

## **GMB Judges' Branch Development Plan 2025**

### **A - Recruitment Plan**

1. The Branch has around 100 members. Given the size of the judiciary, there is no reason why we should not have more than 1000.
2. Support of GMB nationally will be crucial, particularly in securing recognition from MoJ. This raises our profile, gives us a place at the staff side, and provides paid time off for activists to be trained.
3. Most importantly it would give us a space on the MoJ intranet for publicity to potential recruits; the virtual equivalent of the traditional workplace TU notice board. MoJ has just emailed all judges with a link to a statement from the incoming president of the circuit judges' judicial association; we would be able to ask for similar facilities.
4. We published a recruitment page on the web in December 2024 with technical help from region (Google 'GMB Judges Branch' to find it.). This is our shop window.
5. Our page/ website will be revised as required. For example this might be to:
  - a. Reflect that we're open to JOHs/ tribunal expert members, if so decide at the January branch meeting
  - b. Reword the text at the start which was carried over from the previous version. The webpage needs to be welcoming to all potential recruits, whose background, like the legal profession, does not yet reflect society. We want as many members as possible, including from overrepresented groups. Rephrasing will still of course promote diversity.
  - c. Maybe split it with links to other pages, to make it more digestible - see for example French judges TU sites <https://www.syndicat-magistrature.fr/> <https://www.union-syndicale-magistrats.org/>
6. We will ask GMB paid officers to issue press releases where compatible with Branch aims, targeting particular newspapers and professional journals such as Law Society Gazette as appropriate. Using paid officers avoids potential victimisation of activists. We need to co-ordinate effectively with those officers to enable them to issue them promptly. This will be discussed at a meeting with our Senior Organiser and National Officer.
7. Social media has been suggested but needs to be approached with caution. Judges are officially advised to be wary because of privacy issues. Activists using it risk being accused of breaching the duty of reserve, and victimisation by JCIO. Because of the nature of judges' work, there is a danger of trolling; we still remember the "enemies of the people" headlines in some of the press during Brexit.
8. A key resource is our existing members. We send them a regular newsletter with details of campaigns, successes and GMB services. This enables them to promote GMB to potential recruits and retains them.
9. Our January Branch meeting is being asked to approach extending those eligible to join to tribunal experts such as doctors. As well as increasing the

pool of potential recruits, this will help recruitment more generally as tribunal judges don't routinely work with other judges, but often with experts on a panel. The current branch secretary joined GMB after a chat with a disability qualified member on a panel.

10. Our January Branch meeting is also being asked to formally approve Branch aims and objectives. These will reassure potential recruits of our non-political nature, compatible with the judicial duty of reserve.

## **B - Schedule of Branch Meetings**

2025 all at 5pm on Thursdays by remote meeting Zoom

16/1/25

17/4/25

16/7/25

24/10/25

## **C - Union Democracy activity/ Participation in Wider GMB**

1. We will participate in GMB regionally and nationally, within the scope of with the Branch's aims and objectives. For example, we will seek national GMB support through congress for proper resourcing of the justice system.
2. We will offer appropriate expertise to GMB nationally, although obviously we cannot advise on legal cases. We are exploring whether and how we might usefully offer our members' expertise to GMB nationally in designing its legal service Unionline, currently under review. Our branch secretary is meeting the GMB Legal Officer immediately before the January Branch meeting.
3. A current issue in participating regionally is that officers live across the UK. There does not appear to be a mechanism for them to participate in activities at their local GMB offices.

## **D - Branch servicing and retention**

1. The regular email newsletter is a key tool in keeping in touch with members. It seeks their input. It lets them know what we are doing for them and what GMB can help them with.
2. The branch secretary will continue to be the initial contact for members for help, or the branch president if he is on holiday. He will refer on to the Senior Organiser or GMB departments as appropriate.
3. A particular strength of the branch has been the excellent service provided to individual members by the Senior Organiser in personal cases. There have been some notable successes.
4. We will shortly conduct a census of current members through email/ the Microsoft Form questionnaire facility. This will identify members in particular areas so that we can communicate with them about issues. For example, if

MoJ proceeds with worsened conditions for fee-paid SEND tribunal members, we will know who to consult.

## **E - Branch Organising**

1. The Branch is national but administered regionally in the South East, until membership grows sufficiently to split.
2. Currently we over-rely on a few key committee members. This will hopefully change as talented people come forward after requests for help on issues in the newsletter and more JoHs join.
3. We use the GMB Onedrive facility for security, and easy onward transfer of information when officers change. Information transfer has previously been an issue.
4. We are careful to comply with GDPR, particularly as it regards membership of a trade union as sensitive information. We do not communicate with members through MoJ email/ ejudiciary. Information on ejudiciary belongs to the MoJ as it is their computer system.
5. As we are not yet recognised by MoJ we minimise risks of activist victimisation by using paid officials to communicate where appropriate.
6. We have been told that there are least 30 judge members currently allocated to other branches and will continue to press GMB nationally to transfer them to us. We can then include them in our retention plan and to recruit more members.
7. The Branch is focussed on helping members with particular issues, campaigning and seeking official recognition from MoJ. Industrial action is very unlikely.
8. We are campaigning against misuse of the JCIO to discipline judges for trivial issue and name and shame them on a website. The campaign is primarily via the members newsletter. A press release and FOI request await issue by paid officials.
9. Once MoJ grants recognition we will join other MoJ workers including prosecutors at the MoJ staff side to promote our members' interests nationally.

## **F - Branch Resources**

1. Our January Branch meeting is being asked to appoint a second auditor.
2. This will enable the Branch to have its own funds, provided by GMB nationally as a proportion of subscriptions. There are no immediate plans to spend them, but it will be useful to accumulate funds in they are needed later, for example to fund travel to national negotiations.
3. The committee is unpaid and works in its own time. There are no current plans to change this, although GMB rules allow for honoraria to be paid if a Branch Meeting so decides.

## **G - Communications Plan**

1. This has been discussed above – for example concerning the website and newsletter.
2. FOI requests can be used to obtain information to support campaigns, and support our credibility as experts. For example the branch has drafted a FOI request about how and where JCIO to being used to discipline judges..
3. Such requests are best sent by paid officials to be more ‘official’, reduce the risk of them being ignored and avoid any risk of activist victimisation. We need to co-ordinate effectively with those officials so the requests can be issued promptly. This will be discussed at a meeting with our Senior Organiser and National Officer.
4. Modern employers regard trade unions as an essential aid in communicating with their workforce. In promoting official recognition, and our credibility generally, our approach will continue to be more constructive rather, although we will not be afraid to criticise MoJ where appropriate.

## **H - Training**

1. GMB expects course participants to attend only if granted paid time off by the employer. Accordingly activist training awaits official recognition by MoJ.
2. There may be opportunities for brief tailored training in the meantime.

A.Brodie - Branch Secretary

9.1.25

GMB Judges Branch J25 -  
A United Voice for Judges

