

Local charity event discovers a new and talented generation of magistrates

"It never entered my head that I could become a magistrate - that was something that other people did, but thanks to the Partnership Council and Operation Black Vote, that's exactly what I intend doing."

That's the opinion of Rehman Syed, aged 31, a Co-ordinator with the Asian Youth Development Agency, who attended a unique event organised by local Hyson Green charity, the Partnership Council, and the national organisation, Operation Black Vote, held last week at the Vine Community Centre on Bobbers Mill Road.

The event aimed to encourage wider participation in Nottingham's justice system by encouraging more people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to join the Police or become magistrates. As a result, the Partnership Council can report that 10 people are now interested in joining a Magistrates Shadowing Scheme in Nottingham, as the first step on the road to becoming a magistrate.

The organisation Operation Black Vote, which campaigns for greater involvement of people from BME communities in public life has been running a Magistrates Shadowing Scheme since 2001, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice. Ms Wong, who recently participated in the shadowing scheme, came along to the event to tell local people about her experience of shadowing magistrates.

"Magistrates shadowing schemes offer BME individuals who are interested in joining the justice system the chance to 'shadow' a magistrate, helping them to demystify court procedures for example, whilst introducing them to the day to day role of a magistrate. It's brilliant that last week's event inspired so much interest - having ten people keen to become magistrates is a great result for Nottingham as a whole, as well as for those individuals personally."

Ms Wong continues - *"I'd advise anyone interested in becoming a magistrate to contact the Nottingham Magistrates Court directly and ask for an application pack."*

Other speakers at the event included Mrs Harding from the Nottingham Bench.

Matthew Danquah from the Partnership Council concludes:

"We set out to tackle inequalities in the justice system and that's exactly what we've done. It may be a small step but our event was a leap in the right direction, and has given the city ten potential new magistrates."

For more information please contact Matthew Danquah at the Partnership Council on 0115 970 8200 or email matthew@partnershipcouncil.co.uk

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