



Judicial Conduct
Investigations Office

Annual Report

2024-2025



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Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the 2024–25 Annual Report of the independent Judicial Conduct Investigations Office (JCIO). As the statutory body supporting the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice in their joint responsibility for judicial discipline, the JCIO plays a vital role in maintaining public confidence in the judiciary. This is the first annual report since I took up the role of Head of the JCIO in June 2025.

The judicial disciplinary system exists to ensure that allegations of misconduct are dealt with efficiently, fairly, and proportionately, thereby safeguarding public confidence in the independence, integrity, and good standing of the judiciary.

The JCIO investigates complaints of misconduct against salaried and fee-paid courts and tribunal judges, non-legal tribunal members, and coroners. We also provide advice in the process for considering complaints about magistrates. Part one of this report contains more information about the judicial disciplinary system and the JCIO's role in it.

In 2024–25, the JCIO received 3,279 complaints - an increase of nearly 1,000 from the previous year. This rise was anticipated following the expansion of our remit in October 2023 to include tribunal judges and non-legal members.

Despite the increased workload, we concluded 2,740 complaints and met or exceeded our performance targets in 92% of cases. This reflects our commitment to delivering a high-quality service and maintaining public trust in the disciplinary process. However, we recognise that there is always room for improvement. A small proportion of cases did not meet performance targets, particularly those requiring extended enquiries or referral to decision-makers. We are actively addressing these challenges through improved case management, enhanced oversight by managers, and targeted support for staff. Part two report contains further information about our performance in this reporting period.

As in previous years, a significant proportion of complaints (82%) were not accepted following assessment because they fell outside the JCIO's remit or lacked sufficient detail to be considered further. Part three contains further information about the complaints we received and how they were dealt with.

The Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice (or her senior judicial delegate) issued 89 disciplinary sanctions, compared to 58 in 2023–24. This equates to under 0.5% of all judicial office holders in England and Wales. Part four contains further information about complaints that resulted in disciplinary action.

In last year's annual report, my predecessor, Rabiah Narey, noted that the JCIO would review how the significant changes to the disciplinary system introduced in 2023 had been received and are working in practice. Those changes included the publication of new rules and statutory regulations governing complaint handling, as well as measures to improve transparency and consistency. I am pleased to say that the review found the 2023 changes are working well. Further information can be found in our report [*The 2023 Changes to the Judicial Disciplinary System in England and Wales*](#), published in August 2025.

Our priorities for 2025–26 remain focused on handling complaints efficiently, continuing to improve performance, and delivering a high-quality service to both complainants and judicial office-holders.

We are also committed to promoting transparency and increasing awareness of our work, and we welcome any suggestions from readers of this publication for ways to do so. Please send any suggestions to: general.enquiries@judicialconduct.gov.uk

I would like to thank the JCIO team for their dedication and professionalism. I also wish to acknowledge the vital contributions of nominated judges, investigating judges, regional conduct advisory committee secretaries and their teams, nominated committee members, and the judicial and lay members of disciplinary panels. Their work ensures that complaints are dealt with fairly, thoroughly, and effectively, and continues to uphold the integrity of the disciplinary process.

Nathan Cox

Head of the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office

1. The judicial disciplinary system

The role of the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice

Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice share joint responsibility for judicial discipline in England and Wales.

Standards of conduct

Judicial office-holders are expected to uphold the standards set out in the [Guide to Judicial Conduct](#), first published in 2003. The Guide is based on three core principles: independence, impartiality, and integrity, and is regularly updated to reflect changes in judicial and public life.

Judicial independence

Judicial independence is a cornerstone of our democracy. It ensures that judges can act impartially and without external influence, including from government. The disciplinary system addresses personal misconduct only; it does not interfere with judicial decisions, which can only be challenged through the courts.

Misconduct

Misconduct refers to breaches of expected standards of conduct that are serious enough to warrant formal disciplinary action. Examples include:

- Bullying or harassment.
- Discriminatory language.
- Aggressive or rude behaviour.
- Misuse of judicial status.
- Misuse of social media.
- Failure to report involvement in legal proceedings.
- Unreasonable delay in issuing judgments.

