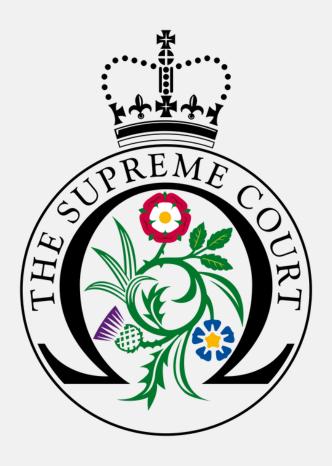
#BRIDGINGTHEBAR

BRIDGING THE BAR



This brochure is dedicated to the late Lord Kerr, without whom this internship would not have been possible.



In February 2021, Bridging the Bar ("BTB") made a pitch to the UK Supreme Court who subsequently agreed to collaborate with BTB and create an internship programme.

In the first week of November 2021, eight BTB candidates completed the first ever internship at the UK Supreme Court.

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When Mass and I first pitched our idea to Lord Kerr in September 2020, he emphasised that it was going to be tough - nothing like this had ever been done before.

When we met Vicky Fox, the CEO of the Supreme Court, to present our idea, we expected resistance. Instead, we were met with openness and a genuine commitment to assist us in our mission to diversify the legal profession.

The success of this programme is in no small part thanks to Vicky Fox and Lord Reed. Lord Reed has spoken about his desire to see a Justice from a BAME background appointed before his retirement and this internship is just one example of the concrete steps the court is taking to increase transparency and inclusivity.

All of the interns were made to feel welcome throughout the internship, from the security staff learning each of their names to Lord Reed personally taking the time to discuss the case with them during the hearing. I was particularly struck by how many of the Justices, Judicial Assistants and court staff attended the interns' presentations, each one of them genuinely interested in learning about the backgrounds and experiences of the interns.

Bridging the Bar is incredibly proud of each one of the interns; we could not have asked for better ambassadors. We are also incredibly thankful to our sponsors and the wider support we have received from the Bar.

This brochure is a special thanks to all of our sponsors and volunteers who sifted through applications, conducted interviews and spoke to our interns during the pretraining. Bridging the Bar is all of you.

INTRODUCTION

The UK Supreme Court Internship



The first interns at the UK Supreme Court:

(left to right) Olivia Bennett, Hayley Webster, Armin Amirsolimani, Fatima Ismail, Adnan Khaliq, Madeleine Lusted, Emily Thorbjornsen and Chloe Reddock.

The Internship Programme

In February 2021, the UK Supreme Court ("UKSC") agreed to collaborate with Bridging the Bar ("BTB") to create the first ever UKSC paid internship programme.

The objectives of the programme were fourfold:

- 1. Provide participants with an insight into the work of the UK Supreme Court.
- 2. Intellectually stimulate and challenge participants.
- 3. Facilitate reverse mentoring.
- 4. Encourage and support participants to pursue a career in law.

On Monday 1st November 2021, eight interns belonging to statistically underrepresented communities at the Bar completed a weeklong placement with the Court.

Each intern was assigned to a Judicial Assistant and their respective Justice. They spent two days observing the *Chandler v The State* hearing and engaging in discussions about the case with their Judicial Assistant and some of the Justices. Each intern met their respective Justice at least once in person or over Zoom.

The interns also had time set aside as a group for Q&A sessions with Lord Reed, Lady Rose, Lord Sales and Vicky Fox, as well as other court staff.

On the final day of the internship, the eight interns each gave a presentation in front of the Justices, court staff and BTB volunteers. Each presentation was unique, drawing on experiences from their personal backgrounds and challenges faced, as well as highlights from the internship itself.

The internship was a huge success with brilliant feedback from the UKSC and all eight interns. It is thus with great pride that we are officially able to announce that we will be running the programme again in 2022 and the subsequent years to come.



"I am pleased that [the interns] found the experience enjoyable and inspiring, and I look forward to welcoming the next group of interns in 2022."

> - Lord Reed President of the UK Supreme Court

SELECTING THE INTERNS

from our BTB Candidates

What did you think of the candidates that applied for this scheme?



"Overwhelmingly, the candidates seemed enthused about the law and energised to effect change; just what our profession needs."

> - Shel Glaister-Young Barrister and First Sift Panelist

How did we select our eight interns?

Bridging the Bar is committed to increasing the equality of access to opportunities in the legal profession across all underrepresented groups. We help future barristers who, owing to their disability, ethnic background, socio-economic background, education or sexuality, belong to groups which are statistically underrepresented in the profession.

