

Dame Sue Carr has been appointed the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales from 1 October 2023

His Majesty The King has been pleased to approve the appointment of Dame Sue Carr as the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales from 1 October 2023. This appointment follows the retirement of The Rt Hon. the Lord Burnett of Maldon on 30 September 2023.

Dame Sue Carr was called to the Bar in 1987. As a barrister she specialised in general commercial law and took silk in 2003. She became Chair of the Professional Negligence Bar Association in 2007, Chair of the Bar Standards Board Conduct Committee in 2008, and was appointed as the Complaints Commissioner to the International Criminal Court in the Hague in 2011.

Her judicial career began in 2009 in crime, when she became a Recorder. She was appointed to the High Court, Queen's Bench Division in 2013, and became a nominated Judge of the Commercial Court and the Technology and Construction Court in 2014. In the same year she became a member of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal until 2016. She became a Presider of the Midland Circuit in 2016 until 2020, when she was appointed as a Lady Justice of Appeal. In the same year she was also appointed as the senior Judicial Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission, a position she held until January 2023.

Dame Sue Carr was educated at Wycombe Abbey School and read law at Trinity College Cambridge.

The appointment

The appointment of the Lord Chief Justice is made by His Majesty The King on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor following the recommendation of an independent selection panel chaired by Helen Pitcher OBE, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission. The other members were Lord Lloyd-Jones of the Supreme Court, Sue Hoyle OBE and Sarah Lee (lay and professional members of the Judicial Appointments Commission), and Lord Justice Edis (Senior Presiding Judge).

This selection exercise was run under the relevant sections of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 as amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013. In accordance with section 70 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, as amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, the panel determined the selection process to be followed and consulted the Lord Chancellor and the First Minister of Wales on the process followed.

In accordance with s.10(3) of the Senior Courts Act 1981 c.54, the selection exercise was open to all applicants who satisfied the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 7-year basis, or were judges of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, or High Court.

Given the challenges of reducing the outstanding caseloads across jurisdictions and the drive for modernisation across the Courts and Tribunals, candidates were expected to be able to serve for at least 4 years.

Career summary

Lady Justice Carr was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1987. She undertook pupillage at Brick Court Chambers and 2 Crown Office Row, now Four New Square, where she became a tenant in 1988. She was called to the New South Wales Bar in 1989, following a Pegasus scholarship in Sydney. She developed a broad commercial practice, taking silk at the age of 38 in 2003. She also became a trained arbitrator and mediator.

Her practice at the Bar focussed on commercial professional liability, insurance and fraud litigation and arbitration. Her professional liability work related primarily to lawyers, accountants, financial advisers, surveyors, architects and engineers. She appeared in the House of Lords in a leading case on constructive trusts and solicitors' dishonesty, and in the Court of Appeal on a leading case on limitation in insurers' claims against solicitors in respect of an after the event legal expenses scheme. She acted frequently in group litigation, including in the context of film/tax scheme disputes. She was also experienced in regulatory matters, including proceedings involving the Law Society and magic circle accountancy firms in proceedings brought by the Financial Reporting Council. In 2012 she was named Professional Negligence Silk of the Year by Chambers & Partners.

During her time at the Bar, Lady Justice Carr held many leadership positions, including chair of the Conduct Committee of the Bar Standards Board; chair of the Professional Negligence Bar Association; Complaints Commissioner to the International Criminal Court in the Hague; chair of the Education and Training Committee of the Inner Temple, where she became a Governing Bencher in 2006; and head of chambers.

Her judicial career began in 2009 in crime, when she became a Recorder. She joined the High Court Bench in 2013, sitting in the Queen's Bench Division and the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division). Alongside the general work of the Queen's Bench Division, she sat in all three jurisdictions of the Business and Property Courts: Commercial, Chancery and Technology and Construction, becoming the first female High Court Judge to sit in the Technology and Construction Court and the second female High Court Judge to sit in the Commercial Court. She also sat on the Investigatory Powers Tribunal between 2014 and 2016.

She was Director of Magistrates' Training and a member of the Judicial College Board between 2014 and 2018, and a Presider of the Midland Circuit, the largest Circuit outside London and the South East, from 2016 to 2020. In 2016 she was presented with the European Women in Business Law Lifetime Achievement Award.

Lady Justice Carr was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2020. She was appointed as the Senior Judicial Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission shortly thereafter, remaining in that role until January 2023. She was a temporary Investigatory Powers Commissioner during the Covid-19 pandemic. She became President of the Professional Negligence Bar Association in 2022.

She was educated at Wycombe Abbey, Buckinghamshire, where she was later a governor for 13 years, and Trinity College, Cambridge, where she read Modern Languages (Part 1) and Law (Part 2). She speaks French and German. She was a keen actress, including with the Bar Theatrical Society, and sportswoman. She remains an active musician, singing with the Bar Choral Society and playing the piano. She is married with three children.