

## **Additional Material for Chapter 7: Magistrates' courts – summary cases**

*Section numbering from the book is used. Its content provides fuller explanations and context.*

### **7.1 Who are magistrates?**

#### **More about magistrates**

Lay magistrates are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor, who acts on the suggestions of a local advisory committee. Recruitment strategy aims to attract people from diverse occupational and social backgrounds, and to ensure that people from ethnic minorities are fully represented in the magistracy.

You can apply to be a magistrate if aged 18 or over. To maintain public confidence in the impartiality of magistrates, people in some occupations – for example, police officers – are ineligible to become magistrates. Also, persistent offenders or anyone convicted of a serious crime is likely to be deemed ineligible. Lay magistrates can serve until the age of 70, and must be available to 'sit' to hear court cases for at least 26 half-days a year.

The Judicial Appointments Commission plays the lead role in the appointment of district judges.

The term 'bench' can refer either to the magistrate(s) sitting in a particular courtroom (for example, 'Who is on the bench today in Court Two?' – the equivalent formal term is the 'panel') – or all magistrates in a particular district (for example: 'She is on the Sheffield bench'). The term 'chair of the bench' may be used for the chair of the magistrates in that area, elected by bench colleagues, but the term 'chair' is also used in a court to refer to the magistrate, if there is more than one, acting as chair of the panel in that particular hearing - the magistrate who, for example, announces the court's decision.

#### **Useful Websites**

[www.magistrates-association.org.uk](http://www.magistrates-association.org.uk)

The Magistrates Association website

<https://www.judiciary.uk/about-the-judiciary/judges-career-paths/becoming-a-magistrate/>

Information about magistrates, from the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website