It is important to note, however, that we currently do so through advertising our programmes to a specific demographic. We do not currently select our candidates based on their protected characteristics. All eight interns for the UKSC internship were selected based on merit.

In July 2020, 121 candidates submitted a written application which assessed their academic ability, commitment to a career at the Bar, written advocacy and interest in the programme.

These applications were marked by a panel of 26 BTB volunteers, comprised of practicing barristers, pupils and judges. These were moderated to produce 20 top scoring candidates who were then invited to interview.

A panel of three barristers interviewed 20 candidates. Candidates were asked to give a presentation about diversity and inclusion, engage in a debate, explain their motivations for participating in the programme and discuss a question of their choice. The panel selected our final eight candidates based on two criteria:

- 1. Reverse Mentoring a candidate's ability to share their experiences eloquently in a way which will facilitate mutual learning.
- 2. Likelihood to benefit from the programme to select a candidate whom this programme will benefit the most.

What were the candidates' written applications like for this programme?



"It was heartening to see so many applications of a very high standard, with candidates providing very thoughtful answers and demonstrating real aptitude for the skills required at the Bar."

- Narinder Jhittay *Barrister and First Sift Panelist*

What did you think to the candidates shortlisted for interview?



"It was a pleasure to interview such outstanding candidates, each of whom could not have been more different from the others – they had a vast range of different life experiences, and aspirations – the only unifying feature was their energy and enthusiasm for a career at the Bar."

- Nicola Fox
Barrister and Interview Panelist

DEMOGRAPHICS

Who applied for the UKSC Internship?

Who initially submitted an application?

STAGE 1 - The Written Application

Demographics of applicants:

- A total of 121 candidates applied for the UKSC Judicial Internship Programme. 73% were female, 26% were male and 1% identified as non-binary. 16% of applicants identified as members of the LGBTQ+community.
- 37% of applicants were of Asian/Asian British ethnicity, 22% identified as White (British/Irish), 22% identified as Black (African/Caribbean/Black British), 14% identified as Mixed while 5% were of Other ethnic group.
- 78% of applicants attended state school for the most part of their education and 58% were first generation in their family to attend university. Additionally, 38% were in receipt of free school meals whilst at secondary school while 33% have parents who qualified for means-tested benefits.
- 87% of applicants relied on student loans to finance their undergraduate studies, in addition to part-time employment and bursaries. 94% of applicants did not attend Oxbridge for their undergraduate studies and 56% did not attend a Russell Group University for their undergraduate studies compared to 44% who did.
- 3% of applicants had also been in care and 22% had a disability or longterm condition. The most common disabilities reported were learning disabilities.

Who made it through to interview?

STAGE 2 - The Interviews

Demographics of interviewees:

- 20 applicants were shortlisted for interview. Of these, 14 were female, 5 were male and one candidate identified as non-binary. 2 interviewees identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- 7 interviewees were White (British/Irish), 6 were of Asian/Asian British ethnicity, 5 identified as Black (African/Caribbean/Black British) and 2 were from a Mixed ethic group.
- 19 interviewees attended state school for the most part of their education while 14 were first generation in their family to attend university. Additionally, 6 interviewees were in receipt of free school meals whilst at secondary school while 6 also have parents who qualified for meanstested benefits.
- 18 interviewees relied on student loans to finance their undergraduate studies, in addition to part-time employment and bursaries. 16 interviewees did not attend Oxbridge for their undergraduate studies and 11 did not attend a Russell Group University for their undergraduate studies compared to 9 who did.
- None of the interviewees had been in care and 2 had a disability or long-term condition. The 2 interviewees who said they had a disability answered "n/a" on accessibility requirements needed during the programme.

Our Final Eight Candidates

STAGE 3 - Our Successful Eight Candidates

Demographics of offerees:

- 8 candidates were successful and received an offer. Of these, 6 were female and two were male. One offeree identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.
- 3 offerees identified as White (British/Irish), 3 were Black (African/Caribbean/Black British) and the other 2 were of Asian/Asian British ethnicity.
- All 8 offerees attended state school for the most part of their education while 5 were first generation in their family to attend university. Additionally, 2 offerees were in receipt of free school meals whilst at secondary school while 2 also have parents who qualified for means-tested benefits.
- 5 offerees relied on student loans to finance their undergraduate studies, in addition to part-time employment and bursaries. 6 offerees did not attend Oxbridge for their undergraduate studies and 5 did not attend a Russell Group University for their undergraduate studies compared to 3 who did.
- 1 candidate had a disability or long-term condition.

What did you think of the quality of our BTB candidates?