Misconduct is categorised into three levels to clarify the link between behaviour and sanction:

- Misconduct.
- Serious misconduct.
- Gross misconduct.

The power to take disciplinary action

Disciplinary powers are jointly held by the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice.¹ Sanctions, ranging from formal advice to reprimand, are issued by the Lady Chief Justice with the Lord

¹ Section 108, Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

Chancellor's agreement. The Lord Chancellor has the authority to remove an office-holder for misconduct with the agreement of the Lady Chief Justice. This is except for judges of the High Court and above, who can only be removed by the Monarch following an address to both Houses of Parliament.

In cases involving misconduct by magistrates, the Lady Chief Justice has delegated her disciplinary powers up to the level of issuing a reprimand to a High Court judge.

Judicial Conduct Investigations Office ("JCIO")

The JCIO's role is defined in [The Judicial Discipline \(Prescribed Procedures\) Regulations 2023](#) and [The Judicial Conduct Rules 2023](#). While the JCIO can reject or dismiss complaints that do not meet the statutory criteria and advise decision makers on potential sanctions, it does not have the power to make findings of misconduct or take disciplinary action.

For complaints that meet the criteria for investigation, the JCIO may review hearing recordings, seek input from third parties, and request comments from the office-holder concerned. Before any disciplinary action is taken, the office-holder must be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

Judicial and lay involvement in the disciplinary process

Independent judicial involvement is central to the disciplinary system. Nominated judges, who must be at least equivalent in rank to the office-holder concerned, investigating judges, who must be senior in rank to the office-holder concerned, and judicially chaired disciplinary panels, which consider some of the most serious cases, are responsible for making findings of misconduct and recommending sanctions to the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice. Lay persons also make an important contribution as disciplinary panel members and nominated committee members, who consider complaints about magistrates.

Complaints about magistrates

Complaints about magistrates are considered first by a regional conduct advisory committee and are referred to the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice via the JCIO if a finding of misconduct is made.

Summary process

This process is used for cases where removal from office is recommended without the need for further investigation—such as serious criminal convictions or persistent failure to meet mandatory minimum sitting requirements specified by the Lord Chancellor.

Expedited process

This is an opt-in route for straightforward cases where facts are undisputed, and the likely sanction is at the lower end of severity (formal advice or formal warning). If agreed by the office-holder, the JCIO refers the case directly to the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice for a decision.

Final decision

Following consideration by the relevant authority, the JCIO refers the case to the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice. Once a decision is made, parties are notified in writing. Where a sanction is imposed, a statement is published on the JCIO website to promote transparency.

2. Our performance in 2024-25

We use key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor our effectiveness and help us deliver a high-quality service. In 2024, we introduced more detailed KPIs to give the public and the judiciary a clearer picture of how we handle complaints.

The table below shows our performance against these new KPIs for complaints concluded during the 2024–25 reporting year. The figures do not match the total number of complaints received (3,279), as some were still under consideration at year-end. Additionally, the data includes cases referred to the JCIO following initial review by regional conduct advisory committees (see KPI4).

Action	Complaints Concluded in 2024-25	Completion Target (% and equivalent number of complaints)	Actual Performance (% and equivalent number of complaints)
1. Notify complainants that their complaint does not meet the criteria for acceptance by the JCIO within 15 working days of receipt.	2,496	90% (2,222)	94% (2,339)
2. Conclude complaints accepted for further consideration and then dismissed following enquiries by the JCIO within 12 weeks of receipt.	157	90% (141)	77% (122)
3. Conclude complaints which are dismissed by a nominated judge or refer complaints in which a nominated judge recommends a disciplinary sanction to the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice (or her senior judicial delegate) for a decision within 26 weeks of receipt.	29	90% (26)	66% (19)
4. Refer complaints in which a conduct advisory committee has recommended a disciplinary sanction for misconduct by a magistrate to the Lord Chancellor and Lady Chief Justice for decision within 8 weeks of receipt.	58	90% (52)	83% (48)
5. Provide monthly updates to parties in ongoing investigations.	2,557	95% (2,429)	92% (2,352)

Overall, we believe that our performance during the 2024-25 reporting year reflects our commitment to delivering a high-quality service, even as the office adapted to a substantial increase in workload following its expanded remit. Despite an increase of nearly 1,000 complaints on the previous year, we met or exceeded our performance target for 92% of the 2,740 complaints we concluded during the reporting period.

