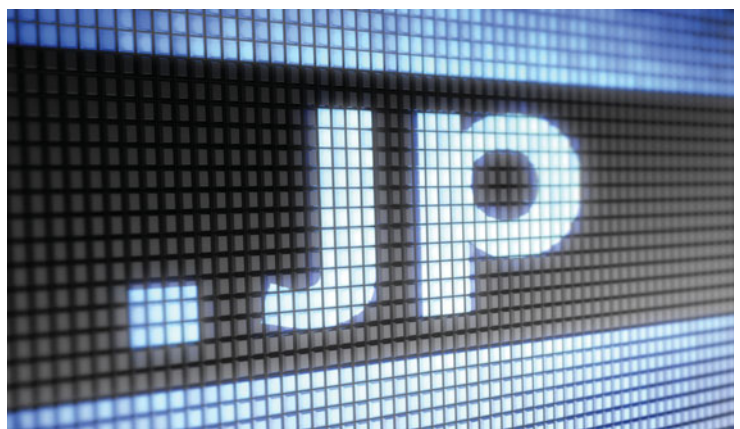




Magistrates Association



Organisational Strategy 2019-2022



10A Flagstaff House
St George Wharf
London
SW8 2LE
Tel: 020 7387 2353

Email: information@magistrates-association.org.uk
www.magistrates-association.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 216066 (England and Wales)

Introduction

Welcome to the Magistrates Association's new three-year organisational strategy for 2019-22.

The Magistrates Association (MA) will celebrate its centenary in 2020, and this significant milestone could not have come at a more important time for the organisation, the magistracy or the broader justice system.

The coming years will be crucial in setting the future direction of the magistracy as a whole, with the ongoing court reform programme leading to significant changes to the courts and to the role of magistrates. A revived focus on recruitment will see a new generation of magistrates recruited, with an increasing number only ever sitting in the family jurisdiction. This comes at the same time as broader changes to the justice system, including to the probation services that are crucial to much of magistrates' work.

At this time of change, the work of the MA, the only independent voice of the magistracy, could not be more important. We must continue to be at the heart of reform, ensuring that our knowledge and expertise informs the changes that will shape the magistracy and the broader justice system into the future. We must also continue to provide support and guidance to our members, helping them in carrying out their role. And we must continue to inform the public about the magistracy and its central role in the justice system.

To do this, we must ensure that the MA is organisationally robust, financially and ethically sound, and delivering work of the highest quality at a time when the reduction in the number of magistrates in the last decade has had a significant impact on the magistracy and the MA. This strategy is intended to meet these goals, a first step towards ensuring that we continue to thrive into our second century and beyond.

John Bache JP
National Chair

Jon Collins
Chief Executive

About us

The MA is an independent charity and the membership body for the magistracy. We work to promote the sound administration of the law, including by providing guidance, training and support for our members, informing the public about the courts and the role of magistrates, producing and publishing research on key topics relevant to the magistracy, and contributing to the development and delivery of reforms to the courts and the broader justice system. With 14,000 members across England and Wales, we are a unique source of information and insight and the only independent voice of the magistracy.

Our vision

The MA's vision is a fair and effective justice system, served by a robust and vibrant magistracy.

Our mission

To work with and on behalf of our members to promote the sound administration of the law by informing policy and practice relating to the magistracy, providing support and guidance to magistrates, and informing the public about the magistracy and the broader justice system.

Our structure

The MA has 54 branches across England and Wales. These are run by and for our members, and allow us to operate effectively at a regional and local level. We also have a Council, comprised of a representative of each branch as well as chairs of the MA's policy committees. Council provides advice and assistance to the MA's Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the governance of the organisation. It sets the strategic plan and budget and is legally accountable for all our activities. The members of the Board of Trustees – including the Chair and Deputy Chairs – are elected by and from our membership.

The MA also has four policy committees, which are made up of members and are at the heart of our work to ensure that magistrates play a leading role in the national policy-making process. The four committees, which are each responsible for policy and practice in a distinct area, are the Adult Court Committee, the Family Court Committee, the Youth Court Committee and the Training Committee.

Working alongside these structures we have a small staff team, which is responsible for designing and delivering the work of the organisation.

The MA's key aims for 2019-2022

Our key ongoing aims for the next three years are:

- 1) We will influence the policy agenda on behalf of our members and in support of our vision**
- 2) We will ensure that the public is better informed about the magistracy and the broader criminal and family justice systems**
- 3) We will provide MA members, and the broader magistracy, with support, information, training and development**
- 4) We will be an effective, well-run and financially sustainable organisation**

These aims will determine our work programme over the next three years and we will judge our success against them.

Over the following pages, we will set out what we will do under each aim to support their achievement.