"The quality of these applications was very high; I am quite sure that the interns selected [had] as much to contribute as to learn in their week with the UKSC..."

- Lucy Garrett QC

Barrister and First Sift Panelist

SUPPORTING OUR CANDIDATES

Pre-internship

Pre-Internship Training & Support

To support our interns before they embarked upon the first ever UK Supreme Court Internship, we provided them with pre-training. This involved spending time with members of the Bridging the Bar Committee, including our Champion Professor Jo Delahunty QC.

One of the most crucial parts of this pre-training were the workshops considering confidence and "owning your own story" with Performance and Leadership Coach, <u>Helen Gazzi</u>.



"The excellent Training Day was an opportunity to meet all the amazing candidates in person. It was wonderful to have a relaxed setting to talk, bond and share. It collaborative solidified the collegiate atmosphere and set the foundation of friendship for the interns. Hearing Jo Delahunty and Mass Ndow-Njie's testimonies was inspiring and helped to demonstrate the power and liberation in sharing the struggles, setbacks and challenges faced in the pursuit of a career at the Bar! Helen delivered superb life coach training which taught key skills that equipped the candidates not only for their work experience but for life."

Emma Hughes

Head of Mentoring at Bridging the Bar



"What made the first ever Internship Programme at the Supreme Court so exceptional for me was the people involved; each member of Bridging the Bar, the Bridging the Bar Champions, the Justices and Court Staff, and most of all, each one of the 8 interns. It felt like a hugely collaborative effort, with everyone there excited to be taking part. Most importantly, what struck me was the feeling that everyone involved was cheering each other on, and willing each other to succeed. It has to be one of the most positive atmospheres I have experienced.

Each intern came with a different life experience, a different perspective, a unique view of the world which opened my eyes in a number of ways.

However, what they had in common was perhaps the most important - they were all incredibly smart, determined and resilient, and had worked really hard to get to where they are.

One of the most inspiring things to observe was the change in the interns during the course of the programme. It was tangible. They all seemed to have developed more confidence in their stories and abilities, more certainty that the Bar is for them, and more clarity on what they wanted to strive to be and do in the future."



At Middle Temple:

(left to right) Emily Thorbjornsen, Adnan Khaliq, Armin Amirsolimani, Hayley Webster, Madeleine Lusted, Professor Jo Delahunty QC, Eleanor Tack, Srishti Suresh, Emma Hughes, Chloe Reddock, Olivia Bennett, Fatima Ismail, Mass Ndow-Njie and Helen Gazzi.



"It was my pleasure [to assist with the UKSC Internship Pre-training]. I met an inspiring group of young people led by inspiring young people."

- Professor Jo Delahunty QC *Champion of Bridging the Bar*

FACILITATING MUTUAL LEARNING

during the internship

Mutual Learning

Objective three of this programme was "to facilitate reverse mentoring".

We define reverse mentoring as when a person from an underrepresented group at the Bar provides an insight into their own experiences to educate more senior people in the profession on the challenges faced. Specifically, our goal was that participants on this scheme would have an opportunity to share their particular experiences with Justices and staff of the UK Supreme Court. It was hoped that this would provide members of the Supreme Court with a greater understanding of some of the challenges faced by aspiring lawyers from underrepresented groups, thus stimulating further internal conversations and in turn, positive change.

Bridging the Bar and the UK Supreme Court decided that, the most effective way for us to meet this objective during the week, was to ask the interns to give a short presentation about themselves and the internship at the end of the programme. The presentation brief was broad and the eight interns all gave very different presentations, interpreting the brief in a way that they were comfortable with. Several Justices, Judicial Assistants, court staff and Bridging the Bar committee members watched the presentations.

Upon reflection, the term "reverse mentoring" is perhaps too strong for this programme, implying a mentor-mentee relationship that would continue post-internship. The "mutual learning" these presentations facilitated, however, was an incredibly unique and important aspect of the internship.

Given the positive feedback from the court and interns alike, we intend to develop and improve this element of the scheme, continuing with the presentations at the end of the programme and considering other ways in which we can facilitate mutual learning.



"I was fortunate enough to have been in attendance for these powerful and exceptionally delivered presentations. During their presentations, each of the interns (all future barristers) achieved something that many experienced barristers with multiple years of experience have never done and may never do. They presented to Supreme Court Justices. The Bridging the Bar interns showed that this would not be their final time presenting in the UK Supreme Court. The advocacy skills on display were exceptional and demonstrated to all in attendance that each of interns had the potential to reach the very heights of a career at the bar."



"...it was inspiring and moving to listen to the interns' reflections and life stories."