While there is room for improvement in our performance on KPIs 2-5, the number of cases in which we did not meet a target represents just 8% of all the complaints we concluded. Additionally, a significant proportion of delays to cases in relation to KPIs 2-4 were due to external factors, such as delays in receiving court hearing recordings, and the need to obtain third-party statements. We nevertheless acknowledge that there are also instances where factors such as staff absence or internal processing issues have led to delays. We are committed to improving our performance in these areas and have already introduced several measures to support improvement, for example:

- Closer scrutiny by managers of case progression.
- A protocol for ensuring that cases are not held up when caseworkers are away from work.
- A weekly 'casework clinic' at which any member of the team who is unsure about how to progress a case can receive advice in person from a senior manager.

We will continue to explore ways in which we can improve our performance in the small proportion of complaints where we have not met our targets.

Staffing

The JCIO has a staff complement of 20 civil servants composed of the following roles and Civil Service grades:

- One Head of Operations (Grade 6).
- One Head of Casework (Grade 7).
- Two Senior Casework Managers (Senior Executive Officer).
- Four Senior Caseworkers (Higher Executive Officer).
- Twelve Caseworkers (Executive Officer) (two of whom also provide business support functions to the team).

Finance

The JCIO's budget for 2024-2025 was £106,000. The JCIO manages its public funding responsibly and adheres to the same financial governance requirements as the Judicial Office under Managing Public Money principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

3. Complaints

Complaints received by the JCIO are categorised based on their subject matter. The categories are:

- Bankruptcy
- Breach of guidelines about contact with the media
- Bullying and/or harassment
- Conduct liable to call into question judicial impartiality
- Conviction for other types of offences (or acceptance of a caution in some circumstances)
- Delay, without a reasonable excuse, in issuing a judgment
- Dishonesty
- Displaying anger or aggression
- Failure to engage with, or report a relevant matter to, a senior judicial office
- Failure to follow guidance about use of social media
- Failure, without a reasonable excuse, to meet sitting or training requirements
- Falling asleep in court
- Improper handling of, or accessing of, sensitive information
- Judicial decision/case management
- Misuse of judicial status
- Motoring-related conviction
- Other
- Rudeness
- Subject to serious criticism in a personal capacity in legal or professional disciplinary proceedings

The table below contains a breakdown of the complaints which we received in the reporting year.

Category	Receipts	% of Receipts
Judicial decision/case management	2,131	65%
Other	395	12%
Rudeness	227	7%
Delay, without a reasonable excuse, in issuing a decision or approving a hearing transcript	199	6%
Displaying anger or aggression	118	4%
Conduct liable to call into question judicial impartiality	73	2%

Bullying and/or harassment	35	1%
Failure, without a reasonable excuse, to meet sitting or training requirements	34	1%
Failure to follow guidance about use of social media	18	1%
Failure to engage with, or report a relevant matter to, a senior judicial office	11	<1%
Misuse of judicial status	10	<1%
Motoring-related convictions	7	<1%
Improper handling, or accessing, of sensitive information	6	<1%
Conviction for other types of offence (or acceptance of a caution in some circumstances)	4	<1%
Dishonesty	4	<1%
Subject to serious criticism in a personal capacity in legal or professional disciplinary proceedings	4	<1%
Falling asleep in court	2	<1%
Not specified	1	<1%
	3,279 ²	

The JCIO is obliged to reject complaints which do not meet the criteria for acceptance set out in *The Judicial Conduct Rules 2023*³. Complaints must:

