

Day in the life

Wendy Hill, Haringey magistrate



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The two Magistrates' Courts at Highgate and Tottenham are part of HM Courts Service, and deal with over 95 per cent of crimes committed in Haringey. Wendy Hill is one of over 150 magistrates in the borough. She says: "My working life has been mainly in the public sector; being a magistrate is a way of continuing to serve the community by ensuring that justice is fairly and

properly implemented. "We sit as a 'bench' of three to share decision making and always have a qualified Legal Adviser with us. Every day in court is different and it's satisfying to deal with issues which affect all our lives. We consider a wide variety of matters, including theft, assault, robbery, benefit fraud, threatening behaviour, possession of offensive weapons, drugs, prostitution, breaches of court orders and

motoring offences. Our role is to take pleas, decide whether to give bail, hear trials and sentence offenders."

21 to 70

Anyone between the ages of 21 and 70 can apply to the magistracy. No particular qualifications are required but applicants need to show they can concentrate on complex matters, weigh up evidence, be impartial and use structured decision making. New magistrates receive training and are supported by a mentor magistrate. Everyone starts in the adult court but experienced magistrates can, after further training, hear youth and family cases, and gambling and liquor licensing appeals. In addition, a Community Justice Court was launched this year working closely with other organisations to deal with local people's

concerns over offending in particular postcodes.

"It's an interesting role and I would encourage anyone to think about applying. We have to sit a minimum of 26 half days but, now I'm no longer working full time, I can do a lot more. Employers give time off for public service. We don't receive a salary but can claim expenses or lost earnings."

Get involved

Wendy is one of a group of Haringey magistrates talking to schools and community groups about the work of the courts and encouraging applications to the magistracy from all sections of the community. "The courts need to reflect the community they serve so it's important that everyone realises they can be involved."



i To find out about becoming a magistrate see the crime, justice and the law pages on www.direct.gov.uk, or contact the

Magistrates Appointments Team, Ministry of Justice, Magistrates Recruitment and Appointments Branch, Judicial Services Directorate, Room 2.20, 2nd Floor, Selborne House, 54 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QW or email mnrsteam@justice.gsi.gov.uk for an application pack.