> - Vicky Fox CEO of the UK Supreme Court



"It was an honour and a privilege to attend the presentations following the completion of the UKSC and BTB Internship Programme. Each intern presented excellently, and raised some extremely pertinent and valuable points that no doubt will be considered and reflected upon by everyone involved in the making and delivery of this programme."

- Abdul Qadim Head of Alternative Work Experience at Bridging the Bar



"The presentations at the end of the internship were both excellently delivered and insightful. Listening to each intern articulating and owning their stories as well as hearing how they had been impacted by the week was extremely powerful. It showed real bravery to stand in front of so many people, and be so honest and open. If the future of the Bar means inclusion of more individuals like this group, then the future is very bright."

- Helen Gazzi

Performance and Leadership Coach

FEEDBACK FROM THE UKSC

Testimonies from the Justices & Court Staff



FROM THE CEO

Inspiring. Empowering. Transformational. These are not words that are heard in the corridors of the Supreme Court's beautiful building on Parliament Square on a daily basis. But the day the Court welcomed the first Bridging the Bar paid interns to the Court in November 2021 was not an ordinary day. It proved, indeed, to be a most extraordinary week for us all.

From the moment they stepped through the door, we felt the enthusiasm, curiosity and energy of the eight interns. There were nerves too, for sure. Who wouldn't feel a little nervous about discussing points of law with some of the greatest legal minds in the country? But as the interns learned about what we do, who we are, and what we stand for, it became clear that the group was beginning a week of learning like no other. As we listened and learned about the interns' career paths, we also began a week of learning like no other.

It took a year of planning to get to that first day. The inception of the scheme began with a conversation that the late and missed Lord Kerr had with Bridging the Bar in 2020. In 2021 the Court published two strategies, the <u>UKSC Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Strategy Action Plan</u> and the <u>UKSC Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</u> making it clear that that we are committed to improving diversity in the legal profession and in the Court itself. We also set out the actions we were preparing to take in our <u>business plan</u> together with our vision to ensure our culture and building are fully inclusive, respecting and valuing the diversity of our court users, visitors, Justices and staff.

As part of our Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy we want to support the progression of underrepresented groups into judicial roles across the judiciary. Meetings and many conversations with Bridging the Bar helped us learn more about the challenges new lawyers face and, in partnership, we developed an internship designed to help break down some of those barriers. We were able to demonstrate our support for diversity and inclusion in a practical, meaningful way, offering a week of work with the Justices and Judicial Assistants, showing that the highest court in the land can be for anyone wanting to achieve an ambitious career in the law.

The week was a great success thanks to the hard work and preparation by our Head of HR and Head Judicial Assistant and the huge amount of time given by the Justices and other staff. The interns got to sit in on, and discuss with Justices, one of the most complex cases the Judicial Committee has heard for some time. All eight said that their views and pre-conceived perceptions had changed dramatically in the five days with us, days which allowed time to reflect on different styles of advocacy and really consider the role of the Justices in a way that they had never done before. Lord Reed was very generous with his time throughout the week and this was really appreciated and noted by all the interns. We also offered afternoon sessions with different Justices and staff to talk about career planning, career paths and overcoming obstacles.

Lord Kerr would have been very proud to have heard the value and impact that each of the interns spoke about in their closing presentations on the Friday afternoon to a room made up of around 40 people, including many of the Justices. Equally, it was inspiring and moving to listen to the interns' reflections and life stories.

One of the most powerful insights from the interns was a realisation that if they can feel comfortable, welcomed and listened to at the Supreme Court, then there is no reason that they cannot and should not feel like that in any other legal setting. Inspiring. Empowering. Transformational. That's just what we hoped for and intended to achieve through this internship. The UK Supreme Court's doors are open and we will be continuing to play our part in building a legal profession in which there is equality of opportunity, and in which diversity is valued and respected.

As a first pilot goes, it far exceeded our expectations, those of Bridging the Bar and the interns themselves – who we hope to see back at the Court as Judicial Assistants, as Counsel – and ultimately as Supreme Court Justices.

I am very pleased Lord Reed has committed to running the programme again next year, and we look forward to meeting more top lawyers of the future.

- Vicky Fox CEO of the UK Supreme Court



"The internship programme forms an important element of the Supreme Court's diversity and inclusion strategy, and all of us at the court were delighted to welcome the interns for 2021. I am pleased that they found the experience enjoyable and inspiring, and I look forward to welcoming the next group of interns in 2022."

