

Civic Responsibility and Building Influence.

Below are some details put together by Sikh Council UK as a guide on processes/ requirements of some of the roles that can be taken up in building civic influence. Getting involved locally in impacting the national picture.

1. Magistrates/JP's

More commonly known as magistrates, Justices of the Peace in England work purely on a volunteer basis. The majority of cases in Wales and England are dealt with by magistrates, who hear cases in local courts involving minor criminal acts that can result in up to one year in prison or fines up to £5,000.

While there are no specific formal qualifications to become a justice of the peace in England (they are assisted in court by a legal adviser), applicants must be between 18 and under 65 years of age (Magistrates must retire at 70 and are normally expected to serve for at least 5 years) and possess certain personality traits. Candidates must satisfy the Lord Chancellor that they meet six criteria:

- Good character; (not found guilty of a serious crime, not found guilty of a number of minor offences not banned from driving in the past 5 to 10 years, not declared bankrupt)
- Understanding and communication;
- Social awareness;
- Maturity and sound temperament;
- Sound judgement;
- Commitment and reliability.

Because of the need to maintain public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary, people who work in certain occupations (for example, police officers) cannot become magistrates.

Time off for magistrate duties

Magistrates need to be in court for at least 13 days, or 26 half-days, a year.

Employers are required by law to grant reasonable time off work for magistrates.

Magistrates are not paid for their services. However, many employers allow time off with pay for magistrates.

If they do suffer loss of earnings they may claim a loss allowance at a set rate. They can also claim allowances for travel and subsistence.

Process

Magistrates are recruited by local Advisory Committees in each region.

Recruitment takes place at different times from area to area, so it is important to check when it is happening in your area (local Advisory Committee)

Preparation and training

Before deciding whether or not to apply, candidates need to visit a magistrates' court to observe the magistrates sitting.

They will need to visit at least once (but preferably two or three times) when it is sitting in general session, in the 12 months before they apply.

Once they have been selected, all magistrates take the judicial oath – the same oath as that taken by judges.

They are trained before starting to hear cases and throughout their careers as magistrates, and are appraised regularly.

2. School Governors

Almost anyone over 18 years of age can become a governor. There are no particular qualifications or requirements, other than a willingness to give time to the role and a capacity for working with other people. Governors serve for terms of four (4) years and are drawn from across the whole community. They are people with an interest in education from all walks of life who simply want to make a contribution.

There are different categories of governor:

Parent- elected by parents of children at the school

Staff- elected by the school staff and usually includes the head teacher

Foundation- those appointed by the church or trust which supports the school

Local Authority- those appointed by the Local Education Authority from political parties and the community

Co-opted- appointed by the school governing body for their particular interests or experience, or to represent a section of the community, such as local employers

Sponsor- appointed by the governing body at its own discretion from amongst individuals who provide services to the school



The type of governor you will become depends on your situation; however all governors have the same roles and responsibilities once part of the governing body.

To be an effective governor you need to:

- Have an interest in education, schools and young people;
- Be able to listen to other people's views, to discuss them and then to form your own judgments;
- Be willing to support the decisions taken by the whole governing body;
- Have time to play your full part in the work of the governing body;
- Be willing to learn;

Process:

If anyone is interested in becoming a parent governor, application forms are available from the child's school.

If they wish to become a local education authority (LEA) governor or a community governor, candidates are usually required to download an application form using the links provided in the local authority's websites.

3. Queens Honour's

Honours exist to recognise and celebrate outstanding achievements. There are always fewer honours than people who deserve them and because they are rare, they should be reserved for people:

- who have changed things – especially by solid, practical achievement
- whose work has brought distinction to British life or enhanced the UK's reputation in their area or activity

Candidates need to have shown one or both of these characteristics to be eligible for an honour.

Honours are open to all and are given to people from all walks of life and sections of society who have made a difference to their community or field of work. This can



include long-term voluntary service, improving life for people less able to help themselves or displaying moral courage and vision in making and delivering tough choices.

Nominations are particularly welcomed for ‘local heroes’ who are well respected by local people and who have made a difference in their neighbourhood. Over half of all awards go to people who are putting something extra into the community on a voluntary basis. They could be charity volunteers, members of the emergency services or Armed Forces, industrial pioneers or specialists in various professions.

