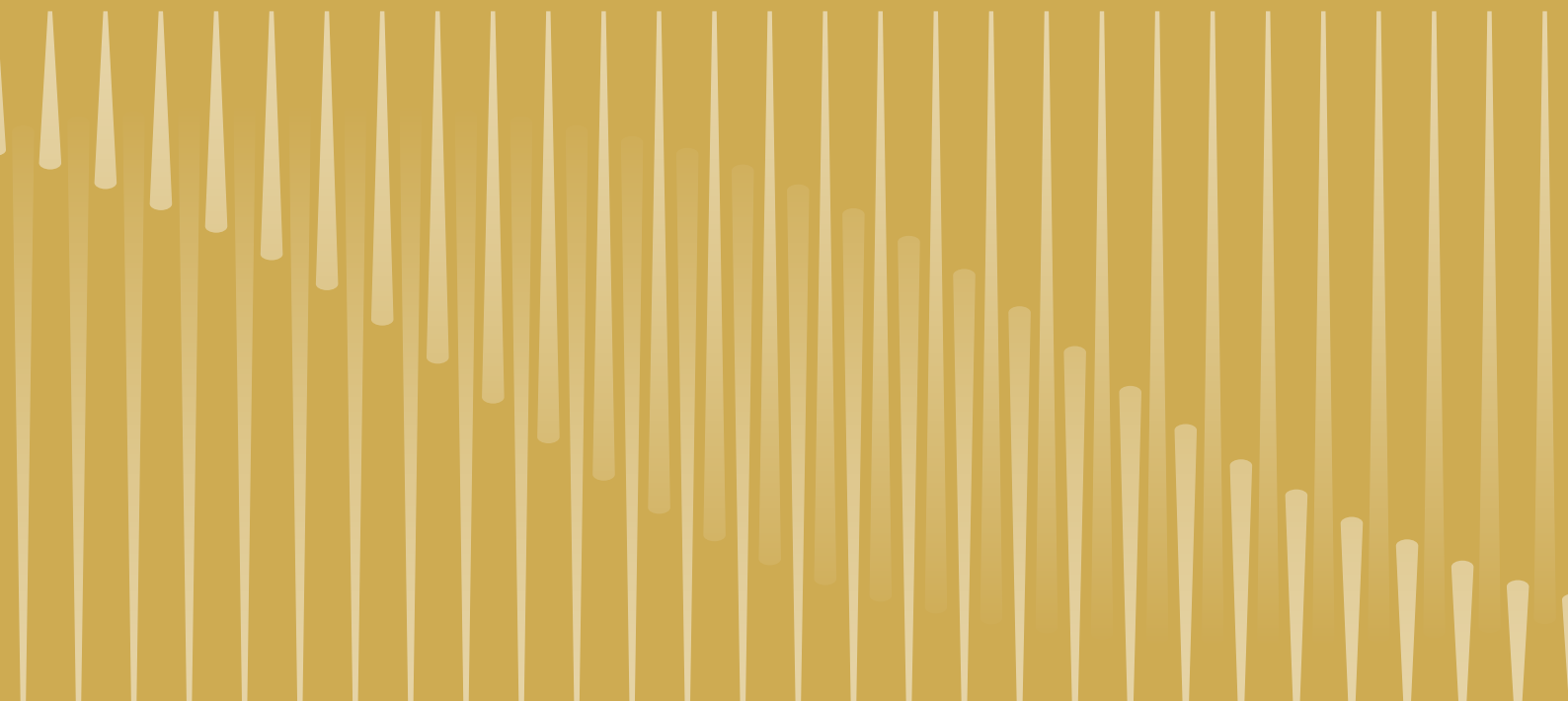




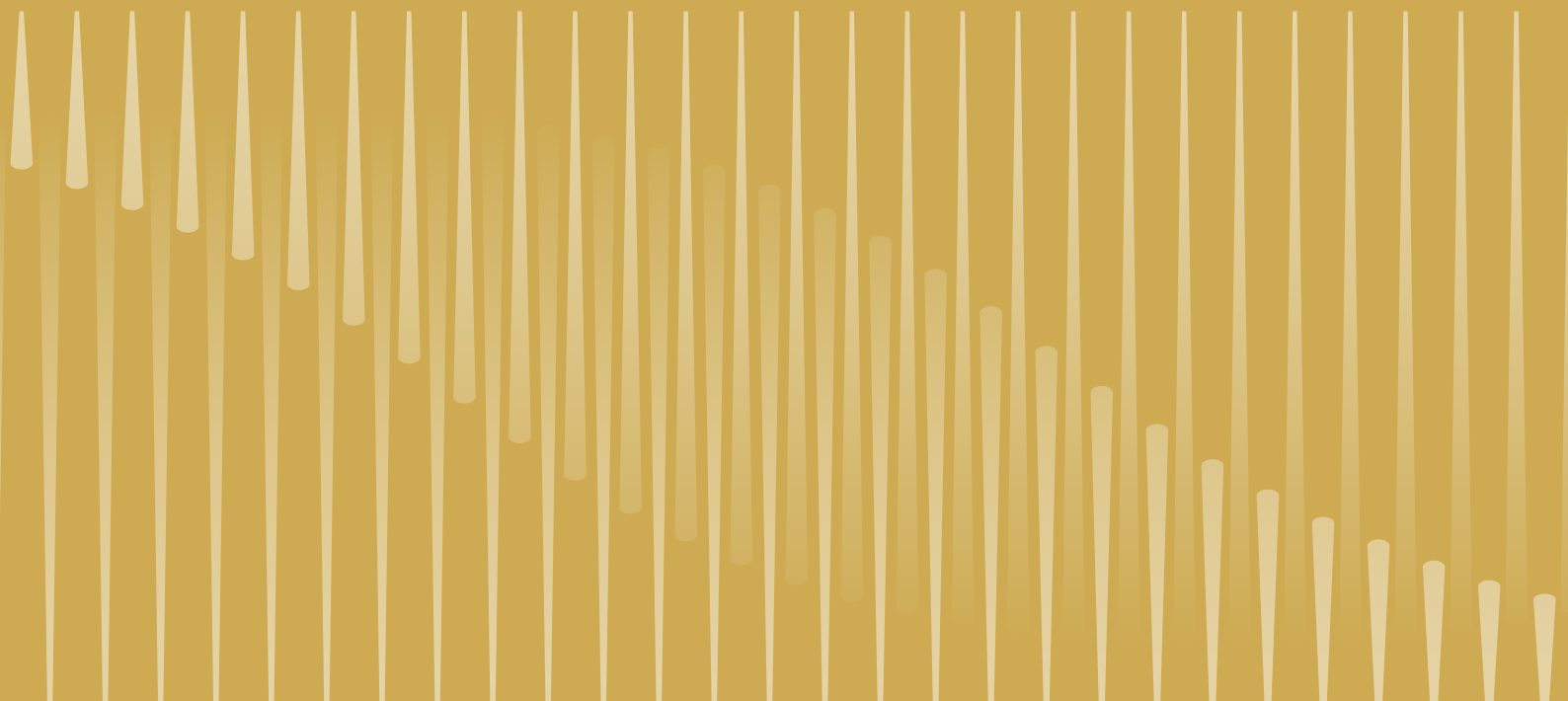
Comhairle na mBreithiúna
The Judicial Council

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Promoting judicial excellence and independence to ensure public confidence in the judiciary and the administration of justice in Ireland.



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Overview of 2025



judicialcouncil.ie
Website visits: **6,824**



Judicial Conduct

87

judges complained of

226

complaints

236

determinations

1

admissible complaint

78

complaints reviewed



Judicial Training

9

new judges inducted

5

conferences supported

105

training events offered

97%

of judges attended
a JSC training event

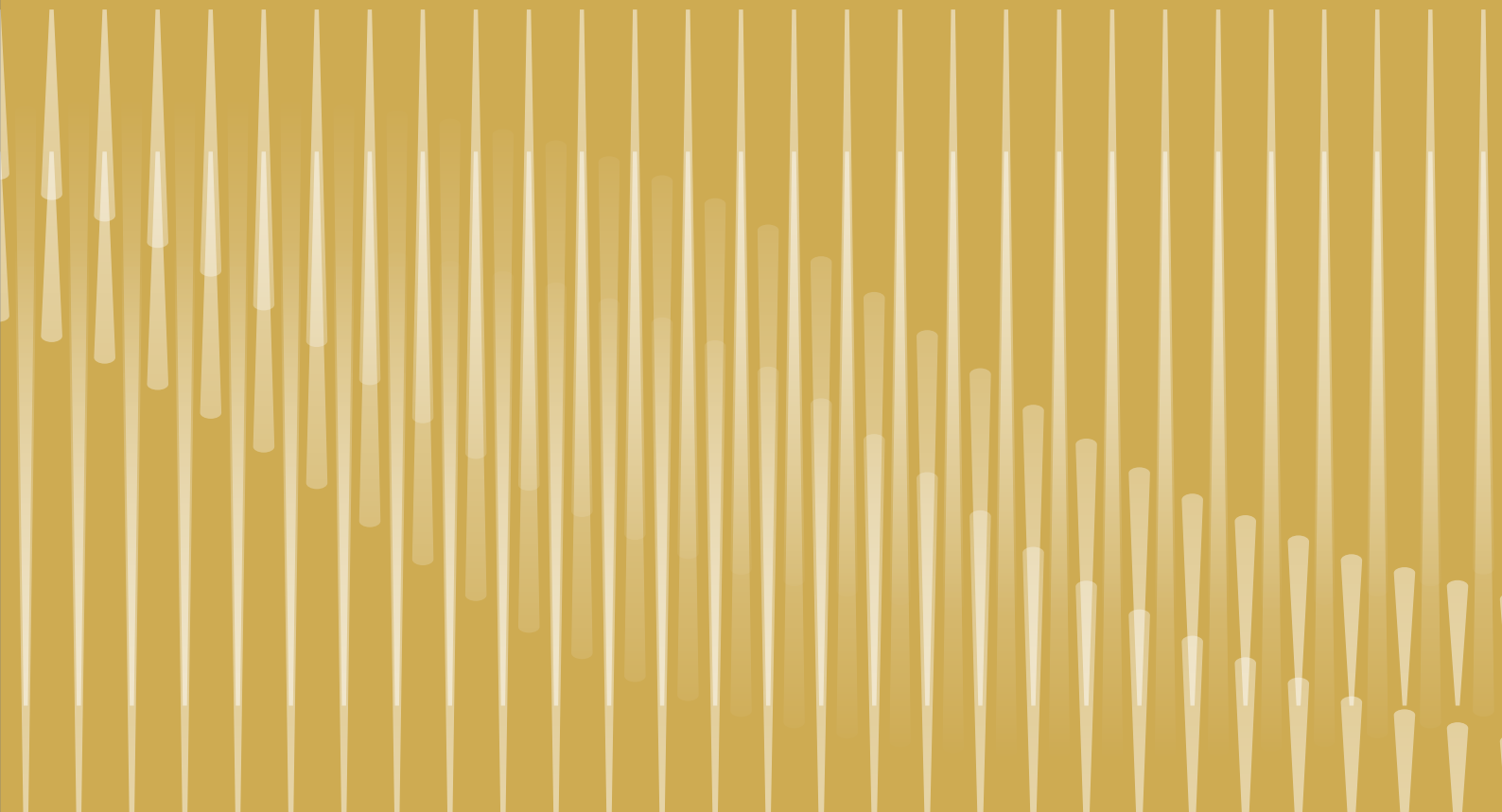


Judges

194

council members

Annual Report of the Judicial Council 2025



Foreword by the Chairperson of the Judicial Council



Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell
Chief Justice,
Chairperson of the Judicial Council

I am pleased to introduce the Judicial Council's Annual Report for 2025.

This is the Judicial Council's sixth Annual Report. Successive reports have noted that central to the Council's functions is the promotion and maintenance of public confidence in the judiciary and the administration of justice in Ireland. This report outlines the continued development and achievement in 2025 of the Council's statutory functions. While the Council's work has continued to develop, of particular importance have been milestones reached in relation to sentencing guidelines, judicial training and the establishment of a judicial wellbeing function in Ireland.

The Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee submitted to the Board under the Act its first draft guideline. That was a significant milestone for that committee, which encountered and overcame a number of hurdles in relation to data to support its work. The first guideline focuses primarily on the application of Section 40 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018. The section applies to a number of offences that include rape, serious sexual offences and serious assaults, as well as lesser offences. The section is engaged if the victim and the offender are, or were in the past, married, or in a civil partnership, or otherwise in an intimate relationship. In these cases the existence of the relationship is to be treated by a sentencing court as an aggravating factor, and the sentence is to be greater than it would otherwise be.

Sentencing in criminal cases can be a complex and difficult task for judges. This guideline, as the first in a series which will follow, will greatly assist judges in their decision making in this area.

A second significant development in 2025 was in relation to the future of judicial training. Early in the year I and the four Court Presidents asked the Judicial Studies Committee to consider the prospect of mandatory training for the judiciary.

The intention was, in broad terms, that judges would be required in each calendar year to complete a minimum number of training courses. Arising from the work of that committee, a proposal to realise an achievable but ambitious level of training emerged. Of particular importance was that the recommendations focused on a variety of topics to achieve each individual's goal. That incorporated substantive law, judgecraft and societal context. I informed judges of the new requirements at our national training conference in November, and the new system has since been widely embraced. This initiative will build upon the significant strides made in recent years in ensuring that our judges have, and develop, the skills required in their roles.

The third aspect I would highlight is that, over recent years, the Council has sought to promote and deliver a professional wellbeing function

for the judiciary in Ireland. Such a facility has been available to judges internationally for some time, and Ireland has lagged behind somewhat. Similarly, supports in this area have been available both for legal professionals and public sector staff for a long period of time. The Council established a committee for this purpose, and its recent planning coincided with the strong recommendations relating to this area in the Report of the Judicial Planning Working Group. In 2025 I was delighted that the Judicial Council launched its first “Strategy on Judicial Wellbeing” at the end of July, which coincided with an international judicial event on the same topic. The proposals in the Strategy, combined with the work already carried out and in progress will serve to guide an accessible support facility for judges in 2026.

These three examples, which at first glance may seem unrelated, illustrate the importance and interdependence of all of the Council’s functions in successfully supporting judges. It is hardly controversial to suggest that a judge who is equipped with guidelines to assist in decision making, who is required to attend a range of training events, and who is supported in their personal wellbeing, will be better equipped to carry out their role and display the highest standards of conduct in doing so. 2025 has seen continued advancement in these areas.

In highlighting only three areas, it is important not to lose sight of everything else which was achieved in 2025. Each annual report refers to the significant undertakings by judges in devoting themselves to supporting colleagues, chiefly through training and wellbeing, but also spending scarce time leading and supporting other functions.

This annual report again provides some detail in relation to the other ongoing work of the Board and the various committees. The Board oversees most of the Council’s functions, and I am particularly grateful to Ms Justice Iseult O’Malley for taking on the roles of Chairperson of the Board and of the Judicial Conduct Committee in 2025. The Chief Justice is ex officio the chairperson of both so, in delegating these roles to her, it enabled

me to focus on the establishment of the Judicial Appointments Commission. The Judicial Studies Committee, in providing training for judges from all of our court jurisdictions, continues to expand its programme. I would note and acknowledge at this point Mr Justice Peter Charleton whose role as Director of Judicial Studies reaches a conclusion in April 2026. His dedication to his responsibilities and his expertise has seen the continued growth of this function.

The Judicial Conduct Committee continues its important role in managing the complaint function under the Judicial Council Act 2019. It is independent under the Act in its role, as indeed is the Registrar, and it is clear from its own report that there is a robust system in place. It is apparent again from the 2025 data that on a daily basis judges in Ireland hold themselves to the high standards which they themselves set by their adoption of conduct guidelines.

As we look towards further growth in 2026, a key development will be the implementation of I.T. systems to support training and conduct. Additional staffing will be required to move to and sustain the next phase of growth. It is important again this year to acknowledge the amount of time that dozens of judges in Ireland dedicate to the functions of the Judicial Council, and as an addition to their workload. We continue to be grateful to the Secretary and staff of the Council, and indeed our committees’ lay members, for their continued support and commitment to the Council’s work. Everyone involved has displayed their dedication to the core objective to which I return: the maintenance and indeed promotion of public confidence in the judiciary in Ireland.

Donal O’Donnell

Chief Justice

Chairperson of the Judicial Council

June 2026

Introduction by the Secretary

I am very pleased to introduce the sixth Annual Report of the Judicial Council. The Council's achievements and ambitions continue to grow year on year, and it is again a privilege to be involved in the ongoing evolution of the Judicial Council.



Kevin O'Neill
Secretary to the Judicial Council

The Foreword by the Chief Justice and the reports of each of the committees illustrate the work done and being done. In assessing where we stand against the overall purpose and goals of the Council, it is clear from 2025 that every statutory function now operates on solid foundations, operating independently and supported by staff. The administrative structures are in place which will enable each to grow and adapt as we move forward. While those committees operate independently, each performs a critical role dependent on the others in achieving the core function of the Judicial Council: public confidence in the judiciary.

In reaching the point where each area has established its own identity, it is not to say that 2025 saw the beginning of the end of the development journey, more so the end of the beginning. Since establishment, growth in relation to staffing and supporting infrastructure for our judiciary has been frustrated in a number of ways, though not unique to this body or unfamiliar to anyone involved in a fledgling public sector body. In 2026 it is hoped that, having reached this key point, we can build on the now established functions and drive their development through the recruitment of additional staff and the creation of learning management and case management systems to support respectively judicial training and the judicial conduct system.

In the case of the former, enhanced access to training materials will add greatly to professional development. The case management system will, in addition to supporting the administration of complaints, support a more transparent approach to data and provide better insight into complaints.

The importance of being able to fully sustain those functions is key to success. Judges who are supported in relation to their wellbeing are better equipped to perform their functions and be resilient. Supporting the development of personal injuries and sentencing guidelines are key requirements in providing judges with the tools to assist in making decisions. Judges who attend training and professional development offerings are better equipped to fulfill their roles. Those who benefit from all of the foregoing are less likely to be the subject of a well-founded complaint. The ongoing development of these areas is dependent on consistent engagement by judges outside of their court duties and the capacity of our staff to support them, and central to that support are the necessary resources.

In looking at 2025, firstly our relationships with judges internationally continues to go from strength to strength. This is a key opportunity to learn from each other. Developing networks and associations with bodies representing judges in other countries is a statutory function

of the Council under the Judicial Council Act 2019 which recognises the importance of international engagement. Our judges and senior staff are actively involved with, and indeed delivering training to, judges across Europe and also participate in the management of various bodies. In addition, our strong relationships with our neighbouring common law jurisdictions see us collaborating on a regular basis in common interest areas in relation to education and sentencing.

Judicial training and wellbeing are of particular importance. Growing demands were met in 2025 through the support of this evolving function, recommended by the Judicial Planning Working Group. Of note was the launch of a wellbeing strategic plan. New initiatives in this area, as well as those in relation to implementing obligatory judicial training and developing a Learning Management System, added to our challenges in 2025, and into 2026.

We have now completed three full years of judicial conduct. While the Judicial Conduct Committee oversees this function, the majority of the work in this area involves consideration of the admissibility of complaints. In my own role as Registrar to the Judicial Conduct Committee, to whom complaints are made under the Act, determinations of admissibility are frequently complex. It is essential that the function operates and be seen to operate independently, with a robust and efficient process deployed. The absence of such a system for decades served to present judges as appearing to be immune from any form of scrutiny in relation to their conduct. That is no longer the case, and what is now in existence for more than three years means that complainants can seek to have judges' conduct examined, and if conduct described in a complaint reaches the threshold for admissibility, there is a fit for purpose process under the Act for having that investigated.

I would point to some of my observations in this area. Last year I highlighted that the prevalence of complaints from unrepresented parties suggested that persons who do not have the benefit of legal advice have greater difficulty understanding the court process, giving rise to many complaints. While that continued in 2025, the provision of

additional information in relation to what might be admissible as a complaint, as well as our participation in the implementation of measures to assist litigants in person in the courts system will, it is hoped, improve the position.

In providing some insight into those complaints, the majority arose in the higher volume District Court with a notable proportion in that court from unrepresented parties in family law proceedings. In the Superior Courts, it is undoubtedly the position that a large proportion of complaints emanate from the same individuals making several complaints. Generally speaking, it remains the case that our judges' conduct is of the highest standards, illustrated by the tiny proportion of complaints made compared with the many thousands of cases dealt with.

In looking at all of the Council's functions together, the importance of their interoperability is now clear. In combining what we learn from judiciaries in other countries, providing guidance and training to judges (whether through training, sentencing guidelines or personal injuries guidelines) and supporting the wellbeing of all of our judges, the capabilities of one and all are being optimised. It is logical to conclude that a judge (or indeed any professional) who is trained, resilient, supported and provided with the means to best enable them do their job maximises the potential for success. The Council has arrived at a point where it offers all of those things.

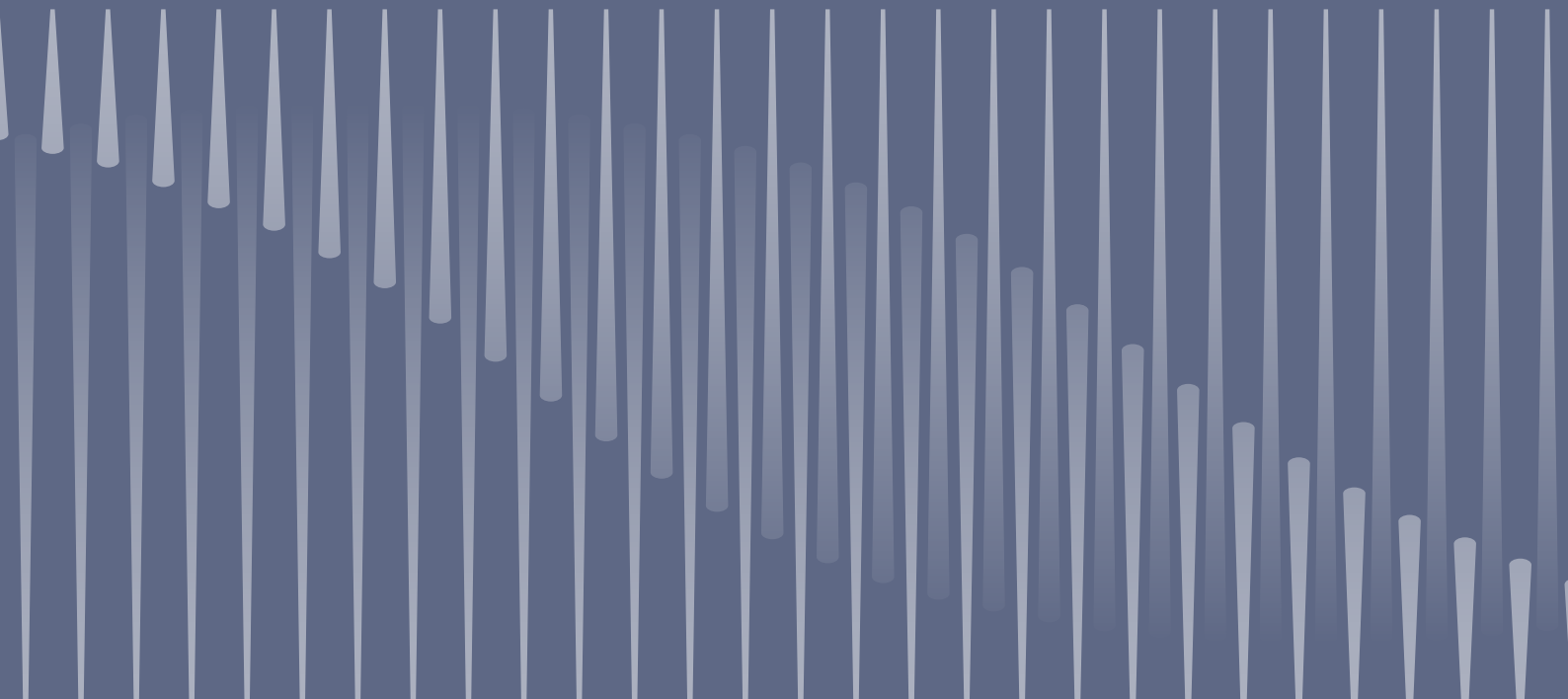
I would like to thank the members of the Board, particularly for their personal support in meeting the challenges in 2025, those on the Council's committees, and countless judges who contributed in many ways to the Judicial Council's progress in 2025. For all, this involves additional time commitments, some significant, and outside of court sittings and related work. The staff of the Council, while small in number, continuously display exceptional dedication to supporting the judiciary and to their roles. I am grateful for their commitment and bringing the Judicial Council to this stage of its development.