> - Lord Reed President of the UK Supreme Court



"It was a pleasure to meet this group of talented and ambitious young lawyers. It gives me confidence that the future of the Bar is in good hands and that we will see a more diverse and inclusive profession."

> - Lady Rose Justice at the UK Supreme Court



"It was a real privilege to have eight Bridging the Bar interns as colleagues for a week. They were all incredibly bright, enthusiastic and professional, and enriched our conversations about the case being heard that week. I am grateful to the team at Bridging the Bar for all that they did to make the scheme a success."

> - Isabella Buono Head Judicial Assistant at the UK Supreme Court

FEEDBACK FROM OUR INTERS

Testimonies about their experiences



The first interns at the UKSC:

Adnan Khaliq
Armin Amirsolimani
Chloe Reddock
Emily Thorbjornsen
Fatima Ismail
Hayley Webster
Madeleine Lusted
Olivia Bennett

Adnan Khaliq



I took part in this internship as I wanted to gain an insight into the reasoning senior judges deploy on important legal issues as well as witness first-class appellate advocacy.

The Justices were very generous with their time and they gave me incredibly valuable advice. In addition, I was fortunate enough to give a presentation to the Justices; an experience that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I also enjoyed my interactions with the judicial assistants; their engagement with us was a key part of the scheme's success.

This scheme would not have been possible without Bridging the Bar. It isn't possible to thank everyone involved but I am particularly grateful to Eleanor Tack for her hard work in putting this scheme together. The Supreme Court's executive team, particularly Vicky Fox and Chris Maile, also played a key role and I greatly appreciate the fact they made us feel so welcome during the week.

I feel honoured to have taken part in the UK Supreme Court's first ever internship and I very much hope the programme continues so that others can benefit from it. It is vital the Bar is open to everyone and, as such, I hope the success of this programme will encourage other organisations and courts to follow suit.

- Adnan Khaliq

Armin Amirsolimani



My name is Armin. I grew up in Scotland, but moved to London a few years ago and am pursuing a career at the English Bar. I studied political philosophy before taking the GDL, and am currently on the Bar Course.

The main reason I decided to apply for this internship was to boost my legal self-confidence. As someone who has only studied law for about eight months, I often worry that people who have read law for many years have mastered some secret formula for legal reasoning that I have not. I hoped that learning about a complex Privy Council case with the help of Supreme Court Justices and Judicial Assistants would remedy that anxiety by improving my legal reasoning.

Indeed, I could not have predicted how comprehensively my conversations with the Justices and Judicial Assistants would dispel that concern. I realised that even the nation's finest lawyers take the same fundamental approach to legal analysis that I do, albeit with a great deal more sophistication, eloquence, and memorised case names. In that way, the conversations I enjoyed on the internship have transformed my legal self-confidence.

It seems somewhat romantic to think that a week-long internship has changed me as a person. But I can honestly detect some striking differences. For example, I can now visualise myself as a practicing barrister much more clearly. Struggling to visualise oneself as a lawyer is one of the steepest hurdles nontraditional aspiring barristers face. It is a pervasive kind of self-doubt that makes you think twice about every aspiration and application. Today, I no longer feel that hesitation. I credit that change to the attitude of the Justices and the Judicial Assistants. They treated us all with sincere respect. They debated legal issues with us as equals and took our views seriously. It is hard to not see yourself as a viable barrister when people with that much authority seem to see you as one.

Rather surprisingly, this internship has substantially changed the way I think about diversity and inclusion. Above all, it has made me much more optimistic that the future Bar will be a diverse Bar. I was deeply impressed and slightly awed by the ambition, determination, and intelligence of my fellow interns. I know anyone that meets them will likely feel the same way I do; that these are not just future barristers, but future leaders of a more diverse Bar.

In closing, I would invite all non-traditional applicants to apply for Bridging the Bar programmes. They have substantially improved my confidence and my prospects at the Bar. If your instinct is that you belong at the Bar, but you worry it may not be a space you can thrive in, let them help you prove that anxiety wrong.

- Armin Amirsolimani

Chloe Reddock



Chloe is a future public law barrister and a proud black working-class woman.

Why did you do this internship?

I applied after an unsuccessful pupillage round hoping to strengthen my CV. I did not think I would actually be successful but I thought what's one more rejection?

What was your favourite part of the internship?

Lord Reed! He would drop by unexpectedly to chat with us. We would gather around him, drawn in by this quiet air of authority he has. He has an incredible ability to simplify the most complex areas of the law. He also just had so much time for us and was clearly committed to the programme – it was a pleasure to have spent so much time in his company.

What impact has this internship had on you?