All nominations for honours are treated in the strictest confidence. The person to be nominated should not be informed as it would not be fair to raise expectations in case they are not met; only 1,350 honours awarded on each occasion, twice a year, and there are many thousands of nominations received.

Who can be nominated for an honour

Nominations for the Honours List can be made by private individuals or by representatives of organisations. Anyone can nominate a person for an honour, provided that it is for service to the community and is not a self-nomination.

Each nomination is considered on its merits so, if you want to nominate someone for an honour, you should be sure that there are substantial objective reasons for doing so.

How to nominate someone for an honour

If you wish to nominate someone for an honour, you can obtain an Honours nomination form from:-

Honours and Appointments Secretariat

Cabinet Office

Ground Floor

Room G39

1 Horse Guards Road

London

SW1A 2HQ

Tel: 020 7276 2777

Fax: 020 7276 2766

Email: honours@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk (Queries only)

Website: www.gov.uk/honours/overview

The form should be completed with the following details:

- the person's full name, address, date of birth (if known) or age; and
- full details of service to the community, with dates, in the area for which the nomination is being made; and
- a summary of the particular achievements/qualities which make them outstanding
- the nominator's name, address and relationship to the nominee.

At least two letters of support from other members of the community who have first hand knowledge of the nominee's activities should be sent, either with the form or separately.

4. Public Appointments

How are public appointments made?

Government Ministers typically make public appointments, although certain roles are appointed directly by HM The Queen and the Prime Minister. All appointments follow a recruitment process regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Departments advertise posts on the Cabinet Office website and in some cases recruitment consultants will be employed to assist in finding candidates and receiving applications.

Those interested in a particular role will be required to submit a CV and expression of interest setting out their suitability for the role and demonstrating how they meet the required criteria.

A selection panel will shortlist candidates based on the requirements of the job and will invite shortlisted candidates to interview. Panels vary in size and composition, however each panel comprises a Chair and at least one independent member, normally with no connection to the organisation or the department in question.

Panels will shortlist candidates based on the requirements of the job and will invite shortlisted candidates to interview. Following interviews, the panel will prepare a report setting out which candidate(s) are capable of carrying out the role and therefore appointable. The Minister may choose to interview all appointable candidates prior to coming to a final decision.

Unsuccessful candidates can seek feedback on their application.

Appointment process

When applying for a public appointment, someone should keep in mind that:

- all appointments are made on merit, based on talents and skills
- an independent assessor will be involved throughout
- the skills and qualities necessary for the post will be made clear to applicants - either in the original advertisement or in an information pack
- the successful candidate will be sent a letter of appointment and all other applicants will be informed

Skills

Public bodies are looking for people with a diverse range of skills and experiences to fill appointments. Candidates should:

- be committed to the work of the public body
- have time to get involved
- be confident and ask questions about the work of the body
- be independent and look at how decisions can affect all sections of the community
- have good communication skills; with the ability to listen and express your views
- be able to negotiate and influence others
- be able to work with all types of people

They don't need to have gained these skills in their current or previous jobs. They could have gained them through volunteering in their local community, taking part in sports, getting involved with activities at their school or college, or in their personal life as a user of public services.

Time and pay

Public appointments usually last from one to five years and may be renewed for a second term (up to a maximum of ten years).

Most public appointments are part-time and may vary from a few days a year to two to three days per month.

Some public appointments will be paid but this will depend on the type of public body and appointment. Pay for public appointments will often be called 'remuneration'. Travelling and other expenses are usually paid.

If the public appointment is paid, this may have an effect on entitlement to benefits. This will depend on their individual circumstances, the type of benefit they receive and the appointment.

Appointments will usually be advertised in local and regional papers, as well as the department's website.

What type of work does a public appointee do?

The roles of public appointees vary but often require them to provide leadership, strategic direction, independent scrutiny and, in some cases, specialist expertise in important areas of public life. Input from a non-executive board or committee member is always more strategic than hands on. Key responsibilities may include: agreeing strategy; overseeing performance targets; ensuring the finances of the organisation are managed properly; and ensuring the organisation works in the public interest.

Further details of vacancies etc can be obtained from the below:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/government-citizens-and-rights/government-1/public-appointments/public-appointment-vacancies.htm>

<http://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search-appointments/all/>