Kevin O'Neill

Secretary to the Judicial Council

June 2026

About The Judicial Council



The Judicial Council

The Judicial Council was established pursuant to the Judicial Council Act 2019 (“the Act”) on the 17th of December 2019 under Section 5 of the Act. It is an independent body whose members comprise of all the judges in Ireland. The full range of the Council’s functions is set out in Section 7 of the Act. Many of the functions of the Council are carried out by a Board on its behalf. More information on the Board is available on page 14.

The functions of the Council may be summarised in four key pillars as follows:

1. Building an independent, progressive body for an independent judiciary
2. Delivering excellence through dedicated judicial training and support functions, including guidance provided by personal injuries and sentencing guidelines
3. Creating a function to oversee high standards of judicial conduct
4. Achieving public confidence in the judiciary and the administration of justice



Central to the values of the Judicial Council are the core judicial values of:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Integrity
- Propriety (including the appearance of propriety)
- Competence and diligence
- Equality of treatment of all persons before the courts

The Council has specific functions which include adopting and publishing:

- Guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics prepared by the Judicial Conduct Committee
- Draft Personal Injuries Guidelines and amendments prepared by the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee and promoting amongst judges an understanding of the principles governing the assessment and award of damages for personal injuries
- Sentencing Guidelines prepared by the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee and promoting an understanding of sentencing principles

In addition to these functions, the Council has a more general role to establish, maintain and improve communication with bodies representing judges appointed to courts outside Ireland and international bodies representing judges.

The Council is, subject to the Act, independent in the performance of its functions.

Many of the functions may be performed by the Board of the Council or the Council's committees, though adopting the guidelines previously referred to is reserved to the Council alone. The Judicial Council is required to meet once per annum.

The Chief Justice is the chairperson of the Council. Administrative support for the Council is managed by the Secretary to the Judicial Council, who reports to the Board in relation to the performance of his functions and who accounts to the Public Accounts Committee and other Oireachtas committees as regards the accounts and general administration of the Council. The Council was funded from the Vote of the Courts Service in 2025.

The Board of the Judicial Council is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues.

As regards governance, the Council is a council of the judiciary and accordingly in certain instances preservation of judicial independence displaces the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Its governance includes both the Judicial Council Act 2019 and the Irish Constitution and both displace provisions of the Code where a conflict or incompatibility arise. The Code may apply in a range of circumstances to the Council but it does not apply where it conflicts with judicial independence. In addition, the Act is notably without many of the reporting provisions typical of public bodies in their governing legislation.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 establishes a positive duty on public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights. The Judicial Council recognises its obligations under this legislation in regard to its staff.

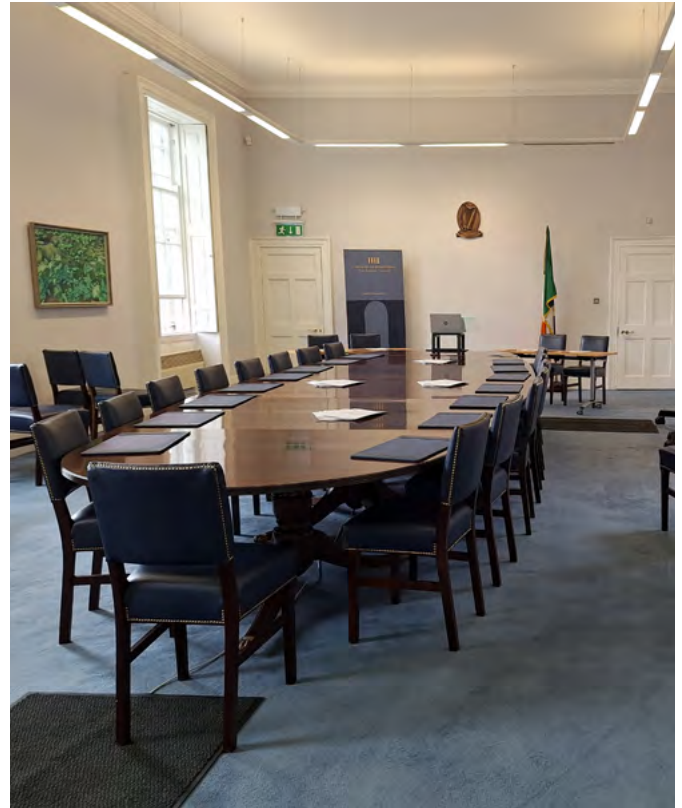
In line with our values, our staff are committed to creating an environment where we promote positive engagement, open and honest communication, embracing diverse perspectives while striving to be inclusive in all that we do. Included in that Act is, in implementing Section

42, a recognition of proportionality having regard to a body's functions, size, and resources.

Our staffing consists of eight persons and there is no direct service provided to the public. Having regard to our scale at this time, equality and human rights training was identified and promoted for all staff as appropriate, provided by OneLearning. We continue to emphasise and promote equality and human rights through our day-to-day work, delivering our objectives in an effective and fair way, with integrity and respect for human dignity. We also ensure that these duties are emphasised for our staff.

The members of the Judicial Council, being the judges in Ireland, are each independent in the exercise of their judicial functions and are independent of Section 42. However our governing legislation clearly recognises the importance of human rights and equality, which is adhered to by the Council. As regards the interaction of Section 42 with the Judicial Council Act 2019, the Council may, under Section 17(3) (c)(iv), provide for the education and training of judges in human rights and equality law. It is also required, through its own functions and those of the Judicial Conduct Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst judges, including having regard to the principle of ensuring equal treatment of all persons before the courts. These matters are addressed through the Council's adoption of 'Guidelines for the Judiciary on Conduct and Ethics' and its ongoing judicial training in human rights and equality law, in judgecraft training and through societal context topics.

The day-to-day management of the staff and administration of the Judicial Council is carried out by the Secretary and his senior management team. The Secretary is accountable to the Board for the performance of those functions under the Act and such other functions as may be given by the Board.



The Judicial Council in 2025

This Annual Report sets out the activities of all of the Council's committees during the year, and the Chief Justice and the Secretary have also referred to many of the matters which took place during the year.

The Judicial Council is required to hold a meeting of all of its members once per year. It held its annual statutory meeting on 31st January 2025. At this meeting, the Council indicated its intention to adopt the draft amendments to the Personal Injuries Guidelines, prepared by the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee and submitted to and modified by the Board, in accordance with section 7(2B) of the Act. That draft was then submitted to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration for the purpose of the next steps under the Act.

A statement of commitment to judicial wellbeing was adopted by the Council. This supports a number of core objectives including



the promotion of judicial wellbeing by raising awareness and providing access to supports. The role of the Judicial Studies Committee in supporting development needs where appropriate was also acknowledged.

International engagement

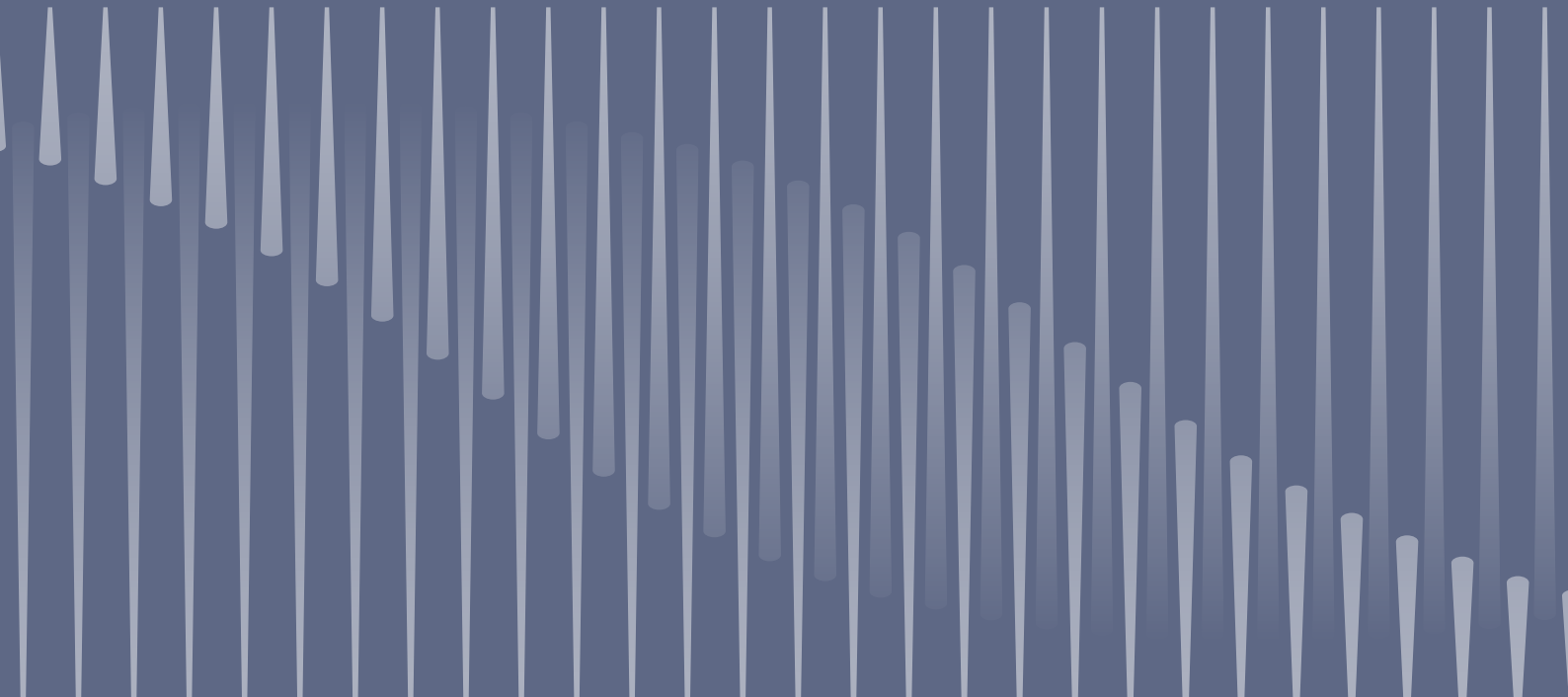
The Judicial Council continued to engage with the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary with nominated delegates participating in both Executive Board meetings and General Assembly meetings. This is a function of the Council provided for in Section 7(2)(k) of the Act. The Council also continued its involvement in,

and association with, other bodies including the European Judicial Training Network and the International Association of Women Judges.

The Council continued to focus on its governance obligations. Its Audit and Risk Committee met four times in 2025. It also engaged external support to procure IT systems related to a learning management system, a case management system and general IT support.

An SI dealing with a Pension Scheme for the Secretary was commenced in 2025.

The Board



The Board

The Board of the Judicial Council under Section 12 of the Act comprises 11 judges and the basis for their appointment as follows:

- The Chief Justice and the four Court Presidents are ex officio members
- One judge from each of the five jurisdictions is elected by their colleagues
- One judge is co-opted in accordance with the Act from the Court of Appeal until 2028

In March 2025 the Chief Justice Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell exercised his power under Section 12(3) of the Act to nominate in his place Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley as Chairperson of the Board.

Each elected and co-opted term of membership is for a period of four years. A full list of Board members at the end of 2025 is set out on page 16.

Board functions

The functions of the Board are set out in Section 11 of the Act.

The functions of the Council, except in relation to the adoption of guidelines, are performed by the Board on behalf of the Council in accordance with directions (if any) as the Council may give to the Board.