It has really boosted my confidence and validated my own experiences on my journey to the Bar. I have always lacked confidence, partly due to being from an untraditional background. I always tried to mask these differences but I realised they are a relevant and compelling part of my journey.

What was it like giving your presentation?

A breeze – just kidding. It was as nerve inducing as you can imagine. Discussing hardships I've faced was difficult enough, much less in front of 9 Supreme Court Justices and like 20 qualified lawyers. However, it was also very empowering. Discussing my experiences so openly to such a receptive group of people from different walks of life (to all of whom I am very grateful) taught me not to be ashamed of them.

Has the internship made you think differently about "diversity and inclusion"?

Definitely. I have always valued D&I but seeing the lack of it in the UKSC really brought it home for some reason. The decisions of the justice system often have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable in society so it does not make sense that their voices are not represented at the highest level of it.

My understanding of what D&I means has also developed. I felt so comfortable on the internship and it was because I was alongside my 8 diverse colleagues. This comfort did not come from being in a space with some quota of others who share my characteristics but from being in a genuinely diverse space where we were all united by our differences.

How do you feel about the future of the Judiciary/Bar?

The Bar and Judiciary have a long way to go to become more diverse and it is not moving fast enough. However, if the Supreme Court is willing to sidestep tradition to promote diversity the rest of the profession have no excuse and I hope all endeavour to follow suit.

How do you feel about reverse mentoring?

It's necessary given the lack of diversity at the higher levels of the profession but it only works if both sides are receptive to it.

What is your biggest takeaway?

If I can feel comfortable and confident to be myself in the Supreme Court then there is no space where I'm going to let anyone make me feel uncomfortable in future.

Do you have anything to say about Bridging the Bar? Would you encourage other organisations to support Bridging the Bar?

Yes! BTB is the most fantastic organisation ever (and I am not just saying that because they gave me this opportunity). Mass, Eleanor, Emma, Srishti, Mat & Aaron genuinely care about making the Bar more diverse and I would encourage any organisation interested in D&I to support them.

- Chloe Reddock

Emily Thorbjornsen



I am a current Bar Course student.

I did the UK Supreme Court Internship for three reasons:

- 1. To increase my confidence about pursuing a career in law;
- 2. To contribute to facilitating reverse mentoring; and
- 3. To increase my skills and knowledge.

Expectations

I was surprised at how much time the justices spent with us to answer our questions, talk to us about how they are trying to increase diversity, and share their legal analysis of the case we were working on. The justices were extremely generous with their time.

Reverse mentoring

As part of the internship, we gave a presentation to the court staff, JAs, and justices about our experiences coming from a non-traditional background and what we had learnt during the week. The fact the justices had spent time out of their busy day to come and listen showed to me that they do care about diversity and inclusion. After the presentation, the justices and JAs spoke with us about what we had shared, some of whom commented that we shared things they had not thought about or realised before. For me, this was the highlight of the internship. I am confident that our presentations will be acted upon by the court. This has made me confident about the future diversity of the judiciary and of the Bar more generally.

Takeaways

Coming from a non-traditional background, I have worried about not fitting the mould of what a barrister 'should' look like. During my internship at the Supreme Court, I felt comfortable, welcomed, and listened to. The justices, JAs and staff were interested in mine and the other interns' ideas of how to increase diversity and were interested in our legal opinions on the case we were working on. My biggest takeaway is that if I can feel this way at the highest court in the country, then there is no reason why I cannot feel like that in any other legal setting. This has inevitably increased my confidence in applying for pupillage.

Further, during the internship, Lady Rose shared her experiences of being a woman in law. She spoke about how she stopped overthinking her behaviour, simply because she is a woman. This resonated with me and is something I will take with me in my journey to becoming a barrister.

The impact of this internship

This internship has changed my perspective on entering the legal profession. I feel much more confident about my prospects of becoming a barrister. I no longer view my background as a barrier to entering the legal profession, rather I cherish it as I can now see how it will make me a better barrister in the future.

Bridging the Bar

This internship has been described as historic; it is the first time The Supreme Court has offered an internship of this scale. I hope that this shows to other organisations how easy it is to support Bridging the Bar in opening up the legal profession for those from underrepresented backgrounds.

- Emily Thorbjornsen

Fatima Ismail



This internship was an opportunity that I did not expect to ever be selected for. The pre-training was a chance to meet my fellow interns and receive helpful advice from individuals, such as Professor Jo Delahunty QC on confidence and owning our stories.

Helen Gazzi's life coaching session was extremely useful in dealing with breaking down our fears and dealing with Imposter Syndrome. Finally, meeting the Head Judicial Assistant, Isabella Buono, was particularly useful in setting our expectations for the internship and learning about how the court operates.

