



With some of the King's School Worcester Getting Court students



On the steps of Worcester Crown Court – the Getting Court Teachers' Day

## Introducing 'Getting Court' to Worcestershire

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High Sheriff of Worcestershire 2025-26

I was unclear what I wanted to make the focus of my year but at the Burghley House seminars I heard about the 'Getting Court' programme and immediately thought that was what I wanted to make my 'flagship' project.

Before doing too much homework, in the year prior to my Declaration, and with the then High Sheriff's blessing, I arranged to meet with the Honorary Recorder of Worcester Crown Court and then the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia. Given the strain on the court system, I was concerned to ensure the initiative would be welcomed by His Honour Judge Burbidge KC. He couldn't have been more encouraging and is now an integral part of the programme. I asked the PCC if he would support us financially if needed and again he was welcoming of the proposal.

Next, I spent some valuable time with

the people who run the very successful Gloucestershire scheme; they were incredibly helpful and invited me to one of their 'teacher days' in Gloucester Crown Court.

The Gloucestershire programme is run by ex-teachers and I realised that getting busy schools to sign up for the programme might be difficult. There would also be an amount of administration which I wouldn't be able to deal with alone. Thankfully, an old friend of mine is a retired teacher and a chat over a pub lunch whetted his appetite. When he messaged me the next day to say he'd been in touch with his old school, I knew I'd found my administrator. He said he would give the programme two years of his time and would not charge anything for doing so.

Getting Court involves taking groups of school students (14- to 18-year-olds) once a month to a live Crown Court session. We target about 12/13 students from two schools each session. This means they can travel in a minibus and avoid the expense of a coach. It is also the maximum number the court can accommodate as they sit in the body of the court not the public gallery. They receive introductions from me and the judge and then watch a morning's sentencing. In between cases, the judge chats to the students about the outcome and asks for questions.

The morning's session is rounded off by an ex-offender addressing the students. He was recommended to me by the probation team and is working for a local charity. He is very articulate and his story incredibly powerful.

Early on we ran a session for teachers from schools which hadn't yet engaged with us and received wonderful feedback.



With members of West Mercia Police's County Lines team at West Mercia Police HQ at Hindlip Hall

We now have court dates planned through to March 2026 and they are all booked out with a waiting list of schools wanting to come when new dates are released.

The programme adds real-life examples to the students' experience of PSHE studies and shows them how one or two bad decisions can ruin lives. It also helps students with career choices, as they see a variety of roles from ushers and clerks to police and probation, to barristers and the judge. The University of Worcester has an award-winning law school and together we have created a pathway for students who express an interest in any of those careers.

The High Sheriffs in nomination following me all want to continue the programme. It is likely that there will be a need to pay for a future coordinator's time and it may incur other costs. I have secured a substantial sum from a local grant-making charity as an endowment for the High Sheriff's Fund to cover these costs for several years and, with the PCC's support as well, hopefully this will be a successful long-term project.



Celebrating 40 years of Redditch being twinned with Mtwara in Tanzania with some of the Tanzanian musicians and representatives of the Tanzanian High Commissioner