

WHY SUPPORTING MAGISTRATES MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE



When people hear the word magistrate, they often picture the courtroom but rarely consider the transformative impact the role can have beyond it.

As a serving magistrate in the criminal courts for over five years, I can say with complete honesty that volunteering in this role has been one of the most rewarding and professionally enriching experiences of my life.

Like many people, I initially saw becoming a magistrate as an opportunity to give back to society. What I did not fully appreciate at the time was just how much I would gain in return — not only personally, but professionally.

Skills That Transfer Directly Back Into the Workplace

Sitting as a magistrate requires careful listening, balanced judgement, confidence under pressure, and the ability to make important decisions with clarity and fairness.

These are not courtroom-only skills. They are leadership skills.

In my professional career as a civil servant, I have found that my experience as a magistrate has significantly strengthened my confidence and sharpened my ability to engage with complexity. Exposure to the realities of the criminal justice system has deepened my understanding of the many different social, economic, and personal circumstances that shape people's lives.

This broader perspective has made me more forward-thinking, more emotionally intelligent, and better equipped to approach workplace challenges with nuance and sound judgement.

In an increasingly complex professional world, employers consistently seek individuals who can think critically, communicate effectively, and navigate difficult situations with integrity. The magistracy develops exactly those capabilities.

A Greater Sense of Purpose

Beyond the professional skills, there is something profoundly fulfilling about public service.

Serving as a magistrate has given me a genuine sense of pride. Knowing that I am contributing to my community, helping uphold fairness, and participating in a justice system that impacts real lives brings a level of purpose that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

For me, that sense of purpose became even more significant following my stroke.

Returning to the bench after such a life-changing health event was not something I took for granted. What stands out to me is just how accommodating and supportive the magistracy was during that transition. The understanding, flexibility, and encouragement I received made a meaningful difference in helping me rebuild confidence and reconnect with a part of my identity that I deeply valued.

That return was about far more than resuming a voluntary role. It became an important part of my recovery — positively impacting my mental wellbeing, restoring a sense of purpose, and reminding me that adversity does not have to define the end of contribution.

That sense of contribution has translated into my wider life and work. It has made me feel more fulfilled, more grounded, and even more motivated in my professional role.

Employees who feel connected to purpose often bring greater engagement, resilience, and loyalty back into the workplace.

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Why Employers Matter

One of the biggest barriers preventing capable people from becoming magistrates is not willingness – it is practical employer support.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to work within the Civil Service, where I am entitled to 18 days of special leave each year for voluntary public duties. This more than covers the minimum 13 sitting days required of magistrates and has made my continued service possible.

That flexibility is not simply an employee benefit. It is an investment.

By supporting staff to volunteer in roles such as the magistracy, employers are actively developing leadership capability, strengthening decision-making skills, and demonstrating meaningful corporate social responsibility.

For businesses across the West Midlands – whether in construction, retail, professional services, manufacturing, logistics, or beyond – there is a real opportunity to empower employees to contribute to society while bringing enhanced skills and perspective back into the organisation.

A Magistracy That Reflects Society

Magistrates make decisions that affect everyday communities. It is therefore essential that the bench reflects the full breadth of the society it serves.

Employers are uniquely positioned to make that happen.

By encouraging staff from all backgrounds to consider the magistracy, businesses can play a direct role in strengthening public confidence in the justice system and helping to build a fairer, more representative society. Supporting magistrates is not simply about allowing time away from work.

It is about developing stronger people, stronger businesses, and stronger communities.

Sometimes the greatest return on investment comes not from what employees do within the business – but from what they are empowered to contribute beyond it.



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