

POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICER

JOIN US TODAY!

Recruitment pack

Closing date:
8 January 2024



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Dear candidate

Thank you for your interest in becoming our Policy and Research Officer. If you are an exceptional policy officer/researcher, who is keen to make a big difference within a small and friendly staff team, we want to hear from you.

At the Magistrates' Association (MA) we have a staff team of 10, a volunteer base of about 400 and a membership of 12,000 sitting and retired magistrates across England and Wales. We're at the heart of the justice system, both nationally and locally. We've recently embarked on a period of significant change and modernisation to ensure we remain relevant to the changing needs of our members. After years of decline in membership numbers they have now stabilised, and we have clear plans to grow our membership base over the next five years.

This role gives the successful applicant a unique opportunity to help shape and influence policymaking on justice and the courts system, working alongside our highly experienced and knowledgeable members and volunteers.

In any day, you might be involved in:

- Working with our expert committees to develop our policy or respond to consultations
- Briefing the National Chair or myself in advance of media interviews
- Preparing Freedom of Information requests, or member surveys, and collating and analysing the results
- Writing a briefing for submission to a parliamentary select committee, or articles for the MA's magazine or website
- Liaising with external partners, including research partners



It's a very varied and fast-paced role, where you will have plenty of opportunity to both use your current skills and learn and develop further. Because we're a small team, you'll have opportunities to be involved in our strategic development, in a way that you are unlikely to be able to do in larger organisations.

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This role gives the successful applicant a unique opportunity to help shape and influence policy-making on justice and the courts system, working alongside our highly experienced and knowledgeable members and volunteers.

I hope this opportunity is of interest to you and look forward to receiving your application.

Kind regards

Tom Franklin
Chief Executive

ABOUT THE MAGISTRATES' ASSOCIATION

Who are we?

We are an independent charity, established by Royal Charter, and the only membership body for magistrates in England and Wales. For more than 100 years we have been helping the magistracy be its best for all of society.

What do we do?

We are run by and for our 12,000 sitting and retired members. We have 54 local branches and five national policy committees. We assist our members to be the best magistrates they can be by:

- **Developing** our members—we provide tools to develop magistrates' skills and competencies. This includes our new online learning portal, MA learn, which has more than 120 learning resources. We also host monthly webinars for our members on topics ranging from domestic abuse to community sentences, to rural or IT crime.
- **Influencing** for our members—we are the only collective and independent voice of the magistracy. We advocate on behalf of our members by publishing advocacy reports, giving evidence to Parliamentary inquiries, and explaining the work of magistrates in the media. In the past year we've published reports on magistrates' expenses, out of court disposals, and the (in)accessibility of many court buildings. We've had more than 300 pieces of media coverage.

We also inform the public about the vital role of the magistracy, through our Magistrates in the Community programme, speaking to audiences of over 20,000 in the past year.

- **Informing** our members—we are the key source of news, updates and opinions on issues relevant to the magistracy. We publish the only magazine dedicated to the magistracy, we have a monthly eNews bulletin, and we are about to launch our new website with blogs and opinion pieces for our members.
- **Supporting** our members—we provide peer support for times being a magistrate feels tough. We have a dedicated member support line, staffed by our most experienced members, to provide a friendly ear and signposts when members don't know where else to turn. And we have four diversity and inclusion networks—providing support to groups currently under-represented in the magistracy: younger magistrates, LGBT+ magistrates, Black, Asian and minority ethnic magistrates, and disabled magistrates.



- **Connecting** our members—we provide opportunities for members to meet, collaborate and network. Each year we host our annual conference and awards, and our 54 branches regularly put on face-to-face training and social events. We've been described as the 'social glue' of the magistracy.

How do we do it?

Our work is overseen by our elected board of trustees, which sets our strategy and budget and is legally accountable for all our activities. There is also a policy board, which reports to our board of trustees, responsible for developing our policy—and five specific policy committees composed of members with specialist interests and knowledge. Three of those committees cover different court jurisdictions (adult, youth, and family), one covers magistrates' training, and the other focuses on diversity and inclusion. We also have 54 branches, each run by an executive committee made up of member volunteers, that put on local events and provide support for members locally. Our small staff team, led by the senior management team, designs and delivers the organisation's work, and supports our members and volunteers.

