

GMMA Branch Newsletter

Newsletter of the Greater Manchester Magistrates' Association



OUR FIRST STEP TOGETHER

Welcome to the very first edition of GMMA Newsletter! This newsletter celebrates the work, achievements and community spirit of the Greater Manchester Magistrates' Association. In this issue, we look back at another successful Year 6 Mock Trial Competition and reflect on our inaugural Summer Event!

We hope you enjoy reading about the activities that continue to strengthen our association and our engagement with the community!



GMMA Summer Event



Year 6 Mock Trials Competition



Meet Your Legal Adviser

Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the first edition of the Greater Manchester Magistrates Association News. The idea behind this newsletter is to update members on what is on offer from the MA locally and create a sense of belonging. As a branch we have four strategic areas we're working on:

- Community Outreach and MIC – 'Prevention through Education'
- Learning and Contextual Visits
- Partnerships and Community initiatives
- Member Engagement and Communications.

The GMMA Magistrates in the Community (MIC) team is the most active nationally. This year we delivered over 300 presentations to schools, colleges and community groups reaching over 11,500 young people. We have just completed our flagship Year 6 Mock Trial Competition – the most successful yet with 58 primary schools.

We had great attendance at our first Summer Event last month. This provided an opportunity for members to meet socially, exchange ideas, learn from interesting speakers all in a sociable setting and with hot food. What's not to like! The next event is our AGM on 13th October.

Paul and I continue to grow our partnerships with like-minded agencies such as Street Doctors and Greater Manchester Combined Authority Violence Reduction Unit. Through the partnership we have a plan to co-deliver a full series of Knife Crime Consequences workshops with Street Doctors to help educate high school children on the risks of carrying knives.

Tara, Haris and Nick have been busy refreshing our communication tools to make them more relevant and easier to read. This newsletter is one such example. Look out for the new style GMMA Website www.GMMA-MIC.net and a new Demystifying Court Terms booklet which will help unpick the plethora of acronyms used in the judiciary.

We are looking for a Training Officer to help coordinate events and training sessions for members. If you're interested, please do get in touch.

That's all for now, hope you enjoy reading this the first newsletter and if you have any ideas or want to get further involved in your branch, please do get in touch.

Best wishes

Rachel

Rachel Medcalf JP
Chair of the GMMA



GMMA Hosts First Summer Event!

On July 2nd, we welcomed 40 members to Hemsley House for the first summer event hosted by the GMMA. The theme of the event was 'Drink, Drugs & Divergence'.



The event was very well received thanks to our speakers and the delicious dinner provided! We first heard from Dr Claire Neilson and Amy Burton about the importance of communication when working with neurodivergent court users.

We had CGL Eclypse's Jenny Sadler and Lucy Cooper, give us a demo of their 'Drinking Goggles' and members could have a go at putting their judgement to the test when 'impaired'!

The evening was hosted by HHJ Andrew Berkley and GMMA Chair Rachel Medcalf who also provided a workshop on drugs and their impact on daily activities. Allowing members to work as a team to learn more about the drug use in Greater Manchester.

A new GMMA member, who joined the bench just this year stated "everyone was really friendly and the event was well organised, interactive and engaging!"

Thank you to all who attended for making it such a great event! We hope to see you all again soon!

Meet your Executive Committee!



Rachel Medcalf JP
Chair of the GMMA

Paul Brearley JP DL
Deputy Chair



Peter Faulkner JP
Secretary

Gary Palmer JP
Treasurer



Kirsty Hart JP
MiC Coordinator

Nicholas Sheardown JP
Communications Officer



Jean Carter JP
FTAAAC Rep

Shazia Book JP
BAME Rep



Ghulam Shahzad JP
Retired Members Rep

Tara Bharadia JP
Young Mags Rep



Haris Ifraz JP
Deputy Chair of MA D&I

District Judge Paul Carr (Rtd)
Patron

HHJ Andrew Berkley
President of the GMMA

You can contact any committee members using their ejudiciary.net email

Year 6 Mock Trial Competition – A Day in Court!

An unforgettable day of learning, teamwork and achievement! There was an air of excitement and anticipation as 16 schools and 140 Year 6 students came together to take part in this year's Mock Trial Competition, where our young participants impressed everyone with their confidence, professionalism and enthusiasm, despite the soaring temperatures!



The case centred on Jo Stockwell, a 14-year-old youth accused of possessing a bladed article. Throughout the day, students took on the important roles of magistrates, legal advisers, prosecutors, defence advocates, witnesses and court staff, demonstrating remarkable poise, proficiency and teamwork. The aim of this scenario was to provide a safe, educational environment where pupils could explore the legal consequences and real-life impact of such issues.

Our young magistrates had the challenging responsibility of carefully examining all the evidence presented before reaching their verdict. They listened attentively to witness testimony, considered the legal arguments from both sides and weighed the facts thoughtfully together to make fair and balanced decisions. It was wonderful to see such strong critical thinking, excellent communication and teamwork on display throughout the day, with many students displaying skills worthy of future careers in the legal profession.



