



2024–2030



JUSTICE **Strategy**

For a fairer UK justice system within everyone's reach



Foreword

It is my great pleasure to introduce this new strategy to you. As President of JUSTICE (one of my favourite titles), I get to work with an exceptionally committed team who together comprise one of the most trusted and respected voices in the justice system. JUSTICE stands as the conscience and heart of the legal profession as a whole – left, right, and centre.

The rule of law has been dangerously eroded over the last decade, as a recent landmark JUSTICE report detailed, and the next few years will be pivotal for efforts to turn this tide. It is excellent, therefore, to see JUSTICE’s trademark combination of expertise, ambition, and pragmatism shining through so clearly in this strategy. Their work will be needed more than ever over the coming years, and they are evidently ready for the approaching challenges and opportunities.

I hope this strategy sparks many important discussions across the legal sector, politics, and beyond about the importance of, and necessary steps towards, a transparent and fair justice system that respects the rights of all. Most importantly, I very much look forward to seeing the plans it contains come to life, to all our collective benefit.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws KC LT
President of JUSTICE’s Council

Baroness A. Kennedy

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Our strategy: an overview

This strategy was created by our staff, Board, and Council members, and with invaluable input from a wide range of key stakeholders and partners. It is designed to guide our work for the next six years, up until 2030.

Our purpose:

To build a fairer UK justice system within everyone's reach.

Our purpose is achieved by our goals:

- 1 Firmly establish the rule of law as a key feature of our democracy.



- 2 Challenge discrimination and inequality.



- 3 Build a well-functioning, people-centred justice system with trustworthy and effective data management.



- 4 Increase public understanding of the importance of the justice system, its key challenges, and most promising solutions.



Our values inform all our work:

Inclusivity

Integrity

Independence

Innovation

About us

JUSTICE is a law reform charity working to build a fairer UK justice system within everyone's reach. Over our 67-year history we have transformed the legal landscape for the better, led by evidence, expertise, and a focus on practical solutions.

We are the only non-governmental organisation ('NGO') whose work spans the whole of the UK justice system - from family and housing law to policing, benefits decision making, and much more – touching the lives of people across the country. Key legal bodies we now take for granted such as the Ombudsman, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board were all proposed and supported into being by JUSTICE.



How we work

JUSTICE's work is known for its independence and rigor. Our research is grounded in deep subject-matter expertise: we bring together experts from within and beyond law – including people with lived experience of interacting with the justice system – to develop realistic solutions to key challenges.

We then advise policymakers, judges, civil servants, lawyers, service providers, and others on how to build a better justice system. As well as producing reports, briefings, and consultation responses, we regularly meet with senior civil servants and politicians from across the political spectrum, sit on key advisory bodies, and work with the media to widen understanding of justice system issues.

Our recent work has:



Safeguarded children.

We recently secured a government pilot to protect domestic abuse victims and children in family court processes.



Supported people with mental health difficulties.

Due to our work, magistrates' and Crown Courts across England now have liaison and diversion professionals to help identify people with mental health issues and other vulnerabilities when they first come into contact with the system.



Protected journalists.

Our work was instrumental in amending the Public Order Act 2023 to protect journalists and members of the public from being arrested while reporting on protests.



Defended government accountability.

Our recent legal intervention blocked attempts to routinely hide the names of external contractors and political Special Advisors in judicial review (a key tool for holding the government to account).



Helped secure everyone's human rights.

We played a leading role in the Save our Human Rights Act Coalition, working with over a hundred other NGOs to defend our current human rights framework.

Our members

We are a cross-party membership organisation with members from students to senior judges – we welcome all who seek to support our important purpose.

Our council

Our council is currently headed by Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws KC LT, with Vice-presidents Dominic Grieve KC and Baroness Sarah Ludford.



**Baroness Kennedy
of The Shaws KC LT**

President,
JUSTICE Council



Dominic Grieve KC

Vice-president,
JUSTICE Council



Baroness Sarah Ludford

Vice-president,
JUSTICE Council

Where we work

JUSTICE is the UK section of the International Commission of Jurists – an organisation comprised of eminent jurists working to defend human rights and the rule of law worldwide.



As well as working across England we have a thriving JUSTICE Scotland chapter and staff in London, Edinburgh, and Sheffield. We also work in Wales and Northern Ireland and plan to deepen our engagement with these regions in the coming years.

