

Magistrate applicants urged to come forward

- Renewed focus by the government on magistrate recruitment and diversity
- Work to support the magistracy will be intensified
- A new group will help promote the role

Efforts to boost the appeal of the magistracy, to current incumbents and potential applicants, will focus on ensuring that magistrates roles are rewarding and meaningful. In order to attract more new applicants, the Ministry of Justice will work closely with the magistracy to develop a new recruitment strategy that aims to streamline the process and encourage greater diversity.

The move follows a [report by the Justice Select Committee](#) recommending a series of measures designed to make working as a magistrate more appealing.

The government has worked since 2015 to increase recruitment of magistrates. According to a survey carried out by the Judicial Office in 2017, 80% of respondents said they had a strong feeling of satisfaction with their role; 89% said they had a strong personal attachment to the role; and 91% said they would recommend the role to friends or colleagues.

Diversity has also improved. The most recent statistics, published in July 2019, show that 12% of magistrates declared themselves as being from a BAME background – an increase of four percentage points since 2012 – and 56% of magistrates were female – an increase of five percentage points since 2012.

Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP said:

More than 1,000 new magistrates were recruited in 2018 alone but we are aware there is more to be done. That is why we are working closely with the judiciary to ensure an easier and faster recruitment process as well as improving diversity and, importantly, boosting morale.

Magistrates continue to be a central pillar of our world-class justice system, sacrificing their valuable time to give back to their local communities. I would encourage anybody interested in the role to consider applying.

Work will include establishing a Magistrates Recruitment and Attraction Steering Group, jointly headed by the Ministry of Justice and leadership magistrates, to drive this activity – promoting the magistracy and increasing recruitment, with a particular focus on increasing diversity.

Potential candidates will receive better and clearer information on what the role entails, what the application process involves and the vacancies that are available in a particular area. Research will be carried out to understand what recruitment activity has been successful and ensure that good ideas and best practice are shared across the magistracy, including in areas that struggle to attract sufficient candidates.

Work with communications and marketing experts will help to target marketing and recruitment activity more effectively, and there will be more work to promote the benefits to employers. This work will raise the profile of the magistracy with the aim of recruiting more diverse members.

The implications of a change to the retirement age for all judicial office holders, including magistrates, will also be consulted on publicly in due course. A new tool is being developed to plan more effectively for long-term recruitment needs, bringing together data and analysis about magistrates in post, expected resignations and retirement rates.

The government also committed to begin a review of magistrates' expenses in 2019 and work has now begun.

Who can apply to become a magistrate?

- People over the age of 18 and under 65.
- Applications may be considered for those aged between 65 and 70 but all magistrates must retire at 70.
- People must be aware of social issues, have sound judgement and be of good character (which means they cannot have been convicted of a serious crime or a number of minor offences, have been banned from driving in the last ten years or have been declared bankrupt).
- They must be reliable and mature and be able to listen and communicate with others.
- For further details about eligibility visit www.judiciary.uk/publications/advisory-committees-justices-peace or www.gov.uk/become-magistrate