Broadly, the Board considers and determines policy in relation to the performance of the Council's functions and oversees the performance of, and the implementation of that

policy by, the Secretary. It also has an important statutory role in reviewing:

- draft Personal Injuries Guidelines prepared and submitted by the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee
- draft amendments to Personal Injuries Guidelines prepared by that Committee
- draft Sentencing Guidelines prepared and submitted by the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee
- draft amendments to Sentencing Guidelines prepared by that Committee
- draft Guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics prepared and submitted by the Judicial Conduct Committee, and
- draft amendments to Guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics prepared by that Committee.

The Board may also make such modifications to those draft Guidelines, or draft amendments to such Guidelines, as it considers appropriate.

The Board is required to meet at least four times per annum. In 2025 it met on five occasions. During the year, the Board reviewed and, without modification, approved the first draft Sentencing Guideline in relation to offences captured by Section 40 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 which was submitted to it by the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee.

In 2025 there were two new Board members appointed. Ms Justice Nuala Butler was co-opted by the Board in January from the Court of Appeal. In July, Judge Brian O'Shea resigned as a judge and was replaced by Judge Gráinne Malone, further to an election by the Judges of the District Court.

The Board adheres to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, although alternative considerations may apply where that Code is incompatible with judicial independence,

enshrined in the Irish Constitution. The Board may, and has, delegated a number of its functions to the Secretary.

The Board received regular reports from the Secretary on the operation of the Judicial Council, the implementation of the provisions of the Act, expenditure and budgetary matters and other relevant matters. The Board regularly receives reports regarding the implementation of risk management systems.



The Members of the Board



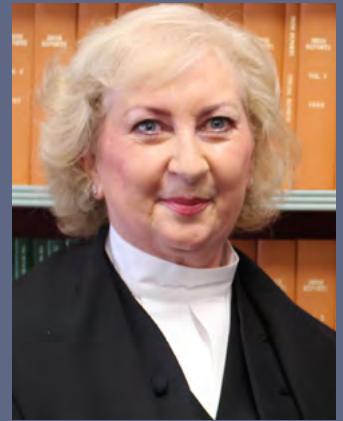
**Ms Justice
Caroline Costello**
President of the
Court of Appeal



**Mr Justice
David Barniville**
President of the
High Court



**Ms Justice
Iseult O'Malley**
Supreme Court,
Chairperson



**Ms Justice
Patricia Ryan**
President of
the Circuit Court



**Judge
Paul Kelly**
President of the
District Court



**Mr Justice
Patrick McCarthy**
Court of Appeal



**Ms Justice
Marguerite Bolger**
High Court



**Judge
John Aylmer**
Circuit Court



**Judge
Gráinne Malone**
District Court

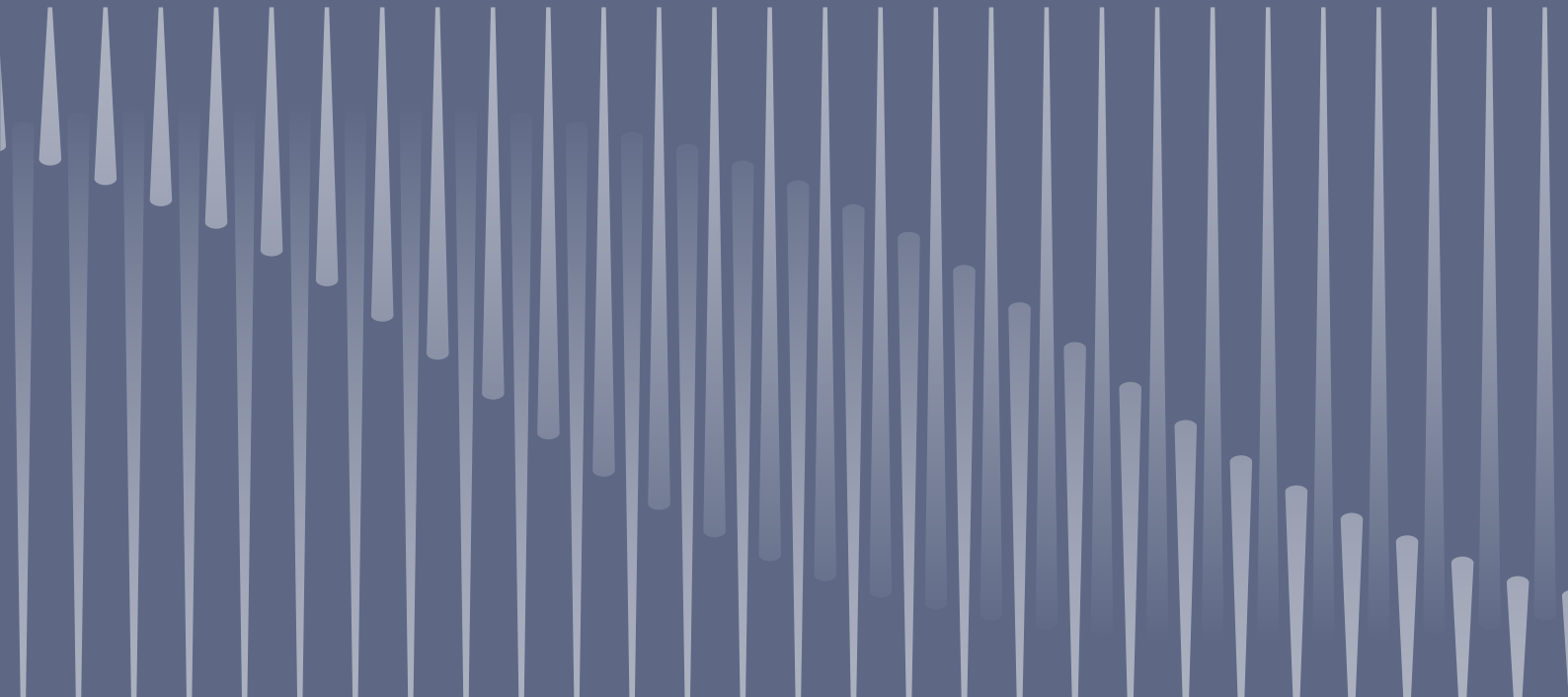


**Ms Justice
Nuala Butler**
Court of Appeal

The Secretary to the Judicial Council is Mr Kevin O'Neill.
The secretary to the Board is Ms Mary Murphy.

There was a vacancy at the end of 2025 in respect of the Supreme Court elected member.

The Judicial Studies Committee



**Ms Justice
Nuala Butler**
Chairperson of the
Judicial Studies
Committee



**Mr Justice
Peter Charleton**
Director of Judicial
Studies



Judicial Studies Committee

Overview

The Judicial Studies Committee (“the Committee”) was established in February 2020 under Section 17 of the Judicial Council Act 2019. Its functions are to facilitate the continuing education and training of judges with regard to their functions. It does this through the provision of induction and continuing judicial education in areas such as substantive law, ethics and conduct, human rights, victims’ rights, EU and international law.

The Committee is committed to maintaining public trust in the judiciary and the administration of justice through the delivery of high-quality judicial education and training, as set out in the Judicial Studies Committee Workplan 2023–2026. This training is grounded in the core values and principles contained in the ‘Guidelines for the Judiciary on Conduct and Ethics’, including independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, competence and diligence.

A key focus of the Committee is the provision of high-quality, judge-led training. To this end, training programmes are facilitated by judges who have undertaken a specifically tailored judicial trainers’ programme. Training provision is further enhanced through contributions from legal professionals, academics, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and subject matter experts. The establishment and maintenance of strong links with national and international agencies involved in judicial education and training remain a key objective of the Committee.

Membership

Committee Members

- Mr Justice Brian Murray
- Ms Justice Nuala Butler, Chairperson
- Ms Justice Niamh Hyland
- Mr Justice Liam Kennedy
- Judge Geoffrey Shannon
- Judge Paul Kelly,
President of the District Court
- Judge Shalom Binchy
- Mr Justice Peter Charleton,
Director of Judicial Studies (ex officio)

Judicial Education and Training Obligation

A significant milestone was reached during 2025 with the development of a scheme for judicial education and training which was approved by the Chief Justice and the Presidents of each court thereby making compliance a requirement for judges under Section 19 of the Court and Court Officers Act 1995. From January 2026, judges will be required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of judicial education and training annually.

This development reflects the growing importance of continuing judicial education in supporting judicial excellence, maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice and ensuring that judges remain informed of legislative, societal and legal developments. The Committee will play a central role in supporting implementation through the provision of a broad range of accessible educational opportunities.

**Ms Maria
Fitzgerald**
Associate Director of
Judicial Studies



Education and Training Provision

Training Data Overview

During the year 2025, while there were some fluctuations in judicial numbers, the overall complement remained stable. Fluctuations occurred primarily due to eight retirements, nine new appointments and one judicial elevation, all of which had a slight impact on the data.

While the judiciary numbered 194 judges at year-end, a total of 204 individual judges were eligible to participate in Judicial Studies Committee programmes during the year due to appointments, retirements and judicial transitions occurring throughout 2025.

Of the 204 individual judges eligible to attend education and training events, 97% attended one or more conference or training event (excluding language sessions), consistent with 2024 participation levels. When conferences are excluded, 85% participated in at least one training event. Overall, 72% attended five or more training events during 2025.

The Committee organised or supported 105 training events, which can broadly be broken down as follows:

- 53 seminars and workshops
- 5 conferences
- 6 site visits
- 41 language sessions

The seminars and workshops included both induction and continuing judicial education, and range in duration from 90-minute seminars after court to full-day training workshops during the vacation periods.

It is worth noting that many judges also engage in training provided by external organisations, often with the financial support of the Committee. Where the activity is not funded/supported it falls outside the scope of this report.

Training Survey

The implementation of a comprehensive training needs analysis was identified as a key priority by the Committee. The survey was launched at the National Conference in November 2024 and achieved an 83% response rate.

The survey has become an important mechanism for ensuring that training provision remains responsive to judicial needs, emerging legal developments and evolving societal issues. The results of the survey, together with identified training requirements and legislative developments, continue to provide direction and guidance for the Committee's work.

Following the Training Survey, the 2025 programme was adjusted in response to participant feedback. This resulted in the introduction of three additional three-hour seminars tailored to the needs of District Court judges, enhancements to the induction programme and the introduction of a short lunchtime seminar series from November onwards.

The survey also identified demand for training in evidence, EU law, neurodivergence, courtroom control and ex-tempore rulings. Judicial wellbeing emerged as another significant priority, leading to the introduction of a Judicial Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan, with the educational and training elements supported by the Judicial Studies Committee.

Initial Training

The Judicial Studies Committee continues to prioritise the induction programme for newly appointed judges. Over the past four years, the programme has expanded significantly and now comprises three key elements: Induction Modules, Mentoring and Shadowing.

A total of nine new judges were appointed in July and September 2025. The Induction Modules are delivered on a cross-jurisdictional basis and provide standardised core content for all newly appointed judges. Following the Training Survey, a three-hour Judicial Wellbeing module was added to the core curriculum.

In response to feedback from District Court judges, an additional day of training was incorporated into the programme to address issues specific to the District Court jurisdiction.

Many newly appointed judges used the period prior to taking up full judicial duties to meet and shadow colleagues within their jurisdiction. Mentors were assigned by the relevant Court Presidents to all newly appointed judges. The Shadowing Programme, previously available only to District Court judges, was extended in late 2024 to include newly appointed judges of the Circuit Court and High Court.

Continuing Professional Education and Training

As in previous years, the Committee provided a broad range of continuing judicial education and training programmes for the judiciary. Formats included ninety-minute lectures with question-and-answer sessions, half-day interactive workshops focused on skills development and full-day conferences covering multiple topics.

Online, in-person and hybrid delivery methods were utilised to maximise accessibility while minimising disruption to court business. The majority of programmes were delivered outside normal court sitting times.

Where appropriate, programmes included contributions from NGOs, academics and other subject matter experts. Judges from the United Kingdom and the United States also contributed to several programmes.

Annual Programmes Delivered in 2025

The Avoiding Re-traumatisation programme was delivered as a workshop for criminal trial judges and focused on reducing trauma for victims in sexual offence cases. The programme included contributions from One in Four and examined practical approaches to managing proceedings while remaining sensitive to the experiences of vulnerable witnesses.

The Coercive Control programme was delivered by judicial trainers and examined the relevant legislative provisions, psychological impacts and developing case law in this area. The programme was supported by an NGO working directly with those affected by coercive control and domestic abuse.