- (a) state the name of the person making the complaint
- (b) state the address or email address of the person making the complaint
- (c) contain an allegation of misconduct on the part of an identified or identifiable person holding an office, which is supported by relevant details as specified in guidance published by the JCIO from time to time
- (d) state the date, or dates, that the alleged misconduct took place unless the JCIO decides that this is unnecessary taking into account all the circumstances of the complaint⁴

In 2024-25, 2,718 complaints were rejected following assessment because they did not meet the criteria for acceptance. This is despite the detailed guidance on our website about the types of complaints we can and cannot accept and the information we need from complainants. Before a complaint is rejected it must be carefully assessed by a caseworker. Such complaints therefore take up a significant amount of staff time, even though they are not taken forward for further investigation.

² This figure does not include the 858 complaints that were categorised as 'created in error', for example, because they were a duplicate complaint.

³ Rule 10, Judicial Conduct Rules 2023.

⁴ Rule 8, Judicial Conduct Rules 2023

Complaints must also be made within three months of the matter complained of. This time limit can only be extended in exceptional circumstances. In 2024-25, 57 complaints were rejected because they were out of time and there were no exceptional reasons to extend the time limit. A further 28 complaints were withdrawn by the complainant.

For complaints which are accepted for further consideration, the JCIO is required to make inquiries necessary to establish the facts. These inquiries will depend on the nature of the complaint. For example, as noted in Part Two, to consider complaints about misconduct in court, the JCIO will typically obtain the audio recording of the hearing and can obtain other sources of evidence such as third-party statements. Complainants are not required to provide a transcript of the proceedings.

Some complaints which have been accepted for further consideration will later be dismissed by the JCIO, a nominated judge or the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice because they are found not to amount to misconduct. The table below provides a breakdown of the 252 complaints dismissed by the JCIO. Eight complaints were dismissed following consideration by a nominated judge. The Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice (or in the case of complaints involving magistrates – a High Court judge acting on her behalf) dismissed a further five complaints.

Dismissed	
The facts alleged in the complaint were obviously untrue	38
Even if the facts alleged in the complaint were true, they would not require a disciplinary sanction to be issued	20
The complaint was about a judicial decision or case management and did not raise a question of misconduct	16
The complaint was misconceived	154
The complaint raised a matter which had already been dealt under the JCIO process or otherwise, and did not present any significant new evidence	4
The complaint was about the private life or professional conduct in a non-judicial capacity of a judicial office-holder and raised no question of misconduct	1
The complaint, for any other reason, did not relate to misconduct by a judicial office-holder	13
The judicial office-holder no longer held office	6
Total	252

4. Disciplinary action

A core principle of the judicial disciplinary system is that where misconduct by a judicial office-holder is established, a disciplinary sanction must be issued. The authority to issue sanctions lies solely with the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice (or a senior judicial delegate). In every case, the sanction must be agreed jointly.

As outlined in Part One, the available sanctions are set out in legislation and, in ascending order of severity, are:

- Formal advice.
- Formal warning.
- Reprimand.
- Removal from office.

The sanction applied in any given case will depend primarily on the seriousness of the misconduct. Other relevant factors likely to be considered include:

- Whether the office-holder has accepted responsibility for their actions.
- Whether the conduct has harmed others or posed a risk to the reputation of the judiciary.
- Whether personal circumstances, such as ill-health, contributed to the behaviour.
- Precedents set in similar cases.
- Any previous disciplinary findings against the office-holder.

Even the least severe sanction represents a serious outcome for a judicial office-holder. All sanctions are published on the JCIO website and remain on the individual's record.

In 2024–25, 89 judicial office-holders were found to have committed misconduct — representing under 0.5% of the approximately 20,000 judges, magistrates, non-legal tribunal members, and coroners in England and Wales.

The table below shows a breakdown of cases of misconduct by sanction and type of office:

Office	Formal advice	Formal Warning	Reprimand	Removed	Total
Magistrates	17	17	5	13	52
Salaried and fee paid courts judges	13	8	0	2	23
Tribunal judges and members	6	2	0	4	12
Coroners	0	2	0	0	2
Total	36	29	5	19	89

The proportion of cases of misconduct by magistrates reflects the fact that magistrates make up approximately 60% of judicial office-holders in England and Wales.