AIM**1****We will influence the policy agenda on behalf of our members and in support of our vision**

At a time of significant change within the magistracy and the broader justice system, it is essential that the MA, the only independent voice of the magistracy, plays a leading role in raising the profile of identified priority issues and informing the design and delivery of changes that will promote the sound administration of the law and contribute to achieving our vision.

To achieve this aim, our priorities will be:**a) To build strong, productive relationships with key national and regional decision-makers**

Robust relationships with key decision-makers – for example the senior judiciary, the Judicial College, the Magistrates' Leadership Executive, ministers, parliamentarians, departmental civil servants and HM Courts and Tribunal Service staff – are essential in enabling us to ensure that we are effective in informing and influencing the development of policy and practice. We will maintain our existing strong relationships and, where new decision-makers emerge, prioritise developing new ones.

b) To support MA representatives to contribute effectively to committees and other groups

The MA is represented on a wide range of standing and project-specific decision-making and advisory groups on the magistracy and related issues, including – for example – the Magistrates' Liaison Group, regional Judicial Business Groups, and Training, Approval, Authorisation and Appraisal Committees. We will provide appropriate levels of support to the MA's representatives on these groups to ensure that they can make a full and impactful contribution.

c) To identify and pursue policy priorities

As a small charity, it is important that we use our resources appropriately. This includes prioritising our policy and influencing work to ensure that we optimise our effectiveness and are successful in achieving our stated aims. Each year, guided by our policy committees, we will identify policy priorities and develop programmes of work to achieve them. This will include, where appropriate, conducting targeted campaigns and collaborating with other organisations to help to achieve our aims.

d) To secure funding and support to carry out research in support of our key policy priorities

It is essential for our ongoing credibility that our policy positions are always evidence-based. As the membership body for magistrates in England and Wales, we are uniquely placed to carry out research with our members to better understand their views and experiences. We will use that capability to gather information and insight, in support of our work to inform and influence developments in policy and practice.

e) To use the media, including social media, to inform and influence key stakeholders

In addition to direct engagement with decision-makers and other stakeholders, promoting our policy priorities in the media, including social media, is an important way to educate our stakeholders about the MA and the magistracy, to build the MA's profile and credibility, to raise the profile of priority issues and areas of concern, and to ensure support for our policy priorities. We will therefore maintain an active social media presence and identify opportunities to appear in the local and national media, both proactively and reactively.

f) To provide briefings to parliamentarians on issues within our remit

Parliament provides a key opportunity to influence the policy agenda, both in respect of legislation as it passes through both houses and in relation to debates on key issues. We will ensure that our views are represented in parliament where possible, through informing and educating parliamentarians.

g) To increase the proportion of sitting magistrates that are members of the MA

In order to be the voice of magistrates in the policy-making process, we will ensure that our membership represents as large a proportion of sitting magistrates as possible. This is important for our credibility, ensuring that stakeholders can be confident that we reflect the views of the magistracy as a whole.

Case study: Research on Transforming Rehabilitation

The Transforming Rehabilitation programme saw wholesale reform of probation services. These reforms had a direct impact on magistrates, both because it created an enforced distance from those managing community sentences and because it led to breaches of the new Post Sentence Supervision being brought to court.

As these reforms developed and came under scrutiny, we wanted to ensure that the voice of magistrates was heard, and that we had a strong evidence base on which to make recommendations. We therefore carried out three separate surveys, the first two comparative pieces of research to assess any change seen by magistrates and the third looking specifically at confidence in the new probation providers.

A report of the research was published, which informed the development of the MA's position on the current probation landscape. We also used the research to inform several consultation responses on probation and to encourage stakeholders (including the Justice Select Committee and the National Audit Office) to examine the issue. It has also been used by other organisations reporting on the topic, including the Centre for Justice Innovation.

AIM 2

We will ensure that the public is better informed about the magistracy and the broader criminal and family justice systems

Public awareness and understanding of the role of magistrates is generally thought to be low, while there is also limited public understanding of the justice system as a whole. Addressing this can contribute to building confidence in the system and increasing interest in joining the magistracy. As an independent charity representing judicial officer holders, the MA is uniquely placed to provide the public with information and insight from within the judiciary.

To achieve this aim, our priorities will be:

a) To increase the number of areas with an effective Magistrates in the Community capability

Magistrates in the Community (MIC), which involves magistrates giving presentations in the community to schools and community groups, is the MA's key public engagement programme and is central to our work to inform the public about the magistracy. But MIC is not currently active in all of the MA's 55 branches, and we will work to increase its availability.

'The students really enjoyed the talk and said they all learnt something new.'