The Assisted Decision-Making programme continued to evolve in response to experience gained following the commencement of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015. These sessions examined emerging legal and practical issues arising from the implementation of the legislation and provided opportunities to discuss developing judicial practice.

Training in Personal Insolvency remained an important element of the annual programme for Circuit Court judges. The sessions addressed legislative developments, practical challenges arising in insolvency proceedings and effective case management approaches.

The Courtroom Control programme was delivered as an interactive workshop designed to support judges in the effective management of courtroom proceedings. The programme focused on practical techniques and approaches to maintaining efficient, fair and orderly hearings.



Hosting the UK & Ireland Judicial Studies Conference in 2025

A new programme entitled Managing Bias in the Courtroom was introduced in September 2025 with a view to becoming a recurring annual offering. The programme explored issues relating to unconscious bias and cultural awareness and included contributions from Travellers Cultural Awareness Training and the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

The Ex-Tempore Rulings programme focused on the development of judicial skills in delivering oral judgments. Initially designed for High Court judges, and subsequently modified for the Circuit Court, the programme proved valuable in supporting confidence and consistency in judicial decision-making and will continue to be included in future years as part of the Committee's ongoing annual programme of training.

Key Seminars and Events

The Constitution Series, delivered in February, provided a substantive law programme developed through collaboration between members of the judiciary and academic experts. The series examined contemporary constitutional issues and supported ongoing judicial engagement with constitutional jurisprudence.

Between January and March, the Human Rights Series comprised a number of online seminars examining LGBTQ+ rights, disability rights and employment rights within the context of Irish and European law. The series provided judges with an opportunity to explore evolving legal developments and emerging issues across a range of human rights areas.

The Neurodiversity and the Courtroom Series, delivered in June, consisted of four seminars

focusing on autism, ADHD, advocacy and the supports available to court users. The programme drew significantly on lived experience and explored practical approaches to improving understanding and accessibility within the justice system.

The Fundamentals of EU Law Series was delivered during October and November and examined the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) as a constitutional court, a human rights court and its relationship with national legal systems. The series provided participants with a deeper understanding of the operation and influence of EU law within the Irish legal framework.

During the year (in January and in November) a series of lectures was delivered on important recent Supreme Court decisions. The decisions chosen for analysis and discussion were those most likely to have an impact on issues arising regularly before other courts and included judgments on litigation delay and on damages. A one-day seminar entitled Voice of the Child was delivered in September. The programme explored issues relating to the participation of children in legal proceedings and considered developments in law, policy and practice in this area and was supported by some external experts.

The site visit programme continued during 2025 with visits to three prisons and a juvenile detention centre. Additional visits were arranged to facilities supporting victims of child sexual abuse, including the Laurels and Alder Clinics and Barnahus West. These visits provided valuable opportunities for judges to gain insight into the experiences of service users and the operation of facilities that regularly interact with the justice system.

The Director of Judicial Studies in liaison with the Courts Service Information Technology Unit arranged for the delivery of a series of on-line webinars to judges on the use of the IT made available to judges through the Courts Service. These webinars were practical in their focus and covered a wide range of topics, including the use of AI.

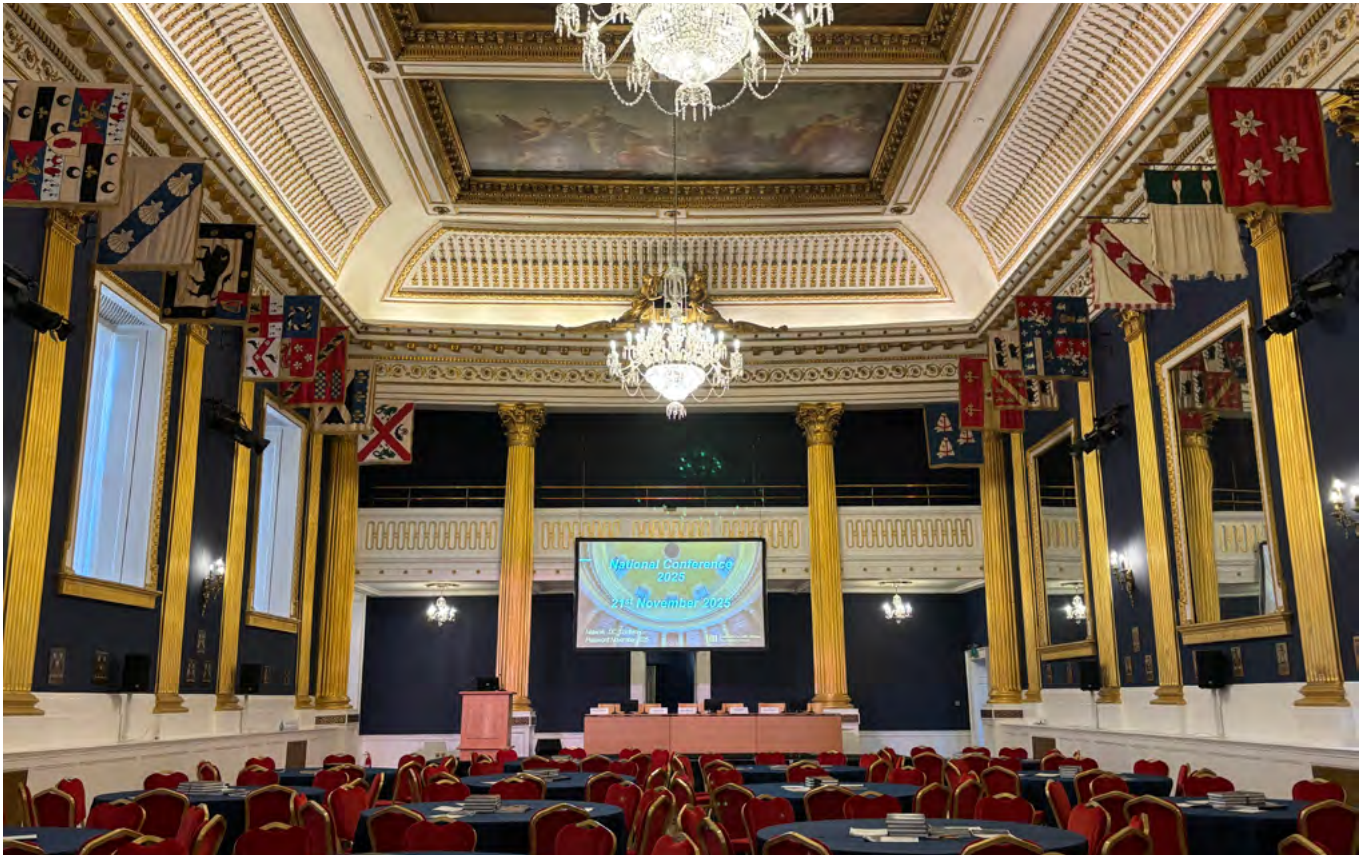
The Director of Judicial Studies introduced a judgment writing programme for new High Court judges. Each new judge is assigned to one of a group of three established judges who will review and provide feedback on a “draft judgment” prepared by the new judge on a sample legal problem. The mentor judge remains available to the new judge if they require further assistance as they begin to write and deliver judgments.

Language Skills

The Committee supports judges in enhancing language proficiency through a range of initiatives designed to support both professional development and international engagement. Irish language provision continued to include fortnightly lunchtime conversation classes, evening language programmes and an annual immersive Gaeltacht course, providing opportunities for judges to develop and maintain practical Irish language skills. French language training also continued during 2025 through weekly 30-minute sessions, which support engagement with international judicial education and cooperation initiatives.

Judicial Conferences

The Committee organised or supported five conferences during 2025, including four judicial conferences specifically designed to address emerging legal, procedural and legislative developments.



Topics included civil restraining orders, intoxicated driving, the Family Law Act, sentencing, issues arising in criminal trials, mental illness, proper provision in family law, artificial intelligence, the appellate process, major developments in EU law and climate change.

Contributions were multidisciplinary in nature and included input from academics, medical professionals, NGOs, state agencies and members of the judiciary.

International Collaboration

International collaboration remains central to the work of the Committee. These partnerships support the exchange of knowledge, international

best practice and comparative judicial perspectives, strengthening the quality of judicial education available to the Irish judiciary. Key international partners during 2025 included the Judicial College of England and Wales, the Judicial Institute for Scotland, the Judicial Studies Board of Northern Ireland, the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the Academy of European Law (ERA).

Irish judges contributed to and participated in 30 international events, including programmes organised by the International Organisation for Judicial Training (IOJT), the EJTN, JuLIA, WIPO and ERA.

In May, the Judicial Council hosted an EJTN programme on Personal Leadership for Judicial Leaders, attended by senior judicial leaders from across Europe, including two Irish Court Presidents. Irish judges also delivered papers and training at a range of international conferences and educational events, reflecting Ireland's continued contribution to global judicial cooperation and professional development.

In November, five judges participated in the Biannual Anglophone–Germanophone Family Law Conference, presenting papers, chairing sessions and participating in discussions.

Summary

Overall, 2025 represented a year of continued growth and development for the Judicial Studies Committee. Participation levels remained exceptionally high, training provision expanded across a range of substantive legal, judicial skills, and societal awareness topics, and significant progress was made in strengthening induction, wellbeing and specialised training programmes.

The weekly Tuesday seminar programme became firmly established during the year and the series-based approach proved particularly effective. The introduction of additional District Court-specific training addressed needs identified through the 2024 Training Survey, while the continued expansion of the site visit programme and increased engagement with European judicial training organisations created opportunities for specialist learning in a range of developing areas.

The agreement of a scheme for judicial education and training from January 2026 represents an important milestone in the evolution of judicial

education in Ireland and provides a strong foundation for future development.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The introduction in January 2026 of a judicial training obligation through the adoption of the scheme for judicial education and training will be a defining feature of the year ahead.

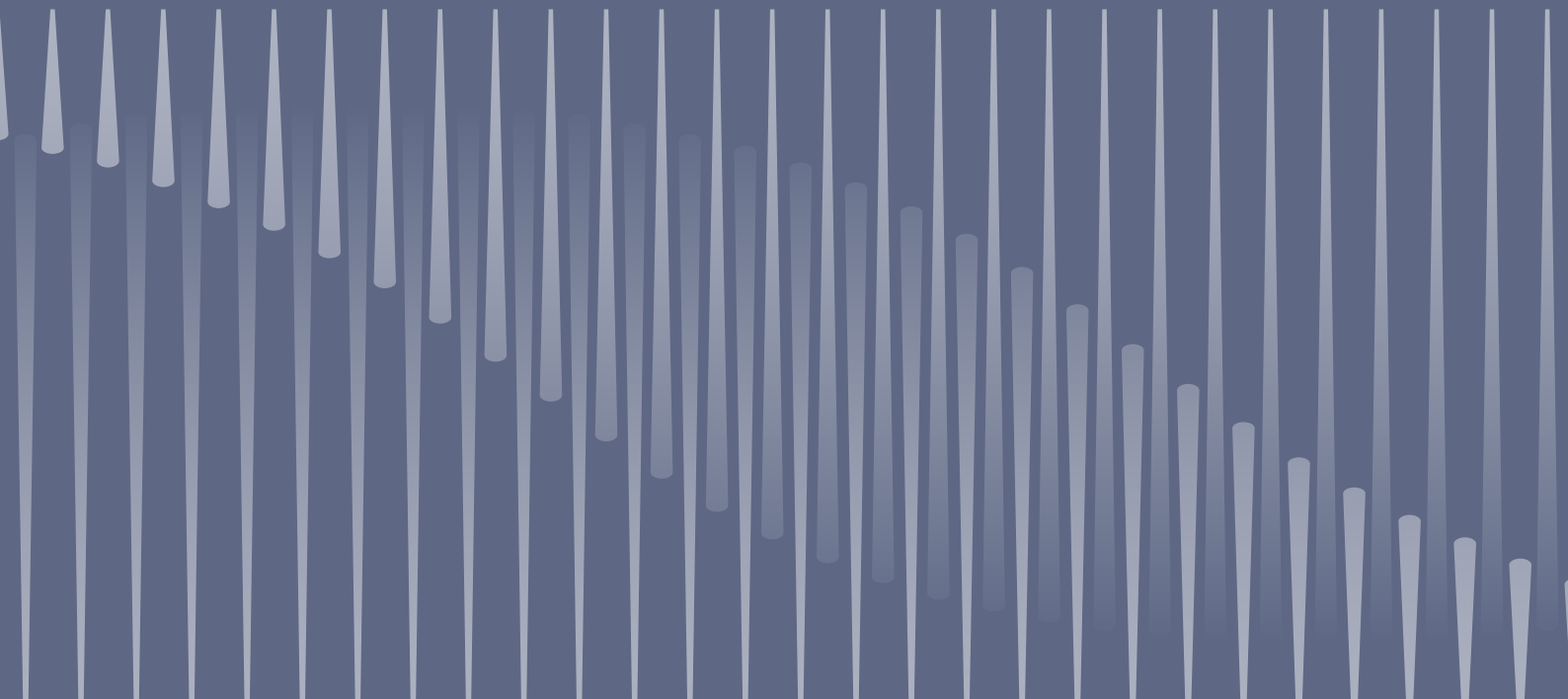
The continued expansion of educational opportunities for the judiciary will be complemented by increased engagement with exchange programmes and study visits offered through the European Judicial Training Network. These initiatives will provide additional opportunities for judges to gain valuable insights into the operation of courts and judicial systems across Europe.