The table below contains a breakdown of complaints by type and outcomes. It should be noted that the total of dismissed and upheld complaints does not match the total received because some complaints were rejected or because they were still under consideration at the end of the reporting period.

Category	Total Received	Dismissed	Upheld
Failure, without a reasonable excuse, to meet sitting or training requirements	34	0	21
Delay, without a reasonable excuse, in issuing a decision or approving a hearing transcript	192	59	14
Misuse of judicial status	10	0	8
Rudeness	227	62	8
Failure to follow guidance about use of social media	18	3	6
Conduct liable to call into question judicial impartiality	73	17	6
Displaying anger or aggression	118	65	6
Motoring-related conviction	7	1	6
Failure to engage with, or report relevant matters to, a senior judicial officer	11	0	5
Bullying and/or harassment	36	7	2
Conviction for other types of offence (or acceptance of a caution in some circumstances)	4	0	1
Dishonesty	4	0	2
Falling asleep in court	2	0	1
Improper handling, or accessing, of sensitive information	6	1	1

Other	395	15	1
Subject to serious criticism in a personal capacity in legal or professional disciplinary proceedings	4	1	1
Total	1,141	231	89

Formal advice

During this reporting period, **36** cases of misconduct resulted in a sanction of formal advice. Examples of misconduct which resulted in this sanction included:

- Failure to report personal involvement in legal proceedings.
- Misuse of judicial status.
- Misuse of social media.
- Unreasonable delay in issuing a judgment.
- Accumulation of points for driving offences.
- Discourteous comments made to a member of court staff during a hearing.
- Offensive humour directed towards a member of court staff.

Formal warning

During this reporting period, **29** cases of misconduct resulted in a sanction of formal warning. Examples of misconduct which resulted in this sanction included:

- Shouting at court staff.
- Shouting at a legal representative.
- Swearing in court and rudeness to a witness.
- Misuse of judicial status.
- Breach of guidance in relation to application for judicial appointment.
- Misuse of social media.
- Disparaging remarks about the magistracy during a webinar.
- Remarks indicative of bias made during a hearing.
- Using a mobile device for personal reasons during a hearing.
- Imprudent management of personal financial affairs.
- Discriminatory remarks made to a colleague in a social setting.

Reprimand

During this reporting period, **5** cases of misconduct resulted in a sanction of reprimand. Examples of misconduct which resulted in this sanction included:

- Failure, without a reasonable excuse, to meet mandatory minimum sitting requirements.
- Inappropriate conduct towards a member of staff.

Removal from office

During this reporting period, **19** cases of misconduct resulted in removal from office. Examples of misconduct which resulted in this sanction included:

- Failure, without a reasonable excuse, to meet mandatory minimum sitting requirements.⁵
- Part time office-holder subject to serious adverse findings in professional disciplinary proceedings.

⁵ The rules which govern the handling of disciplinary cases provide that an office-holder may be recommended for removal from office without further investigation if he/she has failed, without a reasonable excuse, to meet minimum sittings requirements. This accounts for a substantial majority of cases which result in removal from office every year.

5. Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman

The independent Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman (JACO) is responsible for reviewing how complaints of misconduct have been handled by the JCIO. If the JACO decides that the JCIO has mishandled a complaint, he may refer the matter back to us for re-investigation and/or recommend changes to procedures.

In 2024-25, the JACO received 447 complaints about the JCIO that came within his remit, of which he investigated 23. The Ombudsman upheld, or partially upheld, 11 of those complaints. This equates to under 0.5% of all the complaints we received during the reporting period. The remaining 424 complaints were dismissed after a preliminary investigation by the JACO.

When a complaint is upheld by JACO, the JCIO carefully reviews the case to identify learning points. This informs the guidance and training given to staff and helps us provide a better service to complainants and the subjects of complaints.

Further information about the Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/judicial-appointments-and-conduct-ombudsman>