When I arrived at the Supreme Court, I was warmly welcomed by every individual. From the security guards, the Chief Executive and the Justices to the Judicial Assistants, the café staff, and the extremely impressive librarian. Everyone at the court was willing to speak with us about our experiences and fully accommodated our needs. I had the privilege of meeting my allocated Justice and was able to discuss a fascinating case in the House of Lords that I had studied during my LLM. I was pleasantly surprised by how open and welcoming the Justices were. Their willingness to share their own experiences, but to also listen to my opinions and thoughts on a particular case or experience was encouraging. I felt that this was important to the reverse mentoring provision of the internship, and I found it very beneficial. I was nervous about saying the wrong things, but I never felt discouraged or ignored.

My favourite element of the internship was the final day, when giving our presentations. The room was filled with a crowd of supporters. The team from Bridging the Bar, the Justices, the Judicial Assistants, my fellow interns, and the staff at the court. For the first time, I did not feel alone or unsupported when I was faced with a fear that I had to overcome.

Bridging the Bar and the Supreme Court have created an extraordinary opportunity for individuals from non-traditional backgrounds. It is clear that Diversity and Inclusion are important to the court and that they are taking active steps to make positive changes. This internship has given me the confidence I need to feel comfortable in my pursuit of a career at the Bar, notwithstanding the obstacles I have faced. I will always remember this internship as an elemental step in my journey to the Bar and will continue to be a Bridging the Bar Ambassador. I am grateful to all those involved and in particular, the late Lord Kerr, for their commitment and all the hard work that has made this a truly successful internship.

- Fatima Ismail

Hayley Webster



I'm Hayley, and I'm from a Scottish working class background. I'm a first generation university student, and the first in my family to study law. I also have two auto-immune conditions (ulcerative colitis and PSC), which impact my life in quite a big way: I missed a lot of school and university due to being ill.

I really wanted to do this internship because I'm a huge law nerd! The opportunity to discuss law and diversity in the profession with the Supreme Court Justices was too good to pass up. I'm also passionate about equality and diversity in the legal profession, and want to combat the myth that a commitment to diversity means that quality must be sacrificed.

I did have some preconceptions before the internship started. First, I was worried that the Justices wouldn't be interested in what I had to say, and that we would have nothing in common. I was concerned the Justices would be like stereotypical justices: aloof, inaccessible, and scary.

Second, I was a little cynical that the Supreme Court really took equality, diversity and inclusion seriously. I was concerned that their commitment to diversity was mere lip service: something that is talked about a lot, but never acted on.

Thankfully, my fears were totally unfounded. The Justices and the Judicial Assistants were all so generous with their time, gracious, and willing to listen. It was such a big confidence to be able to speak about the law with the Supreme Court Justices and to have my contributions valued.

Early in the internship week, Lord Reed said something that has stuck with me. He thinks that equality and diversity are fundamental in the legal profession because discrimination and bias against people because of their background is, quite simply, irrational and unfair. It is irrational to believe that certain groups of people are less suited to law just because of who they are.

Our job as lawyers is to promote fairness and justice, which is why it is so important to apply those values to the legal profession itself.

I also now see that the Supreme Court does take diversity and inclusion seriously, and it is not just a tick box exercise. When talking to Vicky Fox, the chief executive, her enthusiasm for judicial diversity was plain to see. Everyone I spoke to acknowledged that there is a problem with diversity in the legal profession, and that something needs to be done. And of course, the fact that the Supreme Court agreed to the internship shows their dedication to making a difference.

There were so many memorable moments, but the highlight of the week for me had to be Lord Reed coming down to meet us after the hearings and personally discussing the case with us. It was a real privilege to get an insight into how he legally reasons, and what he thinks about different advocacy styles.

- Hayley Webster

Madeleine Lusted



This year, I became one of the first to undertake an official internship at the Supreme Court. This unprecedented opportunity was afforded to me by 'Bridging the Bar'.

Ultimately, I aspire to practice as a commercial barrister in London and I see myself being part of the service it lends not only to private parties but to the functioning of the state. I have taken away the following from the experience.

First, legal practice (particularly at UKSC level) is intellectually rewarding. I particularly enjoyed listening to judicial interventions during the hearing. The arguments raised were often ideas that had never occurred to me. For example, one Justice asked whether there was a distinction between failure of a court to develop a jurisprudence and simply a 'different' way of developing the law, i.e. by reference to overarching principles rather than textual language. Whether they were persuaded or not, the arguments have stuck with me. What is the role of a judge in a democratic society? Should a constitution be interpreted as a "living" instrument?

