

What kind of questions will I be asked on the application form?

The Advisory Committee who carry out the interviewing for new magistrates will read each form carefully and will be looking for you to show them that you are aware of things around you which could be contributing to crime and how people behave in difficult circumstances. The Committee will also want to know how you have helped your community.

Is the application form difficult?

Whilst the form may look difficult it is designed to allow you to show that you have the qualities required to become a magistrate.

Is there anyone who can help me while I am learning the ropes?

Yes. Every new magistrate will be allocated a mentor who will sit with them as part of a bench when they are first appointed. The mentor will answer any questions you have, give you gentle advice and be there to support you up until your first appraisal.

Appraisal –What does that involve?

In order to maintain the highest standards all magistrates are appraised by another magistrate, trained in appraising. Presiding Justices are appraised every 2 years and other magistrates every 4 years. New magistrates are generally appraised at the end of their first year of sitting.

For more information see:-

www.gov.uk/become-magistrate

www.magistrates-association.org.uk



**Ministry of
JUSTICE**

**CAN
I
BECOME
A
MAGISTRATE?**

**Frequently
Asked
Questions**

**For more information go to
www.gov.uk/become-magistrate**



JUDICIAL OFFICE

*Cumbria & Lancashire Recruitment
Advisory Committee*

Can anyone be a magistrate?

There are certain occupations which prevent you from becoming a magistrate. Eg police officers and traffic wardens. People with a criminal history cannot apply. For full details see the website - Becoming a Magistrate - Guidance for Applicants.

Is there an age restriction?

Anyone between the age of 18 and 65 can apply. Magistrates currently retire at 70 and newly appointed magistrates are expected to serve for 5 years.

Are all magistrates retired?

The perception is partly true as retired people do have more time available to complete the minimum sittings. However it is important for the magistracy to recruit younger people to bring with them their different life experiences.

I am from an ethnic minority and do not speak English as my first language?

Providing that your English is of a standard to follow the arguments made by the lawyers this should not be a problem. We are actively looking for magistrates who are representative of their local community.

I identify as LGBTQ+. Is that a problem?

No. The magistracy welcomes people from diverse backgrounds and has no opinion on the sexual orientation of any of its members.

I have a disability. Will this stop me applying?

No. Depending on the type of disability many of the courts are adapted to cater for magistrates with mobility difficulties.

Do you have to be rich to be a magistrate?

No. Magistrates are not paid, but can claim for travelling expenses. They have to have the time available to fulfil the minimum sitting requirement of 13 days. The impression of a wealthy gentleman/woman sitting as a magistrate is old-fashioned and has no place in the modern court and so we would like to see a very broad spectrum of candidates applying for the role

Do I have to have a job?

Candidates who are working can have difficulty with getting time off for sittings and this is something which will need to be discussed with their employer prior to the interviews, but being unemployed will not stop you being appointed.

Is there such a thing as a typical magistrate?

No, and it is right that there should not be. Magistrates serve their community and the only thing they should have in common is the wish to do this. Although training in aspects of the law is provided each magistrate will bring their own views and opinions to decision making.

Will I know when I am sitting in advance?

The rota team will contact you and ask for your availability over the following 6 months. Your sittings will be allocated to fit in with your availability. Of course unforeseen circumstances will arise and you may have to cancel ideally with as much notice as possible. You may also be contacted to take on extra sittings if convenient to you. You may also be asked to travel to courts other than your preferred site of sitting. You do not have to do this, but in moving about the County you will meet different magistrates and see different types of case and defendant, which you may not see in your 'home' court.

Do I need to know a lot of law?

No. There is no requirement for any legal background or knowledge of the law. Every bench sits with a legal advisor and it is their job to inform the magistrates about the law and how it is applied to each case. Decisions are completely in the hands of the magistrates.

Training in certain aspects of the law is given both at the time of joining the bench and at regular intervals afterwards. If a law is brought in which is likely to have an effect on how matters are dealt with there could be extra training provided. A magistrate is expected to keep up to date with any changes.