

Magistrate recruitment campaign launched

- 4,000 new magistrates covering all jurisdictions sought across England and Wales
- Largest recruitment effort in the 650-year history of the magistracy
- Workforce boost will help deliver speedier justice

A new marketing campaign by the Ministry of Justice seeks to boost numbers by 4,000, with recruits expected to help tackle the backlog of criminal cases caused by the pandemic. It represents the largest recruitment effort in the 650-year history of the magistracy and could increase the workforce by up to a third in the coming years.

The £1 million campaign aims to attract people from a wide range of backgrounds – from teachers to bricklayers, to stay-at-home mums, and any individuals who can display reason and sound judgment. It seeks to make the magistracy more representative of the communities it serves and will specifically target younger people – with anyone over 18 encouraged to apply online.

Magistrates are dedicated, well-trained and supported with legal advice, allowing them to deal with a range of cases themselves – from traffic offences to burglary. The work is voluntary with individuals expected to dedicate a minimum of 13 days a year service, meaning many magistrates often fulfil this crucial role easily alongside full-time employment and caring responsibilities.

Today's announcement comes after the government last week unveiled plans to double magistrates' sentencing powers from six months to a year to help drive down waiting times and bring criminals to justice more quickly. The step is expected to free up an estimated 1,700 extra days of Crown Court time annually.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab, said:

Magistrates are the unsung heroes of the justice system and we want people from every part of society represented in their ranks.

If you care about your community and want to give back then I would strongly encourage you to apply to become a magistrate. There are few other opportunities that can make such a difference in people's lives.

Alongside our plans to double their sentencing powers from six months to a year, this recruitment drive will ensure magistrates can play an even greater role in restoring the swift justice the public deserve.

Adam Rathbone, a lecturer from Newcastle who became a magistrate in his twenties, seven years ago, said:

I grew up in a very deprived part of Middlesbrough and saw a lot of crime as well as victims of crime. I found out about becoming a magistrate from my boss and I liked the idea of using my knowledge and skills to help my community.

It's very flexible and can fit alongside work, children and family commitments and other hobbies. It's also a great way to meet people you might not usually meet and develop yourself in different ways. Magistrates are the balance between the police and professional judges and the public.

All magistrates are given robust training and an experienced mentor in their first year to develop their skills and legal knowledge. The top qualities that MoJ and the Judiciary look for in potential candidates are good communication skills, a sense of fairness and the ability to see an argument from different sides. Candidates are being sought to fill positions across all jurisdictions including criminal work, youth cases, as well as certain civil and family proceedings.

Berinder Bassral, 59, a convenience store retailer from West Bromwich who has been a magistrate for five years, said:

I became a magistrate to make a difference in the area I live in and, as a parent, to be a good role model to my children.

The most rewarding thing about being a magistrate is knowing that you have made a positive change in an individual's life and being able to assure a victim that justice has been done in accordance with the law. You don't need any legal experience, just a fair and open mind. If you choose to apply, you'll be given all the training you need.

Bev Higgs, National Chair of the Magistrates' Association said:

The Magistrates' Association is pleased to support this recruitment campaign and would encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to contribute their lived experience, knowledge and commitment to the judiciary.

It is vitally important that Magistrates' Courts reflect their local communities, and we welcome all who join us in this unique and very rewarding role.

- You can apply to become a magistrate at icanbeamagistrate.co.uk

- The MoJ is investing over £1 million this financial year to support the recruitment of new and diverse magistrates, the government's top priority for the magistracy.
- A revised, streamlined recruitment process will be introduced, with applications made online via a new digital recruitment system to modernise candidate experience and enable MoJ to better monitor recruitment information, including the diversity of applicants.
- The recruitment campaign is supported by HMCTS, and the Judiciary of England and Wales who provide support and training for magistrates.
- The [Magistrates' Association](#) is a national charity and the membership body for the magistracy. With 12,700 members across England and Wales, it is a unique source of information and insight, and the only independent voice of the magistracy.