely to include maximising the use of existing selection materials and increasing use of judges who are sitting in retirement.
- Review our reasonable adjustments policy in light of the research on neurodiversity best practice to address the remaining recommendations and further strengthen the accessibility of the selection process.
- Consider our response to the JAC-specific recommendations within the 2025 Independent Review of Criminal Courts, aligning approaches with partners where appropriate.
- Continue to review our selection approaches to ensure best practice throughout the judicial appointment process, in particular considering the usage and impact of AI, continued exploration of weighting skills and abilities, and reviewing processes to ensure they are as efficient and robust as possible.
- Review the Independent Assessments policy to consider requiring judicial office holders to nominate their direct leadership judge.
- Continue to collect data to inform the evaluation of the implementation of the JSAF to be undertaken in 2027-28.

What success for Aim One looks like:

Efficient and effective delivery of the agreed 2026-27 selection exercise programme.

2

Work with partners to attract well-evidenced applications from the widest range of high-calibre candidates, supporting the achievement of greater judicial diversity.

In the first year of the strategy (2024-25) we:

- Conducted a review of our communications and outreach approaches and launched a new Communications and Engagement Strategy. The new strategy aims to strengthen our relationships with candidates, internal and external stakeholders and the wider public, and ensure consistency of messaging.
- Begun work to further enhance the JAC website to encourage and support a wide range of candidates to submit strong applications. This work has identified the need to further improve the useability and navigation of the website and further expand the preparatory resources available to candidates.
- Reviewed the JAC-led Targeted Outreach programme after two years following its relaunch and expansion. Quantitative and qualitative information was used to ensure that the programme, including the judiciary-led guide scheme, is operating effectively and supporting improved outcomes for underrepresented target groups across all legal exercises.
- Launched a new pilot of enhanced support within the Targeted Outreach programme, specifically aimed at engaging former programme participants experiencing challenges in progressing past selection day.
- Worked with partners to continue delivery of our extensive programme of outreach activities to ensure that candidates from a wide range of backgrounds are able to engage with current and future selection processes. Bespoke candidate resources were provided for some selection exercises including District Judge and Circuit Judge.
- Continued to collaborate with the JDF to implement the Forum's 2024 action plan. Improvements to the Qualifying Test process and guidance were implemented, incorporating all areas detailed in the work programme arising from the JDF's Qualifying Test research which focussed in particular on differential progression for ethnic minority and solicitor candidates.
- As Chair of the JDF, arranged a number of thematic discussion sessions and invited experts from the Business Disability Forum to present to the Forum, sharing insights on best practice regarding disability inclusion.
- Published the JDF Action Plan 2025, an update on the wide range of actions that the JDF are undertaking to achieve a more diverse and inclusive judiciary. Priorities include a collective effort to address representation of women in senior court roles and on black legal professionals entering the judiciary.

In 2025-26 we have:

- Delivered an extensive programme of outreach activities, supporting over 80 events across the year.
- Hosted the first JAC-led outreach event, attended by over 430 people, providing potential candidates with an overview of the appointments process and the new Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework.
- Launched a newly redesigned website which provides a more accessible user journey with easier navigation. The new structure provides candidates with a clearer understanding of JAC processes and expectations during the selection process, including a new preparation resource for the Scenario Test stage.
- Established new, and built upon established, relationships with key stakeholders to promote and highlight opportunities for roles within the judiciary and support for those who wish to apply. This has included both selection exercise specific activities, focused on attracting non-legal professionals to tribunal roles, as well as general support through our continued co-delivery of the PAJE programme.
- As part of an MoJ-led working group focused on improving the representation of Black members of the judiciary, co-led a roundtable with Black legal professionals to explore the barriers to increasing representation of Black judges.
- Collaborated with the MoJ and JDF partners to publish the sixth combined statistics report on the diversity of the judiciary. The report included a new interactive statistics dashboard tool to allow individuals to visualise data across multiple years. This report informed an update to the 2025 JDF Action Plan, which was published in January 2026, outlining the priorities each partner is undertaking to collectively address issues affecting diversity within the judiciary and the professional pipelines.
- Reviewed our equal merit approach, which can currently be applied to women and ethnic minority candidates, and identified opportunities for operational enhancements and the potential for expansion to the protected characteristic of disability.
- Used initial statistical analysis into the success rates of candidates who reapply to JAC selection exercises after previously being unsuccessful to develop new resources for the JAC website.
- Worked with JDF partners to explore the feasibility of a centralised, online 'hub' for candidate support.
- Developed and launched stage-by-stage support resources for Targeted Outreach programme candidates.
- Continued to work closely with the Judicial Outreach Mentoring Scheme and Judicial Work Shadowing Scheme to develop a referral loop across schemes, supporting candidates to access the right support, at the right time.