The planned implementation of a learning management system will further enhance the Committee's ability to deliver, manage and expand educational provision, supporting greater flexibility and accessibility for judges throughout the State.

Key Statistics



The Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee



The Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee



Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne
Chairperson of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee

The functions of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee are set out in Section 18(2) of the Judicial Council Act 2019.

These are to prepare and submit to the Board of the Council for its review

- a. draft personal injuries guidelines in accordance with Section 90, and
- b. draft amendments to the personal injuries guidelines in accordance with that Section.

The initial statutory requirement of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee was to draft Personal Injuries Guidelines for submission to the Board of the Judicial Council, as referred to at (a) above. The Committee submitted the draft Personal Injuries Guidelines to the Board of the Judicial Council on the 9th December 2020 pursuant to Section 18(4) as amended, concluding its work on this first requirement. The adoption of those guidelines by the Judicial Council in March 2021 completed the first stage of this process.

The Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee is required, pursuant to Section 18(11) of the Act, to submit a report of its activities to the Judicial Council for inclusion in this Annual Report. This is

the report prepared in order to comply with that obligation.

Report of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee in 2025

The Committee is required to review the Guidelines at least every three years in accordance with Section 18(5) of the Act. The first such review was carried out during 2022 and 2023. The outcome of the review was submitted to the Board of the Judicial Council in March 2024.

The Act provides that the next review take place and be completed in 2027. For that reason, and because the review completed in 2024 was before the Judicial Council in 2025, the Committee had no statutory function to carry out in 2025, was inactive and did not meet during the year. It is expected that the Committee will commence the next review in 2026, subject to any proposed amendments to the Act.

The review completed by the Committee in 2024 and modified by the Board, was considered by the Judicial Council in 2025, and is available on the Judicial Council's website.

The Committee is required to have regard to the factors set out in Section 90 of the Act including:

- the level of damages awarded for personal injuries by courts in Ireland and such places outside Ireland as the Committee considers relevant
- principles for the assessment and award of damages for personal injuries determined by the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court
- guidelines relating to the classification of personal injuries
- the need to promote consistency in the level of damages awarded for personal injuries

For the purpose of the review, the Committee had regard to those same factors which were considered when drafting the original Guidelines. It noted that in the three years (to the review date) since the adoption of the original Guidelines, significant global and national inflation had occurred. In addition, jurisprudence of the Superior Courts has emerged in the period regarding the proper approach to the assessment of damages in multiple injuries cases. The Committee did not find it possible to carry out any meaningful analysis of the quantum of court awards given under the Guidelines that might inform this review. This is because of the inevitable delay between the commencement of proceedings to which the then new Guidelines applied and their trial, which had meant that few award decisions had been reached and certainly not enough to be statistically significant.

Outcome of the Review

The Committee’s review of the Guidelines resulted in a recommendation to adjust the values in the Guidelines to take account of a rise in the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) since their adoption in 2021. Accordingly, the Committee prepared draft amendments and submitted them to the Board for its review. The draft amendments provide that, due to the HICP rate rise of 15.6% in the three years since the adoption of the guidelines, an overall increase of 15.6% to the original values is appropriate.

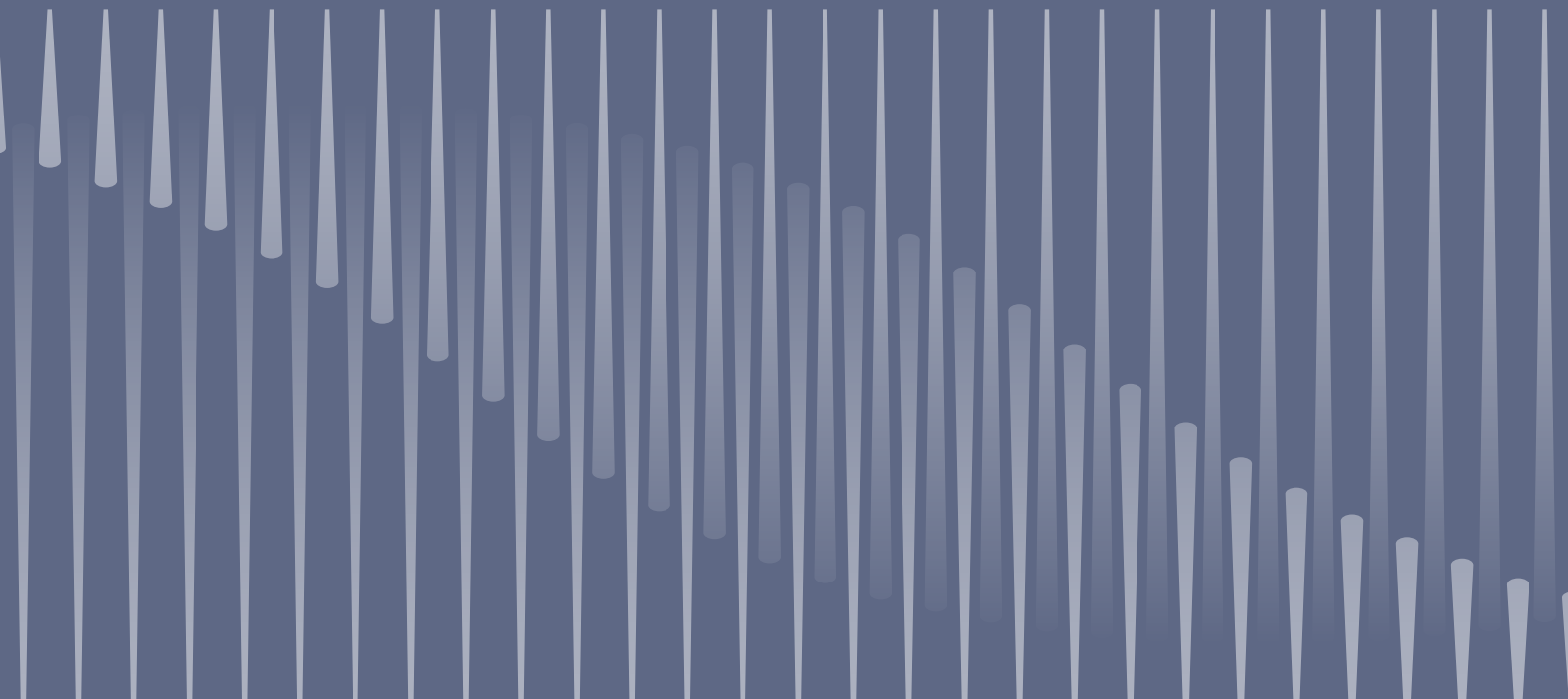
The Board of the Council next reviewed and modified in 2024 those draft amended guidelines submitted to it, and the amended guidelines were considered by the Judicial Council at its meeting in January 2025. The decision at that meeting was that the Council adopt the amended guidelines, subject first to the requirement to submit the amendments to the Minister for Justice for the purpose of being laid before each House of the Oireachtas as required of Section 7(2B) of the Act.

The membership of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee for 2025 is as follows:

- Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne, Chairperson
- Mr Justice Seamus Noonan*
- Mr Justice Paul Coffey
- Ms Justice Emily Egan
- Judge Sarah Berkeley
- Judge James Mc Court
- Judge Marie Keane

* Retired 30th May 2025 vacancy at year end

The Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee



The Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee



Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley
Chairperson of the Sentencing
Guidelines and Information
Committee

Introduction

The Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee was established on the 30th of June 2020 by the Judicial Council. Its membership consists of 13 members in total, from two categories: eight judges nominated by the Chief Justice, representative of each jurisdiction, and five lay members appointed by the Government who each serve for a term of four years. Full details of the membership of the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee is set out on page 33.

The Committee's functions pursuant to Section 23 of the Act are to:

- prepare and submit to the Board of the Council for its review draft Sentencing Guidelines
- prepare and submit to the Board for its review draft amendments to Sentencing Guidelines adopted by the Council

- monitor the operation of Sentencing Guidelines
- collate, in such manner as it considers appropriate, information on sentences imposed by the courts
- disseminate that information from time to time to judges and persons other than judges

Once sentencing guidelines are adopted by the Judicial Council, a court must have regard to any relevant guidelines when imposing a sentence unless it is satisfied that to do so would be contrary to the interests of justice. In such a case, the court must give its reasons.

The factors to be considered by the Committee are wide-ranging and include:

- sentences currently imposed by the courts
- the need to promote consistency in sentences
- the impact of decisions of the courts relating to sentences on the victims of the offences concerned
- the need to promote public confidence in the system of criminal justice
- the financial costs involved in the execution of different types of sentence and the relative effectiveness of them in the prevention of re-offending

The judges nominated to the Committee have particular interest and expertise in sentencing. Their expertise is enhanced by the five lay members, each of whom was re-appointed by the Government in 2024 for a further four years. In appointing a person to be a Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee member, the Government has to be satisfied that amongst the members, there is experience and knowledge of:

- the prosecution of criminal proceedings
- the defence of criminal proceedings
- policing
- the administration of justice
- sentencing policy

In developing guidelines, the Committee takes an evidence-based approach. This means that the Committee will conduct relevant research, engage with key stakeholders, as well as examining best practice in other jurisdictions. This will inform the work of the Committee in creating guidelines that reflect best practice.

The Committee believes that this approach will contribute to enhancing consistency and fairness in sentencing decision-making.

Sentencing guidelines can be used as a valuable resource for judges as well as a range of criminal justice stakeholders. Guidelines can assist judges when making a sentencing decision in an individual case. They may be used as a source of information by the prosecution and defence as well as those involved and impacted by the sentencing process including victims, witnesses and defendants. Guidelines may enhance levels of public awareness on sentencing and the rationales for imposing a sentence in an individual case. The Committee has published information to assist the general public in gaining an understanding of sentencing based on judgments given by the courts, which is available on the Judicial Council's website.

Guidelines can address a wide range of different aspects of the sentencing process. They may be developed to address specific offences, such as assault, rape or manslaughter. The Committee may also produce guidelines dealing with important sentencing issues that may be relevant across a wide range of offences, for example, guidelines addressing the reduction of a sentence arising from a guilty plea or guidelines on the sentencing of young people. Sometimes, more than one guideline may be relevant in an individual case. For example, in an assault case the guideline specific to that offence may be used by the trial judge but if there is a domestic violence component to the offending, a guideline on domestic violence may also be incorporated by the sentencing judge.

Report of the Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee in 2025

The Sentencing Guidelines and Information Committee is obliged, pursuant to Section 23(8) of the Act, to submit this Report of its activities

annually for inclusion in the Judicial Council's Annual Report. The Committee met on five occasions in 2025.

The Committee reached a notable milestone in 2025 through the finalisation of the first draft Sentencing Guideline prepared under the Judicial Council Act 2019. The Guideline was submitted to the Board as required of the Act and, pending consideration by the Judicial Council in early 2026 and contemplating the possibility of revisions to the Act, was published in the form of a non-statutory, non-binding Report.

