



Volunteer courtwatcher - Role description

Volunteer as a courtwatcher and become the eyes and ears of your community in your local magistrates' court.

CourtWatch London is a mass court observation project, where citizen volunteers observe the daily hearings in court and write down what they see. The real-time data and stories volunteers collect will shine a spotlight on what really happens in our local courts, expose shortfalls and highlight systemic injustices.

Volunteer responsibilities:

- visit one of our three target magistrates' courts for half a day (or a day) at a time, on any weekday. Ideally volunteers will courtwatch for a minimum of two days (or four half days)
- observe criminal hearings happening in the court and write down what happens in each of the hearings you observe, using a form provided by the CourtWatch London team
- write up your notes into an online form after your visit (if you don't have easy access to a computer, we can work around this)

Benefits of being a courtwatcher:

- learn about what happens in the magistrates' courts
- develop new skills including research, attention to detail, observation, insight
- help build a picture of what's happening in your local magistrates' court, expose systemic injustices and help make courts fairer and more compassionate
- be part of community of people who share a passion for justice

Skills and experience:

Anyone can courtwatch! You do not need any knowledge or expertise in law or criminal justice to be a courtwatcher. You just need to be passionate about justice and equality, and keen to create positive change in your community.

We will provide you with all the training you need on what happens at court, what to look out for and how to document what happens. Training will be a mixture of in-person and online and likely take place over two sessions. There will also be regular check-ins and debriefs where you can talk with the CourtWatch London team and other volunteers about what you saw and heard.

Other information:

Our target courts are Croydon, Highbury Corner (Islington), and Thames (Tower Hamlets).

Criminal hearings take place on weekdays between 10am and 5pm, with a break for lunch c1-2pm, and Saturday mornings 10am - 1pm.

Within the times above, and once you've completed the training, you can go to court when it is most convenient to you. You might want to buddy up with another volunteer for your first visit while you learn the ropes; we can help arrange this.

You can courtwatch any time from July 2023 until December 2023 – we hope you'll become a regular! – after which we will use data you have collected to produce a report. We may also use some of the stories and data you collect to communicate about what's happening in courts while courtwatching is still underway.

CourtWatch London will cover reasonable expenses that you incur while courtwatching, for example for travel and lunch, upon production of valid receipts and in line with our expenses policy.

CourtWatch London will make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities who would like to volunteer. Please get in touch and we will discuss with you how to achieve this.

Before you begin courtwatching we will ask you to complete our volunteer training and sign our volunteer agreement.

CourtWatch London is run by Transform Justice, a charity that works for a fairer, more compassionate criminal justice system.

To become a courtwatcher volunteer, register your interest here:

<https://transformjustice.org.uk/page/courtwatchlondon>

If you have any questions about the role and whether it's right for you, get in touch at

courtwatch@transformjustice.org.uk.

Find out more about CourtWatch London here:

<https://www.transformjustice.org.uk/focus-areas/courtwatch-london/>