The marketing and communications team was set up two years ago and is central to the delivery of the MA's business change programme. Its remit is to develop sharper and clearer marketing and communications that strengthen the organisation's reputation, communication with its members and recruitment activities.

POLICY AND RESEARCH AT THE MAGISTRATES' ASSOCIATION

The policy and research team has four staff members:

- Chief Executive
- Policy and Research Officers x 2
- Training, Learning and Development Officer

Influencing the policy agenda on behalf of our members has always been central to our work. Our policy team carries out an ambitious programme of work to ensure the fair and effective delivery of justice and support the development of the magistracy. This includes producing and publishing research on key topics relevant to the magistracy and informing and influencing policy related to magistrates' courts and the magistracy.

Recent policy reports have included 'Inaccessible courts: A barrier to inclusive justice', based on a survey undertaken by our members of access for disabled magistrates in one third of courts; 'It shouldn't cost to volunteer', reviewing the out-dated expenses system for magistrates, with 20 recommendations for improvement; 'Out of court disposals: Fit for purpose or in need of reform?'; and 'Magistrates' courts and Covid-19'. As well as our advocacy reports, we also respond to relevant consultations – such as the current government reviews of out of court disposals and of open justice, and recent consultation on domestic abuse and mandatory mediation for family courts.

Over the past two years we have seen an increase in our media presence, with coverage across broadsheets, major news and radio channels, and the internet. We want to drive this further, helping the public to understand the work of magistrates and the justice system more widely, and supporting our advocacy work. The policy team works closely with our communications team to help prepare briefings for both journalists and MA spokespeople. We also regularly give evidence to parliamentary select committees.

There are currently four priority streams of work:

- **Making justice work better.** This includes the proposed reform of local justice areas, the extension of magistrates' sentencing powers, and non-custodial sentencing options.
- **Better justice for children.** This includes transparency in family courts, the future for youth courts, and working with the Youth Justice Board on disparities in youth court outcomes and with the Ministry of Justice on youth remand, ensuring that custody is always a last resort.

- **Openness and transparency.** This includes the provision of open data from magistrates' courts and open justice.
- **Support for magistrates.** This includes the development of a magistrates' charter, recognition for magistrates, expenses, recruitment and retention, and diversity and inclusion.

Another key element of our work at present is to improve the monitoring and evaluation of our policy work. We have developed an impact tracker, to keep a record of the difference we are making, to better quantify our influence on behalf of members.



JOB DESCRIPTION

Policy and Research Officer

1. Main purpose of the job

To research and develop MA policy positions and promote their implementation.

2. Position in the organisation

Reports to: Chief Executive

Main relationships: MA committee chairs, deputy chairs and committee members, MA members, civil servants, parliamentarians and justice organisations

3. Main areas of responsibility

- Policy development
- Research
- Writing reports and briefings
- Drafting consultation responses
- Parliamentary strategy

4. Specific responsibilities

Policy committees

- Support the MA's policy committees, especially those covering youth, family courts, and diversity and inclusion
- Propose priorities and manage programmes of work for the committees
- Provide high-quality information to ensure that committee members and other interested parties are up to date with relevant information
- Ensure agreed actions and decisions of the policy committees are implemented
- Build and maintain excellent relationships with committee members
- Provide support to committee members to enable them to effectively contribute to the work of the MA
- Assist in the training and development of committee members
- Agree and implement committee working practices

Policy

- Monitor and analyse relevant information, including parliamentary activity and new developments in the law and the courts
- Develop and propose new policies
- Draft consultation responses, proposing lines to take
- Develop and implement strategies to influence parliamentarians and other justice system stakeholders
- Develop links with other stakeholders in the judicial system
- Represent the MA publicly in a range of forums, including at meetings and conferences
- Draft reports and present findings
- Draft briefings and information for committee members, parliamentarians and MA members

Research

- Support the development of a research programme
- Propose research projects to provide a solid evidence base for MA policies
- Develop detailed research proposals, including analysis of timescales and budget implications
- Research funding opportunities and draft grant applications
- Project manage and undertake agreed research projects and report on findings both internally and externally

Communications

- Work closely with the communications team to support the delivery of the MA's communications activities – both for members and externally
- Ensure the accuracy of policy information contained in MA communications outputs
- Contribute to our *Magistrate* magazine, newsletters, website content, social media and press releases
- Draft articles for the specialist, local and national media
- Liaise with the media to provide background information and inform MA media work