Values: how we will work

JUSTICE exists to build a fairer UK justice system within everyone's reach. We are united under this purpose and our commitment to the following values:

Inclusivity

We are open and prioritise meaningful collaboration. We seek a wide range of perspectives and expertise, ensuring the voices of those with lived experience and those most in need of a better justice system are heard loud and clear. We believe listening and empathy are critical to good policymaking.

Integrity

We are trustworthy and evidence based. We work transparently and with intellectual rigour. We speak out with courage when appropriate.

Independence

We prize our objectivity, impartiality, and political neutrality. We are led by evidence, data, and careful analysis. This rigor and independence enable us to maintain strong trust and hold decision-makers to account.

Innovation

We are not afraid to think differently and challenge the status quo when it is not working. We are forward looking and aim to set the agenda for justice system reform.

What is the justice system?

The justice system is the wide ecosystem of people, institutions, and services which advise on, enforce, and administer the law. It can be broken into four broad parts:

Administrative justice concerns how the state treats the people who interact with it. It includes issues such as benefits decision making, housing provision and immigration decisions.

Criminal justice concerns the investigation, arrest, prosecution, defence, sentencing, punishment, and rehabilitation of those who are suspected or convicted of criminal offences. It impacts not just those who are suspected of, or involved in, breaking the law but many others including witnesses, victims and family members of both victims and perpetrators.

Civil justice captures issues where people, businesses or other organisations are trying to resolve their disputes with each other or ensure they have their rights respected. It covers a very wide area – from simple damaged goods or small debt recovery claims to large claims between multi-national companies.

Family justice concerns the legal regulation of disputes within families or between members of the family and the state. Issues around child arrangements, for example, fall into this category.



Justice and the rule of law are under threat in this country in ways which would have seemed unimaginable when JUSTICE was founded 67 years ago – its work has never been more needed than it is now.

Baroness Hale of Richmond DBE



Context: key challenges & opportunities

A fair, well-functioning justice system is the foundation upon which thriving societies, strong democracies, and robust economies rest. A just set of rules that apply to us all equally gives us a firm basis from which to trust one another, form contracts, start families, participate in collective decision making, and meet shared challenges.

The UK has a great basis from which to achieve this: we have a long tradition of protecting human rights and our courts are viewed as some of the fairest in the world.

But our current justice system is not a stable bedrock enabling us all to live together and flourish. Instead, widening cracks across the system are causing increasingly painful injustices and inefficiencies. In particular, successive governments have seriously eroded the UK's rule of law, with profound impacts on democratic accountability and the quality of policymaking.

These harms hurt us all; every one of us relies on the justice system, whether via employment rights protections, fair decision-making by public bodies, or simply by knowing those in power cannot act with impunity. But they do not hurt us all equally - marginalised groups such as young people, racialised communities, and migrants bear the brunt of these injustices and inefficiencies. Understandably, many in these communities struggle to trust that the justice system will treat them fairly.

Despite a large modernisation programme, our justice system still lags far behind our current technological capacities. If designed around the people who use the justice system, technology has the potential to revolutionise the sector. But technological reforms done wrong risk making things worse for those already obstructed or prevented from realising rights and accessing justice.

The extent of the justice system's current problems are kept hidden by a widespread lack of understanding of what the system is, how it works, and its foundational importance across many dimensions of life. Data blind spots throughout the system do not help, and serve as unnecessary blocks to evidence-based policymaking.

The next six years are therefore a key opportunity to repair and renew this cornerstone of our society. Having developed and guided transformational improvements to the UK justice system before, we know this can be done. This experience, coupled with our system-wide expertise, means JUSTICE is uniquely placed to help ensure we seize this chance to change things for the better.



Measuring impact

A note on people-centred evaluation

A fairer, more transparent justice system within everyone's reach would change all our lives for the better, supporting democracy, strengthening communities, and giving each one of us a firm, trustworthy foundation to build our lives on. Because of this, we plan to keep our impact on people's lives at the forefront of our evaluation efforts over the next six years.

But measuring the success of our work will not be straightforward: the mechanisms behind complex social change are knotty and inherently uncertain. Nevertheless, good evaluation is essential to ensuring our work is as effective as possible.