'It makes me want to be a magistrate when I'm older.'

b) To broaden the delivery of MIC to new audiences and to cover new topics

MIC currently primarily covers the adult criminal court and is delivered largely to schools and a fairly limited range of community groups. We will work with branches to broaden its coverage, for example by developing presentation materials on family courts, and enable the targeting of hard to reach groups. We will also develop materials for corporate engagement activities, to enable us to work with employers to promote the magistracy as a volunteering opportunity.

c) To proactively work with the local, regional and national media, and use social media, to improve public understanding of the magistracy and the broader justice system

Due to its status as an independent charity, the MA is well placed to positively promote the magistracy in the media and on social media. We will identify and capitalise on opportunities to work with the national, regional and local media, and use social media, to promote the role of the magistrates and improve understanding of the role. We will also provide a communications toolkit to increase branch capacity and capability to engage with the local media to raise awareness of MIC.

Case study: MIC in East London

The East London Mosque is a large and influential mosque in Whitechapel, a very diverse part of East London. It runs a wide range of activities that reach beyond its purely religious mission and has an annual footfall of around 1.7 million people.

Central and North London MA has been involved in a number of different events with the mosque. These began with a branch visit to the mosque in July 2018, followed by about half a dozen elders from the mosque visiting Highbury Magistrates' Court in September 2018 for a lively discussion about the justice system and a court observation.

Central and North London MA then presented to a group of about 50 men and women, with a view to encouraging them to consider becoming more involved in the justice system. They provided information not only about becoming a magistrate but also about membership of referral order panels, Advisory Committees and Independent Monitoring Boards.

The branch has established a very good relationship with the mosque and their message of the importance of a truly diverse bench, which represents its local community, has been well received.

AIM 3

We will provide MA members, and the broader magistracy, with support, information, training and development

A core part of the service that the MA offers to our members – and, where appropriate and taking into account the Judicial College’s overarching training role, to the magistracy as a whole – is the information, training and development that we provide. This includes the provision of training materials, including national training resources developed with the Judicial College, but also local and national events and communications, which provide opportunities for information-sharing as well as peer-to-peer learning and support. We will continue to build on this offer, ensuring the coverage of a broad range of issues and using a range of approaches, including online. Alongside this, we will ensure that the support offered by the MA considers the full diversity of the magistracy, including retired, family-only and younger magistrates.

To achieve this aim, our priorities will be:

a) To continue to provide MA members with relevant, high-quality communications to support them in their work as magistrates

One of the advantage for members of the MA is that our communications help to make them better-informed magistrates. We not only provide them with practical information, such as legal updates and sentencing exercises, but also help to give them a wider understanding of issues in the justice system that help them to make better decisions in court. We will continue to provide this information through MAGISTRATE magazine and MA ENEWS, as well as through a modern, professional and effective website.

‘MAGISTRATE is now an excellent training tool and an invaluable source of information for continued personal development as a magistrate.’

b) To hold national events for MA members

Our national events bring together members from different areas and jurisdictions and provide opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning, as well as input from experts in relevant fields. We will develop the MA Annual Conference, increasing attendance and member engagement and ensuring that its content is relevant, informative and distinctive. We will also continue to hold our well-received national retired member events and other relevant events.

‘What I liked most was the ability to mix with other members of the MA and exchange views.’

c) To support MA branches to hold events for magistrates in their areas

Local MA events for members and other magistrates within the branch area provide an opportunity for training and broader awareness raising on key issues. We will work with HM Courts and Tribunals Service and Training, Approval, Authorisation and Appraisal Committees to develop their support for local MA events. We will also provide events toolkits for branches, supporting branches to maximise the value of their existing events and develop new ones. This will include a dedicated strand of work to create a programme of local retired member events.

d) To provide training and development resources for MA members

As well as providing members with wider information, we also produce specific training materials. Some materials are developed in conjunction with the Judicial College, and hosted on their learning management system, but we also produce MA training resources and guides on a variety of topics. We will consult with members on their training and development needs and preferred methods of delivery and produce a range of resources designed to address them, including online via an MA website that is fit for purpose.

e) To foster a sense of community among MA members

One of the benefits that we provide to our members is to give them a social network and feeling of belonging, whether through local structures or national communications such as MAGISTRATE and THE TRUNK. We will therefore continue to share good practice of branch activities and ensure communications offer an opportunity for members to share views and experiences.

f) To ensure that the MA meets the needs of distinct groups of magistrates

The membership of the MA must fully reflect the diversity of the magistracy and we aspire to be in the forefront of work to ensure that the magistracy reflects the community it serves. Following the recent launch of a special interest group for young magistrates, we will support its development and launch further special interest groups that provide forums for groups that are underrepresented within the MA and the broader magistracy.

g) To continue to develop our membership offering for retired members

It is important to recognise the value that our retired members bring to the organisation, as well as their contribution to the magistracy. We will therefore continue to acknowledge their efforts with a retirement certificate, as well as providing a regularly-updated list of post-magistracy volunteering options and holding targeted national and local events.