Second, having never visited the Supreme Court, I had no preconceptions as to what it would be like. However, I was impressed by the care taken in the design of the building's architecture, from the minutiae of the carpets to the incorporation of Union symbolism throughout. The environment at the Court was relaxed, amiable and friendly – despite its somewhat imposing exterior!

Third, an insider view on how the highest levels of the judiciary operates will not only make me a better barrister, but a better citizen. As active participants in a common society, we all share a vested interest in understanding how our core institutions work.

Watching the hearing impressed on me the level of concentration and hard work demanded of judges, as well as the expectations of top-level advocates. It was particularly interesting to observe how the board responded to different strands of argument depending on whether they were policy, principle or textual based and how these arguments affected the dynamic of the hearing.

Finally, the internship has given me a greater drive and impetus to achieve my goals. Far from being a remote aspiration, the Bar is in fact an attainable reality. As a student from a working-class background, the encouragement I received from the Justices, JAs and UKSC staff was invaluable. As such, I would strongly encourage more organisations to support Bridging The Bar – without support, this project is not feasible. Without this project, opportunities are lost to those who need them. Without opportunities, the Bar will lose high-calibre candidates with much to offer.

I hope one day to join the bench as a judge, and it has been a privilege to interact with the Justices at the UKSC. To quote Cicero: "It is not by muscle, speed or physical dexterity that great things are achieved, but by reflection, force of character and judgment." This internship proves that.

- Madeleine Lusted

Olivia Bennett



My name is Olivia. I'm an aspiring barrister from a working class background in Burton on Trent. I'm proudly a third generation migrant from Jamaica. I went to a state school and was the first in my family to attend university.

I was motivated to participate in the internship for three reasons. First, I recognised it was an opportunity to be intellectually challenged, discuss legal issues and gain an insight into the Justices' decision-making process. Second, I was enthused by the reverse mentoring component of the programme. I believed that sharing first-hand experiences behind disappointing diversity statistics with Supreme Court Justices had the potential to stimulate discussion and further positive change. Third, as the first cohort to complete the internship, I knew it would be a unique experience on my CV and give me confidence applying for pupillage.

My favourite part of the internship was the meetings we had with Lord Reed at the end of each day of the trial. It was a privilege to hear his legal analysis and thoughts on the advocacy we had observed. He was generous in answering our (many!) questions. I learnt from Lord Reed how to captivate a room. Whenever asked a question, he would take a short pause to gather his thoughts and respond with poise and calmness of voice that has you subconsciously leaning forwards to absorb every word.

All the interns were paired with a Judicial Assistant and at least one Justice. I was fortunate to be paired with two, Lord Sales and Lady Rose. During our one on one chats I was inspired by their willingness to speak so candidly about their own experiences overcoming adversity. Despite our different backgrounds and being in very different stages of our career, I found I could relate to the Justices.

Prior to our presentations, I saw the Supreme Court Justices, their Judicial Assistants, court staff and Bridging the Bar members enter the room. I felt a knot slowly tightening in my stomach. Before taking the podium I asked Lady Rose if she had any advice, she smiled and simply said "Be yourself". This settled my nerves, I was myself and gladly the presentation went smoothly. I felt empowered and humbled to see attentive faces who genuinely wanted to hear our personal journeys to the Bar.

Thank you Bridging the Bar (BTB) for creating this phenomenal and unprecedented scheme with the late Lord Kerr. This experience has intensified my love for law and desire to be a barrister. It has raised my aspirations and given me self-belief. It has also provided me with a fantastic support network in my fellow interns and wider BTB family, I've never felt so supported to achieve my legal goals! Most importantly it has demonstrated that it is not merely lip service when the profession speaks on improving diversity and inclusion. To anyone interested in improving diversity in law, I would encourage you to get involved with BTB.

- Olivia Bennett

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"We made a pitch and we made history."

- Mass Ndow-Njie

Founder and Chairperson of Bridging the Bar

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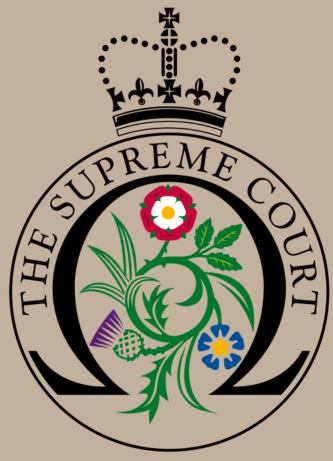




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