The document deals with sentencing in cases involving relationship violence - specifically Section 40 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018. This followed extensive research and consultation with stakeholders including NGOs and public bodies working in this area.

Section 40 is relevant to offences committed in a context where the victim and the offender are or were married, or are or were in a civil partnership, or are or were in an intimate relationship. Such a relationship between the offender and the victim must be seen as a factor that aggravates sentence. In sentencing for offences covered by the Section, the sentence ultimately imposed must, where there is a relevant relationship, be greater than would otherwise be the case (although it can never exceed the maximum sentence provided for in statute). It covers only offences where such a relationship exists, and does not deal with offences of violence in other contexts. It is recognised that domestic violence is a gendered crime, affecting significantly greater numbers of female victims. It should, however, be understood that offending of this nature can and does occur against women, men and people of all genders.

Before the enactment of the Section, sentencing judges would generally have seen abuse of trust, confidence or a dominant position within an intimate relationship as aggravating factors

in relation to most of the offences covered by Section 40. What is new is that this principle must now be applied systematically to the specified offences, and there is now a specific requirement for a heavier sentence than might otherwise have been imposed. It is intended to assist judges in complying with that requirement in sentencing the various kinds of offences concerned.

The Committee in the course of preparing the guideline conducted a consultation process amongst agencies, bodies and persons with particular experience and expertise in this area and is grateful for their assistance.

Access to data on sentencing is central to the Committee's work and has presented as a barrier to progress for the Committee during the year. During 2025 amendments to three Statutory Instruments, S.I. 660 of 2018, S.I. 662 of 2018, and S.I. 664 of 2018 were approved by the Superior Courts Rules Committee, the Circuit Court Rules Committee and the District Court Rules Committees respectively. These amendments were required to enable access by the Committee to court records/documents and it is expected that this will enhance the range of data available. Identifying and tracking cases from first instance to sentencing through court records will be a key part of the Committee's research process. Related to this, a legal researcher joined the staff of the Judicial Council in 2025 and will assist the Committee in its work.

A subcommittee has commenced work on a draft guideline in relation to Dangerous Driving Causing Death or Serious Injury. This follows initial research on sentencing in these cases amongst judges of the Circuit Court.

Research is also underway to support the drafting of a guideline in relation to the sentencing of rape cases. Judges of the Central Criminal Court are supporting the committee's work in this area. The research has a particular focus in the application of the framework set out in *DPP v F.E.* in how



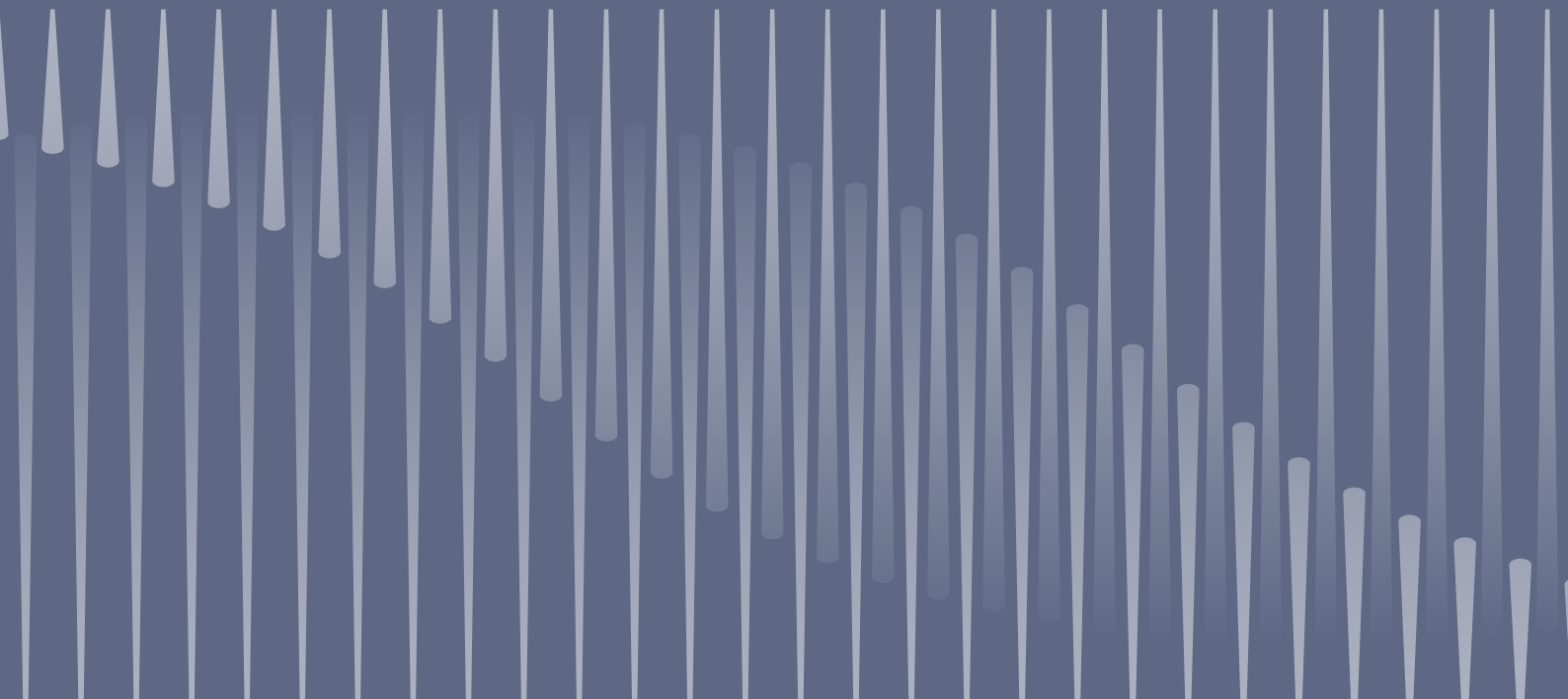
sentences in rape cases are arrived at. The Committee commenced considering and drafting its next Work Plan in 2025 to cover the following years. This plan will set out the Committee's strategic priorities and programme of work for the period 2026–2029. It builds upon the foundational research, data-collection initiatives, and institutional relationships developed during earlier phases of the Committee's work, and will reflect the Committee's commitment to an evidence-based, transparent, and consultative approach to sentencing guidance.

In 2025 the Committee published an updated database of all Court of Appeal sentencing decisions from 2014 on the Judicial Council website, including a link to the judgments delivered.

The members of the Committee at the end of 2025:

- Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley, Chairperson
- Mr Justice John Edwards
- Mr Justice Tony Hunt
- Mr Justice Paul Burns
- Judge Francis Comerford
- Judge Kenneth Connolly
- Judge Gráinne Malone
- Judge Paula Murphy
- Mr Vivian Geiran
- Dr Diarmuid Griffin
- Ms Marianne O'Kane
- Mr Michael O'Sullivan
- Dr Sinéad Ring

The Judicial Support Committees





Ms Justice Aileen Donnelly
Judicial Welfare &
Support Committee

The Judicial Support Committees

Judicial Support and Wellbeing

The Judicial Council Act provides for the establishment of five statutory Judicial Support Committees, one for each jurisdiction. It is envisaged that each committee, which includes a judge elected by his or her colleagues, will advise and assist the Council from the perspective of their respective court jurisdiction.

Related to this, and with a particular focus on judicial wellbeing, a cross-jurisdictional Welfare and Support Committee was established by the Council at its first meeting. This Committee is, under its founding terms of reference, comprised of a judge from each of the five jurisdictions and will work to provide for and assist in relation to judicial welfare.

Judicial Support Committees

Section 30(3) of the Act states that the function of a Judicial Support Committee shall be to advise and assist the Council in the performance of its functions under this Act insofar as matters relevant to the Court to which the Committee relates are concerned.

All five committees were established on the 31st of March 2020.

Membership of each jurisdictional committee is made up of (i) the jurisdictional President plus (ii) the elected member(s) from that jurisdiction. Further to elections taking place, the following judges were members for their respective courts at 31st December 2025:

Supreme Court

Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne

Court of Appeal

Mr Justice Charles Meenan

High Court

Ms Justice Leonie Reynolds and
Mr Justice Rory Mulcahy

Circuit Court

Judge Eoin Garavan

District Court

Judge Marie Keane

Judicial Welfare and Support Committee – established pursuant to Section 7(3)(a)

The Judicial Council may establish committees for the purpose of assisting in the carrying out of its functions. The Terms of Reference of the Judicial Welfare and Support Committee, as adopted at the first meeting of the Judicial Council on the 7th February 2020, are to assist and advise the Judicial Council in the performance of its function set out in Section 7(2)(l) of the Act to assist with the provision of support to judges generally.

The Committee, at the end of 2025, comprised of five judges nominated by the Chief Justice as follows:

Supreme Court

Ms Justice Aileen Donnelly, Chairperson

Court of Appeal

Ms Justice Teresa Pilkington

High Court

Ms Justice Siobhán Phelan

Circuit Court

Judge Elma Sheahan

District Court

Judge John Brennan



The term of office of a member of the Welfare and Support Committee is four years.

The Committee met three times during 2025. Two key outputs from its work saw the adoption of a commitment to judicial wellbeing by the entire judiciary and the launch of its Judicial Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan. Some aspects of the plan were rolled out in 2025 such as an induction session on wellbeing for new judges. It is intended to seek to expand the membership and the terms of reference of the Committee in early 2026 to support implementing the ambitious plans set out in the Strategy.

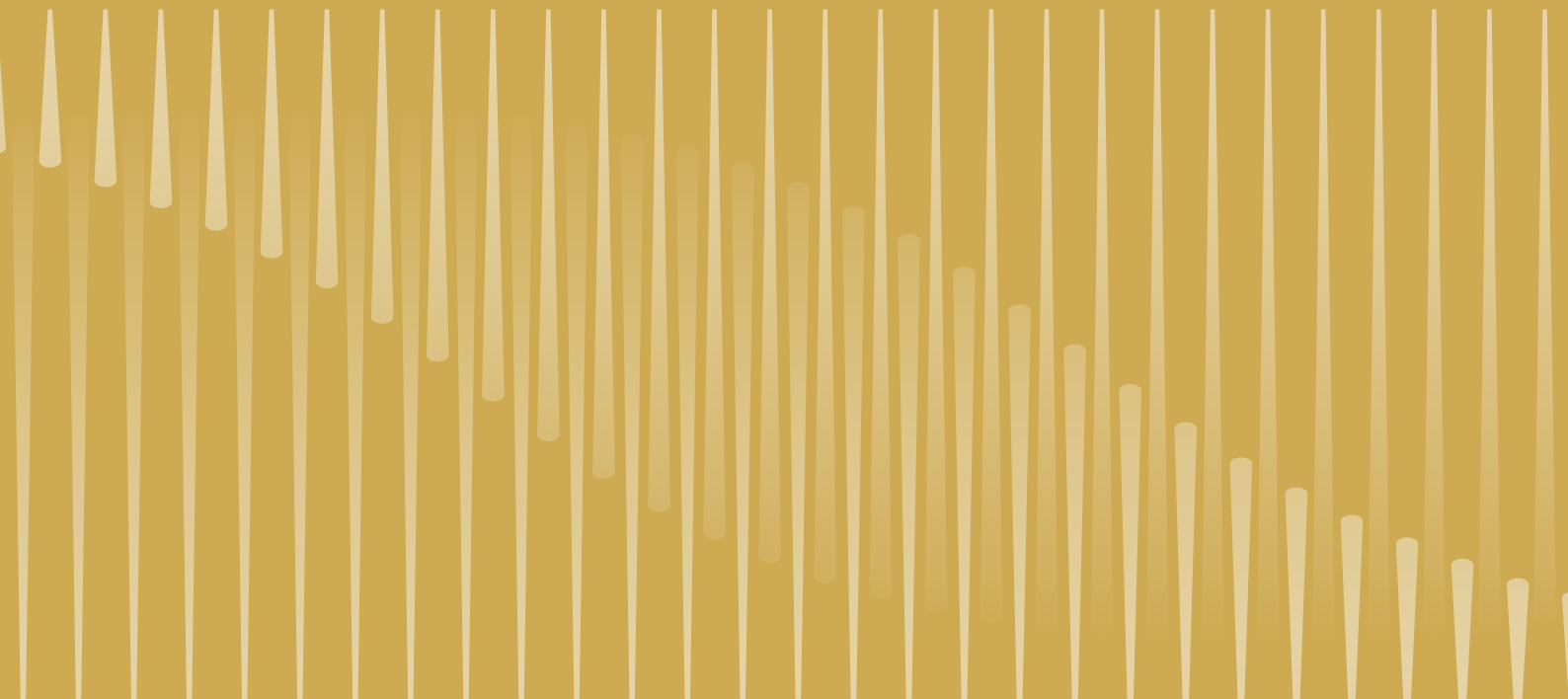
At the annual meeting of the Judicial Council in January 2025, judges adopted a statement of commitment to judicial wellbeing. This statement supported a number of core objectives and conferred on the Judicial Welfare and Support Committee the responsibility to achieve those objectives.

