

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Prevention and the Role of Judicial Authorities in a Local Context

David Chesterton

Youth Court Magistrate and Social Worker

Profile of David Chesterton JP

David is aged 45, he is married and has three children, he lives on the Isle of Dogs, in the heart of London's East End.

He is trained in Law, Social Work, Community & Youth Work and Management

David is a Youth Court Magistrate [Justice of the Peace] he is appointed to the Inner London Youth Courts Panel and sits at the Thames Youth Court in the East End of London.

David is the Director of Focus E15, the 210 unit Stratford Foyer, which serves the East London Boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Hackney.

He began his professional career in East London in 1974 as detached youth worker (Street Worker) and has remained working with young people in London's East End ever since. David is very active in his community, he has been a school governor (Chair) for 16 years, a successful campaigner on many local issues and is a member of the UK Board of the Foyer Federation.

He established one of London's first inner city watersports & outdoor pursuits centres in the London docks in the 1970's and early 1980's. Then he went on to play a central part in the creation of all of the major watersports centres across London Docklands.

Before taking up his post at Focus E15 in 1996 he had been responsible for managing a number of Urban Regeneration initiatives in Newham and prior to this had worked in the private sector for three years in the early 1990's

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In April this year I spoke at a Council of Europe conference in St Petersburg on policies for deprived children. I was surprised at the number of participants who approached me afterwards asking that I explain again the Youth Court system in the UK. I guess I had not made it clear enough in my speech, and the way we run things certainly does seem very different to most other countries in Europe. This time I thought I would begin with an introduction to our system and in particular the position of Magistrate.

I am an Inner London Youth Court Magistrate [or Justice of the Peace] and sit at the Thames Youth Court in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in East London. This appointment is unpaid and part time. I sit four to five days a month, every other month [about 25 days a year]. I am one of 117 part time Magistrates appointed to the Inner London Youth Courts Panel, of which 49 of us are assigned to the Thames Youth Court. The initial process of appointing a magistrate takes about a year and comprises detailed application, references, visits to courts and an interview. Those that are selected to become magistrates are required to successfully complete a series of training programmes before being allowed to sit in court, and then only in the adult court. After at least a year sitting in the adult court those magistrates that choose to may undertake further training for the youth court and once this has been successfully completed they may begin sitting. We are required to undertake additional training every year thereafter and this is monitored.

Most magistrates that sit in the youth court have considerable experience of working with young people, which is often the