

**I can be a
magistrate**

**The benefits of supporting
your employees to
volunteer as magistrates.**

**Great for your organisation and employees.
Good for the community.**



**Ministry
of Justice**



**JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES**



A hidden army of volunteers

There are approximately 13,000 magistrates in England and Wales. Nearly all criminal court cases in England and Wales begin in a magistrates' court, and 95% will be completed there too. Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate systems.

As with many volunteers, magistrates lead busy lives, many managing young families and full-time jobs alongside sitting in court. Volunteers come from all walks of life and form a vital part of our justice system.



All sorts of people make good magistrates

Magistrates are unpaid volunteers. They sit in either the criminal or family court in their local community and make fair and reasonable decisions on the cases brought before them. Magistrates do not need a legal background and receive specialist training before hearing cases.

All sorts of people make good magistrates. That's why we're actively looking for more people from diverse professions and backgrounds – which is where you and your organisation come in.

Read on to discover what it means for you, as an employer, to have a magistrate on your team.

Find out how it works from your perspective and what you, and any employees who volunteer, will gain.

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“The benefits of volunteering – to the employer as well as the employee – are now well-established and supported by a body of research. At a time when all employers could do with every advantage possible, ensuring your workforce is able to volunteer makes business sense and demonstrates best practice.”

**David Allen, Chief Executive, Cumbria CVS
(Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service)**



Why support your employees to become magistrates?

Supporting individuals to volunteer as magistrates benefits your organisation, employees and the community.

Supporting employee development

Enabling staff to fulfil the vital voluntary role of a magistrate is a powerful way of demonstrating your organisation's commitment to their wider personal development. Magistrates benefit from excellent training and gain a wide range of highly valued and transferable skills – such as critical analysis, complex problem solving, mediation, influencing and decision making – which can bring significant benefits to your team. Supporting individuals to volunteer can therefore be an effective way of supplementing the formal training you offer and can help develop your future leaders.

Shaping your employment offer

Employees sitting as magistrates build a deeper understanding of local issues. This can help your organisation become aware of new local challenges and opportunities. It can help you shape what you offer as a local employer, stretching your employees' potential while changing your community for the better.



Giving back to the community

Supporting employees to sit as magistrates provides tangible evidence of your organisation's commitment to giving back to the community. This can boost your standing and influence locally. In turn, it can help to attract jobseekers who share your values and see your organisation as a good employer and attractive employment opportunity.

Nurturing job satisfaction and employee engagement

Volunteering for a role that makes a difference to the local community can help foster a sense of pride and personal influence. And being able to take time off work to volunteer can drive an employee's job satisfaction and engagement as they increasingly see your organisation as a great place to work – helping you to retain high performing employees.

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“For us, having a magistrate as an employee was a win-win. Not only were we able to support a highly motivated, self-starter to progress with his own life-goals – which we know as a company aids staff retention – but, in supporting our employee, we were also able to demonstrably deliver social value and be part of something that gives back to society.”

Marcia La-Rose, Head of HR, Four Communications



What are your responsibilities as an employer?

Magistrates need to attend court (sit) for a minimum of 13 full days a year, during working hours. This doesn't include training days, some of which can be done at weekends.

Employers are obliged to allow time off work for employees to volunteer in a public role – such as a magistrate.

It is at their discretion whether this is paid or unpaid leave, and there is no legal stipulation in terms of the number of days they have to provide as leave.

Many employers support their employees by granting paid leave for at least some of a magistrate's sitting days.

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“The GLA provides paid time off for public duties – up to 5 days per year for magistrates. We also offer up to 3 days of volunteering leave and flexible working arrangements, such as compressed hours, which could support individuals to take on ongoing public duties or other voluntary roles outside of work.”

Charmaine De Souza, Assistant Director, HR and OD, Greater London Authority



Research shows:

- **The majority of decision-makers (84%) would be generally supportive if an employee wanted to be a magistrate**
- **89% think people who are magistrates have sound judgement**
- **81% say magistrates are effective decision-makers**

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 515 adults (employers involved in decisions about the community work their organisation does). Fieldwork was undertaken between 9 February and 2 March 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of businesses in England and Wales.

Promoting the magistracy to your employees

If you're interested in promoting the role of magistrates to your employees, or employees ask you about the role, make sure line managers within your organisation are equipped with the basic facts:

- anyone can become a magistrate if they have the right skills and integrity
- magistrates don't need legal knowledge or a degree
- volunteering as a magistrate provides development opportunities and can improve staff retention.

The [Magistrates Association website](#) suggests reviewing your public duty policy to make specific reference to magistrates, and including specific guidelines on the number of days' leave permitted. It also provides some practical advice on how you can support your employees to be magistrates.