We therefore plan to use the first year of this strategy period to hone our approach to measuring our impact.

We plan to:

1.

Extend our ability to measure and communicate the impacts of our work, including both system-level and person-level impacts, which we see as closely interrelated.

2.

Approach impact relationally, reflecting the fact that our work will often contribute to change alongside other actors within a complex wider ecosystem.

3.

Use our impact findings to iteratively inform our planning, so the design of future work is shaped appropriately by these findings.

We will look for impact on people's lives in the following interconnected areas:



Examples of how we envisage our future work impacting people's lives:

In this document, we have given illustrative examples below each goal to give a sense of the ways in which we envisage our future work impacting people's lives.



**JUSTICE is the
cornerstone of legal
integrity, fostering a
society where every
voice is heard and
every right is upheld.**

*Leslie Thomas KC
Barrister at Garden Court Chambers and
Professor of Law at Gresham College*



Goals: what we want to achieve by 2030

We will work towards four key goals over the next six years. Though these do not represent the entirety of our aspirations, they will serve as our guiding beacons.

1. Firmly establish the rule of law as a key feature of our democracy.

This crucial element of our democracy has been seriously eroded over the last decade. We aim to repair and strengthen it by:

1. **Scrutinising new policies and legislation.**
2. **Holding government and parliament to account.**
3. **Increasing the public profile of the rule of law.**
4. **Promoting equality at the heart of policymaking.**

The rule of law is fundamental to stable democracies. At its most basic, it means that we all benefit from, and are answerable to, the same set of rules. When secured, it protects people from arbitrary state power and allows democracy, commerce, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy to thrive.

Human rights and the rule of law are intimately intertwined and mutually reinforcing: the rule of law requires human rights protections and human rights cannot be protected without a strong rule of law.

Whilst its exact elements are contested, we understand the rule of law to mean that: nobody is above the law, including the government; the law is clear, foreseeable, and safeguards everyone's human rights; everyone has access to justice, meaning we can all equally enforce ours and others' rights and responsibilities; and individuals receive equal treatment in law and are equal before the law.

Examples of planned work in this area:

- **Lessons for Democratic Renewal:** Following our landmark 2023 report, 'The State We're In: Addressing Threats & Challenges to the Rule of Law', we will now look internationally for lessons to help us repair and renew the UK's Rule of Law. We aim to chart different countries' respective journeys and difficulties with Rule of Law adherence and then apply these learnings to the UK context.
- **Ongoing parliamentary advocacy:** The next few years will be a key chance to turn the tide on the erosion of the rule of law. Building on our strong work in this area, we will scrutinise the next government's agenda robustly and fulsomely through briefings, parliamentary events, drafting amendments, and monitoring the impact of reforms.

An example of how we envisage this future work impacting people's lives:

Michael, a small business owner, is faced with huge economic uncertainty after a new policy is announced that was not in the government's manifesto. Due to growing consensus around a JUSTICE-authored 'consultation checklist' to ensure policies benefit from sufficient evidence and insights from those affected, the government undertakes a robust and meaningful consultation, thereafter properly reflecting the results into their plans. After many responses identify serious problems with the proposal, it is substantially redesigned. Through this process, the voices of Michael and thousands of others are better heard by government and their livelihoods protected. More widely, the checklist helps improve policymaking across education, economics, health and more.



2. Challenge discrimination and inequality.

Inequalities and discrimination pervade our justice system. We aim to change this by:

- 1. Amplifying the insights of those with lived experience of these issues.**
- 2. Holding the government and public bodies to account.**
- 3. Promoting equality and non-discrimination as core justice system attributes.**

The UK justice system does not treat us as equals. Too often, people's interactions with the justice system are shaped by the colour of their skin, how much money they have, whether they have a disability, their gender, and other factors that should have no bearing. The resulting injustices separate families, entrench destitution, and deprive young people of life opportunities.

JUSTICE has a proud history of working to address these issues, having advocated for reforms of the youth justice system, the system of inquests and inquiries that fail victims from Hillsborough to Grenfell, and more. People want a fair justice system that treats us all equally and we know real, workable solutions to these issues exist.

