



JUDICIARY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

DESIGNATED CIVIL JUDGE: JOB DESCRIPTION

Introduction

This document has been approved by the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls and is intended to explain the role of the Designated Civil Judge (DCJ) and what is expected of the holder of that post.

The Role of the Designated Civil Judge

- The role of the DCJ is to take overall responsibility for the civil work of the county courts and District Registries. In the area to which they are appointed. That involves providing leadership to the civil judiciary (including Circuit Judges, District Judges and fee paid judiciary) who sit at the courts in that area and ensuring the efficient discharge of judicial business at those courts.
- The DCJ is expected to work closely with the Resident Judge(s) and Designated Family Judge(s) in the area and by discussion and agreement to resolve any questions affecting the administration of justice across the jurisdictions.
- DCJs assist the Presiding Judges of their Circuits, who in turn assist the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls and the Senior Presiding Judge in discharging their responsibilities. DCJs are expected to represent the views of the judiciary, assist in maintaining appropriate arrangements for the welfare, training and guidance of the judiciary, maintaining arrangements for the deployment of the judiciary and the allocation of civil work within the courts in their own areas.
- The Resident Judge(s) or Designated Family Judge(s) for the area may ask the DCJ to provide local judicial leadership and support to other members of the judiciary at their home court. When appropriate the DCJ may seek similar assistance from the Resident Judge(s) or Designated Family Judge(s).
- DCJs should ensure that they are provided with adequate administrative support and sufficient time out of court to enable them to carry out their functions. Any difficulty in obtaining these facilities should be reported to the Presiding judges immediately.

- Under the overall guidance of the Presiding Judges DCJs are responsible for the strategy for civil justice within their area. Accordingly they should sit for the whole or the greater part of their time in civil work, afford that work absolute priority in their deployment and sitting time and visit regularly each of the courts within their areas.

Key Responsibilities

1. Leading the civil judiciary at the courts in their area:

DCJs are responsible for leading the civil judges in their areas and for encouraging other judges to give of their best to ensure the highest possible performance for the courts in their areas. In order to achieve that object they should:

- a. make regular contact with all those sitting at the courts within their area to discuss performance and encourage consistent practices;
- b. visit each of the courts within their areas at least once a year, and attend court-user meetings;
- c. regularly analyse and review performance statistics with the judiciary and court staff in order to remove delays and other difficulties;
- d. maintain regular contact with the judges in their areas, including any who are unable to work through illness;
- e. if a judge's performance gives cause for concern, discuss the matter with a view to supporting the judge in identifying the source of the problem and in finding ways to overcome it;
- f. assist in the deployment of fee-paid judiciary in accordance with the needs of the court and support effective arrangements for the mentoring and training of fee-paid judges, including "sitting-in" and "supervised sittings";
- g. provide references or information in respect of those applying for judicial appointment or promotion;
- h. co-operate with the Presiding Judges to ensure that the demands of civil justice are not subordinated to the demands of family and criminal justice;
- i. ensure in co-operation with the Presiding Judges, that reserved judgments are delivered without undue delay;
- j. foster an inclusive culture throughout the salaried and fee-paid judiciary in their area;
- k. facilitate appropriate arrangements for ADR.

2. Allocation and despatch of court business:

DCJs are responsible for ensuring the effective management of business within their areas as well as managing their own cases and caseload. This includes working with other judges at the court centres in their areas to ensure that work is done in accordance with current guidelines and good practice and that action is taken to improve performance in order to enable the court to discharge its business promptly and effectively. This includes:

- a. ensuring that there are arrangements in place for the proper despatch of all civil business;
- b. under the general guidance of the Presiding Judges, co-operating with any BPC, TCC or Chancery Judges within their areas and with those responsible for Administrative Court business to ensure efficiency in listing and other necessary arrangements;
- c. keeping the judges based in the courts in their area informed about court performance, disseminate any guidance and good practice and ensure that it is put into effect consistently;
- d. ensuring that judges apply effective case management principles in line with the spirit of the civil justice reforms and the overriding objective;
- e. securing consistency of approach and eliminating local practices;
- f. hearing major procedural appeals from all the courts in the area, disseminating the results of such appeals and nominating judges to hear appeals which they are unable to deal with personally and monitoring their progress;
- g. ensuring that appropriate policies are in place for the allocation of work between District Judges and Circuit Judges, both at individual courts and between courts in their areas and that appropriate arrangements exist for the allocation of work between District Judges and between District Judges and Deputy District Judges;
- h. setting policies with managers, diary managers and listing officers at the courts in their areas, particularly in relation to the management and trial of fast-track and multi-track cases, in order to ensure consistency in listing and the adoption of back-to-back listing arrangements where appropriate and where resources permit;
- i. in conjunction with Delivery Director, writing (for publication) the Annual Report for the courts in their areas in accordance with guidance given by the Senior Presiding Judge.

3. Other specific responsibilities

The DCJ has specific responsibility for dealing with the following matters:

- a. applications for Group Litigation Orders;
- b. applications for civil restraint orders;

- c. applications for freezing injunctions and search and seizure orders under arrangements agreed with the Presiding Judges;
- d. appeals from District Judges in civil matters in the High Court, under arrangements agreed with the Presiding Judges.

4. Liaison with the Presiding Judges

DCJs are the key link between the civil judges in their areas and the Presiding Judges. They are expected to advise the Presiding Judges on matters such as ticketing, deployment and appointments. They are expected to provide advice about the needs of the court when vacancies occur. They advise the Presiding Judges about problems at the courts in their areas, resources and any problems arising in relation to new laws, practices or procedures.

5. Work with Court Staff

The HMCTS Framework document states that all staff have a joint responsibility to the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice for the effective, efficient and speedy operation of the courts and tribunals. All members of the judiciary have a similar responsibility to the Lord Chief Justice to work with the staff to deliver these objectives. DCJs are therefore responsible for maintaining close working relationships with the managers and court staff in their areas to ensure that the business of the courts is dealt with as effectively, efficiently and speedily as possible.

6. External relationships

DCJs are the public face of the civil judiciary in their areas and as such are expected to build and maintain good working relationships with others involved in the administration of civil justice.

July 2023