

Magistrate or Justice of Peace

Cost: Unpaid	Can claim allowances for travel, subsistence and financial loss, such as loss of earnings
Time: High	Required to sit for minimum of 26 half-day court sittings each year. Must also be available for training
Requirements for Position: Low	For consideration you must be between 18 and 65 years of age. Magistrates must retire at the age of 70. You do not need formal qualifications
Training Offered: Yes	Training is compulsory and is provided to each magistrate when they start and throughout their service.

What is a Magistrate?

The office of Magistrates which may also been known as Justice of Peace have existed in England and Wales for hundreds of years.

Magistrates are normal members of the public who voluntarily perform a public

service by acting as the first tier in our justice system.

All criminal cases begin in the magistrate courts and about 97% of these are concluded there. Serious crimes will begin in the magistrates court but will follow through to the Crown Court.

As a magistrate you must listen to cases, decide on a verdict, and an appropriate sentence. A magistrate must follow guidelines and protocols for sentencing, so it is important that a magistrate listens to everything that is said and makes decisions carefully.

Magistrates do not hear cases on their own but will sit as one of three magistrates on a bench. A qualified Legal Adviser will also sit on the bench and will provide advise on the procedure and legal aspects.

Magistrates attend their local magistrate court, within Hartlepool this is located at:

Magistrate Court
The Law Courts,
Victoria Road,
Hartlepool
TS24 8AG

Requirements to become a Magistrate?

There are no formal or academic qualifications required to become a magistrate, however you will need common sense and be able to demonstrate the following six key qualities.

- Good Character
- Understanding and Communication
- Social Awareness
- Maturity and sound temperament
- Sound judgement
- Commitment and reliability

As a magistrate you should also be available to undertake a minimum of 26 half day sittings, these are arranged in advance on a rota basis at the beginning of the year.

Employers are required to provide you with a reasonable time off to undertake your magistrate duties under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. Although this is something you should discuss with your employer before applying for the position.

Can I be a Magistrate?

It is vital that the justice system remains impartial therefore in some instances individuals in a small number of occupations may be unable to become magistrates. For instance police officers or traffic wardens, serving members of HM Forces, un-discharged bankrupts, close relatives of a magistrate in the same court area or employees of the Crown

Prosecution Service, Prison Service or Probation Service may be unsuitable to become magistrates.

You do not have to have British nationality to become a magistrate, however you must be willing to take the Oath of Allegiance. Those undergoing the process of asylum cannot be considered to become a magistrate.

All magistrates begin by sitting in the adults court, however once you gain experience you can undertake additional training and sit within specialised areas such as the Youth or Family court.

Necessary training for the role

You will receive compulsory training to prepare you for your role as a magistrate and this will usually last from a year to 18 months. Training and meetings will be held outside of work hours. During this period you will gain the skills and understanding required for your role.

You will also receive ongoing training throughout your service as a magistrate and once every three years magistrates are appraised, this simply helps to ensure that all magistrates maintain their competency.

Before you can apply to become a magistrate you must visit a magistrates court to observe what happens. This is also a great chance to assess what the role of the magistrate might entail for you.

All magistrates are provided with a mentor for the first two years who provides support and assistance.

For further information about becoming a magistrate please visit the following links which provide both information and experience about being a magistrate:

[Magistrates Association](#)

[DirectGov](#)