Examples of planned work in this area:

- **Ethnic minority women and girls in the criminal justice system project:** Following our report 'Tackling Racial Injustice: Children and the Youth Justice System' (2021), we have begun a project looking at Black and racialised women and girls' experiences of the justice system. This project will offer a series of practical recommendations to improve these groups' experiences, reduce discrimination, and ensure they receive any help and support needed.
- **Achieving racial justice at inquests training:** In 2024 we published a guide giving lawyers and coroners tools to raise the potential role of racism in state custody deaths. We will develop this into training modules for barristers, solicitors, and coroners to increase the likelihood of inquests making recommendations to address racist practices contributing to the deaths of Black and racialised people in state custody and to improve the experiences of bereaved families.

An example of how we envisage this future work impacting people's lives:

Imran dies after being restrained in prison and his family believes racism played a role in his death. Having taken JUSTICE's Achieving Racial Justice at Inquests training module, the lawyer representing Imran's family has the knowledge and confidence to raise the potential role of racism at the inquest into his death. The coroner acknowledges the role of race in Imran's death and (due in part to the lawyer's arguments on the role of race) makes recommendations to change the prison's restraint policies and training practices. This gives Imran's family the answers they deserve, and the coroner's recommendations save future lives.



3. Build a well-functioning, people-centred justice system with trustworthy and effective data management.

The state of our justice system and the pace of technological change will make the next six years pivotal in reshaping the terrain. We will help to transform the system for the better by:

1.

Scoping a JUSTICE data and policy initiative to develop cutting-edge justice data, research, and policy with people's needs at their heart.

2.

Advising on trustworthy and effective justice system data-management.

3.

Shaping policies on the use of AI in the justice system.

Advances in technology are a great opportunity to improve the justice system. But the risks – from discrimination to digital exclusion – must be addressed to ensure technology benefits those currently underserved by the status quo rather than those already empowered by it.

For modernisation to be effective and fair, justice bodies must collect and manage the right data in trustworthy and effective ways. JUSTICE will play a key role in highlighting data issues and setting out the importance of data for evidence-based policies and fair and open justice. We aim to be a leading voice on AI, human rights, and the law.

Examples of planned work in this area:

- **JUSTICE data and policy initiative:** We are scoping the potential for a global centre of excellence for justice data, research, and policy development to improve justice policy and practice.
- **AI and the Law project:** A multiyear project to ensure the use of data and AI in the justice system improves access to justice, advances human rights, and strengthens the rule of law. This will: develop principles for the use of AI in the justice system; investigate how AI and other technologies can help address unmet legal need; draw out lessons on AI use in other criminal justice systems; and consider what accountability for unfair or unsafe AI looks like.

An example of how we envisage this future work impacting people's lives:

Maya's application for council housing is accepted but she is not given as high a priority as she thinks she is entitled to. The council are using an AI tool to determine priority. She wants to challenge the decision but because of the AI used it is unclear how the decision was made. Due to JUSTICE-proposed legislative changes regulating public sector AI use, she can request a clear, simple explanation of how AI contributed to the decision making. She then wants to challenge the decision in court but cannot afford a lawyer and is overwhelmed by the process. Using free AI tools – incentivised by policies proposed by JUSTICE – providing accurate help for people without a lawyer, she is able to make a successful court application.



4. Increase public understanding of the importance of the justice system, its key challenges, and most promising solutions.

The justice system is undervalued and poorly understood. We aim to increase the importance of justice system issues by:

1. Providing accessible, trustworthy content explaining these issues.

2. Making the case for system-wide improvements to interested members of the public.

A well-functioning justice system is key to a thriving society. But, due to a lack of trusted, independent voices and increased misinformation, the UK justice system is undervalued and not well understood. Nor is its foundational importance for a functioning democracy widely recognised.