As the competition drew to a close, there was great anticipation as everyone gathered for the results. His Majesty's High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, Mr Mark Llewellyn DL, handed out the awards. Every participating school celebrated success, with one pupil from each team receiving an Outstanding Performance Award, celebrating exceptional individual contributions throughout the day.

Congratulations to Stockport Grammar School, who were crowned this year's champions.



A huge well done also goes to Horwich Parish Primary, who proudly received the Runners-up Shield, with an incredibly close finish—just two points separated the top two schools, highlighting the exceptional standard of the competition.



We would like to thank all of the schools, students, and partnership agencies who participated in making this year's Mock Trial Competition a success. As students transition to High School, it is particularly important to equip them with the knowledge and awareness to make safe and informed decisions. It was truly inspiring to see the dedication and commitment of all those involved in creating a safe and educational environment for our young people to learn about key issues with real life professionals.

Partnership agencies in attendance this year were:

- Greater Manchester Police
- Oasis Navigators - A youth-focused, violence reduction project
- Greater Manchester Travel Safe – focusing on prevention and engagement
- Early Break -advocacy support for young people and families facing substance misuse challenges
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service – Broughton's Blue Watch ran a water safety exercise in the yard with their fire engine
- British Transport Police – Antisocial behaviour on the railway



We are also grateful to High Sheriff Mark Llewellyn for taking the time to attend and hand out the prizes to the deserving winners. It is through continuing partnerships like these that we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of our future generations.

Adding to the excitement, we were delighted to welcome Granada Reports, who spent the day filming the event. Their report was broadcast on Tuesday 30th June, showcasing the incredible enthusiasm, talent and dedication of all those involved.

If you haven't seen it yet, please follow the link below to watch the report and celebrate this fantastic event with us.

<https://www.itv.com/watch/news/school-pupils-get-potentially-life-saving-legal-lessons-by-taking-part-in-a-mock-trial/vtmrm5m>

Thank you again to everyone who was involved in this year's Mock Trial Competition. We look forward to seeing you all again next year.



Meet Your Legal Adviser

We caught up with Sara Shah from the Family Bench...

Hi Sara. Thank you so much for being our first interviewee for the GMMA Branch Newsletter! You joined us recently as the new Legal Team Manager for Family. Tell us a bit about your professional background, goals and how you are finding Manchester so far:

Thank you! So I spent 4 years working in various firms in West Yorkshire and Manchester, mainly specialising in Personal Injury claims which I soon grew bored of. I have always enjoyed family law and so when I saw that HMCTS was hiring trainee legal advisers I applied. I was lucky enough to be offered the job and was placed in the Cheshire Merseyside team where I was just over 5 years. I have qualified as a solicitor with HMCTS and have grown to love family law. It is a very interesting area of law which can be very rewarding. My long term goal is to become a Judge and hopefully that can be achieved in the coming years. Manchester thus far has been very welcoming, I have previously lived here and helped out on an adhoc basis.

Having sat with you recently, your organisation skills are great! How would you describe your style as a legal adviser?

I like to approach my role as a legal adviser into breaking down the core issues for the court. There is a lot of noise in family court cases and it is easy to get sidetracked by the number of issues that can arise. I think over the years I have become skilled at guiding benches to focus on the core issues to be decided on the case. I have been told my magistrates that they like my direct and clear approach in the court.



Manchester is a big and vibrant city, what is your favourite restaurant or neighbourhood in Manchester that you have discovered so far?

I am a city girl through and through and therefore the city centre would have to be my favourite area, in particular the Northern Quarter. I actually studied and lived here during university and lived here for a few years thereafter. My favourite food spots in Manchester are Sugar Junction, Try Thai or Zouks.

What do you get up to, outside of work?

I am an avid reader, so if you're sat with me in court please share any recent good reads. One of the books I have just finished is She Who Remains by Rene Karabash which follows a young woman called Bekija, who lives in an Albanian village in the mountains that still follows an archaic set of laws.

It is currently surprisingly sunny in the UK, what would be your ideal holiday destination and why?

I am currently in the process of booking a trip to Marrakech to tick off a bucket list experience where you spend a night camping Merzouga and visit the Saharan Desert.

Member Updates



GMMA Member & Young Mags Representative Tara Bharadia celebrated her marriage in July 2026



MiC Presenter Sean Bostock and his wife Sue attended a Royal Garden party earlier this summer hosted at Buckingham Palace!

Learning Corner

Click the links below to access recent learning materials from the GMMA, you can also access via our website: gmma-mic.net

[Summer Event Drugs Workshop Slides](#)

[Summer Event Speech & Language Summary Sheet](#)

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 13th October

Branch AGM

6pm

Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St,
Manchester, M2 5NS

Recruitment

The GMMA is looking for a training officer, could this be you? Help to organise exclusive contextual visits for our members and be a part of our amazing community! Contact via our website to find out more.



Editor - Tara Bharadia JP

Want to be in the next edition?

Don't keep your success, updates or ideas a secret! Let the GMMA Branch celebrate you!

Send your news to tara.bharadia.jp@ejudiciary.net with the subject line 'GMMA Branch Newsletter' with at least 2 good quality photos