Membership

- Support the work of the MA's membership team to recruit and retain members
- Assist in responding to members' queries and provide up to date information for members on policy issues

Budgetary accountability

- Prepare budgets for the MA's parliamentary, policy and research activities
- Ensure the proper management of budgets
- Hold operational budgets related to key activities

Other duties

- Work with the Training, Learning and Development Officer to produce materials to assist magistrates in their work
- Contribute to team meetings, organisational strategy and priorities
- Be proactive in keeping up to date with developments affecting the role
- Contribute to other organisational tasks, such as administration, as required

5. General

This job description is intended to convey information essential to understanding the scope of the job and the general nature and level of work performed by employees in this role. It is not exhaustive and staff may be required to undertake other reasonable duties commensurate with the role.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential

- Degree level qualification or equivalent experience
- Knowledge of the criminal and/or family justice system, especially knowledge or experience of family law and/or the family justice system
- Experience of producing consultation responses or other policy documents and/or of conducting policy-relevant research
- Demonstrable ability to assimilate and understand complex information quickly and explain complex issues clearly
- Proven ability to produce clear, concise reports, consultation responses, discussion papers, briefings and letters
- The ability to establish personal credibility with a range of stakeholders
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to communicate effectively, diplomatically and persuasively with a wide range of people
- The ability to work effectively under pressure and to tight deadlines
- A creative and pragmatic approach to problem solving and the ability to provide sound reasons to support proposed solutions
- Ability to organise and prioritise your own workload and strong attention to detail
- Excellent networking skills

Desirable

- A proven track record of working within—or lobbying—Parliament or other justice organisations
- Qualitative and quantitative research skills
- Project management experience
- Experience of drafting legislation or legislative amendments
- Knowledge of the workings of magistrates' courts
- Experience of working in a membership organisation

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

This section summarises basic information about employment terms and conditions. Full terms and conditions will be included in the contract of employment that will be offered to the successful applicant. This summary does not form part of a subsequent employment contract.

Salary	The salary for this post is £35-36,900 per annum.
Location	<p>The MA's office, where this post is based, is at 10A Flagstaff House, St George Wharf, London, SW8 2LE.</p> <p>There is the potential for hybrid working arrangements, such as working from home for part of the working week.</p> <p>The role involves occasional travel and overnight stays.</p>
Hours of work	Full time hours are 35 hours per week. Job share applicants are welcome to apply.
Annual leave	The annual leave entitlement is 25 days, plus statutory holidays.
Pension	On completion of a probationary period, the Magistrates' Association will make a pension contribution equivalent to 10% of salary to an approved pension scheme, provided that the employee is contributing at least 5% of their gross salary to the scheme.
Probationary period	There will be a probationary period of three months.

HOW TO APPLY

Please forward the following to tom.franklin@magistrates-association.org.uk by 5pm on Monday 8 January 2024.

- Your CV (max. three sides of A4)
- A supporting statement (max. three sides of A4) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the criteria in the person specification

If you have questions about the role or the recruitment process, please contact the MA’s Chief Executive, Tom Franklin, at tom.franklin@magistrates-association.org.uk to discuss the position informally.

Recruitment timetable

Closing date	8 January at 5pm
Shortlisted candidates contacted by	12 January
First interviews	17 or 18 January
Second interviews	w/c 22 January

Please note we may shortlist before the role closes, so do not wait to apply. Applications without a supporting statement related to this post will not be considered – please be sure to tell us why you have the skills and experience to be an excellent policy and research officer at the Magistrates’ Association.

Candidates must have the existing right to work in the UK.

If you are not available on the interview dates, please let us know when you submit your application.

BENEFITS OF WORKING AT THE MAGISTRATES' ASSOCIATION

- 25 days annual leave plus bank holidays
- The potential for hybrid working arrangements, such as working from home for part of the week
- Enhanced employer pension contributions of 10% of salary when employee contributions are at least 5%
- Season ticket loan
- Employee assistance programme
- Enhanced sickness and maternity policies
- Volunteering days
- The opportunity to be involved in high profile policy work, within a small, supportive and dynamic team

EQUALITY STATEMENT

The Magistrates' Association is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and eliminating discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Because we are focusing on becoming an organisation that more closely reflects the society we live in, we especially welcome applications from underrepresented groups.