In 2026-27 we plan to:

- Enhance the granularity of analysis and reporting to support the progression of Black lawyers, those from underrepresented professional backgrounds, including chartered legal executives, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Work with partners to further develop outreach activities and create further JAC-led events tailored to underrepresented groups.
- Trial a series of support projects, focusing on the Targeted Outreach candidate pool and progression rates of Black lawyers and judges, disabled candidates, candidates for senior and leadership roles and social mobility.
- Design, support and lead the launch of the JDF Hub, a single web interface for all judicial diversity support programmes.
- Deliver face-to-face training for Judicial Guides within the Targeted Outreach programme, focusing on mock interviews, in line with the new JSAF.
- Implement the operational improvements identified in the review of our Equal Merit approach, including further consideration of the feasibility of expansion of the provision to include disability. As part of this work we will ensure that our Equal Merit approach continues to reflect the evidence base of where underrepresentation exists in the judiciary, and aligns with JDF partners' diversity principles.

- Continue to enhance our approach to exercise specific and wider outreach, as well as our general stakeholder engagement, with a focus on those who are currently underrepresented within the judiciary. This will include engaging with legal education providers as well as wider professional bodies to ensure the widest possible pool are considering a judicial career at an early stage.
- Review our approach to reasonable adjustments to ensure it continues to align to best practice and ensures disabled candidates are able to fully engage with the appointments process. Conduct further analysis into the conditions declared by disabled candidates, to better understand differing experiences, success rates and barriers for those with different categories of disability.

What success for Aim Two looks like:

Underrepresented candidate groups applying and progressing more closely in line with their numbers in the eligible pool.

3

Ensure the JAC is widely recognised as the trusted expert body on independent, merit-based and inclusive appointment to the judiciary.

In the first year of the strategy (2024-25) we:

- Promoted the JAC's 2024-27 business strategy, 2024-25 Annual Report and 2024-25 diversity statistics through regular engagement with key partners and stakeholders.
- Continued to monitor the diversity of JAC panels, ensuring a balance of both gender and ethnicity representation on panels across all selection exercises.
- Worked to increase Welsh speaking representation on JAC panels, engaging with the Welsh Language Commissioners Office to accelerate Welsh outreach.
- Formalised the selection day observation process, establishing a growing database of observation insight. This has provided a central reference point for the continued enhancement of the candidate experience, an audit trail, and evidenced responses to complaints and panel appraisal.
- Continued dialogue with key stakeholders including the senior judiciary. We continued to work closely with the Senior President of Tribunals' Diversity Taskforce on various projects alongside promoting information about the enriched experience a Tribunals career can provide.
- Conducted an analysis on our key audiences and the strategic aims of reaching those audiences to inform our wider communications and engagement approach, utilising the findings from this analysis to update our organisational key messages.
- Reviewed and published our Good Character guidance for candidates to provide additional clarity on our Selection and Character Committee's decision-making and expectations of applicants.
- Continued to raise the prominence of diverse voices from across the appointments process through various channels, including JAC blogs, judicial case studies, and promotion of videos highlighting the work of individual members of the judiciary.
- Hosted the 2025 judicial appointments tripartite conference in London with the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland and the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission. The conference allowed us to share insights and best practice on judicial appointments and explore shared challenges.

In 2025-26 we have:

- Continued to monitor the diversity of JAC panels, ensuring where possible a balance of both gender and ethnicity representation on panels across all selection exercises.
- Continued dialogue with key stakeholders including the senior judiciary. We continued to work closely with the Senior President of Tribunals' Diversity Taskforce on various projects, observations and training, alongside promoting information about the enriched experience a Tribunals career can provide.
- Delivered a campaign focused on the JAC's constitutional role and statutory duties, highlighting our duties to: appoint solely on merit, those of good character, and to have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of people available for selection.
- Continued to publish our bi-annual diversity update, which outlines the progress we have made against our diversity priorities of outreach, fair and non-discriminatory selection processes, and working with partners to break down barriers.
- Contributed towards the Senior Salaries Review Body's major review of judicial salaries, by providing qualitative and quantitative evidence and attending regular meetings of the Advisory and Evidence Group.

- Continued to share knowledge and best practice with other UK judicial appointments bodies, including a focus on approaches to communications and engagement.
- Published a variety of blogs throughout the year focusing on demystifying the judicial appointments process, the role and perspective of lay people in JAC processes, and advice for solicitors applying for judicial roles.