These objectives are:

- To promote judicial wellbeing through raising awareness and by providing for access to internal and external health and wellbeing supports
- To develop accessible and transparent assistance and intervention pathways for judges in times of illness, bereavement or other crises including those which may arise from the inherent demands of judicial work which also includes working with difficult subject matter, with the support of the Board of the Judicial Council and the Chief Justice and the Presidents of each court jurisdiction
- To respond to occupational training and development needs by identifying and providing opportunities to enhance skills with the support of the Judicial Studies Committee where appropriate

Given the interest amongst judges in progressing this function, a number of additional judges attended meetings and workshops to plan for and develop what may be offered to judges. A strategy workshop was held in April 2025 following which the Committee launched its Judicial Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan in July 2025. This strategy was supported by engagement between the Law Society Psychological Service and members of a Judicial Wellbeing Steering Group. It outlines a phased and tailored strategy to support the wellbeing of judges by identifying a number of focus areas each with related actions and timelines.

Annual Report of the Judicial Conduct Committee 2025



Judicial Conduct Committee

This Annual Report of the Judicial Conduct Committee is prepared pursuant to Section 87 of the Judicial Council Act 2019, whereby the Committee is required to submit a report of its activities annually to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and to the Judicial Council. The Minister, pursuant to Section 87(3), shall cause copies of this Report to be laid before each of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Background

The Judicial Conduct Committee (“the Committee”) was established on the 30th of June 2020 and met for the first time in July 2020. The Committee is independent in the performance of its functions. Its principal function is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct among judges, having regard to the principles of judicial conduct requiring judges to uphold and exemplify judicial independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety (including the appearance of propriety), competence and diligence and to ensure equality of treatment of all persons before the courts.

It is required to:

- prepare and submit to the Board of the Judicial Council for its review draft guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics, including guidance as to when a judge should consider recusing himself or herself from presiding over legal proceedings, for adoption by the Council
- consider admissible complaints and refer them for resolution by informal means or undertake investigations into the conduct of individual judges in accordance with Part 5 of the Act
- take such action, if any, in accordance with that Part as it considers necessary for the purposes of safeguarding the administration of justice whether as a result of its consideration of a complaint and its referral for resolution by informal means or the undertaking of an investigation under Part 5 or otherwise
- prepare and publish guidelines providing for the resolution by informal means of complaints that are determined to be admissible under this Part.



It may also,

- of its own volition or, shall, on the request of the Board or the Council, prepare and submit to the Board for its review draft amendments to guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics adopted by the Council
- provide such advice and recommendations to an individual judge or to judges generally on judicial conduct and ethics as it sees fit

It is particularly important to note that the Committee is, pursuant to Section 43(4) of the Act, independent in the performance of its functions.

The Committee's role in relation to judicial conduct

The Committee considers complaints alleging judicial misconduct after a complaint is deemed admissible and referred by the Registrar to the Judicial Conduct Committee or the Complaints Review Committee. Complaints must be made within three months from the date of the conduct complained of, though the Committee has power to extend that period in certain circumstances.

The Committee may, upon referral of a complaint, consider whether the complaint is suitable for resolution by an informal means. This option only arises where the complainant and the judge consent to this process. As the name suggests, it involves a process to ascertain whether the matter can be resolved without having to follow the formal statutory process.

If not suitable to be resolved informally the Committee will convene a panel of inquiry to carry out an investigation.

The Committee may also, in the absence of a complaint about a judge's conduct and where it considers it necessary to safeguard the administration of justice, refer a matter for investigation by a panel.

Each panel of inquiry comprises three members, being a judge from the same court as the judge complained of, a judge from a different jurisdiction and a lay member appointed by the Government to panels of inquiry.

The panel of inquiry has various and wide-ranging powers under the Act and the procedures developed by the Committee. Those powers include the option to conduct a hearing in relation to the matter.

There are a number of courses available to the panel during an investigation but ultimately it leads to the panel preparing a report for the Committee. That report may include matters such as the panel's findings, any action which it is recommended should be taken, and whether there is a concern in relation to the health of the judge which has become apparent. In the case of a reprimand, a panel can recommend advice be given to the judge, a specific course of action or admonishment, as well as any further matter to safeguard the administration of justice.

The Committee, having considered a panel's report, has further powers which may result in the complaint being referred back to the panel or leading it to a determination as to whether the complaint has been substantiated. It may decide that no action is required, adopt the recommendation of the panel or refer the matter to the Minister for Justice for the purpose of Article 35.4 of the Constitution.

Where the judge is required to follow a course of action decided upon by the Committee, the Committee will monitor compliance. Failure to comply by that judge may also result in a referral to the Minister.

Membership

The Committee is made up of 13 members:

- The Chief Justice and four Court Presidents who are ex officio members,
- Three judges elected by the judiciary from the membership of the Council,
- Five lay members appointed by the Government.

Each elected and lay member's term is for a period of four years. The lay members are appointed by the Government following recommendations made by the Public Appointments Service. In appointing a person to be a lay member of the Judicial Conduct Committee, the Act provides that it is desirable that amongst the members there is experience and knowledge of:

- the maintenance of standards in professions regulated by a statutory or other body
- dealing with complaints made against such professionals
- mediation or other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms
- the administration of justice
- the management and provision of services to the public

A lay member is appointed to a panel of inquiry from a designated list of persons appointed by the Government following recommendations made by the Public Appointments Service.

In 2025 the Chief Justice nominated Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley to carry out his functions on the Committee pursuant to Section 44 (3) of the Act. The members of the Committee at 31st December 2025 are as follows:

- Ms Justice Caroline Costello
- Mr Justice David Barniville
- Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley, Chairperson
- Ms Justice Patricia Ryan
- Judge Paul Kelly
- Mr Justice Charles Meenan
- Judge Karen Fergus
- Judge James Faughnan
- Prof Claire Archbold
- Prof Maeve Conrick
- Prof Bernard McCartan

There were two lay member vacancies on the Committee at the end of 2025.

Several members of the Committee were appointed to the Complaints Review Committee during 2025. The members of the Complaints Review Committee at 31st December 2025 are:

- Mr Justice Charles Meenan
- Judge James Faughnan
- Prof Claire Archbold

The Registrar to the Judicial Conduct Committee is Mr Kevin O'Neill.



Report of the Judicial Conduct Committee in 2025

2025 was the third full year of the operation of the system for judicial complaints. The experience in each of the three years has been similar. While there has been a decrease in the number of complaints made, there has been no difference in the basis for making those complaints and the reasons for determinations made by the Registrar and the Complaints Review Committee.

There was one complaint during 2025 determined by the Registrar to be admissible and that complaint was referred to this Committee, which established a panel of inquiry for the purpose of investigating the complaint. That investigation was ongoing at the end of 2025. An investigation in relation to a complaint being investigated during 2024 concluded in 2025.

It is apparent that the majority of complaints which were not admitted relate to decisions made by judges. It is unfortunately the position that 173 of the complaints considered by the Registrar (73% of the total) were found inadmissible as relating to decisions made by judges in cases with which the complainant was dissatisfied.

It is the Committee's view that it is worth repeating again that the making of a complaint to the Judicial Council does not present any possibility of having a decision of a judge overturned or changed. However, it is evident that a large proportion of those who make complaints do so because they are unhappy with a decision made by a judge.

A party who is unhappy with a decision in their case may seek a remedy through the courts. That may be by way of appeal or through other legal remedies which may be available. In fact, the Act, aside from stating in Section 53(3) that such a complaint is not admissible, precludes in Section 93 interference in the judicial function and the functions of the courts. The Judicial Council and this Committee are not courts and have no power to interfere in a judge's decision making.

The prevalence of multiple complaints made by the same complainant in 2024 reduced somewhat in 2025 though some complainants continue to make inadmissible complaints directed at the same judge.

The Committee welcomes the work being done to assist litigants in person in navigating the court process outside of the Judicial Council through the Working Group on Litigants in Person and the Courts Service. It is hoped that the greater understanding which this work will bring to litigants will promote improved awareness of the system and the role of the judge.

In 2025, judicial review proceedings commenced against the Complaints Review Committee. Those proceedings were ongoing at the end of 2025.

The Committee will in the coming years provide a greater level of insight into the type of complaint made and how a panel of inquiry carries out an investigation, and where possible by reference to case studies. As the total number of complaints increase, there is significantly less risk associated with this approach leading to a judge or a complainant being identifiable and the Committee will work with the Registrar to pursue this objective.

In addition, the growing experience of the Committee, the Complaints Review Committee and the Registrar will provide insights which may be shared with the Judicial Studies Committee to enhance the training provided to judges.

Summary of complaints made, and determinations issued in 2025

The Registrar

The total number of new complaints made to the Registrar and requiring consideration under the Act in 2025 was 226.

2 further complaints were lodged which did not come within the scope of Part 5 of the Judicial Council Act 2019. The Registrar had no authority to consider those two matters and they could not be considered.

30 complaints which were made in 2024 remained for consideration at the start of 2025. Therefore 256 complaints were before the Registrar for consideration.

Of those 256 complaints

- 1 complaint was determined to be admissible
- 235 were determined to be not admissible
- 4 complaints concluded because the Act ceased to apply
- 9 complaints were withdrawn and
- 7 complaints remained for consideration on the 31st of December 2025 (received in November and December).

87 individual judges were complained of in 2025.

The Complaints Review Committee

- 7 reviews remained for determination at the end of 2024
- 87 new requests to review the Registrar's determination were received in 2025. This was an increase on the number received in 2024 by 36
- 78 determinations were made in 2025
- 16 reviews remained for determination at end of 2025

Panels of Inquiry

- 1 panel of inquiry had been established in 2024 for the purpose of investigating a complaint admitted in 2023. That investigation was discontinued in 2025.
- 1 further panel was established in 2025 for the purpose of investigating the complaint admitted in 2025. That investigation was ongoing at the end of the year.

Breakdown of complainants

- 108 complainants made a single complaint
- 16 complainants made 2 complaints each
- 6 complainants made 3 complaints each
- 1 complainant made 4 complaints
- 1 complainant made 6 complaints
- 1 complainant made 8 complaints
- 1 complainant made 10 complaints
- 1 complainant made 11 complaints
- 1 complainant made 13 complaints
- 1 complainant made 16 complaints

The following information is specified to be published pursuant to Section 87(4)

2025		2024	2023
226	(a) the number of complaints received,	273	216
1	(b) the number of complaints determined to be admissible by the Registrar	0	1
78	(c) the number of complaints considered by the Complaints Review Committee and	58	62
0	the number of complaints determined to be admissible, by the Complaints Review Committee,	0	0
0	(d) the number of complaints resolved by informal means in accordance with Chapter 4,	0	0
0	(e) the number of investigations initiated pursuant to a referral under section 59,	0	0
1	(f) the number of investigations conducted by a panel of inquiry under this Part of complaints or consequent on a referral under section 59,	1	0
0	(g) the number of complaints considered by the Judicial Conduct Committee that were not substantiated,	0	0
0	(h) the number of determinations made by the Judicial Conduct Committee under section 71 (5) or 79	0	0
0	(i) the number of judges who consented to the issuing of reprimands to them in accordance with section 58 or 73, and	0	0
9	(j) the number of complaints that were withdrawn in the circumstances referred to in section 57 or 74	2	2

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings visible.



Comhairle na mBreithiúna
The Judicial Council

