



Lord Chancellor's Directions Appendix 3B

Guidance for referees following an application for appointment as a magistrate

The duties of a magistrate

The office of magistrate (also known as Justice of the Peace or JP) has existed in England and Wales for hundreds of years. People holding the office perform an essential public service by dispensing justice within the justice system and hearing a range of cases. Magistrates sit in courts across England and Wales, and they all give their time and expertise voluntarily.

The magistrates' court predominantly deals with criminal cases for both adults and young people (aged 10 – 17). They also deal with some civil cases and other matters like enforcing non-payment of council tax. Magistrates also sit in the Family Court where some family disputes are heard for example whether children should be removed from their parents. The decisions they make have a direct impact on individuals in the justice system.

It is important that referees are honest about the candidate's suitability and ability to become a magistrate. This will help us to ensure that only the most suitable individuals are appointed to this important public office.

Your role as a referee

The candidate has nominated you to provide a reference in support of their application to become a magistrate. All information you provide is confidential and will not be shared with the candidate.

If you feel unable to provide a reference, please notify the candidate immediately so they can nominate another person. If you can provide a reference, please do so by the requested date to avoid the candidate's application being rejected.

Eligibility of who can provide a reference

To provide a reference for a candidate to the magistracy, you:

- must have known the candidate for a minimum of three years unless you are the candidate's employer;

- must not be in an intimate or familial relationship with the candidate;
- should not appear regularly before the court, whether in a personal, professional or volunteering capacity, to which the candidate might be appointed; and
- must state if you are a magistrate or judicial office holder.

Personal qualities of a magistrate

Below are key attributes that a magistrate must possess which will be tested through the selection process. Please bear these in mind when writing your reference.

- **Understand and Appreciate Different Perspectives**
- **Communicate with Sensitivity and Respect**
- **Work and Engage with People Professionally**
- **Make Fair, Impartial and Transparent Decisions**
- **Show Self-Awareness and be Open to Learning**

For more information about how candidates should demonstrate these attributes please see here: [<https://magistrates.judiciary.uk/>].

Candidates will also be required to demonstrate that they are of good character and that there is nothing in their public or private life that could bring the magistracy into disrepute. They must also declare that they are willing and able to make the minimum time commitment of at least 13 days per year for sitting in court.