In 2026-27 we plan to:

- Continue to engage with partners, at the most senior level, to strengthen relationships and ensure priorities are aligned to support the delivery of our stretching recruitment programme.
- Build on key messages from previous campaigns to roll out a myth-busting campaign across our various platforms to address common misconceptions about the judicial appointments process, focusing on the partnership nature of our work, eligibility, competency-based interviews, the competitive nature of our exercises, and statutory consultation.
- Launch a pilot of social media checks on non-judicial office holders in fee-paid legal exercises, in line with our good character guidance.
- Progress a proposal for the formal inclusion of the JAC lay panel member role as a public duty within the Employments Right Act, following approval from the Department for Business and Trade.

- Mark 20 years since the establishment of the JAC, reflecting on achievements and progress since the pre-JAC period.
- Engage with parliamentarians across England and Wales to ensure greater understanding of the work of the JAC and wider judicial appointments priorities.
- Further enhance the information available on the new JAC website, with a particular focus on our Welsh language provision and specific guidance to candidates at each stage of the appointments process.
- Commission the Government Internal Audit Agency to conduct an audit of how we collect, report and respond to candidate feedback.

What success for Aim Three looks like:

There is widespread confidence in the JAC's selection approach and engagement with candidates, partners and stakeholders is positive and constructive.

4

Develop people and tools to support the delivery of the Commission's aims.

In the first year of the strategy (2024-25) we:

- Introduced Personal Growth Maps across the organisation to help JAC staff evaluate and reflect on their own performance and form objectives for their personal development goals with their line manager.
- Launched a new three-year People Plan for 2024-2027 for staff, which takes into consideration the aims and objectives of the organisation's three-year business strategy to ensure that its activities are aligned to the wider ambitions of the organisation and are underpinned by a commitment to staff wellbeing.
- Reviewed and updated the lay panel member terms and conditions to ensure we are providing the best possible offer and are strengthening our commitment to their continuous professional development.
- Utilised the Crown Commercial Service's G-cloud framework to secure two call-off contracts for the provision of a full range of digital services, to help maintain and develop the JAC's online recruitment platform.
- Commissioned an external review of the architecture and software that underpins the JAC's online recruitment platform, the 'technology stack'. The review concluded that the technology we use remains a suitable, reliable and flexible solution to support user needs and the organisation's strategic and operational goals.
- Through the Ministry of Justice, commissioned the UK's National Standards Body to undertake an IT health check (a security assessment) of the JAC's online recruitment platform to identify any vulnerabilities and prevent unauthorised access.
- Commenced an external board effectiveness review, in line with Cabinet Office guidance for Arms-length Bodies.
- As part of our commitment to continuous upskilling, we have inducted and developed new Commissioners and have planned learning and development sessions for the full Commission Board.

In 2025-26 we have:

- Continued the use of Personal Growth Maps for staff to set themselves development goals.
- Provided staff and commissioners with opportunities to observe courts and tribunals.
- Delivered leadership and inclusivity training to our Senior Leadership Team as part of our commitment to development, elements of which have been adapted and rolled out to the wider organisation.
- Conducted a review of our People Plan, highlighting progress and successes and setting priorities for 2026.
- Received the external Board Effectiveness Review report which found that the Board was operating well.
- Implemented a new three-year digital strategy incorporating findings of an independent review of our digital platform's technology stack. The strategy covers our approach to security and compliance, development processes, governance and monitoring, the user experience and accessibility.
- Implemented a new digital quality assurance strategy and tightened our digital platform security and data rules.
- Addressed all of the findings from the IT Health Check carried out in 2024-25.

- Undertook an independent digital accessibility audit to ensure compliance with regulations, and commenced work to remedy areas for improvement.
- Continued to make iterative improvements to our digital platform to support and automate JAC operational processes.

In 2026-27 we plan to:

- Establish a new Information Management Committee as a sub-committee of the JAC Board.
- Commission the Government Internal Audit Agency to assess how the organisation assesses and manages cyber security risks.
- Continue to address the recommendations within the external Board Effectiveness review.
- Undertake another IT health check to assess the security of the platform, identify vulnerabilities and to prevent unauthorised access, and to take remedial action as necessary.
- Undertake a further technology stack review to consider whether the online recruitment platform continues to best support user needs and aligns with our strategic and operational goals. As part of the review we will consider whether there is more we can do to maintain the platform's technical efficacy, and whether there are other digital solutions to consider to support business requirements in the longer term.

- Continue code refactoring to improve maintainability of the platform, optimise performance and increase the efficiency of our development processes, and expand test coverage across all platform environments.
- Work with MoJ and Government Property Agency to agree JAC accommodation move ahead of MoJ exit from the office building at 102 Petty France at the end of 2027/early 2028.

What success for Aim Four looks like:

Everyone within the JAC has the resources, support and working environment they need to deliver their work to a high standard.

