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YOU'RE A GOOD LAWYER - DON'T YOU WANT TO BE A JUDGE?

The Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) has commissioned independent research to find out from solicitors and barristers what attracts them to - or puts them off from - applying to be a judge.

The research by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) will take place over the next few months and will further assist the JAC to be more specific and targeted in attracting a wider range of candidates for judicial appointments.

The JAC, an independent organisation, has the task of selecting judges on merit and also has a statutory duty to have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection for appointments.

Baroness Prashar, Chairman of the JAC, will announce this research during a session on judicial diversity, where she is speaking alongside the new Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge, at an event organised by the Ministry of Justice, 'Equality in Justice Day'. Letters will be sent to more than 6,000 members of the profession informing them about the research and encouraging them to participate.

The JAC has worked with the Bar Council and Law Society to help make sure the questions asked are the right ones, and will share the full findings with them.

Baroness Prashar said: "We all have anecdotal evidence about what needs to change. But the results of this survey will enable us to take more directed and effective joint action to encourage greater diversity."

She emphasised that, "Increasing diversity is a joint effort and the JAC is working with the legal profession to enlarge the pool from which the selections can be made.

"Apart from the size of the pool, some minimum entry requirements can deter or prevent some strong candidates from applying. So can the hours or the inflexibility. Only the Lord Chancellor and the Judiciary can change those, and I hope some of these additional barriers can be lowered."

The letter to potential respondents, will be signed by Baroness Prashar, by the President of Law Society Paul Marsh, and the Chairman of the Bar Council, Tim Dutton QC.

For further information contact Stephen Ward, Judicial Appointments Commission Media Relations Manager 020 3334 0329.

EDITORS NOTES

1. For legal fee paid appointments in the year 2007-8, 45 per cent of all applicants were women, and 46 per cent of the total selected were women. 17 per cent of all applicants were of black and ethnic minority origin (BME), and 9 per cent of the total number selected were of BME origin. 73 per cent of applicants were solicitors, and 51 per cent of those appointed were solicitors.
2. For legal salaried appointments in the year 2007-8, 25 per cent of all applicants were women, and 28 per cent of the total selected were women. 7 per cent of all applicants were of black and ethnic minority origin (BME), and 4 per cent of the total number selected were of BME origin. 42 per cent of applicants were solicitors, and 35 per cent of those appointed were solicitors.
3. Five of the 22 High Court judges recommended for appointment by the JAC this year are women, which will raise the number of women High Court judges to 17, the highest number ever.
4. The British Market Research Bureau will send the letter to 6,250 solicitors and barristers.
5. Data from all the JAC's selection exercises since April 2006, including details of the eligible pool for each post, is available on the statistics page of the website: <http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk/annual/annual.htm>