

# Find out more

## Visit a court

Anyone can visit a local magistrates' court to see the work of the court, and decide whether they would like to be a magistrate. It is best to telephone first to see what court business there will be on the day you plan to visit.

Courts hold open days and evenings, when visitors can watch mock trials and talk to magistrates about their work. Contact details for local courts and dates for open evenings in Hertfordshire are on the back of this leaflet.

## Useful websites

[www.direct.gov.uk/magistrates](http://www.direct.gov.uk/magistrates)

West Hertfordshire Magistrates' Courts  
[www.westhertsmagistrates.org.uk](http://www.westhertsmagistrates.org.uk)

Magistrates' Association  
[www.magistrates-association.org.uk](http://www.magistrates-association.org.uk)

## Open events at Hertfordshire Magistrates' Courts

**24 January 2009**  
**from 10 am to 12.30 pm**

- Hertford Magistrates' Court, The Shire Hall, Fore Street, Hertford SG13 1DF
- St Albans Magistrates' Court, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans AL1 3LB
- Stevenage Magistrates' Court, Danesgate, Stevenage SG1 1JQ
- Watford Magistrates' Court, 61 Clarendon Road, Watford WD17 1ST

**24 February 2009 from 6 – 8pm**

- Hemel Hempstead Magistrates' Court, The Courthouse, Dacorum Way, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1HF
- Hertford Magistrates' Court, The Shire Hall, Fore Street, Hertford SG13 1DF
- St Albans Magistrates' Court, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans AL1 3LB
- Stevenage Magistrates' Court, Danesgate, Stevenage SG1 1JQ

Enquiries: 01923 297516



# Could you be a Magistrate?

Contributing to the community  
Delivering local justice  
Learning new skills

Application forms should be downloaded from the website [www.direct.gov.uk/magistrates](http://www.direct.gov.uk/magistrates) or call Mrs Sue Neaves 01923 297516 for further information.

The closing date for applications is  
31 March 2009.

# Could you be a Magistrate?

## What does a magistrate do?

All criminal cases that come to court are first heard in magistrates' courts, and about 96% of the cases are decided there.

Three magistrates sit together to hear cases in court. There are some 30,000 lay magistrates, also known as Justices of the Peace or JPs, across the country. All magistrates hear criminal cases, and some also sit in specialist youth and family courts.

Magistrates listen to evidence, pass sentence, decide on bail applications, and enforce fines. A typical day might include dealing with driving offences, shoplifting, assault and theft cases.

## Who can become a magistrate?

Magistrates are lay people who work on a voluntary basis. Magistrates are drawn from all backgrounds and every section of the community. You can become a magistrate if you are aged between 18 and 65.

## A role for everyone

To be a magistrate you do not need a legal background. You need these essential qualities: good character, communication skills, willingness to work in a team, social awareness, maturity and sound judgement, commitment and reliability.

*'Serving as a magistrate is totally different from what people expect. You don't need a legal background – just a lot of common sense.'*

Jenny Kerr, magistrate and self-employed conference organiser

*'When I became a magistrate I had been doing some human rights work and it convinced me I could do more to represent our multicultural community.'*

Manjit Singh Buttar, magistrate and station manager, London Transport

## How much time does it take?

Magistrates must be able to sit for a minimum of 26 half-days a year in court.

Magistrates who are in paid employment may agree time away from work with their employers to fulfil their duties as magistrates.



## Does being a magistrate require legal knowledge?

Magistrates do not need specialist legal knowledge or qualifications. They receive training and are helped in court by trained legal advisers.

## Are magistrates paid?

Magistrates are not paid. They can claim expenses and loss of earnings allowance, but many employers allow time off with pay.

*'I get a sense of satisfaction from serving the local community and ensuring people in society are being treated fairly for the way they live.'*

Grantley Yearwood, aircraft technician, British Airways