



LAY MAGISTRATES

COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF JUSTICE

Am I Eligible?

So, you know what a Lay Magistrate is, and now you're wondering if you might be eligible to become one.

To be eligible to serve as a Lay Magistrate, you must be between 18 and 74 years of age and be a resident of Northern Ireland.

There is no requirement to have a legal background, however, you cannot be appointed if you fall into any of the following categories:

1. Members of certain professions or roles. You're not eligible if you are a Barrister or Solicitor currently practising, a Police Officer, including part-time or reserve, a member of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) or the Police Ombudsman's Office, a Prison Officer, a Civil Servant working in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, or other justice-related departments, or a member of the armed forces.
2. People holding Judicial or Quasi-judicial roles. You cannot be appointed if you already hold a Judicial Office, for example, a Judge or tribunal member, or a role that involves regularly exercising judicial powers.
3. Elective representatives. You're not eligible if you are a member of parliament, an MLA, a local councillor, or hold any elected political office.
4. People with certain conflicts of interest. You're not eligible if your job or business would regularly bring you into conflict with the courts or justice system, or if you have a role that could undermine public confidence in your impartiality.
5. People with certain criminal convictions. Serious or relevant criminal convictions can make you ineligible, as the focus is on ensuring public trust and integrity.

To find out more or to see the full eligibility criteria, please visit the Lay Magistrates Hub at www.nijac.gov.uk/laymagistrateshub.