

GMB J25 Judges' Branch Development Plan 2026 – Problems & Opportunities

A - Recruitment Plan

Current Membership - Annual Increase 35%

1. The Branch had 135 members as of 16th December 2026. This is a 35% increase compared to a year ago.
2. The branch scope was extended in January 2025 to include tribunal experts (such as doctors and disability experts) and coroners, as well as judges. This was after an approach from ASENT, a judicial association who represent the judiciary in the Special Education Needs & Disability Tribunal.
3. J25 has approached other judicial associations as well, to encourage them to promote GMB membership to their members. As well as generating more members, this can provide experienced activists.
4. The membership increase reflects
 - a. Word-of-mouth recruitment to GMB.
 - b. Transfers of GMB judicial members who were in other branches.
5. There is an opportunity to improve our organisation and co-ordination in asking GMB officers to identify judicial members who in other branches. We are pursuing this.
6. Given the size of the judiciary, there is no reason why we should not have more than 1000 members. There may well be a significant number of judicial members in other branches, making GMB stronger than we realise.

MoJ Recognition as the Trade Union for the Judiciary/ Legal Rights

7. J25's aim continues to be securing recognition from MoJ. This would raise our profile, gives us a place at the staff side alongside quasi-judicial colleagues from the Crown Prosecution Service and fellow GMB members in the Legal Aid Agency, give us official access to the judiciary to promote membership, and provide paid time off for activists to be trained.
8. GMB nationally is still deciding its approach, and we are in continuing discussions with GMB regional and national officers. Key considerations will be:
 - a. how viable recognition is; a failed request to MoJ before we have enough members could prevent further requests for years

- b. what legal provisions for recognition appear in the forthcoming Employment Rights Act, such as the proportion of union members in a workplace entitle the union to recognition.
- 9. We continue to press GMB officials to ensure that the judiciary is included in national GMB representations about who qualifies for employment rights as workers and employees. A particularly unwelcome development would be if the rights gained for the judiciary as 'workers' after the litigation in O'Brien, Southby etc were lost.

Publicity and Media Strategy

- 10. J25 has a recruitment page on the web (Google 'GMB Judges Branch' to find it). This is our shop window.
- 11. Judicial work is unusual compared to many jobs in that it is of public interest. This offers publicity to recruit members and influence MoJ.
- 12. We avoid using serving judges to publicly comment as it risks victimisation/ disciplinary sanctions.
- 13. Instead, we promote Branch aims such as adequate resources for justice and resisting unfair criticism through:
 - a. Press releases through national GMB Press Office
 - b. Media contacts with journalists which we are building up. We generated supportive coverage in October in the Times regarding unfair targeting of judges.
- 14. 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.
- 15. 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.

B - Schedule of Branch Meetings

2026 all at 5pm on Thursdays by remote meeting Zoom

15/1/26

16/4/26

16/7/26

15/10/26

C - Union Democracy activity/ J25's Place in 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 protection of the judiciary from unfair attack and individual vilification by politicians and the media.
2. We will continue to press GMB nationally to ensure that all GMB judicial members are allocated to J25, including those who were allocated to other branches because they joined before J25 was born. This ensures that GMB presents a united, co-ordinated face to MoJ, and that all judicial members can shape J25's campaigns.

D - Branch servicing and retention

1. The regular email newsletter is a key tool in keeping in touch with J25 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 in personal cases, but the scope of these may need to be reviewed. The current Senior Organiser, who serves other branches as well, has about 20 live cases. This appears excessive for a branch of 135 members; an equivalent rate for the total GMB membership would give 85,000 current cases. It may make it more difficult to bring other judicial GMB members into J25 because of the potential extra workload.

E - Branch Organising

1. The Branch is national but administered regionally in the South East, until membership grows sufficiently to split. This can cause some anomalies such as members from far away being solely invited to training events in the South East.
2. Currently we rely on a few key committee members. As more members join and judicial associations such as ASENT throw their lot in with J25, we will acquire more potential officers.
3. We use the GMB Onedrive facility for security, and easy onward transfer of information when officers change.

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. MoJ would potentially have to provide GMB information in response to a subject access request if it is stored on ejudiciary.
5. As we are not yet recognised by MoJ we minimise risks of activist victimisation by using paid officials and/or retired members to communicate where appropriate.
6. The Branch is focussed on helping members with particular issues, campaigning and seeking official recognition from MoJ. Industrial action is very unlikely.

F - Branch Resources

1. The Branch is now accumulating its own funds, provided by GMB nationally as a proportion of subscriptions. There are no immediate plans to spend them, but it is useful to have them in case they are needed later, for example to fund travel to national negotiations.
2. The committee is unpaid and works in its own time – no ‘protected time’ for TU duties or expenses is provided by MoJ as GMB J25 is not yet recognised as the judicial trade union. There are no plans to pay the committee, 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. 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.

A.Brodie - Branch Secretary

5.1.26

GMB Judges Branch J25 -
A United Voice for Judges