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“Businesses supporting their people to volunteer as magistrates see a real return on their investment. Being a magistrate helps develop interpersonal, decision making and analytical skills. It also provides those involved with a much broader perspective of what is happening in society, which is very useful to business from a Corporate Social Responsibility perspective. It's a great thing to do for society, the individual and your business – helping employees develop skills which can be applied in the workplace.”

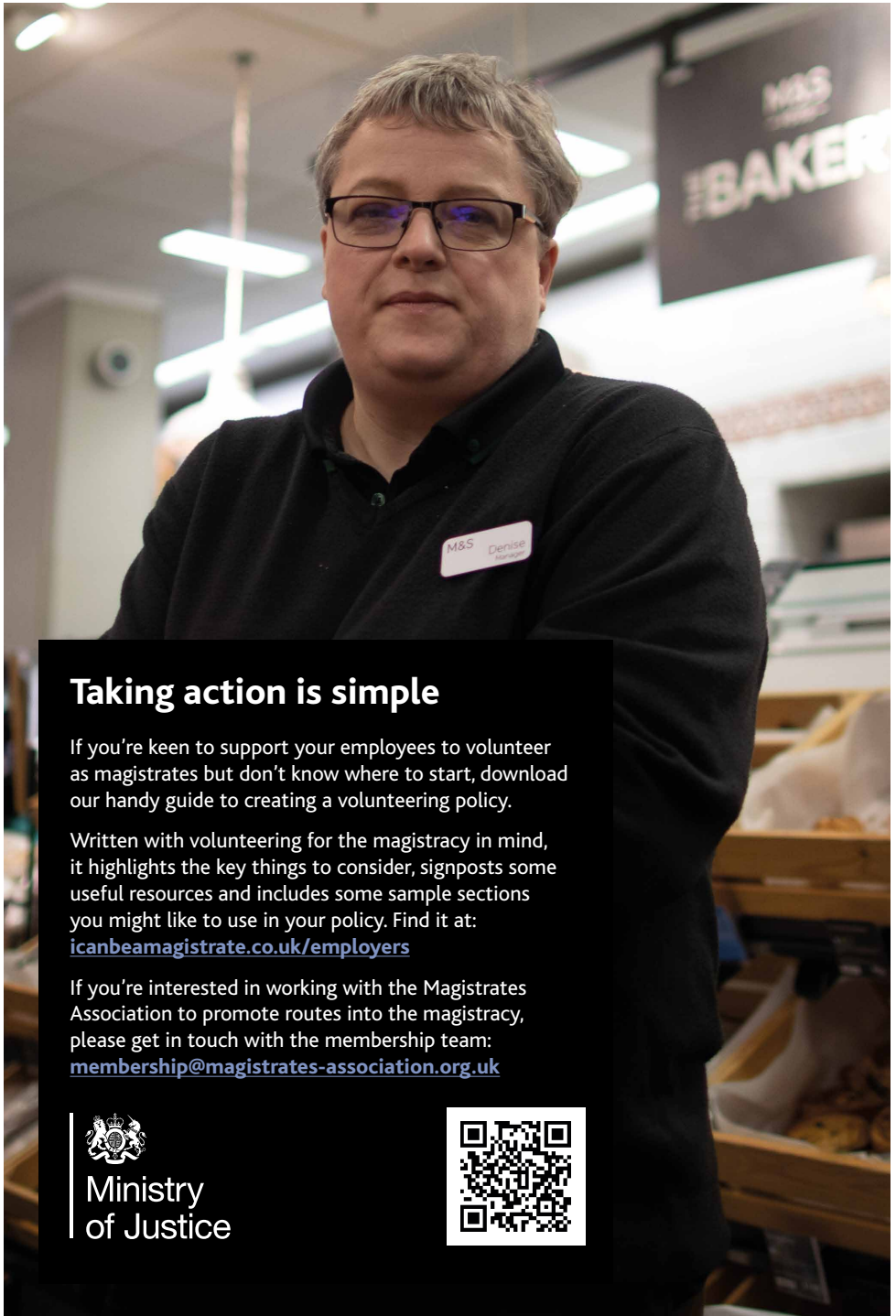
**Jo Lappin, Chief Executive, Cumbria LEP
(Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership)**



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“Providing our employees with time to act as Magistrates not only supports the local communities in which we operate but we recognise it also presents a unique opportunity to develop their skills, experience and knowledge which helps their career development and ultimately, the effectiveness of our business.”

Janet Garner, Head of HR, Skills and Academy Principal, BAE Systems



Taking action is simple

If you're keen to support your employees to volunteer as magistrates but don't know where to start, download our handy guide to creating a volunteering policy.

Written with volunteering for the magistracy in mind, it highlights the key things to consider, signposts some useful resources and includes some sample sections you might like to use in your policy. Find it at:

icanbeamagistrate.co.uk/employers

If you're interested in working with the Magistrates Association to promote routes into the magistracy, please get in touch with the membership team:

membership@magistrates-association.org.uk



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