Case study: Winger Workbooks

The MA and the Judicial College have recently jointly produced a new series of 14 workbooks and 11 e-learning modules. These will support wingers in meeting all of the competence requirements before they undergo their first appraisal. They can also be used by more experienced magistrates to refresh their knowledge.

Based on the competence framework, the workbooks and e-learning modules take you through the progress of a day in court. They start while you are preparing to go to court, take you through the best ways to communicate with colleagues in the retiring room and finally consider the decision-making process, ending with sentencing.

Because these learning resources were developed in partnership with the Judicial College, they will be hosted on their learning management system. This ensures that they are accessible for all magistrates, providing valuable learning resources for the magistracy.

AIM 4

We will be an effective, well-run and financially sustainable organisation

We are proud to have a highly respected, dedicated and motivated team of staff, trustees and other volunteers, working together to deliver an ambitious and effective work programme. To maintain this, we must continue to invest in the health of the organisation and the wellbeing of the people within it. We must also remain financially robust. Following a significant reduction in the number of magistrates in recent years, from nearly 30,000 a decade ago to less than 15,000 now, this must involve not only increasing the number of members but also finding new sources of income to enable us to pursue new areas of work.

To achieve this aim, our priorities will be:

a) To increase member numbers, through increasing both recruitment and retention

This will include raising the MA's profile (including in the media), streamlining our membership processes, developing a fit for purpose members' database, providing high-quality communications to our members, and providing branches with a structured programme of support. We will also continue to develop special interest groups and our specific offerings for family-only magistrates and for retired members.

b) To secure alternative sources of funding that reduce the MA's reliance on membership subscriptions

In order to diversify our income base, we will – while at all times respecting the MA's position as an organisation representing judicial office holders – actively seek funding from trusts and foundations and statutory and corporate sources for MIC activity, policy and research work and the MA's centenary celebrations in 2020. We will also introduce a legacy giving programme, providing members and other supporters with the opportunity to leave the organisation a gift in their will.

c) To ensure value for money in every area of our work

As a charity, it is essential that the MA manages its resources prudently and has robust financial processes in place to ensure efficiency and value for money. As well as ensuring that all expenditure is necessary and responsible, we will strive to make all the organisation's core activities cost neutral. This includes, for example, MAGISTRATE magazine and the Annual Conference, AGM and MA Awards.

d) To ensure that the Board of Trustees continues to provide effective governance for the organisation

Our board is made up of magistrates, elected by members, and plays a vital role in the running of the organisation. It is essential that they are provided with all the information and training needed to perform their legal role as trustees, while holding the staff team to account and ensuring that the organisation is well-run.

e) To maintain a staff team that is trained, supported and motivated

The MA has a small but dedicated and professional staff team. In order to maximise staff efficacy, they must be appropriately trained and supported and there must be good communication and a strong team ethos. We will actively seek to be a learning organisation and to improve staff wellbeing, provide support where needed and continue to ensure staff are appreciated for the work that they do.

f) To support those carrying out volunteer roles at the MA

As an organisation, we rely on volunteers for numerous roles – including branch committee members, regional representatives and national board and policy committee members. Without the time given by our volunteers, we would not be able to continue as an organisation. It is therefore essential that we recognise this by supporting existing volunteers and encouraging new people to come forward.

g) To ensure that the organisational infrastructure is fit for purpose

Members and staff at the MA work closely together at all levels and it is therefore vital that there are clear policies in place to govern decision-making and other processes. We must ensure the organisational infrastructure optimises information-sharing and the smooth running of the organisation, while ensuring protections are in place where necessary. This must be underpinned by facilities and IT that are fit for purpose.

h) To ensure that the organisation operates in an ethically sound manner

As a charity, it is important that all staff and volunteers can feel positive about the work that we do and the impact we have, and working for an ethically sound organisation was identified as a key priority for staff. This includes ensuring we have a robust ethical framework for all our policies – both internal and external.

Case study: Leadership training day

In March 2019, we ran a leadership training day, in partnership with the leadership training consultancy Olivier Mythodrama and funded by a generous donation, to enhance leadership development and encourage attendees to take up future leadership roles in the MA.

Attendees represented a wide geographical spread and a number of different roles, including Council members, members of policy committees, branch chairs, trustees and staff. The day was framed around the Shakespeare play 'Henry V' and the lessons it can teach us about leadership. Attendees took part in a number of different interactive exercises to explore how their current leadership strengths could be utilised, as well as exploring what areas of leadership they found more challenging and in what ways these could be developed.

The day was extremely well-received with attendees rating it highly in their feedback. Many identified specific areas of leadership development they would like to work on further.

'...it is insightful and a very interesting method of delivery, not something I've come across before but very well-delivered and thought-provoking'

'...came away having had one of the best training courses as a magistrate for 25 years'



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