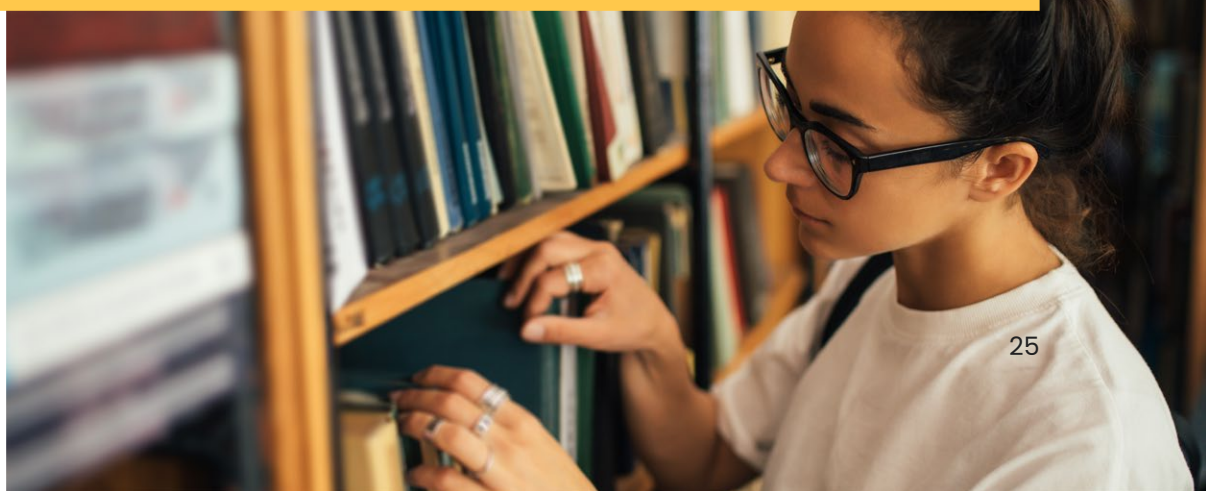
This lack of awareness goes hand in hand with successive governments' erosion of the rule of law and their failures to tackle systemic issues. This hurts us all, but marginalised groups bear the brunt of the resulting harms first and most deeply. We aim to increase the salience of justice system issues to improve justice outcomes for everyone, with particular attention on improving outcomes for marginalised groups.

Examples of planned work in this area:

- **More accessible resources on justice system issues:** We will launch a new JUSTICE website to give interested people a trusted, independent, and easily navigable source of information on justice system issues and solutions. Longer term, an expanded communications function will allow us to produce a variety of resources in different formats to reach new audiences for our work.
- **Updated ‘Law for Lawmakers Guide’:** MPs are key messengers on justice system issues – if they grasp the system’s importance and issues, the public are likely to follow. JUSTICE’s 2015 Law for Lawmakers Guide explains the key legal concepts central to MPs’ daily work. We will publish an updated, more accessible guide that reflects the changed political landscape – including the UK’s exit from the European Union and, crucially, the dangers of eroding the rule of law – and ensure every MP has a copy. We also plan to explore tailoring versions of the guide for Scottish MSPs, Welsh MSs, and Northern Irish MLAs.

An example of how we envisage this future work impacting people’s lives:

Sarah discovers plans for a new law that threatens her right to protest her local library closure. Seeking clarity, she finds a wealth of thorough, accessible JUSTICE resources to illuminate the legal background and potential repercussions of the new law. Empowered by this knowledge, Sarah transforms her concern into action. She uses JUSTICE’s materials to inform her community, distilling complex legalities into digestible insights through social media. As Sarah’s initiative gains momentum, she becomes a member of JUSTICE and takes part in a collaborative workshop with experts to further bridge the gap between legal expertise and public conversations. Sarah’s work shows the role trusted, accessible, expert analysis can play in informing democratic debates, protecting fundamental rights, and ensuring the right to protest remains a pillar of UK democracy.





**Probably the most
august cross-party
justice NGO in the
United Kingdom and
well known across
the world.**

*Lord Ken Macdonald KC
Former Director of Public Prosecutions*

Help us build a fairer UK justice system within everyone's reach

Join:

Our members are amongst our greatest assets – their support and expertise enables and informs our work. JUSTICE members are eligible to participate in our groundbreaking working parties, gain access to exclusive events, and receive discounts for our paid-for events (including our annual conference). We offer individual, student, and corporate membership options.

To find out more and join, visit
<https://justice.org.uk/support-justice/join-justice/>



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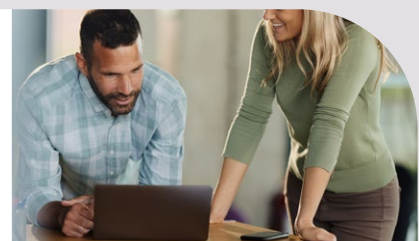
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admin@justice.org.uk



2024-2030



JUSTICE Strategy

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