

'Justice Secretary must remove Judicial Appointments chair'



GMB Judicial Branch has called for the Secretary of State to remove Helen Pitcher, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission

Judges made the call in [an open letter](#) to Shabana Mahmood today.

JAC Chair Helen Pitcher recently resigned as the chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) – the body that investigates miscarriages of justice – after [failings that saw an innocent man jailed for 17 years for a rape he did not commit](#).

Meanwhile the JAC itself has come under fire for taking secret references when judges apply for promotion which outweigh assessments of their ability and their open references.



A senior judge in the Court of Appeal, Sir Geoffrey Vos criticised this as unfair in June 2024, in [a case brought by District Judge Kate Thomas](#).

Stuart Fegan, GMB Senior Organiser, said:

“GMB judges do not believe anyone who is unfit to lead the Criminal Cases Review should be overseeing appointment of our judges.

“A discredited JAC chairman reflects badly on judges because the JAC appoints them – it undermines public confidence in the justice system.

“Meanwhile the JAC under Ms Pitcher is a failing organisation; senior appointments have been irregular, there is a lack of procedural fairness and a shadowy secret reference system that lacks transparency and contributes to an atmosphere of intimidation in the judiciary.

“We call on the Justice Secretary to remove Helen Pitcher from her role as chair.”

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